

ASSESSMENT PRACTICE OF INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: A CASE OF  
PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NEPAL

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A Dissertation

Submitted to  
School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

Kathmandu University  
Dhulikhel, Nepal

January 2026

AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Ramesh Khatri* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in Educational Leadership*, presented on *1 January 2026*, entitled *Assessment Practice of Integrated Curriculum: A Case of Private Schools in Nepal*.

APPROVED BY

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Asst. Prof. Rebat Kumar Dhakal, PhD  
Dissertation Supervisor

This research on the assessment practice of the Integrated Curriculum (IC) (Grade 1-3) in private schools in Nepal is contextual and is a new approach. This study aims to explore the implementation practices of assessment of the integrated curriculum in private schools in Morang. It has mainly focused on how school leaders and teachers interpret and apply the principles of assessment for the holistic development of children. The real practices of assessment emphasized ongoing observation, portfolio management, rubric use and authentic tasks that connect learning with real-life contexts.

In order to address the research questions, I have used the qualitative Case Study within the interpretive paradigm to unveil the classroom practices, selecting the principals and teachers as key participants, employing interviews, classroom observations, and students' workbook analysis as the major tools for data collection.

The assumptions of an integrated curriculum to make students understand the realities in a holistic way are less reflected in the practical level. The teachers are still largely guided by traditional thinking and methods of teaching and learning activities. They find it hard to be transformed into newer ideas and practices as envisaged by the integrated curriculum. The teachers are less empowered in the concepts and practices of

IC. There are fewer meaningful practices of alternative assessment of students' learning/performance based on what the IC has envisaged.

My research revealed a significant gap between the ideals and classroom practices of authentic assessment within the integrated curriculum. Although the concept is understood at the leadership level, its practical application remains inconsistent, with exam-oriented approaches and limited parental involvement prevailing. The findings highlight that authentic assessment has yet to be fully institutionalized, and effective instructional leadership is essential to translate assessment theory into consistent classroom practices.

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1 January 2026

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## शोध सार

शैक्षिक नेतृत्वमा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर उपाधिका लागि राजेश खत्रीको शोध प्रबन्धको शीर्षक “एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमका मूल्याङ्कन अभ्यासहरू नेपालका निजी विद्यालयहरूको एक अध्ययन” १७ पुष २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

उप. प्रा रेबत कुमार ढकाल, पीएचडी  
शोध निर्देशक

नेपालका निजी विद्यालयहरूमा कक्षा १-३ का लागि लागू गरिएको एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम अन्तर्गतका मूल्याङ्कन अभ्याससम्बन्धी यो अनुसन्धान सन्दर्भिक छ र यस अध्ययनलाई निजी विद्यालयहरूको हकमा एक नवीन अध्ययनका रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ। यस अध्ययनको मुख्य उद्देश्य मोरङ जिल्लाका निजी विद्यालयहरूमा एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमको मूल्याङ्कन अभ्यास कसरी कार्यान्वयन भइरहेको छ भन्ने विषयको गहिरो अन्वेषण गर्नु हो। विशेषतः विद्यालय नेतृत्वकर्ता तथा शिक्षकहरूले बालबालिकाको समग्र विकास सुनिश्चित गर्न मूल्याङ्कनका सिद्धान्तहरूलाई कसरी व्याख्या गर्छन् र व्यवहारमा कसरी लागू गर्छन् भन्ने पक्षमा अध्ययन केन्द्रित रहेको छ। अध्ययनमा अवलोकित मूल्याङ्कन अभ्यासहरूले निरन्तर अवलोकन, पोर्टफोलियो व्यवस्थापन, रुब्रिकको प्रयोग तथा वास्तविक जीवनसँग सिकाइलाई जोड्ने प्रामाणिक कार्यहरूलाई प्राथमिकता दिएको देखिन्छ।

अनुसन्धानका प्रश्नहरूको उत्तर खोज्न व्याख्यात्मक दर्शनमा आधारित गुणात्मक केस अध्ययन विधि अपनाइएको छ। यस क्रममा प्रधानाध्यापक तथा शिक्षकहरूलाई प्रमुख सहभागीका रूपमा चयन गरी अन्तर्वार्ता, कक्षा अवलोकन तथा विद्यार्थीका कार्यपुस्तिकाको विश्लेषणलाई तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलनका मुख्य उपकरणका रूपमा प्रयोग गरिएको छ।

एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमले विद्यार्थीहरूलाई यथार्थलाई समग्र र बहुआयामिक रूपमा बुझाउन सहयोग गर्ने अपेक्षा राखे पनि ती मान्यताहरू व्यवहारिक तहमा पर्याप्त रूपमा प्रतिबिम्बित भएको पाइएन। शिक्षकहरू अझै पनि परम्परागत सोच तथा शिक्षण-सिकाइ अभ्यासबाट निर्देशित देखिन्छन्। एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमले परिकल्पना गरेका नवीन अवधारणा, विधि र मूल्याङ्कन अभ्यासतर्फ रूपान्तरण हुन उनीहरूलाई कठिनाइ भएको देखिन्छ। साथै, शिक्षकहरू एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमका अवधारणा र मूल्याङ्कन अभ्याससम्बन्धी ज्ञान तथा सीपमा अपेक्षाकृत रूपमा सशक्त देखिँदैनन्। एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमले परिकल्पना गरे अनुसार विद्यार्थीको सिकाइ तथा कार्यसम्पादनको वैकल्पिक र प्रामाणिक मूल्याङ्कनका अर्थपूर्ण अभ्यासहरू सीमित मात्रामा देखिएका छन्।

यस अनुसन्धानले एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम भित्रको मूल्याङ्कनका सैद्धान्तिक आदर्श र कक्षाकोठाभित्रका वास्तविक अभ्यासबीच उल्लेखनीय अन्तर रहेको तथ्य उजागर गरेको छ। यद्यपि विद्यालय नेतृत्व तहमा एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम र मूल्याङ्कनको अवधारणात्मक बुझाइ रहेको देखिए पनि यसको व्यवहारिक कार्यान्वयन असंगत रहेको पाइयो, जहाँ परीक्षा-केन्द्रित प्रवृत्ति तथा अभिभावकको सीमित सहभागिता हावी रहेको छ। यस अनुसन्धानको निष्कर्षले प्रामाणिक मूल्याङ्कन अझै पूर्ण रूपमा संस्थागत हुन बाँकी रहेको स्पष्ट पारेको छ र मूल्याङ्कनसम्बन्धी सिद्धान्तलाई कक्षाकोठाभित्र निरन्तर, प्रभावकारी र अर्थपूर्ण अभ्यासमा रूपान्तरण गर्न सशक्त शिक्षणात्मक नेतृत्व अपरिहार्य रहेको तथ्यलाई जोड दिएको छ।

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राजेश खत्री

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

१७ पुष २०८२

This dissertation, entitled *Assessment Practice of Integrated Curriculum: A Case of Private Schools in Nepal*, was presented by *Rajesh Khatri* on *1 January 2026*.

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I understand that my dissertation will be part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University's library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

..... 1 January 2026  
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

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## DEDICATION

This work is profoundly dedicated to my facilitators of Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED), my family (Father, Mother, Spouse, Son, Daughter, and School families). My school, Shiksha Sandesh, Morang, friends, my research participants, and their schools, who have been part of my life and research, to whom I am always indebted. It is because of their effort and support that I was able to complete my MPhil Degree.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of a number of people's collective support and cooperation. I am deeply grateful to my mentor and supervisor, Asst. Prof. Rebat Kumar Dhakal, PhD, for his profound and continuous support and guidance in the study's subject matter. To me, he will always remain a true definition of a leader and my true role model. I am grateful for the extraordinary experiences he arranged for me and for allowing me to advance academically and professionally. His inspiring words, caring, and feedback have been very important to me in the study of the subject matter.

I want to thank my participants who took time to participate in my research and make this research task possible. I would like to recognize my respected course facilitators, Prof. Dhanapati Subedi, PhD, Assoc. Prof. Shesha Kanta Pangei, PhD, Asst. Prof. Basu Prasad Subedi, PhD, Hari Lamsal, PhD, Asst. Prof. Shree Krishna Wagle, PhD, and Prof. Mana Prasad Wagley, PhD, for their insightful sharing along with meaningful feedback. The experiences they shared on the subject are the heart and soul of my research. My honest gratitude always goes out to Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD, Dean, Kathmandu University School of Education.

I would also like to thank Noor Jung Shah and Narayan Shrestha, who helped me with APA formatting and language editing of this dissertation. I would to thank the administrative staff of KUSOED, particularly, Raju Maharjan for creating the supportive environment for my research work. I cannot remain silent to thank my classmates for their cooperation and meaningful sharing that made me conscious in every walk of my research journey.

Then, I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my father and mother, seniors, colleagues, and other well-wishers who continually encouraged me to finish this task. Additionally, I will never forget my research participants, (pseudo names) Jagat Basnet and Kumar Khulal as head teachers and other participant teachers, Rajwai Basnet, Sapana Kafle, Kanchan Rai, Puja Basnet, Rojina Chaudhary and Prakash Basnet for their honest help in taking time to participate in my research and making this dissertation possible

Finally, special thanks to my beloved wife Sapana Kafle, son Precious Khatri, and daughter Rajwai Khatri, without whose support this research work would not

have been completed. Then, my sincere attitude also goes to my brother, Ramesh Khatri, Ganesh Khatri, Bhojraj Karki, Sister Sumitra Khatri, Radhika Khatri, niece Bhumika Khatri, and nephew Venish Khatri, brother in law Sagar Kafle and sister in law Nita Kafle for their cooperation.

Similarly, I am also thankful to my school's subordinate leaders and teachers who supported me in sharing the lead to lead my school even in my absence. I am also pleased with Nabin Niroula and Prakash Basnet, who always supported me from a technical point.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CTF	Career Training Foundation
ECA	Extra Curricular Activities
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IC	Integrated Curriculum
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEC	National Education Commission
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on exploring the internal assessment practices of integrated curriculum in private schools for grades 1 to 3 in Morang District. Drawing upon personal and professional experiences as an educator, coupled with relevant literature, the research agenda is set to investigate the current state of internal assessment within the context of integrated curriculum in the specific setting of private schools. This chapter is dedicated to a brief introduction to this study. I begin with the background of the study in order to establish my positionality as a researcher with very much academic burning and relevant topics from my professional experience as my research issues, claiming to be the problem. Then, I moved on to explain the issue that instigated me to do this research. Then it includes a problem statement that clarifies the research problem, contributing to explicating the purpose of the study. The next section sheds light on the research questions which I would raise to guide my inquiry. Then, I clarify the rationale behind this research with verification and the essence of the research topic, consisting of the detailed significance of the present study for different stakeholders. Finally, it explicates the delimitation of this study that sets the scope of the research as well.

#### **Background of the Study**

My over a decade of experience as a school leader and working as an English Language teacher in different private schools and colleges has helped me to identify the researchable problem in education. From the very beginning of childhood, I was eager to be an English teacher. So, I studied hard for the completion of my aims, especially focusing on English subjects. I came to appreciate the immense responsibility that comes with this profession. Despite embarking on my teaching career at a young age without a defined goal, formal training, or an academic background in education, I joined a private school as a teacher in Siddhartha English (Pseudo name) School, Dangihat, Morang, which helped me to dig my career despite the many problems in curriculum application. I was very confused with the school principal and teachers because they were not self-motivated to study the curriculum and its implementation in the real classroom. However, I would participate in the workshop on curriculum organized by different organizations. I always completed my

professional responsibilities at the forefront of my work, whenever and wherever I worked. For example, during my teaching career, I have also served as an Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) in-charge and school coordinator. I have also gained the experience of leading the school from the position of vice principal and worked at the school with the experience of teaching from junior classes to higher classes. I believed that teachers' roles are not only limited to the classroom but also extend to different domains such as the community and many organizations. Guided by this philosophy, I have taken on various roles throughout my career, both within and outside the classroom, to enhance my students' learning in different capacities, sometimes solely as a teacher and sometimes as an administrator-cum-teacher.

Talking about my present profession, as the principal of my own school, Shiksha Sandesh, for the past 15 years, I have developed a plan to bring about transformative changes in students and teachers by fostering their professional skills throughout their careers. For this, I explored ways for change and development in students' achievement level. I got a chance to participate in the training on (integrated curriculum conducted by CTF (Career of Teacher Training Foundation) Nepal. Mason (1996) supported the integrated curriculum as a holistic approach in Basic Level Education, connecting different common themes integrated across multiple subjects from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary thematic ways. These ideas are closely aligned with practices of thematic teaching, which offer the opportunities of achieving the knowledge from subjects like Mathematics, English, Nepali and Our Surroundings in an interconnected approach to the world context.

According to Stiggins (2017), students are enhanced by the teachers' strong understanding of assessment practices in a supportive learning environment. This thematic teaching facilitates the learners applying the activities-based teaching. Although I shared my combined teaching and assessment skills, there was little interest in implementing them in practice, despite the numerous benefits for both teachers and students in terms of learning and gaining diverse perspectives. In Nepal, an integrated curriculum has been in place for grades one to three since 2019. The learning experiences of the students are expected to be enhanced by interconnecting the same common themes with multiple subjects, enabling the learners to achieve holistic knowledge of different essential academic and life skills and fostering interdisciplinary thinking. It was initially piloted in 2018 and fully implemented in 2019. To achieve holistic child learning from the application of the newly existing

curriculum in practice, I have decided to implement integrated curriculum guidelines and support systems to help teachers. The multi/ interdisciplinary nature of this curriculum has proven beneficial for teachers, enabling them to acquire practical skills and enhance their knowledge and abilities. Still, my teachers were found to continue the previous traditional subject-centric approach as a preference rather than a newly learner-based continuous assessment system where assessment as/for learning was in recent practice.

All school stakeholders (head teachers, teachers, students, and parents) are facing various problems in implementing the new integrated curriculum (Koirala & Neupane, 2023). Likewise, I also found that most of the respective parents were not ready to accept the new changes in preference to the summative test. In response to these challenges, from the desk of the school leader, I have conducted numerous training and seminars focusing on application skills development, with a particular emphasis on human resource development. As a result, I noticed little change, only in understanding and its application. But no improvement is seen in authentic assessment practice, no stakeholder support and collaboration and no emphasis and integration of soft skills were evident. So, I wondered how I could solve these problems. Then, I visited different teachers and principals and questioned them, such as, "Have you applied the new curriculum in your school in classes one to three?" I got the answer "Yes", but in real ground observation, it was hardly applied. Several studies have looked at the challenges of the implementation of integrated curriculum in various contexts (Fu & Sibert, 2017), while connecting the school practices and beliefs. Likewise, I have encountered many implementation challenges not only in my schools but also in many other neighboring schools from interaction, observation and students' workbook analysis. So, I thought that it was a matter of research on this crucial topic. Therefore, I was hungry and self-motivated to conduct research on exploring internal assessment practices in private schools in Morang, with the hope of providing valuable insights for addressing the challenges faced by private schools.

My decision to pursue an MPhil degree is driven by the recognition that internal assessment practices within integrated curriculum represent a significant issue. The implementation of an integrated curriculum by the Government of Nepal (GoN) in 2019 marks a significant departure from conventional subject-based approaches to a more holistic and real-life-focused approach to learning. Conventionally, subject based applied teaching is replaced by the understanding the

diversity of each student They possess unique learning strategies and rate which has to be assessed by the variation in assessment tools respecting contexts. Assuming assessment by the curriculum is continuous process integrating with the teaching activities as an essential authentic assessment. Assessment is envisioned as an ongoing and integral aspect of classroom instruction, incorporating authentic tasks as best on practical approach as far as possible. This targets to achieve the learning outcomes for overall development among the learners in basic level education, aligning with the ideas that interactive knowledge enhances the interdisciplinary learning experiences supported by Beane (1997) and Jacobs (2010). Similarly, in Nepal, the Integrated Curriculum was introduced to provide the learner with a comprehensive and facilitative educational experience (Curriculum Development Center [CDC], 2019). However, the implementation aspects of authentic assessment practices as envisioned by the curriculum in the classroom practices were unexplored, considering the contextual factors of private schools. Therefore, understanding the existing practices of private schools is essential for enriching learners for the holistic development of a child. Comprehending the current state of internal assessment within the context of an integrated curriculum is essential for various reasons. Internal assessment significantly contributes to the evaluation of students' progress and offers essential feedback to support their learning journey (Broadfoot, 2007). The assessment enables the teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. They can make the decision either that the instructional approaches they have applied require some modification, or they have to continue the same on the basis of the achievement level. Thus, teachers need to explore the current assessment practices to determine whether the assessment methods and assessment tools are applied according to the goals of this thematic approach. Eisner (2004) believes that authentic assessment practices of integrated curriculum depend on the alignment with the teaching and assessment practices in the classroom situation. Thus, Inadequate or inappropriate assessment practices can alter the expected outcomes of learners. This malpractice produces an incomplete understanding of students' achievements, which can hinder the potential opportunities of inter/multidisciplinary learning experiences. Thus, exploring the existing situation of internal assessment within integrated curriculum is crucial for creating a cohesive and supportive educational environment for young learners.

The curricula promoted one-size-fits-all for all contents and pedagogies and facilitated fostering the de/contextualized teaching and learning practices in schools in Nepal (Luitel, 2009). My research focuses on the existing situation of internal assessment within integrated curriculum. This study seeks to contribute to the knowledge base and inform educational stakeholders, including teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers, about the strengths and weaknesses of the current practices. The findings will provide valuable insights for enhancing assessment strategies that align with the principles of integrated curriculum, thus supporting the overall educational development of young learners in private schools in Nepal.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem to be researched in this study is the existing situation of internal assessment of integrated curriculum in private schools in Morang.

Integrated curriculum, with its emphasis on holistic child development and inter/multidisciplinary learning, has gained attraction in Nepal since its introduction by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in 2018. There is a specific model of an assessment system within this Framework: Authentic assessment. It focuses on formative and diagnostic evaluation. In the recently introduced integrated curriculum of Nepal, there is no room for the summative evaluation system up to grade three. It also links with parents for the evaluation of a child. It is a letter-grade-based evaluation. It also expects competency-based evaluation through learning outcomes to major learning outcomes. Focus is given to assessment for/as learning rather than assessment of learning. It has some opportunities and challenges in the Nepali context. In my long experience in the teaching field. For example, Kuwar and Acharya (2024) argues that an integrated curriculum “provides learning experiences designed to develop children's attitudes, skills, and knowledge simultaneously,” thereby creating a more comprehensive conceptual understanding through real-world themes. From these perspectives, I have realized that an integrated curriculum has focused on many opportunities: it provides holistic development of children, soft skills development, collaborative learning, etc. It is activity-based and child-centric. It is a theme-based curriculum system that links learning competency and soft skills with learners. It is a place-based learning that links with the context of the children, which aligns with the ideas of Lamsal (2021), reports that Nepali curriculum experts believe integrated curriculum is important because it allows children to connect what they learn in school with real life, enabling them to apply learning practically rather

than seeing subjects as isolated. So, as a researcher, I am interested in exploring how its assessment is being implemented in Nepal.

However, its application will have a remarkable change in the part of students' learning as it is lacking in the application part. Our children are missing the great opportunities given by the internal assessment. Furthermore, the assessment practices within this curriculum, particularly in private schools, have not kept pace with its transformative potential. In this support, Stiggins (2005) highlighted that the curriculum intends to be the formative nature of assessment, the stakeholders stress the emphasis on the summative test, which reflects a lack of understanding of the value and authenticity of real learning. Then, when I visited different related research in Nepal in the context of private schools, I also found Adhikari (2019) has studied the integrated curriculum of a public school, but it has not captured the main essence of assessment practice. Likewise, Rijal (2021) and MacMath et al. (2009) stated that the assessment as/for learning brings the requirements of a thematic-based curriculum, highlighting the need for transformation from conventional subject-based practice to more thematic and learner-centric approaches. Likewise, the main issue of internal assessment practices in the integrated curriculum requires exploration through my study in private schools in Morang because its application must be contextual. However, another researcher, Koirala (2023), Shrestha (2025) also declare that related literature is largely connected to community schools in comparison to empirical work for internal assessment practices in private schools. Likewise, Sharma (2020) also claimed that most of the existing research on integrated curriculum assessment is focused, focusing primarily on government schools, without considering the contextual factors in the private schools in Nepal. It shows that the shaded aspect of internal assessment practices in integrated curriculum has made me to assign this study as my researchable issues. Furthermore, Black and Wiliam (1998) emphasized that this assessment practices can not only assess student learning but also leads for providing valuable insights to both students and teachers. The products of this curriculum is aligning with soft skills such as fostering deeper understanding, encouraging critical thinking, and promoting the collaboration, communication, and creativity for capturing the essence of 21st century. But in a real application sense, in the context of the private schools in Morang, they claimed that they have good, authentic assessments applied as envisioned by the curriculum. Still, I found the supremacy of the summative test. But in the practical sense, in private schools,

although they claim to have good assessment practices, I found them applying for the summative test. The soft skills proposed by CDC were found to be neglected in the summative test (Koirala & Neupane, 2023). The summative test practices have disconnected the assumptions of the integrated curriculum and real practices. Therefore, there is a need for research to explore the real gap in application in the context of private school, with the fulfilment of the contextually relevant solutions.

Although the present practice and motivation for applying the growing body of evidences stressing the focus on the efficacy of assessment for/as learning in fostering the soft skills such as deeper learning, critical thinking, and self-regulated learners (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Stiggins, 2007) Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) found that the preliminary research revealed a significant lack of parental understanding and acceptance of formative assessment, an approach which emphasizes ongoing feedback, self-reflection, and the development of essential soft skills for the 21st century. Moreover, this research also included the ability to communicate for collaboration and problem-solving in creative ways. Similarly, Koirala and Neupane (2023) believed that the parents' limited awareness and understanding determine a gap between knowledge and practices. These gaps also aligned with the facts of integrated curriculum, specifically focusing on assessment practices in private schools, supported by another research by Adhikari (2022). On the other hand, El Nokali et al. (2011) also presented that parental emphasis has also influenced the focus on rote learning and test preparation for the development of a deeper understanding and critical thinking.

In my understanding, I found the consequences of this research gap to be far-reaching when I reviewed different literature. However, some were conducted on the integrated curriculum rather than on assessment practices without a clear understanding of authentic application and its opportunities within the integrated curriculum. The students were deprived of remedial teaching and continuous feedback for the holistic development that this curriculum intends. The defects in application in the classroom hindered their academic progress and overall well-being.

Professionally, as a principal, I have seen the assessment practices as trouble trend in my school as well as neighboring schools from the interactions with other school principals and teachers in the Morang district. I had evidence that schools claimed to implement an integrated curriculum, but there is a lack of continuity in assessment, portfolio management, and soft skills application. Furthermore, the

teachers continuously emphasize the need for learners with strong soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). However, the formative assessment could not capture the essential skills required for the expected outcomes. So, the contextual research is essential in private schools focused on separate assessment guidelines. The real practices seen in research and my experience have motivated me to problematize this issue as my research topic. Moreover, I have also experienced in my school that soft skills application, integration of content, portfolio management, and stakeholder collaboration are found to be lacking. Though it is formative in nature, as the assessment for/as learning, schools tend to apply summative tests in the separately taught subjects, and parents also have beliefs in summative tests. This suggests a superficial adoption of the curriculum without fully embracing its assessment philosophy.

The lack of research in this area has left crucial questions unanswered, such as: Are teachers, parents, or principals responsible for implementing authentic assessment? Is it the result of the unclear policy? Or is it because of the lack of training? Is it the reason for collaboration among stakeholders, or is it the unfair perspectives of researchers or the government towards private schools? I was curious to explore how internal assessment is currently being conducted, the effectiveness of these methods, and potential strategies for improving assessment practices within integrated curriculum in private schools. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of assessment for/as learning and assessment as learning in fostering student development, many students in private schools in Morang are not experiencing the full benefits of these approaches. This discrepancy is due, in part, to a strong parental emphasis on summative assessment and traditional, exam-oriented, subject-centered curricula. Therefore, my research concern lies in ensuring that the authentic assessment practices in integrated curriculum in private schools in Morang.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to explore the internal assessment practice of integrated curriculum (Grade 1-3) in private schools in Morang and provide contextually relevant implications.

### **Research Questions**

This study has been framed to respond to the following research questions:

- i. How is the existing situation of assessment practice within the integrated curriculum in private schools in Morang?

- ii. In what ways are the principal and teachers playing their roles in implementing assessment?

### **Rationale of the Study**

The integrated curriculum places a strong emphasis on formative assessment, particularly assessment for/as learning, as advocated by the Curriculum Development Center (CDC, 2019). The study focused on exploring and bringing the implications of the internal assessment of integrated curriculum in private schools in Nepal for grades 1 to 3. My study will contribute to theoretical understanding, practical implications for educators and policymakers, policy refinement, knowledge advancement, and future research. My choice of interest to research in internal assessment practices in private schools under Nepal's integrated curriculum was generated from a clear research gap, and my own professional experiences aligning the gaps between theoretical intent and practices. The previous studies on how these practices actually play out in private-school settings are very limited. For instance, Dhungel (2024) provides rich insight into continuous assessment in private schools of Kathmandu, but this is limited only to the urban-based schools, which are quite different in the setting of Morang. At the same time, other studies (e.g., Prajapati, 2024) also show a policy–practice gap in continuous assessment under the integrated curriculum but focus primarily on government schools. Further, conceptual work by Kunwar and Acharya (2024) also identifies “assessment difficulties” as a major challenge in integrated curriculum implementation, which could not explore the practices in assessment.

On the other hand, my interest in conducting this study arose from my professional experience, academic engagement and limited previous research work with Nepal’s private-school context as mentioned under the background section. As an educator working directly with early-grade learners, I have observed a significant mismatch between the integrated curriculum’s emphasis on authentic assessment and the actual assessment practices carried out in private schools. This gap might have created practical challenges for teachers and learners. Thus, as an MPhil researcher in Educational Leadership, I was motivated to generate evidence that not only strengthens theoretical understanding but also supports schools ‘stakeholders and policy designers in implementing assessment practices that genuinely foster holistic development. Thus, my research studies also investigated the shaded areas of research in integrated curriculum, which contributed meaningful insights that could guide policy refinement, enhance classroom practices, and finally improve learning

outcomes in Nepal's private-school sector, supported by the idea that assessment frameworks in integrated or STEAM education struggle because they don't sufficiently reflect Nepal's cultural and contextual realities. The past studies also stressed the limits for meaningful student involvement and actual measurement of learning.

Therefore, due to this limited one-sided research coverage, I want to build new, context-specific evidence to understand how private school teachers and principals play a role in assessment practices under the integrated curriculum in private schools of Morang district and to identify contextually relevant barriers and supports in Nepalese private schools. My research is expected to help bridge the gap between policy design and classroom reality. Additionally, the study fills a gap in literature by examining assessment practices within integrated curriculum frameworks in private schools, enhancing theoretical foundations. Despite the integrated curriculum's emphasis on formative assessment and holistic development, there is a lack of research examining how these principles translate into actual classroom practices in private schools (CDC, 2019). The assessment strategies are detected for the practical implication, which is aligned with the integrated curriculum principle in the private school context of Nepal, because the assessment variations are shaped by the unique challenges, particularly within school-specific factors such as time constraints, workload, stakeholder perception, available resources, etc. The research work of Brookhart (2013) also believed that challenges include limited awareness and understanding of authentic assessment among principals and teachers, as well as a lack of resources and support for implementing innovative assessment methods, which strongly supported my challenges faced by private schools due to contextual factors.

This study helps in examining the existing policies, exploring the gaps, as well as offering evidence to favor improvements in policy design in private school contexts. Furthermore, it can also contribute to teacher training, curriculum design, resource management and informing them about the present status of assessment practices. For example, although there are various existing policies, many teachers face challenges in implementing assessment for learning due to the scarcity of apparent ideas and skills regarding it, along with the notion of unnecessary burdens as well as inadequate time available for keeping students' portfolios (Prajapati, 2024). Moreover, it can be beneficial in the development of assessment equipment,

especially designed based on the requirements of private schools in Nepal, favoring the notion of developing authentic assessments that actually represent the requirements of integrated learning, such as intensive content knowledge of the teachers, involvement of the stakeholders, and contextual understanding as numerous requisites (Kuwar & Acharya, 2024).

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The delimitations of my research refer to the deliberately established limitations for this study. These limits helped me to clarify the scope of the study and ensure it was possible to carry out. This research adopted only a qualitative research approach in a single case study, focusing primarily on the context of private schools in Morang. The literature review was delimited only to the assessment in scope, concentrating on key aspects of the research problems. The assessment covers various facets, but my research was delimited with a specific focus on soft skills, portfolio management, and assessment strategies. Besides this, the study only involved teachers and the principal as the key stakeholders, as they are directly involved in implementing the integrated curriculum in the classroom. The parents' perspectives were also taken as the secondary part, from only the viewpoints of the principal and teachers, delimiting their direct voices. This means that findings of the research may not be generalizable to other stakeholders, such as students, parents or policymakers. Moreover, my research was moved ahead with the support of the two theories, such as constructivism and instructional leadership theory.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of existing scholarly works and research studies related to the topic of internal assessment within the integrated curriculum framework in Nepal's private schools for grades 1 to 3. The review includes four dimensions, such as thematic review, empirical review, theoretical review, and policy review, specifically related to the private school settings. This chapter focuses on examining and synthesizing key ideas and findings from the literature, offering a comprehensive understanding of the recent state of knowledge in a specific context. Firstly, the thematic literature review digs into various themes, including the foundational background of integrated curriculum, the conceptualization of integrated curriculum, thematic and interdisciplinary curriculum, and teaching pedagogy. This study provides valuable insights for the subsequent chapters of the research, concerning a deeper exploration and analysis of the internal assessment practices in the integrated curriculum context within the private school sector. This chapter also identifies research gaps. Finally, this chapter introduces the conceptual framework as a roadmap for understanding the concept of this paper.

#### **Thematic Review**

##### **Foundational Background of Integrated Curriculum**

The foundational roots of integrated curriculum began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, emerging to replace the fragmented, subject-based approach of so-called traditional education. The integrated curriculum was the concept of the Herbartian model of education, which was developed in the late 1800s. This approach highlights connecting disconnected subjects around central and common themes as the thematic integration of varying disciplinary knowledge and skills, emphasizing that knowledge should not be taught in isolation but as an interconnected whole (Petrosyan et al., 2005). This research was aligned as one of the earliest efforts to create a curriculum that connected different domains of learning rather than keeping them compartmentalized.

While talking about the development of this thematic-based curriculum, John Dewey's progressive education movement significantly advanced the idea of an integrated curriculum in the 1920s. Dewey argued that education should be student-

centered, experiential, and relevant to the social and personal interests of learners. Furthermore, he emphasized that learning should not only be concerned with acquiring facts but also connecting knowledge to real-life experiences, such as promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and active engagement (Petrosyan et al., 2005).

Likewise, during the mid-20th century, concerns about the increasing disintegration of knowledge led to the transformation of curiosity into theme-based teaching. Drake (1998) and other scholars developed various models of integrated curricula, including thematic, interdisciplinary, and project-based approaches. These approaches highlight the importance of making meaningful integration across multiple subjects, which encourages collaborative learning and engages students in authentic activities. In informal educational contexts, integrated learning is reflected in an experimental learning program. It supports outdoor education and community-based learning initiatives that emphasize rather than compartmentalized instruction.

In Nepal, the theme-based integrated curriculum is more recent, departing from the subject-based teaching with a priority on interdisciplinary nature. Before this approach, Nepal followed a subject-centered curriculum in the formal education system, focusing on rote learning and examination-focused practices. The educational policies, such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2019, showed a major shift by introducing an integrated curriculum for (Grade 1 to 3), with plans to extend it up to Grade 8 (CDC, 2019). This curriculum mainly highlights the holistic development skills and knowledge integration, including subjects such as Nepali, English, Mathematics and our surroundings and local studies. This also encouraged child-centered learning, activity-based teaching, and collaborative practices.

The concept of the integrated curriculum began beyond formal schools in educational settings in Nepal, such as community learning centers, cultural programs, and environmental education initiatives. It portrays the principles of integration by combining multiple learning domains and practical experiences (Magoma, 2016). These efforts indicated the growing recognition that holistic development and real-world problem-solving are essential components of education.

The concept and application of the integrated curriculum is not only connected to Western education, but the foundations can be traced much earlier within the Eastern education traditions, particularly in the Vedic and Gurukul systems. These earliest education structures focused on holistic learning, value-based education,

developing character and the interrelation of knowledge that is closely connected with present principles of integrated curriculum.

In addition, learning was not separated into various subjects in the Vedic education, but intertwined in an integrated, everyday life-related curriculum. For instance, language, philosophy, science, mathematics, ethics, arts, physical education and spirituality were taught as interrelated spheres which jointly shaped a balanced personal (Saha, 2025). This system considered education as an experience driven by values, and its objective was to foster overall development of several aspects, mainly spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical. These ideas apparently reflect the notion of integration, aiming to combine various competences into a meaningful and effective learning experience (Saha, 2025).

The students were encouraged in the Vedic curriculum to apply their classroom knowledge to real-life situations through hands-on activities and projects (Jumbuh-Prabowo, 2018). The Gurukul system, practised in ancient India and Nepal, fostered an integrated approach to education. The students lived with their guru and achieved education from the guru, and they also learned through daily activities such as dialogue, observation, and practical engagement with nature and society. Learning was not confined to the textbooks or rigid subject boundaries; instead, concepts were taught through integrated life experiences. For example, Mathematics was learned through household management, the knowledge of science was learned from environmental interaction, ethics through daily conduct, and language through recitation and reflection. Integration of various dimensions of experiences aimed to ensure holistic knowledge acquisition (Adhikari, 2019). Its focus remained on the development of the whole person by teaching moral, ethical, and spiritual values. Gurukul's integration of different domains of knowledge, skills and values into the curriculum can be linked to the contemporary social and emotional needs of 21st century education. Therefore, the ancient Gurukul education system can be viewed as the one that reflects the intent of the modern integrated curriculum. Its focus on whole-child development across cognitive, physical, moral and social aspects is consistent with the contemporary integrated curriculum framework.

Although Western literature claims the origin of the integrated curriculum in the 20th century, the ancient Eastern education system had, in fact, embraced the organically developed integrated framework. Therefore, the Gurukul education can be seen as an important historical foundation of the modern curriculum. It had laid the

seeds for student-centered, integrated education. Therefore, the modern integrated curriculum can be considered as a re-shaping and re-transformation of the ancient Eastern education system.

### **Conceptualizing Integrated Curriculum**

The concept of an integrated curriculum caught my attention as a comprehensive approach to learning that transcends traditional subject-based education and to integrated curriculum. Various avenues existed to explore this pedagogical philosophy. This approach is the simultaneous study of multiple subjects, a method advocated by Drake (1998). Moreover, integrating the curriculum serves as a demonstration of developmentally appropriate practices in education, which promotes active engagement through contextual projects connected to specific subject areas, children's learning (Magoma, 2016).

The integrated curriculum emphasizes interconnections of different educational domains (knowledge, skills and values) across disciplines (Jacobs, 1989). It advocates for transdisciplinary collaborations and connections, encouraging a shift from traditional subject-centric boundaries. This approach is intended to provide students with a more meaningful and relevant learning experience by connecting multiple concepts and ideas from different subject areas.

Therefore, the integrated curriculum is a pedagogical transformation of traditional, compartmentalized education (Beane, 1997; Jacobs, 2010). It encourages real-world experiences and is underpinned by a constructivist approach (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). The constructivist principles, such as active learning, critical thinking and authentic tasks, are the backbones of an integrated curriculum.

In the context of Nepal, the integrated curriculum is still in its premature stage of implementation. To prepare for the complex needs of 21st century education, the integrated curriculum is increasingly gaining interest both at the policy and practice level. Globally, the integrated curriculum has expanded its popularity by demystifying the subject-level instruction and enabling the opportunity to explore interdisciplinary education (Drake, 1998). This approach fostered a deeper understanding of the theme with emphasis on thematic and inter/multidisciplinary curriculum. The integrated curriculum looks for concepts and promotes the transfer of learning to real-world situations.

However, most of these discussions focused on the advantages and said little about the difficulties that schools encounter. For example, if teachers were not

confident in all subjects, integration may remain superficial rather than deep. Lhomi (2020) pointed out that countries like Nepal were still at the early stages of implementing this approach. Still, there was a limited explanation of why progress was slow or what support schools need. The above literature depicted the fact that celebrating the benefits of integration is not enough. What mattered was whether schools had the conditions to make it work in practice, something that was often missing in the literature.

### **Thematic and Interdisciplinary Curriculum**

Lipson (1993) found the importance of an integrated curriculum by stressing several key findings. He strongly advocated integration because it makes learning purposeful and encourages the students to explore rather than memorize. Firstly, an integrated curriculum resulted in a more comprehensive knowledge base. Secondly, diverse perspectives contribute to a more integrated knowledge base. Thirdly, an integrated curriculum enables faster information retrieval. Lipson strongly highlighted the importance of the integrated curriculum, believing that it provides a more comprehensive and profound learning experience for students, which helps cultivate positive thinking, enabling the learners to explore the curricula more effectively and meaningfully, as well as fostering deeper knowledge.

Drake (2012), Drake and Reid (2018) advocate three major approaches to designing the integrated curriculum:

#### ***Fusion Approach***

This method includes the integration of new concepts, such as technology, into the preexisting curriculum instead of considering them as different scopes. Drake believes the meaningfulness and the relevance of teaching technology increase when it is amalgamated in the main learning objectives instead of teaching them separately. It promotes the overall development of the child. However, Drake warns that the succession application of the fusion approach requires adequate teacher training, resources, and effective integration of technology into core curriculum goals. In Nepal, the internal assessment practices can be strengthened by using authentic assessment tools such as portfolios, performance tasks, and project-based evaluations that capture students' practical use of technology, problem-solving abilities, and soft skills within thematic units. This approach ensured that assessment reflected real learning experiences rather than only academic recall, addressing one of the key goals of the integrated curriculum: holistic child development (CDC, 2019)

### ***Interdisciplinary Approach***

This approach focuses on integrating a single theme, issue, or problem, emphasizing interdisciplinary concepts or skills. The interdisciplinary concepts and skills can be blended across multiple subjects. For example, the same theme “Keeping the School Clean” can be incorporated across Health and Physical, Science, Social Studies, and Moral Creative Art. Drake studied how the integrative (interdisciplinary) curriculum can enhance student engagement, broaden viewpoints and better prepare learners for complex, real-life situations. In Nepal, the integrated curriculum includes subjects like “Hamro SeroFero” consisting of different integrated knowledge, such as Health, Physical Education, Science, Social Studies, and Moral Creative Arts, helping students see how knowledge in one area relates to another (CDC, 2019). It promotes learners to develop critical thinking ability along with problem-solving skills instead of memorizing facts related to the specific subjects. Drake and Reid (2018) also claim that meaningful learning only occurs if teachers engage their students in real-world tasks and use assessments to record their learning growth. Hence, tasks such as project work, performances and portfolios are important. Overall, these findings showed that an interdisciplinary, theme-based approach did not just make learning more interesting, but also helped students develop the skills and understanding they needed to direct the complexities of the real world. My observation showed that students learn to question, explore, and connect the integrated concepts, which supports applying knowledge in the real, authentic context if a teacher assesses the students learned performance through the curriculum’s proposed assessment tools. This approach prepares the learners to adjust to real-world problem-solving rather than rote learning.

### ***Multidisciplinary Approach***

This approach maintains distinct disciplines while establishing deliberate connections between or among them. It aims to synthesize multiple subjects to give learners a cohesive and holistic experience. This approach supported the learners to understand the interconnected thematic knowledge, aligning with its application in the real-world context.

Likewise, the integrated curriculum in a multidisciplinary approach offers the knowledge and skills of English, Nepali and Mathematics. A study in Indonesia found that using a multidisciplinary, integrated project-based learning model significantly improved elementary students’ critical thinking and collaboration skills in the

experimental group compared to the control group. Similarly, another ethnographic study of the Limbu community in Nepal explored how mathematical practices in daily life (ethnomathematics) can be connected with cultural, social studies and language learning, showing that linking mathematics with other disciplines (culture, language). This research supported how mathematics was linked with the contextual understanding of culture and language. (Bhatta & Kandangwa, 2022).

Integrated curriculum embodies the thematic amalgamation of various subjects such as English, Nepali, Mathematics and local subjects using several activities in our contexts. It also emphasizes observing the local environment, recording data in both languages, and performing measurements aligning with the curriculum's goals of holistic, child-centered education. The students not only acquire subject-based integrated knowledge but also practice problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. However, research has warned that its effective application can be influenced by factors such as teachers' pedagogical capabilities, resource availability and community readiness (Kunwar & Acharya, 2024). Even though a multidisciplinary approach is theoretically promising, translating it into practice in Nepal requires careful preparedness.

### **Pedagogy in Integrated Curriculum**

The effective implementation of the integrated curriculum requires a pedagogical transformation, underpinned by a multi-disciplinary approach to education (CDC, 2019). This newly practiced curriculum focuses on engaging, thematic, and student-centered learning. Thematic and holistic education are the prerequisites of the pedagogy in an integrated curriculum.

The application of active teaching and learning methods helps to connect ideas from various subjects, encouraging pupils to ponder across disciplines. Teachers design new shared themes amalgamating different concepts from different subjects such as Nepali, English, Mathematics, Social Studies and many more. The active pedagogy based on integrated curriculum highlights real-life and project which is aligned with the concept of constructivist learning concepts, including the active learner's participation, critical thinking, and problem solving (Vygotsky, 1978).

According to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2019), the time allocated for each subject supported the teachers to apply plan-based teaching as envisioned by the CDC. For example, in the context of Nepal, Hamro Serofero allows the teachers to apply the ideas integrating with the science and environment, social

studies, health and physical education, and Creative connecting with meaningful activities. Assessment in this approach is not limited to written exams; it also includes projects, presentations, and group work to better evaluate students' learning. This evaluation method seeks to evaluate not just the retention of information, but also the application of knowledge to practical situations. Therefore, teachers' professional development is critical to adopt the integrated curriculum. They need to be equipped with relevant skills and pedagogical competence to deliver an interconnected learning experience (Ismail et al., 2022). Teachers should be prepared to transform their role from subject-based instruction to interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary instruction.

In a nutshell, integrated curriculum advocates holistic learning, which is aligned with the constructivist approach that facilitates learners for active learning, critical thinking, and practical application (Lhomi, 2020). Its goal is to prepare learners for 21st-century education by providing holistic and real-world learning.

From the discussion above, I came to understand that the theme-based teaching pedagogy and integrated model of assessment have been proposed from theoretical grounds, but not all stakeholders are on the same page for their application. For example, teachers are still using the traditional tools for both teaching and assessment. Ismail et al. (2022) conducted research concluding the facts that teacher training has become a critical requirement that can shift from traditional teaching to integration-oriented facilitation.

### **Conceptual Understanding of Assessment in Integrated Curriculum**

The assessment, as indicated in the Basic Level Curriculum (1-3), proposed by the Curriculum Development Center (CDC), is a continuous and ongoing process of evaluating student learning. Furthermore, CDC suggests continuous assessment for lower grades, focusing on formative and diagnostic evaluation instead of summative evaluation (CDC, 2019). Thus, internal assessment is a prominent instrument in order to assess students' progress and provide feedback, which fosters learning (Broadfoot, 2007). The major components of formative assessment embody continuous feedback and teaching and learning adjustments (Black & Wiliam, 1998). With the help of regular feedback on learners' achievements, teachers amend their teaching to make it more easily accessible and appropriate to their learners. Despite its merit, implementing formative assessment encounters numerous challenges in Nepal. The community preference for summative over formative assessment and the resource constraints in school impact its success (Ismail et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the

integrated curriculum in Nepal does not include a summative evaluation system up to grade three.

The integrated curriculum views the assessment as learning and for learning. This emphasizes the ongoing feedback process to improve student learning outcomes. The assessment within this curriculum is based on the letter grade. It embraces competency-based evaluation, as opposed to segmented test performance evaluation. This competency-based approach captures students' specific skills and competence throughout their learning journey, instead of solely relying on their performance in final tests (CDC, 2019). CDC's Basic Level Curriculum (1-3) outlines guidelines for carrying out internal assessments. It involves information about recommended assessment types, scoring procedure, and result interpretation for continuous teaching adjustments (CDC, 2019).

The conceptual understanding of internal assessment within the integrated curriculum was deeply rooted in the principles of formative and authentic assessment.

### **Authentic Assessment**

Authentic assessment evaluates how well students apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful, real-world situations (Wiggins, 1998). In the context of an integrated curriculum, authentic assessment highlighted students' performances to connect learning across multiple disciplines, which demonstrated competencies through tasks that mirror real-life challenges. This approach also emphasizes not only the final outcomes but also the *process* of learning as much as the *product* that promotes creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication (Adhikari, 22). Furthermore, Wiggins (1998) also advocates educative assessment in his book, emphasizing the genuinely designed assessment system different from traditional practices. This newly designed assessment is supposed to encompass real-world experiences demanding the real-life application of the students' learning. Furthermore, he states that the authentic assessment is transferable into various forms, such as project work, maintaining portfolios, along with the conventional evaluation practices. These new methods of evaluation provide opportunities for a wider comprehension of students' learning, assessing a wider range of skills and competencies. In the context of private schools, authentic assessment involves careful management of student portfolios by teachers, connecting the development of soft skills, assessment of both written and oral work, task completion, project execution, and classroom presentation. This framework also integrates dimensions such as

students' active participation in oral and written activities, project work, task completion, and presentations. Moreover, the amalgamation of peer evaluation, self-assessment, and productive interactions with parents provides a comprehensible outline apart from the traditional assessment practices. This also fostered a holistic understanding and application of knowledge.

Wiggins (1998) further said that achieving the objective of holistic development and preparing students for the 21st century required the integration of authentic assessment practices within the integrated curriculum. Authentic assessment is a crucial constituent of curriculum integration, offering student evaluation in real-world contexts. He further claims that the meaningful application of students' learning is required in this approach, condemning the conventional assessment practices designed to evaluate memorization or rote learning.

The integrated curriculum was introduced in grades 1-3, expecting the extension in upper grades in the future. It has integrated subjects such as Nepali, Mathematics, My Surroundings, and other local disciplines to offer a holistic learning experience to the learners (CDC, 2019). This resonates with the Eastern ancient education system, where whole-person development was the primary focus by nurturing head, heart and hands. Thus, assessment within an integrated curriculum challenges traditional paper-pencil tests and incorporates authentic and reflective learning.

However, research so far has identified numerous implementation challenges. In addition to inadequate teacher training and available resources, schools often experience resistance from parents and the local community due to their prevailing belief in traditional subject-centric assessment (Bhandari, 2015). In addition, research has also highlighted the theory-practice gap in regard to authentic assessment implementation (Adhikari, 2022). Teachers often depend on summative evaluations due to a lack of adequate training, clarity, and resources. Similarly, Koirala (2023) reported that headteachers and teachers showed limited understanding of the STEAM-based integrated curriculum and authentic assessment, even though the policy encourages contextual, performance-based evaluation to foster holistic learning. Both experiences and research work showed partial challenges remained, although strong theoretical intentions. Adhikari (2019) further believes that many teachers are incompetent about constructing authentic tasks, for example, rubrics, because of insufficient training. As a result, traditional methods of assessment remain prevalent

in most private institutions. In addition, Koirala (2023) highlights several other contributors, such as time constraints, large classroom sizes, and a lack of awareness about a new assessment system among parents, hindering the complete and effective implementation of authentic assessments.

Despite its challenges, previous research showed the positive influences of assessment practices on students' learning in Nepal (Ghimire, 2018), supported by the evidence that shows the impact of this curriculum on fostering real-life experiences, practical skills and collaboration in early years.

### **Scope of Authentic Assessment**

To assess the students' learning outcomes, the instructors employ diverse methods and tools to evaluate attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Madani, 2019). The assessment goes beyond mere recall of information, requiring the students to learn against established notions to carry out in a balanced manner. The educators intend to determine the relative position of each student in comparison to established benchmarks. This comprehensive approach encompassed not only cognitive aspects but also attitudinal components, ensuring a well-rounded evaluation of student learning. These methods include:

<b>Competency Type</b>	<b>Assessment Methods</b>
Attitude Competences.	Observation
	Self-assessment
	Peer evaluations
	Written reflection
Knowledge competence	Written tests
	Oral tests
	Assignments
Skills competence	Practical demonstrations

(CDC, 2019)

According to the CDC (2019), the scope of assessment under the integrated curriculum extends to the entire range of learning activities, including classroom participation, project work, creativity, discipline, communication, and moral behavior. The CDC encourages teachers to evaluate students through ongoing observation and

performance-based tasks. For example, child-friendly tools such as checklists, rubrics, portfolios, and self-assessment were recommended in the research work of Bhattarai and Pant (2021). Furthermore, the curriculum envisioned assessment as a collaborative practice. The students are required to be active participants rather than passive. Similarly, the learners are encouraged to reflect on their performance to work in groups and take part in self-assessment and peer-assessment, which also assists in developing responsibility for further learning (Adhikari, 2022).

### **Assessment Methods in Integrated Curriculum**

The integrated curriculum plays a crucial role in assessing the achievement level of the students and ensuring the effectiveness of the integrated curriculum (Barell, 2018). The formative assessment was the preferred method for assessing the learning rate of the integrated settings, with the challenges particularly in the context of private schools, because the external preference often favors summative tests.

In the international scenario, the importance of formative assessment within an integrated curriculum was widely acknowledged. Scholars like Black and Willam (1998) emphasized that thematic-based teaching practices, which involved continuous feedback and adjustments to teaching, contributed to student learning outcomes. Likewise, the practices in Finland were known for their successful education system through highlighting the formative assessment to foster a more holistic and student-centered approach (Sahlberg, 2011).

In the context of Nepal, in private schools, the practices in assessment within the integrated curriculum face the multiplied challenges for application due to the practical limitations and other factors of the school. The National Curriculum Framework (2019) highlighted the thematic integration of formative assessments as a fundamental component which also emphasizes the continuous feedback and deep understanding of student progress. Ismail et al. (2022) also found that the deeply rooted belief in the historical emphasis on exam-centric evaluation poses a substantial barrier to the widespread acceptance of formative assessments.

My experience also resonates with research findings. When teachers try to integrate diverse subjects and thematic approaches, they encounter additional challenges related to workload pressure while aligning with students' portfolio management practices for the application of formative assessments. The thematic integration requires significant efforts from teachers in the process of curriculum planning and execution (Bachman et al., 2010). This results in teachers' burnout and

additional stress in the effective implementation and documentation of ongoing assessments. Additionally, remote schools often encounter resource challenges. Poor access to technology prevents the incorporation of digital tools into the assessment process (Ismail et al., 2022).

### **Portfolio Management in Authentic Assessment**

The portfolio management practices, as envisioned by the curriculum through continued efforts of the teachers, served as a dynamic method for assessing the students' progress. This approach also required continuous assessment-based activities to keep the record of students' work, showcasing their achievements, projects, and reflections within the thematic framework. The students' portfolios presented a detailed and deep overview of a student's academic journey, emphasizing a holistic understanding of subjects and fostering connections between themes. This multifaceted assessment tool highlighted the oral and written activities, project work, task completion, and presentations, offering a transparent representation of a student's learning experiences. The portfolio management was a core part of assessment for learning as it allowed continuous and comprehensive evaluation, which supported formative assessment practices. This approach not only marked academic progress but also highlighted students' individual growth and learning or learned and unlearned status. Another research work claimed that critical thinking and problem-solving skills were essential for a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Chang, 2021).

### **Development of Soft Skills in Authentic Assessment**

The authentic assessment measured the student learning beyond a subject-based exam-centric approach, emphasizing the concurrent development of essential soft skills. Each thematically integrated lesson requires activation and participation of students in various activities, in order to inculcate five different soft skills. These soft skills, such as thinking skills, intrapersonal, interpersonal skills, information communication technology and multiliteracy skills, and citizenship skills encompassing thirty sub-skills like communication, collaboration, problem-solving and so on and so forth (CDC, 2019). The evaluation process includes peer observation, self-assessments, and meaningful interactions involving parents, offering a comprehensive approach of fostering not merely the discipline-based content but also the wider set of skills related to the real-world settings.

Numerous foreign studies have highlighted the benefits of soft skill development. For instance, a study conducted in Pakistan by Sahar et al. (2024) found

the value of soft skills for meaningful learning. However, the study emphasized the importance of sufficient knowledge and skills that teachers need to possess in order to successfully integrate the soft skills into the curricula. In a similar manner, a study in Vietnam has highlighted that the integration of soft skills is beneficial not merely in the motivation of the learners but in overall learning outcomes.

Furthermore, Moore et al. (2015) advocate the meaningful amalgamation of soft skills like self-control and collaboration, which supports the enhancement of experiential learning as well as the holistic development, equipping the learners with several attributes such as flexibility, good communication, professional development, and the notion of teamwork, skills considered essential in the 21st century. It prepares the learners with attributes such as flexibility, communication, professionalism and teamwork, which are the critical skills required for the 21st century workforce.

Findings from previous studies identify the need for integrating soft skills into the curriculum and assessment, instead of just viewing them as extra-curricular activities. For example, emotional intelligence is a key soft skill required for an individual's overall success and well-being. The ability to self-assess and regulate individual emotions enables people to work efficiently in social settings and manage challenges positively.

Despite the wide recognition of soft skills integration for holistic development, its implementation in Nepal is contestable. Studies like Sahar et al. (2024) highlighted that teachers' skills, learning, students' motivation, and experiential learning are crucial for soft skills development, which encouraged teachers to apply the soft skills integrated with a thematic basis. Additionally, the insufficient training of teachers about successful task designing, fostering soft skills development appears as one of the major issues in the context of Nepal (Sahar et al., 2024).

Similarly, large class and resource limitations also hinder the implementation of soft skill-based activities (such as group work and collaboration). Furthermore, parental pressures and preferences for exam-based scores for their children limit the opportunities for teaching other non-academic skills. Therefore, despite the merit of soft skill integration, the prevalent policy-practice gap cannot be ignored.

### **Empirical Studies**

From the lens of empirical review, various researchers have contributed and published their articles in different journals related to internal assessment practice in integrated curriculum. This study was based on the assessment of Nepalese private

schools. Thus, this limited literature could not capture the main essence of the integrated curriculum, specifically addressing the context of private schools in Nepal. However, existing research has contributed to study further research work that poses both the potential benefits and challenges associated with these practices.

Bhattarai and Thapa (2018) studied the role of self-assessment in a private school setting in Nepal, which highlighted its potential to promote student learning and engagement. However, the findings also warn that without ongoing teacher training and pedagogical competence, implementation of self-assessment practice remains fragile. Gurung et al.'s (2019) investigation supports performance-based assessments in private schools, which indicates their potential for enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving competencies. However, the development and implementation of performance-based assessments such as role-play, field trip and project work are time-consuming and labor-intensive (Gurung et al., 2019). This can be a challenge in private schools in Nepal. Therefore, research suggests the need for finding the viable assessment strategies that strike a balance between the intent of integrated curriculum and the resource constraints in private schools (Bhattarai & Thapa, 2018; Gurung et al., 2019).

However, the research work on my related topics was limited to Nepali private schools' internal studies. Ismail et al. (2022) conducted a case study in the United States to assess the students' learning performance-based assessments in integrated science and mathematics curricula. The findings of this research also indicated that these assessments could promote student learning and engagement but require sufficient teacher support for implementation. This encouraged the notion that teacher professional development was important for the authentic integration of internal assessment practices within the curriculum. In the United States, a study was carried out by Waugh and Gronlund (2013), who highlighted that teachers in an integrated curriculum used a variety of assessment methods such as observations, portfolios, and performance assessments. Similarly, a study by Chen and Wang (2019) suggested that self-assessment can effectively promote student learning in an integrated curriculum. Students who had the chance to self-assess their work were more involved in the learning process and took more responsibility for it.

On the other hand, a study by Adhikari (2022) also placed the challenges faced in assessment practices in community schools. Likewise, the study found that

assessment practices did not relate to the spirit of the curriculum, mainly due to the lack of proper orientation and training during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effects of authentic assessment on prospective teachers' perceptions of academic achievement and educational measurement were investigated. This study stressed the experimental group that engaged in authentic assignments and alternative assessment methods over a 14-week course focusing on assessment and evaluation. The outcome of the research revealed that authentic assessment significantly promoted academic achievement and positively influenced attitudes toward educational measurement among the prospective teachers. This suggested that authentic assessment can also be an essential tool for improving academic learning and also for the attitudes related to educational measurement among prospective teachers.

Moreover, Budhathoki (2023) highlighted the research on the perceptions and practices of teachers regarding integrated curriculum in private schools in Nepal, which resulted in the assessment showing that the assessment has shown the within integrated curriculum, but also pointed out the challenges such as teacher shortage, poor resources and parental preferences for summative assessment to its successful implementation. The study highlighted the need for regular teacher training and administrative support. However, the study did not consider the assessment practices as part of its research on the integrated curriculum. This remains a gap in the research.

In the same manner, Dahal (2022) highlighted the benefits of rubrics supporting honest and apparent feedback to student learning. Teachers also favored the usefulness of rubrics in the promotion of active participation and high motivation of the students. Although he also emphasizes the need for adequate teacher training as well as time management for the effective implementation of rubric.

In summary, several existing studies advocate that assessment practices of integrated curriculum can be effective in promoting student learning and engagement. However, implementation challenges have also been evident, especially in private schools in Nepal. Under-resourced environments, limited opportunities for teacher training and strong preferences of parents for summative exams prevent effective implementation. Future research needs to focus on solutions to these challenges at both policy and practice levels.

## **Policy Review**

Every research is based on certain policies which support or criticize its foundational principles. Below are the discussions of national and international policies relevant to my study.

### **National Policies**

Several national documents, such as NCF 2019, and School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016-2023, National Education Policy 2019, Basic Level Curriculum 2019 advocate the formative assessment system integrated in the integrated curriculum, mentioning continuous feedback and successful learning as the major components of curriculum integration.

Although some unclear ideas have been seen during the review of these policies, for example, the National Curriculum Framework for formative assessment does not provide targeted and specific guidelines for its implementation in private schools. This poses a risk for inconsistency in the interpretations and implementations of assessment practices across schools. Similarly, although SSDP (2016-2023) highlights the need for teachers' professional development, the policy is silent in outlining the practical strategies and resources for teachers (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2016). Therefore, only the abstract recommendations in policy can create challenges in practical implementations.

Furthermore, the role of stakeholders, such as parents and school management committees, lacks clarity in the internal assessment process. At the same time, the NCF 2019 states that it does not determine the extent of parental involvement which contributed to creating the potential misunderstandings and inconsistencies in practice (CDC, 2019). Moreover, Education for All: National Review Report 2001-2015 emphasizes the use of diverse assessment tools such as classroom assessment (formative, and summative assessment) and importance of continuous assessment and national and basic level (MoE, 2015). The additional assessments such as examinations of grade 5, 8 and 10, Early Grade Reading (EGRA), additional assessment tools such as project work, community engagement, student self-assessment and reflection, as well as techniques to evaluate student learning. Additionally, teacher training and professional development opportunities were highlighted, focusing on the importance of providing teachers with assessments. However, the unique challenges and opportunities of assessment were not addressed by the report of the assessment in the integrated curriculum.

The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-2015 proposes strategies for enhancing education quality in Nepal. It stresses the significance of assessment for learning and formative assessment in improving teaching and learning (MoE, 2009). Further, this also stressed that the assessment was prioritized through teacher training and professional development. However, neither the NEC nor the SSRP clearly addresses the specific challenges and opportunities posed by the assessment of private schools within the integrated curriculum.

The importance of internal assessment practices is emphasized, aligning with the objectives outlined in the integrated curriculum in the domain of international educational policy. This is exemplified by guidelines set forth by organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) International Bureau of Education (IBE). These guidelines highlight the need to use a variety of assessments to gain a complete understanding of students' learning (UNESCO, 2025). My understanding showed that the existing policies in Nepal highlight several important aspects of internal assessment in the integrated curriculum, neglecting the contextual factors in private schools, as given below.

- i. The role of teacher training and professional development is not clearly mentioned, although there are several agendas that are not sufficiently captured.
- i. The specific guidelines and criteria for assessment in private schools.
- ii. The stakeholders' roles, such as parents and the school management committee, are in the shadow.
- iii. The use of technology to support assessment practices.
- iv. No policies talk for the clear definition and differentiation between formative and summative assessment processes and practices, aligning assessment with the integrated curriculum's interdisciplinary nature.

Addressing these gaps in policies and practices is crucial for ensuring that internal assessment supports students' learning and development within the integrated curriculum in Nepal's private schools.

### **Theoretical Review**

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are grounded in four prominent educational theories: constructivist learning and instructional leadership theory.

#### **Instructional Leadership Theory**

Instructional leadership Theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) highlights the role of the principal in supporting the cooperative school environment for effective

teaching and learning. In this view, the principal not only functions as an administrator but also as a guide for instruction but as an instructional guide supports a culture of academic excellence and a culture of academic excellence (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The school leader helps to shape the curriculum, observes teaching practices and encourages a strong academic culture. Instructional leaders support the teachers through regular professional guidance. The teachers obtain ongoing professional support so that assessments are meaningful and aligned with curriculum goals based on students' learning evidence. (Blase & Blase, 2000). This theory closely connects with the focus of this study on internal assessment practices within the integrated curriculum in private schools. This theory stresses the This theory stresses the active involvement of principals in instructional planning and collaboration among teachers which directly connects to the intention of the researchers 'aims understanding how the principal understanding how principal and teachers work together in private schools to implement effective assessment strategies Furthermore, the theory focuses on providing the resources on providing and support for teachers, monitoring student progress, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement is crucial for ensuring that internal assessment practices are aligned with the goals of the integrated curriculum and are implemented effectively. This notion believes that leadership affects students' learning via teachers determining clear objectives, organizing instructional programs and instructions, along with grooming professional collaborations. This view resembles the notion of an integrated curriculum embodying continuous assessment, timely feedback and teamwork among teachers, becoming the center for overall development of the learners.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) studied that one of the most powerful factors influencing school effectiveness is instructional leadership, especially when principals engage directly in teaching and assessment discussion and teacher mentoring. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2008) found that leadership is a key factor in school effectiveness, particularly when principals are involved in teaching, assessment discussion, and teacher monitoring, revealing that leadership practices focused on improving instruction had a significantly greater impact on student achievement than those emphasizing administrative or managerial roles. The previous research also highlighted the need for instructional leadership. For instance, Shrestha (2025) investigated it in Morang, where his study revealed that schools led by active principals who regularly observed lessons and guided teachers to achieve better

academic performance. The principal, motivated by the spirit of instructional leadership, motivated lesson delivery and guided teachers to achieve better expected outcomes. Likewise, Adhikari (2022) reported that leadership behavior in the community and concluded that principals with practice of collaborating instructional supervision improved teachers' motivation and classroom assessment practices. However, both studies pointed out that instructional leadership was not linked with internal assessment and curriculum planning. This gap is directly addressed by the present study using the systematic integration of instructional leadership into internal assessment.

The instructional Leadership Theory provides a strong framework for this research because it links leadership practices with teaching quality, assessment of integrity practices and students' learning outcomes. The assessment practice is not an isolated or separately taught subject but an ongoing process that requires the teachers' collaboration, the principal's facilitation and strategic guidance in the integrated curriculum. The instructional leadership is supported through building teachers' assessment capacity and professional dialogue. Monitoring and aligning assessment tools with the goals of the curriculum. Likewise, this theory is supported by activities such as child-centered pedagogies, monitoring progress and ensuring consistent assessment practices, which can foster a reflective school culture valuing the evidence-based improvement

From a theoretical perspective, the study assumes that principals' instructional leadership directly influences how teachers understand, design and apply internal assessment. The collaborative and developmental focus of instructional leadership complements the constructivist learning principles that underpin the integrated curriculum, creating a strong conceptual bridge between leadership, teaching, and assessment.

Thus, this theory supports the qualitative case-study design of your research, allowing exploration of lived experiences and interactions among principals and teachers in real school contexts.

### **Constructivist Learning Theory**

Constructivist Learning Theory, proposed by Vygotsky (1978), explains that knowledge is actively constructed with the learners' experiences and interaction with their surroundings, which neglects passively receiving and storing information. The theory believed that knowledge is created through social interaction as well as

collaboration and engagement with the environment (Vygotsky, 1978). According to this theory, understanding grows when learners work with teachers and peers, A central idea of this theory is the Zone of proximal Development (ZPD) referring to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance from a teacher of a more capable (Vygotsky, 1978) Another related idea is scaffolding which involves providing temporary support to learners so they can complete tasks beyond their current level. This support is gradually reduced as learners become more confident and capable. The importance of language, dialogue and cultural context in learning is also stressed by social constructivists who inherently assert cognitive growth (Wertsch, 1991). Learning is seen as a social process, where thinking develops through communication and shared experiences. Many studies have shown that collaborative, project-based and theme-based learning approaches help learners develop critical thinking, problem solving and soft skills. Another research also showed that scaffolding in integrated and child-centered curricula helps learners connect and apply knowledge across different subject areas, which improves the learner's ability to transfer the knowledge within multiple subjects (Palincsar, 1998). However, in the Nepalese context, there is no prior research explicitly examining the application of social constructivism in internal assessment practices within integrated curriculum (Kunwar & Acharya, 2024). This particular idea supports the notion of the integrated curriculum. Although the concepts such as ZPD, scaffolding and peer interaction have been studied in Nepali language teaching (Karki & Karki, 2024) and in general assessment perspectives, their use in internal assessment within the integrated curriculum at the primary level remains underexplored. Thus, this theory strongly aligns with the principles of the integrated curriculum. It prioritizes active learning, inquiry-based projects and regular assessment. In the same manner, constructivism promotes these notions, motivating students in exploration, interrogating and generating meaning from their experiences. In internal assessment, this approach values understanding how the students construct knowledge rather than measuring final outcomes. Thus, this promotes a profound knowledge of ideas and facilitates the application of knowledge in real-world settings. It also highlights the importance of timely feedback to support learning progress.

By applying Vygotsky's constructivist theory to assessment practices in private schools in Morang district, this study aims to address the existing research gaps in contributing both theoretical insights and practical understanding of

assessment practices. It highlighted the need for immediate feedback to promote learning performance. While Vygotskian socio-cultural constructs such as the Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding and peer interaction have been investigated in Nepali language teaching (Karki & Karki, 2024). There is limited research applying these concepts explicitly to internal assessment within an integrated curriculum for primary grades in Nepal.

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of internal assessment practices of integrated curriculum in Nepal, which covers the historical development of integrated curriculum globally, highlighting the shift from traditional subject-based approaches to a more holistic and interconnected learning experience. This theory also stressed the importance of formative-based authentic assessment. In this context, aligning with the concept of constructivist learning theory as envisioned by CDC. At the same time, the review highlights the benefits of internal assessment, which increases the student's engagement, improves critical thinking and better learning outcomes.

The discussion is supported by national policy documents such as the NCF (2019), the SSDP (2016-2023), and the SSRP (2009-2015). Then, some international policy documents, including UNESCO guidelines on assessment are also included. In addition, empirical studies from Nepal and other contexts provide practical insights into how assessment is implemented and experienced. By using a qualitative case-study design, the social interactions, teacher scaffolding, peer support, classroom discourse and assessment practices within a school can be explored, which map directly onto ZPD, more knowledgeable other (MKO), scaffolding, and social construction of knowledge, which are the central constructs of Vygotsky.

In the context of Nepal's integrated curriculum, internal assessment is expected to go beyond measuring rote learning; it should capture how learners progress through guided tasks that foster holistic development. When teachers assess students through observations, projects, portfolios, and peer interactions, they are, in essence, assessing learning that takes place within each child's ZPD. For example, a teacher supporting a student during a group project on "*Hamro Serofero*" observes not only what the child already knows about the local environment but also how they learn collaboratively to connect ideas from science, social studies, health, and language. This aligns with Vygotsky's belief that learning is a socially mediated process where children internalize knowledge through meaningful interaction

(Wertsch, 1991). I believe that Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the ZPD provides me with a valuable theoretical lens for understanding how children learn, and teachers can design meaningful assessment practices.

### **Research Gap**

Qualitative research is important for exploring the real context, challenges and possibilities of internal assessment practices within the integrated curriculum in private schools. Based on thematic, empirical, policy and theoretical review, several research gaps have been identified in the study of internal assessment practices of integrated curriculum in private schools in Nepal because they primarily focus on public schools, neglecting the unique context of private schools. This gap leaves unanswered questions about the specific challenges and opportunities faced by private schools in implementing internal assessment within the integrated curriculum. A notable gap in current research regarding the viewpoints of educators and administrators concerning internal and evaluation techniques. The previous research did not cover the perspectives of the core stakeholders (principals and teachers) in similar research. So, it is required to see the perspective and practices of them in schools to view and formulate the assessment strategies.

Additionally, the research is required to see how the theoretical framework of this theory supported and translated the theory into practices to minimize the gaps through the assessment, which hindered the consistent level of practices. The research does not adequately address the contextual factors which are unique to private schools, such as their educational philosophies, resource allocation and class sizes. This can influence the implementation and outcomes of this assessment method, while policies like the NCF (2019) and SSDP (2016-2023) acknowledge the importance of internal assessment, lacking specific guidelines and standards for private schools. This ambiguity can also lead to inconsistent practices across the school, class and teachers, also hindering the authentic practices of authentic assessment.

However, technological integration supporting assessment practices has not been investigated enough in empirical studies, where the exploration of possible usage of digital platforms could be a boon for the future. Developing and evaluating effective assessment methods for effective assessment methods for soft skills is crucial for ensuring the holistic development of students. The unexplored areas of portfolio management, soft skills application, school principals, and teachers' collaboration and assessment strategy in the specific context of private schools for

grades 1 to 3 will be important points of this research to provide valuable insights and bring implications. This research focused on the needs and challenges of the private education sector in Nepal. Addressing these gaps is essential for strengthening internal assessment practices and ensuring the holistic development of students. This research aims to contribute practical and context-specific insights that can support effective assessment practices in Nepal's private education. Finally, my research work aims to explore these under-researched areas to develop evidence-based recommendations for improving assessment practices and promoting the students' learning outcomes.

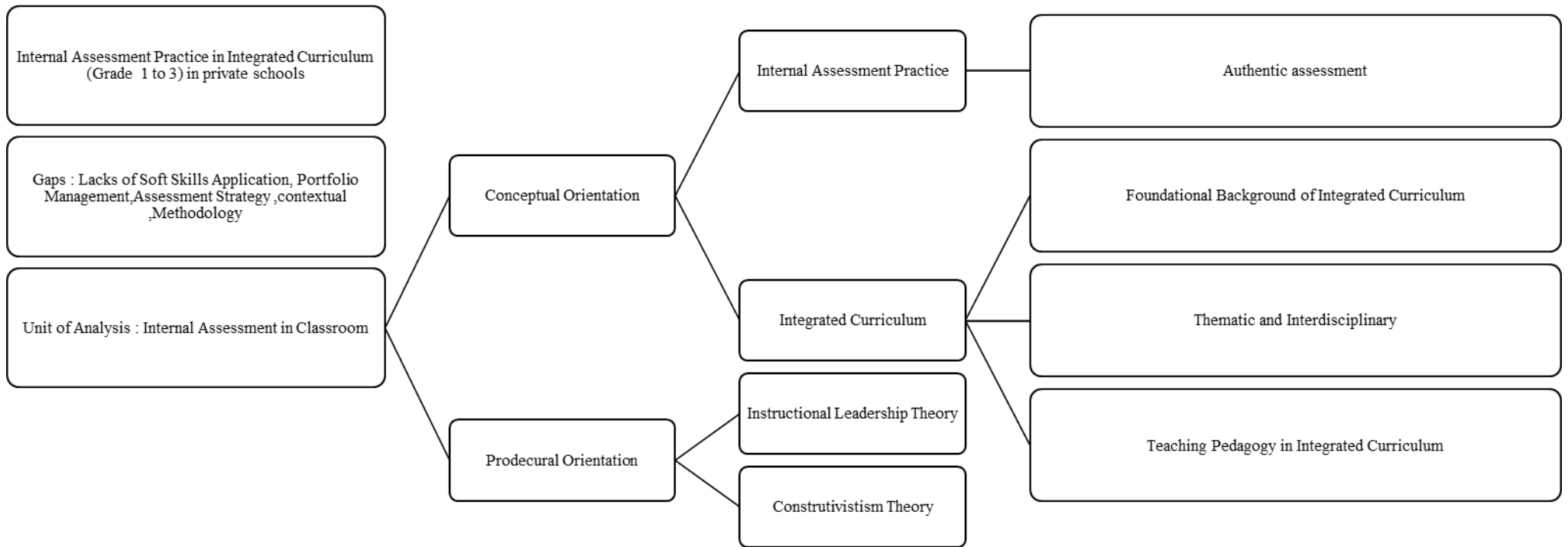
### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed all the existing information about how basic level school children (Grade 1 -3 in Nepal's private schools). This curriculum assumes that the same teaching themes are integrated, connecting with different subject areas rather than focusing on separate subjects. The review of the literature chapters systematically explores the existing research on internal assessment within the integrated curriculum framework for Grades 1-3 in private schools in Nepal, which covers thematic, empirical, theoretical and policy dimensions. The thematic review traced the IC's global, local and Eastern roots (Vedic/Gurukul), conceptualized it as a constructivist, interdisciplinary approach, and detailed its pedagogical shift toward active, theme-based learning and authentic assessment. Empirically, while IC and IA are seen as beneficial for holistic development, the challenge of misalignment between policy and practice reverting to summative methods in private schools due to teacher capacity, workload, and parental pressure was consistently highlighted. Policy analysis revealed national emphasis on formative, competency-based IA but a lack of specific guidelines for private schools. Theoretically, the research is grounded in Instructional Leadership Theory, emphasizing the principal's role in instructional quality and Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky's ZPD, supporting active, social, and authentic learning). The chapter concluded by identifying a crucial research gap: the lack of qualitative investigation into the practical implementation, stakeholder perceptions, and specific contextual factors (like portfolio management, soft-skill assessment, and collaboration) within the unique setting of Nepal's private schools.

### Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework*



## CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology, including the nature of the research, research design, sources of information, methods and instruments, strategies for minimizing errors, and trustworthiness of the information. The study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm, reflecting a commitment to understanding the subjective experiences and meanings associated with these practices. This chapter unfolds with an exploration of the philosophical underpinnings, elucidating the ontological, epistemological and axiological that guide the research. I have discussed my research paradigm and research design. I have also mentioned the population and sample of the study, the data collection process, tools and techniques, and the data analysis process. Finally, I have discussed the study's quality standards and ethical considerations.

### **My Research Paradigm: Interpretivism**

As a researcher following the interpretive approach, I wanted to dig into the subjective experiences and interpretations of teachers and principals, with regard to the internal assessment practices within the integrated curriculum. This paradigm aligned with the fundamental principles of interpretivism, which posited that reality was socially constructed and that individuals' interpretations and meanings are central to understanding phenomena (Erickson, 1986). As I took opinions or personalized thoughts of the participants to collect data, and all the participants may not have the same socio-cultural background, as a consequence, they differed in their perspectives too. Every individual possesses unique perspectives, views, backgrounds, and practices. An exploration of teachers' perspectives and practices on internal assessment could best be achieved by examining their world through their eyes. The interpretive paradigm encompasses the concept of meaning-making through the individual worldviews of teachers. A paradigm, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), consisted of ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological elements. Similarly, Willis (2007) described a research paradigm as "a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field" (p.8). A paradigm is significant as

it encompasses norms, values, and beliefs that a researcher should obey during their research journey. Interpretivism, as my chosen research paradigm, recognizes that each individual has their own unique views and perceptions of the world and world beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In my study, I employed an interpretive research paradigm to examine the internal assessment practices in private schools in Morang, Nepal. This approach was suitable for my research because it allowed me to discuss and ask open-ended questions to participants from basic levels 1 to 3. As there was no scientifically approved data from inside the human mind, an interpretive approach enabled me to gather subjective and constructive insights from the participants.

According to Creswell (2013), the interpretive paradigm acknowledges that the participants' backgrounds and experiences can influence their responses. Therefore, I acknowledged that the perspectives, beliefs, and thoughts of the participants may vary, and the nature of reality will be subjective or constructive. Lincoln & Guba (1985) believed that his approach was aligned with the interpretive paradigm's emphasis on multiple perspectives and the importance of context in understanding social phenomena.

As a researcher, I respected the multiple views and perspectives of the participants as guided by my research paradigm. Then I also recognized that there was no single "truth" about internal assessment practices. The multiple interpretations of school A and school B 's principals and teachers were shaped by individual experiences, beliefs, and values. These sorts of diversity in perspective contributed to preparing the rich insights which can inform the development of more effective and contextually relevant assessment practices in Morang's private schools.

### **Philosophical Foundation of Research**

In this section, I uncovered my ontological stance on my research. Responses from different respondents were collected from different principals and teachers on my topic. Epistemological and axiological aspects were also incorporated in this section as per its value for the philosophical standpoint.

#### **Ontological Belief**

This philosophical instance of this study aligned with interpretivism, which posited that reality was constructed and based on subjective interpretation,

acknowledging a diverse range of internal assessment practices within private schools in Morang. My key interest in ontology was based on respecting the diverse practices and individual differences of each and every teacher and the principals. The reasons why and how the assessment practices also may be because of the level of teachers' understanding, the unique style of teachers and the leadership style of principals within the school climate and other distinctive qualities of two different schools. Therefore, my ontological orientation was inductive /Multiple reality, recognizing the varied perspectives and practices of teachers and principals. There were variations in both principals' and teachers' perspectives from one school to another and among individual teachers within the same school. It was difficult to find the single truth related to practices on the implementation of internal assessment practices in the curriculum. I approached this study with the understanding that there is no single, objective "truth" about internal assessment practices within integrated curriculum (Crotty, 1998). In such a subjective phenomenon, teachers thought, felt and viewed the assessment role differently, to bring the variation in application also. Hence, my ontological belief was based on various and unique perspectives on my research topics, which is aligned with the past research. Ontology is the assumptions we make about the kind and nature of reality and what exists.

In the context of my research, I adopted an ontological stance that prioritized the exploration of various realities and experiences of principals and teachers within two different schools. Recent research in Nepal supports the multiplicity of realities in the domain of assessment. For example, Dhungel (2024) studied the teachers in Kathmandu valley perceived and implemented continuous assessment in diverse ways depending on their training where school policy leadership supported and personal beliefs, stressing that assessment practices were inherently subjective and context dependent This reinforces my belief that internal assessment in the integrated curriculum which cannot be captured through a single unified perspective, Rather it unfolds differently across individuals and schools. I believed that there were individual differences, and hence, different people may have different perceptions. So, a single truth from a variety of minds was almost impossible. Rather it could be considered that truth is something created or constructed differently in a different context. Thus, in my research, I interacted with all

six participants, thereby exploring multiple realities of assessment practices. Then, my research intended to explore and understand these diverse perspectives and interpretations, recognizing the subjective and context-dependent nature of assessment practices. Then, International literature similarly supported the interpretive view.

Yan and Brown (2021) conducted the research work on teachers' assessment literacy in Hong Kong primary schools, admitting that teachers' assessment decisions were shaped by their personal interpretation, belief, school culture and leadership expectation. This demonstrated that assessment practices were constructed through individual meaning-making rather than standardized objectivity.

Thus, in my research, my ontological stance highlighted that the principals and teachers at school A and B adopted the various assessment practices shaped by their background, interpretations and experiences within their specific school environment.

### **Epistemological Perspective**

My research adopted a constructivist epistemology, recognizing that knowledge is not discovered but co-created through interaction and interpretation, as believed by Lincoln & Guba (1985). I actively engaged with my participants through interviews, observations, and document analysis, recognizing that both my own interpretations and the voices of both principals and teachers contributed to the knowledge generated. Epistemologically, the study adopted a subjective approach, asserting that knowledge is actively constructed through interpretation. In order to do this, I stayed in touch with the principals and teachers, visited the field, and worked together with them, as supported by Creswell (2007). In my research, I explored and interpreted teachers' and principals' experiences through interviews in their school setting. I believed in the assumption that knowledge can be constructed by critiquing oneself and others. Considering this notion, during the interaction with the teachers, I also communicated with them regarding my internal assessment practice in their school through dialogue and collected their views and feelings. I wanted to contribute the new knowledge through my participants' findings based on their own practices because I believed that knowledge was socially co-constructed, prioritizing the multiple practices of each teacher and principal's multiple practices on assessment variation. The recent research also supported this constructivist orientation. In the Nepalese context, Shrestha (2025) found that teachers made sense of

assessment practices through sense of assessment practices through conversation reflections and presented experiences within their environment of school A and B. My research was socially constructed because the individual perspectives were accepted.

Dhungel (2024) also found that teachers constructed the meaning and assessment practices through informal conversation and shared classroom experiences. In my research, the practices of assessment in integrated curriculum were also shaped, highlighting their values and ideas. These practices demonstrated knowledge socially rather than being imposed externally.

In this study, I highlighted the ideas that teachers and principals held different understandings based on their background, training, and school culture. By listening deeply to their voices, I allowed these multiple viewpoints of teachers on how the students' learning feedback and re-assessment were assessed to produce the grade of the students. In this way, the study honored the constructivist belief that knowledge was co-created, dynamic, and rooted in the experience of my participants.

### **Axiological Aspect**

Acknowledging the value-laden nature of research, the axiological perspective recognizes the presence of values in the research process. Since my research adopted an interpretive paradigm, I believe that the research is value laden. My personal beliefs, sentiments, and feelings were also embedded in the discourse, prompting an open discussion of my values with participants, which could influence their own values. I openly acknowledged the inherent value-laden nature of research recognizing the same nature in the information gathered from the field. The interpretive paradigm that I have chosen serves as the guiding framework, emphasizing a holistic understanding of the diverse internal assessment practices within the integrated curriculum.

My Axiology refers to the study of the value of all my participants. As a researcher, I explored my values and beliefs along with the values and beliefs of principals and teachers, which helped me to explain what, why and how values are constructed and followed in human life. In my experience, my participants were also guided by the values they applied because People try their best to give meaning based on their values. As individuals naturally construct meaning based on their values. Then I also found that teachers' and principals' assessment practices were widely rooted in their

professional ethics, school culture, and personal philosophies of teaching. This aligned with recent findings in Nepal, which were supported by Shrestha (2025), that teachers' values, emotions, and personal histories strongly shaped the way they implemented assessment and interacted with learners, illustrating that assessment practices were inherently value embedded. The findings of this research also reinforced that research involving the principals and teachers on assessment practices and experiences cannot be value-free.

Hence, the role of value was crucial in the meaning-making process in my research. Regarding interpreting the internal assessment practice in grades one to three, there was the possibility of influence on the value of participants as well as the researcher. It indicated that it is difficult to conduct value-free research; rather, it includes the value of each individual. In this context, the value of me and my research participants might influence their expression, ideas and views while participating in practice and interaction. Thus, the axiology of my research was to explore the emotions, feelings and opinions of my teachers from both schools in interviews on the implementation of internal assessment. The interpretive paradigm guided this study toward a holistic understanding of the diverse internal assessment practices within the integrated curriculum and emphasized that meaning emerges through interactions shaped by the values of principals and teachers.

### **My research Design: Qualitative Case Study**

As an interpretivist researcher, my principal aim is to gain insight into the assessment practices used in schools A and B in Morang. I was highly interested in understanding the teachers' and principals' subjective experiences, beliefs, and perspectives within their respective private school context. I perceived my research as the requirement of investigating and revealing the multifaceted nature of reality, where I can get the ground reality of private schools. The research would be more authentic and valid if we studied from an explorative point of view. For this, the qualitative case study would be contextual, which captured the unfound reality of assessment practices based on the private schools, because no research captured the assessment guidelines: How and in what ways the assessment practices were exercised.

My decision to employ qualitative case study methodology as a primary method of inquiry was largely driven by its essential features. Through an in-depth examination and rigorous analysis of single case studies, we can gain crucial understandings regarding the mechanisms and underlying rationale behind occurrences. Accordingly, my research questions researched into the alignment of internal assessment practices with case studies, employing descriptive approaches aligning with Yin (2018) who wrote that “case studies can answer descriptive questions (what happened), and the underlying question in case studies is what are the characteristics of this particular entity, phenomenon, person, or setting?”

A qualitative case study design was selected for this research because the study seeks to explore the existing internal assessment practices and examine the ways in which ways principals and teachers implement authentic assessment within the integrated curriculum in(Grades 1–3) and supported that Case study research is appropriate when the purpose is to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). Since internal assessment practices were shaped by school culture, leadership behaviors, teacher beliefs, and policy implementation, they required an in-depth, context-bound exploration. The recent study also presented that case studies are effective for understanding authentic assessment practices in early grades and for examining leadership roles in assessment implementation in Nepal (Poudel, 2024). Furthermore, case study design enables the use of multiple data sources, interviews, observations, and document analysis, allowing for a holistic understanding of assessment practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, a qualitative case study provided the most suitable methodological framework for exploring the complex, interactional, and practice-based nature of internal assessment in private schools of Morang.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the assessment practices, I employed a descriptive case study design, favoring the idea that descriptive case studies enable researchers to present rich, thick descriptions of actual practices, strategies, challenges, and stakeholders’ roles without attempting to manipulate variables or test causal relationships. This approach aligns directly with the research questions, which seek to understand “*how internal assessment is conducted*” and “*in what ways principals*

*and teachers play their roles in implementing assessment* “This approach allowed me to investigate deeply into each case and explore the rich and complex realities of my respondents (Flick, 2018). The research theme I have selected is relevant to our educational context and can be effectively studied through descriptive cases within a school setting (Creswell, 2013). A case study involves gathering in-depth information and conducting a thorough analysis of each case. Similarly, Yin (2014) informs that a case study might be better approached using a how or what research question, which is likely to be more suitable.

I believed that descriptive case study design was particularly well-suited for research on internal assessment practices in integrated curriculum across private schools. Yin (2018) conducted research, which allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon through examining the various cases, each representing a unique context with its own set of characteristics and challenges.

In my study, I have identified the patterns and variations in assessment practices. My research approach also followed the principles of descriptive case studies, which served as the guiding framework for my investigation. Yin (2014) supported that “What” of the phenomenon is captured through the descriptive aspect, including the comprehensive portrayal of recent internal assessment practices. This variation within both schools may be because of factors such as the school's educational philosophy, resource constraints, teacher beliefs, parental expectations, school's leadership planning and management, etc.

My research showed that I applied the multi-faceted data collection approach to achieve the purpose of my research to find the answer to two research questions. For example, interviews with teachers and principals, classroom observation and students' workbooks analysis allowed me to gain insights into their personal experiences, beliefs, and interpretations of internal assessment. From interviews, I engaged with teachers and principals, looking to understand their belief, attitudes and experiences related to assessment within the integrated curriculum framework within the integrated curriculum framework. I have used open-ended questions and encouraged participants to share their perspectives and experiences freely. I intended to disclose the underlying meaning and multiple interpretations associated with these practices. So, my research case was the

single case on internal assessment connecting with the ideas that a case study was the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p. 11). Supporting my research gaps with the ideas of Dhungel (2024), a case-study approach allows me to fill this gap by producing contextually grounded research.

Furthermore, I conducted classroom observations to gain first-hand insights into how internal assessment is enacted in real-world settings. I captured the distinction and complexities of the assessment practices through the observation of teachers’ interaction with the students, their assessment tools and feedback mechanisms used in the classroom, which were not fully articulated in interviews.

Besides this interview, the NCF, assessment policies, and student work samples were also analyzed to complement my research work. Likewise, a descriptive case study allowed me to present these practices in detail, showing how assessment was actually implemented rather than how it ought to happen.

Regarding my research, the descriptive case study would focus on describing the different assessment methods used in two schools. I generated rich and meaningful insights into the internal assessment practices in the integrated curriculum in the context of private schools in Morang. These insights informed the development of more effective and contextually relevant assessment practices that support student learning and development.

### **Study Site and Participants**

As the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) (2019) has declared Basic Level Education to cover grades 1 to 8, my research specifically focused on grades 1 to 3 and the teachers of these levels only. To conduct my research, I visited private schools in Morang, targeting the surrounding subject teachers as participants. They were purposively selected based on the location and feasibility. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines participants as the group or individuals from whom researchers gather insights to address their research questions. Fieldwork is crucial as it allows researchers to immerse themselves in the actual context, become familiar with participants, and gather in-depth information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Flick (2018), cases in qualitative research should be selected for their relevance to the

research issues, rather than their representativeness of the population. For my research topic related to schools, I consulted teachers and head teachers. Establishing a good rapport with all participants was essential for data collection.

### **Data Collection**

Under the methods and tools for information generation, I collected the primary data by using methods such as observation, interviews, and document review in my study research. In the data collection process, all four techniques were applied while collecting and generating information from my research participants. Data collection involves the gathering of information from various sources, such as people, documents, observations, or measurements, to address the research objective” (Neuman, 2014). It refers to the systematic way of gathering information or insight to address the aims or research questions that researchers have proposed. For this particular study, I gained all the needed information from the subject teachers and principals who have already experienced assessment practice in private schools in Morang.

### **Study Tool Preparation**

Qualitative research utilizes methods as its "study tools" to gather rich data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In my research, I made an effort to dig into participants' experiences and perspectives through the use of interviews, observation, and document analysis as instruments for gathering data from school A and school B. I prepared the interview guiding questions to capture the main essence of my research to achieve authentic outcomes. Through the use of interview guiding questions, I attempted to elicit insightful responses from participants.

Morse et al. (2008) explains that "study tools" are methods used to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research. Patton (2015) highlights that using predetermined questions in qualitative research is an effective way to keep accurate records of the data collected. Therefore, I used this strategy because it was a trustworthy method for preparing study tools in qualitative research, making the process more authentic and straightforward.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

My research is to explore the practices of teachers and principals in the assessment of the integrated curriculum. So, I had to go through the experienced

participants with the list of interview guideline questions, which were open-ended in nature. The interview refers to the individual or group of people from whom we can have a realistic date on the spot, as stated by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Hence, possible responses would be as practical and flexible as possible so that the participants do not hesitate or experience any complication in responding. The teachers can conveniently answer the questions as per the need of my answer, and I can draw the conclusion with the interpretation and explanation of the participants. It is often stated that a set of questions should be more liberal and flexible in nature, which plays a vital role in unfolding the realities from the participants in research. Open-ended questions create a supportive environment for participants to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas freely, without the limitations imposed by predetermined response options (Patton, 2015). Besides the interviews, I also conducted classroom observations and document analysis.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedure**

According to Creswell (2007), interpretivist researchers try to understand and illustrate issues based on how participants make meanings of their experiences. While analyzing the data from my study on internal assessment practices in a private school's integrated curriculum, careful and systemic analysis was essential. I conducted this process in the following steps.

#### **Organizing and Transcribing**

Firstly, I organized all the received information employing the guidelines suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which includes transcribing interview recordings, arranging field notes, observation notes, and documents in a comprehensive order and format.

#### **Initial Coding**

The next step was coding the data using thematic analysis. The generated codes helped me to identify major themes, key ideas, and repeated patterns connected to internal assessment (Brawn & Clarke, 2006). In this step, I read all the transcriptions carefully and noted down the significant and recurring ideas regarding internal assessment.

### **Refining the Codes**

Furthermore, with the numerous revisions of initially generated codes, many of them were combined as they represent similar patterns, while some of them were renamed, narrowed down as well and integrated as per their nature (Saldana, 2016). I ensured they clearly represented the data and maintained consistency.

### **Thematic Development**

After I organized the refined codes, I began grouping them into broader themes that represent significant patterns and insights within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes might contain how teachers designed assessments and how different practices influenced learning.

### **Quality Standards**

In my research on internal assessments within a private school's integrated curriculum, ensuring the trustworthiness of my findings was the key purpose. The main purpose of quality standards was to judge the quality of disciplined inquiry and present the criteria for trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, to keep quality standards in my research, I adopted several methodological standards through the research process: Credibility was strengthened through multiple tools: interviews with principals and teachers, classroom observation and analysis of students' workbooks, portfolios and internal assessment records in both school A and school B over the multiple visits. I also practiced triangulation of data by analyzing schools' documents, such as students' portfolios, students' workbooks, and a sample of students' exam copies. For example, when teachers shared how they used rubrics and continuous feedback. I compared their statements with classroom observation notes and checked the students' notebooks to see whether such feedback was documented. Likewise, confirmability was reinforced through ongoing reflexive writing. Being principal, I was conscious that my professional background could influence interpretation. To reduce this risk, I recorded my assumptions and reactions after each school visit and interview, which would help me return to the data with fairness and self-awareness. Transferability was also applied in practice by presenting each school's context. I also described the classroom environment, teacher training background, types of assessment tools used, parental expectations and the way the integrated curriculum was implemented in daily

learning. I also included examples from students' copies, such as how feedback, project work and the types of assessment tools were used to assess the students' learning. This allowed me to determine whether the findings could relate to other private schools in Nepal with similar structural and cultural settings. Therefore, I provided enough contextual depth for the readers. Authenticity was maintained by representing the diversity of principal and teachers' voices presented in the school A and B. Some teachers confidently used portfolios and rubrics, while others relied heavily on written tests. I also conducted member checking by sharing preliminary interpretations with teachers and principals to confirm that findings reflected their experiences and perspectives accurately. To ensure dependability, I maintained an audit trail that included field notes, dated journal entries, interview transcripts and coding decisions. Each modification in the data collection process was recorded, which made the research procedure traceable and transparent.

Furthermore, I maintained a critical reflexivity journal as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to acknowledge my own assumptions and how they might influence my research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In ethical issues, I adopted research guidelines recommended by the university. I maintained transparency in the expression of values and personal concerns. In the study, participants were provided with informed consent forms and privacy information. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This informed consent clearly explained the purpose of the research, data collection methods, and participants' rights. In addition, I used unbiased language or words against gender, age, or disability in writing the reports.

While conducting the research, it is important to establish self-restraint about what to do and not to do. Creswell (2007) states, "the research should protect the participant's individual identities in qualitative research. So, it guarantees them that any of their data will not be revealed" (p. 72). My style of presentation did not aim to harm and discriminate against anyone irrespective of gender, caste, creed and class in the research purpose. Similarly, I was also aware of respect for the research sites and the people to minimize the disturbance of the physical and social setting of the research site

(Creswell, 2009). I kept all the information and collected documents very securely and have not disclosed the real identity of the participants and the research site. Last but not least, KUSOED's ethical guidelines were also followed strictly.

### **Chapter Essence**

In this chapter, I explained the methodology where the subjective experiences of the principals and teachers were highlighted regarding internal assessment practices in the integrated curriculum. My research study was situated in an interpretive paradigm. In my study, reality was shaped through interaction, and the individual may hold different viewpoints. I used the qualitative case study as my research design. My research design employed a qualitative and descriptive single case study approach to comprehensively explore the distinct contexts of two A-graded private schools situated in Morang.

For the data collection, I conducted interviews, observed the classrooms, and analyzed the students' workbooks. I applied data collection tools to ensure consistency based on the interview guidelines, observation notes and workbook analysis. I analyzed the data through coding and thematic development, making sure of credibility through member checking. To maintain quality standards, I practiced credibility, confirmability, and transferability. My Ethical considerations, including informed consent, university guidelines, confidentiality, and anonymity, were paramount.

## CHAPTER IV

### EXISTING SITUATION OF INTERNAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

This chapter deals with the first research question of my research topic. I captured the four sections here, such as school profile, stakeholders' understanding, thematic case for assessment practices within inter-schools. The experiences gathered from my participants present their school's practices relating to assessment through their respective voices, where they expressed their understanding, practices and challenges in its effective implementation. In this Chapter, I unfolded the initiatives regarding the implementation of internal assessment in sampled schools with my research.

#### **Profile of School A**

School A is recognized as a prominent Graded 'A' at the municipal level among the private schools located in the urban setting in one of the Municipalities of Morang. With its long history, it signifies a deep integration within the local educational landscape, which was established in 2052 B.S. As a private institution, the school operates under the direct authority and mandate of the local government. I found that this school has been operated according to the Private Company Act, with the interaction of the school principal and all the existing bodies, such as SMC (School Management Committee) and PTA (Parents and Teachers Association), actively working. Further, this school is also recognized as the level of Grade A under the evaluation system of the respective municipality and is also directed under the PABSON (Private and Boarding Schools' Organization Nepal), as the leader school in diversified areas. This school has a very long and remarkable history for its development to arrive at this stage. At the beginning of its establishment, it was run by a single founder in a rented room with only seven students. After ten years of birth, this was run in the ownership of seven partners, shifting to the next location, which was up to six classes, with the motto of quality education. Again, this was transferred to the ownership of 40 partners representing different communities and private college teachers, along with the social activists and business leaders. However, their partnership could not last long due to having diverse experiences, and the expectations of shareholders for early financial profit. After its long

and dynamic history, this school has been shifted to two partners in the present context. Now these two founders are holding the positions of chairman and principal. This school currently accommodates a substantial student population of approximately 1200 from early childhood development to secondary education with dedicated team of 65 teaching and non-teaching faculties, fostering a comprehensive school's physical infrastructure comprising a single but multi-storied building, This school has designed to optimize space and facilities typical of well-established urban educational institution, including classrooms, administrative offices, a library, and other essential learning areas. This school covers four densely populated municipalities, ranging from urban to rural.

From the socio-economic perspective, people surrounding the school have diverse social and economic backgrounds. It means people are engaged in different professions, such as farming, business, and working in both government and private organizations. This location is also rich in multilingual, multicultural exposure. This school celebrates many holidays due to local festivals. This school was established in the Terai area by the dense forest, reflecting the diversified semi-urban demographics of Nepal that come from varied economic strata and ethnic backgrounds. Most of the people in the community bring a rich tapestry of experiences and languages to the classroom. Thus, the present situation of School A is shaped and recognized as the established leading school in the private context, through the sociocultural and socio-economic background. The school's present status is shaped by the socio-cultural and socio-economic background of the surrounding local people. The pedagogical approaches and assessment practices are influenced by requiring the teachers and the school leadership to be adaptable and culturally sensitive in their educational practices. This school claims to be a progressive school, as reflected in the signboard at the school. This approach also highlighted a student-centered teaching pedagogy focusing on hands-on, experiential activities, aligning with significant recognition for its progressive pedagogical approaches, particularly in the realm of basic education. According to University of Saskatchewan (2023), authentic assessment activities engage students in real-world tasks that present meaningful application of knowledge. Likewise, authentic assessment practices are an integral part of the integrated curriculum in the real-world context. It has actively sought

to implement authentic assessment practices as an integral part of its internal evaluation system for the integrated curriculum in private schools in Nepal.

When I visited the authentic website and found inclination towards the authentic assessment practices, it is the defining and recognizing factors for educational philosophy in school, towards authentic assessment, which is a defining characteristic of school from philosophical perspectives. This school highly focus on educational philosophy, which aims to move beyond traditional rote learning because it standardizes testing for more holistic and practical assessment of student understanding and skills. School A is perceived as the research center for a researcher who encourages the teacher's autonomy for designing contextually relevant assessment tasks (CDC, 2019). Likewise, the principal of the school claimed that his school reflects dedication to child-centered and competency-based learning. I found School A to be a learning and innovative center for the foundational learning environment, which emphasized authentic assessment. During the early stages of this research, the principal of School A clearly stated a desire for the school to be known as a progressive school, especially in the early grades (grades 1-3). This goal is reflected in the school's strong focus on educational innovation. Based on the observations, the school's leadership supports new teaching ideas and encourages ongoing professional learning for teachers. Present-day primary education also focuses on values and 21st century skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Several studies showed that schools employing value-based and progressive teaching approaches support children in developing not merely academic skills but also social and behavioural skills (Pokhrel et al., 2023).

The school regularly provides professional development opportunities for teachers, emphasizing modern teaching methods, student-centered learning, and assessment practices that go beyond traditional memorization-based teaching. The principal in school A was dynamic in the sense that this school also supports holistic development of students, fostering critical thinking, nurturing creativity, encouraging collaborative learning, and encouraging the practical application of knowledge. The naturally provided fertile ground is shaped from the pedagogical choices naturally provided fertile for the application of authentic assessment practices, where students were assessed that learning is evaluated through meaningful tasks that mirror real-world

applications. This foundational emphasis is on progressive aspirations and the active pursuit of innovative teaching and assessment tools and techniques. I studied the artefacts of the same school where I found the school's purpose, mission and vision as given below:

**Purpose**

- To search for new and improved best practices
- To supply professional and skilled human resources in the global market.
- To bring the child for holistic development

**Vision**

To facilitate a thriving school community where all individuals can flourish and positively impact the world around them. To nurture and inspire emotionally intelligent and morally uplifting role models who aspire to excel academically and strive for excellence in all areas of life.

School case A aims to be an institution of excellence where sound ethical values, character, wisdom, leadership, service and academic achievements are encouraged in a safe and nurturing environment. Moreover, I found the school's purpose, Mission and vision printed on the banner in the principal's office.

**Mission**

Enabling our learners to achieve their full potential today and empowering them to become the global leaders of tomorrow by promoting an ambitious culture of learning and curiosity and purposefully creating meaningful connections. We aim to promote a culture of academic excellence in an engaging and safe learning environment. Teaching through mutual care and respect so our pupils can excel and realize their full potential to foster our pupils with the love of learning and promoting excellent character, human values, and aspire for our pupils to become model citizens and future leaders of our community. The Mission of the school is to provide an environment that lays emphasis on intellectual and emotional growth in which every student discovers and realizes his/her full potential and highest academic standards are achieved; where emphasis is laid on integrity, ethics, moral courage, hard work, responsibility, and self-discipline, where activities focus on developing visionary, articulate and confident individuals with sensitivity and concern for the less fortunate, the environment, diversity and communal

harmony, human rights and democratic values; where students, teachers, parents and the administration work together as a nurturing community.

### **Understanding Assessment in Integrated Curriculum of School A**

This includes the understanding of both headteachers' and teachers' understanding of the internal assessment task of students' learning as proposed by the NCF (2019).

Teaching and assessment are integrated within the same theme simultaneously.

I conducted an interview with the principal of School A on understanding internal assessment. He viewed that internal assessment in Grades 1 to 3 as distinctively different from that of higher grades. In his view, the integrated curriculum demands continuous and varied assessment methods that align with real-life situations, focusing more on learning processes rather than outcomes, compared to the upper grades. *He further said that this curriculum is based on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary thematic approaches from different disciplines in an integrated way. This includes my Nepali, my English, my mathematics and Hamro Serofero and local knowledge rather than of teaching as separate subjects.* The assessment in lower grades (1 to 3) emphasizes observational techniques, performance tasks, portfolio-based assessment, and anecdotal records, which support holistic child development. According to the principal, internal assessment is conducted regularly in the classroom during teaching and records the student's learning performance. He says, *“learning, assessment and feedback as well as re-teaching, remedial class and transparency will be at the same time”* in the question of Is there any pre-determined schedule of assessment? The principal places significant emphasis on collaborative planning, integrating the common themes, and ensuring that multiple subjects can be integrated meaningfully. This helps students connect knowledge rather than learning it as subject based.

For the proper application of assessment practices as assumed by the curriculum, the principal of school A said that. *We hold monthly planning meetings where teachers align the common themes, for example, combining Science (plants) + Nepali (plant stories) + Math (counting leaves). However, not all teachers collaborate smoothly; some prefer sticking to their subject. We encourage best practice sharing in staff meetings, but consistent integration isn't 100% yet.* Regarding feedback for students' learning, Principal A explained that *students' portfolio has to be checked to determine whether*

*learners have achieved the targeted achievement or not. As an important stakeholder, the parents' workshop is conducted to make them believe on continued assessment after each theme completion. Likewise, all the teachers, coordinators, and the principal will have a sharing and discussion over learners' performance along with the common theme, as well as for improving the weak students' learning performances.* He was questioned about making the availability of students' portfolios for performance record-keeping. He took me to all the classes to show the students' portfolios, which were kept in each classroom, and which were in excess of the number of students. There were printed copies of the curriculum. I turned all the pages and found that no re-assessment and remedial class was conducted a second time if the learners had achieved below three marks.

Furthermore, no portfolio was managed in the same way as the students' Evaluation Record portfolio of individual students. Then again, the principal said to me, *"It happened because of time constraints.* He also added that *if this assessment is applied, it can enhance the holistic development of the child, which is independent learning".* It came to know the level of understanding from his description that the school principal has to be aligned with its authentic application, the essentialities of parents' involvement, utilization of many assessment tools such as presentation, discussion, project work, integration of teaching with assessment, feedback, thematic and soft skills integration beyond the terminal written test. In response to the question in the interview, "what do you focus on as the leader of your school? He asked, *"If this assessment in Grades 1 to 3 should not merely focus on marks or test results Rather I should support the natural learning process and recognize children's individual progress".* Furthermore, he says, *"Assessment must be continuous, participatory, and context-based, reflecting children's development in communication, behavior, creativity, and understanding.* In the interview, he stated that *assessment in lower grades must align with the child's context and participation, not with numerical comparison,* emphasizing that authentic assessment should serve as a learning tool, not a judgment. During the interview, he also explained the policy alignment and monitoring. The principal shared the assessment policy aligning with the framework of the integrated curriculum as guided by the CDC. The principal takes regular feedback from classroom observations, sample student portfolios, and coordination meetings to monitor the implementation. According to him, an internal

quality monitoring committee reviews assessment practices and suggests timely improvements. *In the question of answering, what is the nature of students' assessment, and how are they assessed? Sapana Kafle (Pseudonym) says, "The students are assessed for identifying the learned and unlearned performance. She further says that immediate feedback is given to the students using different assessment tools, and they are also given remedial teaching and a cooperative learning environment. The teaching and assessing for further learning are integrated at the same time, based on the complete formative nature of the exam.*

### **Profile of School B**

School B is a privately owned and operated educational institution located in the semi-urban setting of one of the municipalities, Morang District, established in 2070 B.S. It is recognized as Graded 'A' categorized private school, well-recognized in the region for its educational excellence, modern teaching philosophy, and strong community engagement. As a newly established private school, it has experienced rapid growth, quickly earning a Grade 'A' rating from the local government and building a strong reputation that attracts students from four surrounding municipal areas. Likewise, this also comes under the local government and company Act, operated as a member of the National Private and Boarding Schools' Organization Nepal (NPABSON).

The principal is qualified and recognized as Montessori based philosophy. The school is led by a highly qualified principal and recognized as Montessori philosophy based. He claimed that his school completely focused on child-centric, hands-on learning activities. The principles of school B believed that teaching and assessing the learners are integrated in thematic ways in his school for the continuous, as mandated by Nepal's Curriculum Development Centre (CDC). School B was also circulated through a privately funded and managed organization. The School A was operated under the governance of Nepal's Ministry of Education and is aligned strictly to the Education Act of Nepal.

School B also offered comprehensive academic programs from Early Childhood Development (ECD) through Grade 10. This school B consists of approximately 1400 students, including both teaching and non-teaching staff. This school has most of the classes on a single shift class schedule that allows for more in-depth engagement in both

curricular and co-curricular activities. This school highly focuses on how the projects are integrated into the school. This school has a single but multi-storied building cluster, which is equipped with ICT-based education and well-furnished classrooms. This school also consists of having some essential departments, a library, computer and science laboratories, an art room, music room, and playgrounds, arranged to foster interactive and student-centered learning. This school is rich in sociocultural socio-economic backgrounds, from low-income families to higher income families. This school is supposed to have a complete English Environment. The school maintains active real-world application of knowledge, creative expression, cultural awareness, and critical thinking engagement with parents and the broader community, primarily through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and the School Management Committee (SMC). This school is expensive because of privately funded financial resources for infrastructure and staff development. The leader of this school has made it easily accessible for the parents and students, encouraging them to share ideas. This school is unique in the sense that it conducts teacher training to explore new pedagogies and actively participates in collaborative decision-making processes. The principal conducted continuous teacher support, regularly organizing in-house training, external workshops, and mentoring sessions focused on child-centered learning and assessment practices. This school believes in recognition itself as progressive, drawing inspiration from John Dewey's educational philosophy. However, this school has not applied the entire approach as assumed in an integrated curriculum lacking portfolio management, soft skills application, thematic integration, and the use of various specified assessment tools. The assessment system at School B reflects a transitional approach moving away from a purely summative focus toward formative and authentic assessment practices.

This school is identified as the hybrid model because the formative assessments are partially in practice. In lower grades, where teacher observation, anecdotal records, portfolios, and project outcomes are used to understand individual targeted achievement progress purpose. This school intends to provide children with a cooperative and facilitative place to learn and grow. The school aims to help students develop good habits, practical skills, and positive values along with their academic learning. It tries to offer an environment where students can explore, ask questions, and learn through real

experiences, not only from textbooks. The purpose of the school is to guide every child toward becoming confident, responsible, and able to adjust to the demands of modern life.

### **Mission**

- To provide education that focuses on the child, encouraging them to learn through doing, exploring, and interacting with others.
- To run a learning program that connects ideas across subjects and helps children relate learning to everyday life.
- To build a friendly school culture where teachers work together, learn from each other, and try out new methods that better support students.
- The parents are encouraged to be involved in the community school activities so that students can receive support from both parents and teachers.
- To help students grow in all areas: academic, social, emotional, cultural, and physical through regular classes as well as co-curricular activities.
- To provide equal opportunities to all the students from diverse backgrounds to learn.

### **Vision**

This school aims to establish a school which truly helps the overall development of every child. This school has a sustainable vision to give a certain shape to students who are normal children. This school gives priority to natural learning who can think and act independently and can adapt to new challenges in life. Furthermore, this school prioritizes the play way based methods believing in Montessori based education.

#### **Understanding Assessment in the Integrated Curriculum of School B**

In the interview, Principal B said that the integrated curriculum is thematic-based teaching where the common themes are integrated within different domains of knowledge. This approach supports children's holistic development through the practices of different soft skills. He further added that although it offers many opportunities, we have some gaps in practices because the same teachers cannot teach because we have not prepared yet. He shared his further understanding that this curriculum was introduced to replace the subject-based teaching which was applied conventionally. Moreover, he added that time constraints, resource limitations, lack of training, and parental pressure

for the summative test have hindered the application of internal assessment practices in private schools in terms of how the students are assessed. The principal viewed that the assessment practices in (Grades 1 to 3) should be continuous and process-oriented rather than focus solely on outcomes. During the sharing, his understanding entails that he admitted the importance of internal assessment proposed by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2019. Moreover, he accepted that implementing those ideas completely is a bit challenging due to several limitations. The principal of School B reiterated that assessment in grades 1- 3 should be continuous, and process-oriented instead of focusing mainly on the outcomes. However, *he stated that the curriculum consists of the core parts such as assessment observation, portfolios, anecdotal records, and performance-based tasks.* His school has modified some of these approaches to fit its practical limitations. When he was asked whether there is a pre-determined schedule for assessments, *the principal explained that assessments are conducted continuously but not always in strict alignment with the curriculum's suggested timeline.* He also stated: *We integrate assessment with teaching, but due to time constraints and workload, we sometimes adjust the frequency, he continuously mentioned that while they strive for thematic integration, they also rely on traditional assessment tools because parents have more preferences for terminal tests.* Regarding feedback mechanisms, the principal emphasized that,

*They do review student portfolios, but they have developed their own format rather than strictly following the curriculum's model. He showed me some samples where teachers maintain individual student progress sheets, but these were not always theme-wise organized. He further said that teachers encourage teachers to provide verbal and written feedback if the student is supposed to have the learning performance under average level, but maintaining detailed portfolios for every student is time-consuming in a private school in Nepal.*

School B conducts the parents' workshop with regard to parental involvement because they also have to understand the importance of continuous assessment. *However, the principal presented the idea that parents do not participate in assessment practices in inconsistent ways, and some parents still prioritize exam results over formative assessments. He says, "Additionally, the school holds weekly meetings among teachers,*

*coordinators, and the principal to discuss student performance, but the discussions are more flexible rather than strictly structured around thematic assessments.”*

When the principal was questioned about assessment and remedial classes, he acknowledged that they do not always conduct follow-up assessments for students scoring below a certain mark. *“We try, but due to time limitations, we can’t always ensure a second round of remedial teaching”, he said.*

When asked, "What do you focus on as the leader of your school?" The principal responded that his priority is balancing curriculum expectations with practical feasibility. The principal assured us that School B aligns with the CDC’s framework but implements it with modifications. The principal mentioned in the interview that the internal exam committee reviews assessment practice, but modification is required based on teacher feedback, students ‘learning achievement and real classroom challenges.

While School B’s principal supported the philosophy of internal assessment in the integrated curriculum, I observed that assessment is a continuous process along with the teaching, but I came to know that students’ learning was assessed on the basis of the routine tasks rather than an opportunity for reflection and individualized feedback. These findings suggested the need for teacher training on practical aspects of how classroom-based assessment strategies and the development of simple tests are conducted in private schools, as proposed by the CDC (2019).

Smriti Karki (Pseudo name) shared her practices that this curriculum brings growth and changes for the holistic development of children, but she was applying only the subject-based teaching and students were assessed through only oral and written tasks. Further, she said that the teacher in school B prepared the learning calculation and result manually. She added more: The remedial teaching and re-assessment were conducted rarely due to time constraints. She recorded a complete four marks because less than four is now allowed.

From my observation and analysis, the assessment practices in School A show that teachers are genuinely trying to apply the multiple tools proposed by the integrated curriculum, such as classroom participation, oral and written work, projects, and discussion, but their use remains inconsistent and often superficial; the assessment practices with parent involvement are not counted for. It can be seen that the assessment

is conducted with less focus on guiding individual progress. This practice reflects the authentic practices of school leaders in the spirit of the curriculum framework, but the practices are still uneven, depending heavily on individual teacher creativity rather than a well-organized system, which limits the depth and impact of assessment on student learning.

### **Assessment Practices of School A**

Based on the interview of the principal and teachers from School A, classroom observation, document analysis of students' work, and portfolios have been considered as the center of my research to observe practices as a case. The cases I brought from the research field have been presented below.

#### **Differentiated Assessment Approaches**

*In the interview, the principal of School A viewed that the assessment practices are different on the basis of level-wise education, such as the formative nature of assessment is applied in Basic Level Education (grade 1 to 3). This is a thematic approach to assessment as assumed by the integrated curriculum. On the other hand, the principal explored the practices in his school that upper grades focus on subject-based summative exams, but the lower grades (Grades 1 to 3) are assessed through continuous observation, portfolios, classroom activities, and project-based work. The assessment process is more developmental and formative in nature for younger learners. I found the alignment of the assessment in School A, focusing on holistic progress.*

As he said, I also observed some samples of students' notebooks in the classroom having weekly project work, but the project work as an assessment has to be provided on the basis of a theme or as guided by the curriculum.

Black and Wiliam (1998) have studied and found that continuous feedback and some modification contribute to learning outcomes. Another research was conducted in countries like Finland, which also applies the formative assessment to foster a more holistic and student-centered approach (Sahlberg, 2011). *My participant, Sapana, said that this integrated curriculum was also aligned with the classroom practices, but this implementation is somewhat partial and lacks systematically, which is like the curriculum guidelines in practice. She further shared that the assessment is happening, but not in the structure recommended by the curriculum.* Thus, the school demonstrates an intention to

follow progressive assessment approaches, but the practices reveal a gap between curriculum expectations and classroom implementation. *From the answer to the questions with the principal, “What is the nature of the exam that your school is conducting at different levels?” He replied that his school is conducting the terminal exam at all levels, for example, even in Basic Education (grades 1 to 8) and secondary level (grades 9 to 12), instead of the pure formative nature of the exam. However, 100% formative ought to be in assessment practices within the integrated curriculum (grades 1 to 3). He added that subject-based test exam is expected above class three and authentic assessment is applied from (std 1to3) as envisioned by the curriculum, but we are not applying all the assessment tools.* The practices in School A present only the weekly basis project work, but not only on the basis of theme showing, the partial application’s philosophy of the integrated curriculum, which emphasizes holistic development over rote academic achievement.

### **Curriculum-Aligned Assessment Planning**

In School A, assessment planning begins with structured teacher collaboration, as emphasized in principal interviews. The principal says, *“Teachers conduct monthly meetings to design thematic units that integrate multiple subjects, aligning with CDC's framework.”* This school has the practice of conducting Grand workshops involving teachers from classes 1 to 3, providing the orientation of internal assessment practice in this school. *He added that it seems to be more energetic and a possibility for the application at the beginning of the session. Each and every teacher is asked to read the overall assessment practices proposed by the curriculum. According to him, he has to present his own understanding of assessment as proposed in the curriculum. Additionally, respective teachers should present yearly, terminal and daily plans with the help of the curriculum and the Teachers’ Guide after a week.*

From the classroom observation, I wanted to see the teachers’ plan, whether it was planned in a thematic way or on the basis of separately taught subjects. For this, I questioned Sapana (pseudonym) as: *“Excuse me, may I see your teacher’s Diary? It was a daily lesson plan book, but I wanted to see the yearly plan diary. She told me that the yearly plan had already been submitted to the school principal. She says that we have the practice of submitting at the beginning of each academic session.* When I was observing

her class, she wrote a question, ‘What does your father do?’ and informed me that this question is important for the first terminal exam, containing five marks. I found that although she has an understanding of the authenticity of assessment, the teaching was not aligned. Further, I came to know that no re-assessment or feedback on students’ learning had been given when a student had secured only two marks in one of the achievements as proposed by the curriculum. Then I went to the principal’s office and asked the principal to observe the plan of Sapana, which is presented below:

**Figure 2**

*Planned Activities: Sapana (Participant)*

वार्षिक कार्ययोजना - २०१२					विद्यार्थी कार्ययोजना			
क्र.सं.	गणित	विषय	विषय	विषय	विषय	विषय	विषय	विषय
1.	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी
2.	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी
3.	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी	विद्यार्थी

I have observed that the teacher prepared the yearly, terminal and daily lesson plans, as the principal claimed in the interview, which contain some students' achievements, assessment tools, teaching pedagogy, and a list of soft skills without being integrated on the basis of each of them. I wanted to be sure that the teachers' plan and the head strategies and feedback teaching pedagogy, including project-based evaluations and other required assessment tools, were based on the theme. This practice of the given



Figure 4

Sapana's Daily Lesson Note

Date: 20821813		DAILY LESSON NOTE				Day: Wednesday	
Period	Subject	Class	Topics	learning Activities	Achievements	Evaluation Tools	Remarks
1st	अंग्रेजी		हामी राखिदुय पिहनेहरे	चित्र हेर्ने र पहिचान गर्ने जातिविधि * राखिदुय (चिन्हहरूको चित्र देखाउने र बिनाश्रीलाई नाम भन्ने लगाउने। * उगाउने जातिविधि * राखिदुय जनाउने, फूल र घासको चित्र बनाई उगा गर्ने लगाउने। * सरल कथा सुन्दा विद्यार्थीहरूलाई पनिपाली र-उ नाकमा चोल्न लगाउने।	* राखिदुय पिहनेहरे पहिचान गर्ने सक्ने छन्। * राखिदुय पिहनेहरेका बारेमा भन्ने र सरल सक्ने छन्।	* हलफल * उत्प्रेषण (S-2)	* सिकार्ड सिप
2nd	Science		Environmental Cleanliness	* Showing picture of clean and dirty environment * Finding difference between	* Students can say the difference between	* Disc ussion	* App lication (S-2)
Class Teacher		Coordinator		Principal			

Date:		DAILY LESSON NOTE				Day:	
Period	Subject	Class	Topics	learning Activities	Achievements	Evaluation Tools	Remarks
				between clean and dirty environment. * Discussing why should we keep our environment clean.	clean and dirty envi- ronment		
1st	अंग्रेजी	2	हामी चाडपर्व	* हामी तिहार, दस, नौसाहको पर्वका तस्वीर हेरेर चिनाउने * फर्कका चाडको मुरह सिद्धता भन्ने * समुह हलफल - कडाबाई सुना समुहमा सिद्धासन जमी हरेक समुहलाई एउटा चाड पर्वको सिद्धता प्रस्तुत गर्दा लगाउने।	* चाडपर्वको सिद्धता भन्ने र लेख्न सक्ने छन्।	* हलफल	* सिकार्ड सिप (S-2)
Class Teacher		Coordinator		Principal			

The practices presented by School A with the assessment planning appear well-structured at the leadership level. This daily plan has also ensured that teachers' collaboration was found to some extent. The practice of yearly and daily plans and orientation workshops was aligned with CDC guidelines. Teachers formally prepared lesson plans with assessment tools and pedagogy. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge and promotes interdisciplinary learning experiences (Beane, 1997; Jacobs, 2010). In Nepal, the Ministry of Education has introduced an integrated curriculum for grades 1 to 3, aiming to provide young learners with a comprehensive and engaging educational experience (MoEST, 2019). However, classroom observation shows a gap between planning and practice. For example, when a student scored poorly, no re-assessment or feedback was provided; instead, emphasis was placed on exam-focused preparation. This indicates that while curriculum-aligned assessment is present in documentation, its authentic application in classroom learning is weak. The practice of teachers depicts the assessment focusing on summative tests to some degree.

### **Portfolio Management and Documentation Practices**

I asked the principal to provide me with the required resources which could support assessing students' learning outcomes. The principal shared with me the students' portfolio book and printed copies from the curriculum for keeping the students' learned and unlearned performance, as the students' portfolio is made accessible for each teacher and student. Furthermore, he also showed me the individual racks for keeping the portfolio sheets. He also added that teachers need many other teaching resources and ready-made materials on the basis of a theme, which was the responsibility of the principal because he was leading this school. Although the portfolio was easily available in the market, which cost almost rupees two hundred, parents did not want to purchase it. A teacher named Rajwai (pseudonym) answered me with the question of who will manage the portfolio? She recalled the issues of disputes with teachers in just giving information that parents have to buy themselves as instructed by the principal. Another teacher, Sapana, says that it was ten years ago that the physical structure of the classroom was so small. Now, after 5 years, the physical infrastructure has changed as it is in need of conducting activity-based teaching and assessing the students' performance. She stated that the school principal has a significant role in the management of all the resources for effective change in management. The principal says, "*If we search for the authenticity in the performance of teachers, the school leader completes their own responsibilities of materials and resources.*" When I visited School A, it was found that teachers were working with portfolios filled out, along with teaching in an integrated way. Sapana stresses that portfolio students' documents, which support the students' learning records and also assess the students' unlearned performance, include remedial teaching activities. Rajwai also expressed her happiness in getting all the materials in time, and she told me that we teachers have to make students' strengths and weaknesses more transparent, like an X-ray of our body, for feedback and remedial teaching. I requested Sapana to gather all the students' portfolios. But most of their portfolio was kept in the students' homes. I got only ten students among twenty-five students.

The implementation of portfolio assessment reflects a strong commitment to the integrated curriculum framework. In my understanding, an integrated curriculum has a lot of opportunities for the holistic development of children through independent learning,

respecting the individual learning abilities, performances and style of learning, which is really beneficial to apply in the sense of authentic assessment. Many schools claimed to apply that curriculum, but I did not find any more. Yes, they have taught the textbooks only based on the curriculum and applied some assessment tools also, but lack in maintaining the student's portfolio, which I take as an asset of the child to assess as self-assessment. My main concern was with students' portfolio practices, as I mentioned in the background section. Therefore, I got permission from the principal to observe the class. He informed me of having six sections from class one to three, and requested me to go to grade one, Venus section. However, I entered and observed all the classes. As soon as I had entered the classroom, I realized that the teacher seemed to be a bit afraid, but she was Sapana Kafle, whom I had already met during the interview and had developed rapport with, and I informed her that I would visit and learn some integrated teaching and learning skills from you. I remembered our past talk. So, I told the whole class that I am your friend. I came to learn from your class. She did activity-based teaching.

When I observed the class of Sapana, who was teaching the theme, "Hamro Samudaya", consisting of 15 achievement levels proposed by CDC under the subject, My Nepali, she assessed her students, although she was not aware of the achievement level aspects of assessment through authentic assessment tools, randomly. Five students were assessed. Three of them secured four marks, but one of them secured only two marks in achievement level four. Likewise, the next student achieved only one mark in achievement level six. In this case, she needed to provide less achiever students feedback and re-assessment was to be conducted but she left and I asked her "why didn't you reassess your students?" she responded that yes you are right; however, that child was very weak from beginning so, if I had taken both of them would have secured the same marks. Likewise, all the students' portfolios were filled up and kept in racks. But it was found that the same students who had secured lower marks under basic and under, respectively, secured an advanced level of achievement. But it was not signed by parents, and she asked her why it was. She responded to me, *I sent this portfolio to parents at home with the students, but it was always without a signature.* I asked further questions to those whose mistake was that, and she replied to me that it's both parents and students. Then, I told her that you would call her parents to sign. About the role of parents, Sapana

told me *that we have the practice of informing all the parents in the parents' workshop at the beginning of the session, where it is discussed and get parents to sign the memo.*

The above practices give the justification of what and how the roles are played by a subject teacher in implementing the assessment. When I told and explained the practices in the classroom, he realized the lack of alignment between the assumption and classroom practices. As a result, a kind of pessimistic idea is added by the principal in school A: *This is all because of being a private school. He said that this was our compulsion to run the private school, we can't leave it because we have also invested. Being emotional, he says, "We have a bank loan."* I was shocked to hear his ideas and could not catch his meaning, and I asked him why. He clarified to me *that teachers need frequent training and workshops to apply, though I have ideas, but no time for them. Furthermore, we didn't have sources for training and even a lack of teachers with an educational background.* He seemed to be a bit frustrated and still complained to the government *because the local level of government didn't support the private school for the training based on this curriculum.*

I observed only one class of Sapana in class three. Again, I would like to enter the class one where the principal has already requested me to observe. So, I was thinking of why the principal said so. It was tiffin time. So, I had to wait for the class in the principal's office. When I was waiting for the next class, a lady parent came with the portfolio books and thanked the principal. My attention was drawn to the student's portfolio in the sense that she thanked the principal. Her child had achieved an advanced level. That portfolio was signed and well-studied by the parents. The principal asked the female parent *to thank the teachers, not me, because I did not teach and guide her child. I have just managed the qualified teachers and some materials and resources. He added that teachers have contributed to arriving at this stage through continued guidance.* But she had already met and thanked the teachers. Moreover, I wished to compare the portfolio practices of different teachers within the same school, as given below:

Figure 5

Student's Portfolio: Prepared by Rojina

	मुख्य सिकाइ उपलब्धि	परीक्षण गर्ने पक्ष	साधन	नियमित पढाइको मूल्याङ्कन		थप सहायतापछिको मूल्याङ्कन		कैफियत
				मिति	अङ्कन	मिति	अङ्कन	
१.	कुराकानी, संवाद, छलफल र प्रश्नोत्तरका क्रममा उपयुक्त भाषाको प्रयोग गर्ने	श्रुतिकथन	कुराकानी				३	
		श्रुतिकथन	अवलोकन (हाठपाउ र कथन)					
		श्रुतिकथन	छलफल					
		श्रुतिकथन	प्रश्नोत्तर					
		श्रुतिवर्णन	अवलोकन					
२.	पारिवारिक परिवेशमा प्रयोग हुने शब्द पहिचान गरी प्रयोग गर्ने	शब्द भण्डार	शब्दसूची	३			४	
		शब्द भण्डार	अर्थबोध र प्रयोग					
३.	सङ्केतक जोडी विभिन्न आकृति र चित्र निर्माण गर्ने	पुनरुत्पादन	ढाँचा लेखन	३			४	
		पुनरुत्पादन	रङ्ग भरण					
४.	स्वर वर्ण (उ, ऊ, ऋ, ए) पहिचान गरी उच्चारण गर्ने	सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन	श्रवण र उच्चारण	३			४	
		पठन अभ्यास	सस्वरवाचन					
५.	पाठमा प्रयुक्त दैनिक प्रयोगमा आउने शब्द र शीर्ष शब्द पढ्न (अनुच्चारण वा अनुकथन गर्ने)	सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन	उच्चारण	२			३	
		शब्द भण्डार	परियोजना कार्य					
६.	पढेका वर्ण तथा मात्राको सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन गरी लेखन ढाँचाको अनुकरण गर्ने	सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन	लिपि सङ्केत	१			५	
७.	शब्दमा अक्षर छुट्याउन र जोड्न, धप्प, हटाउन र परिवर्तन गर्ने (जोड्न र छुट्याउन मात्र)	सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन	शब्दनिर्माण	२			५	
		सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन	अवलोकन (श्रवण)					
८.	विसङ्केतक शब्दका सुरु र अन्त्यका ध्वनि पहिचान र उच्चारण गर्ने	सङ्केतन र विसङ्केतन	अवलोकन (श्रवण)	२			५	
९.	चित्र, शीर्षक, पाठ परिवेश र सन्दर्भका आधारमा छलफल र प्रश्नोत्तर गर्ने	पठन बोध	छलफल र प्रश्नोत्तर	२			५	
		पठन बोध	वर्णन					
१०.	दर्प, चिन्ता, घृणा, आश्चर्य, उत्सुकता जस्ता सवेगात्मक अभिव्यक्ति बुझेर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त गर्ने	चिह्न, काल र सङ्गति	मौखिक प्रयोग	३			४	
११.	पाठगत परिवेश, पात्र र सन्दर्भको पहिचान, छलफल, प्रश्नोत्तर एवम् तुलना गर्ने	पठन बोध	सूचना प्रयोग	१०			५	
		पठन बोध	छलफल र प्रश्नोत्तर					
		पठन बोध	तुलना					
१२.	शब्दअनुसारका चित्र र चित्रअनुसारका शब्द पहिचान गरी प्रश्नोत्तर गर्ने	दृश्यबोध	चित्र	३			४	
		दृश्यबोध	श्रव्यदृश्य सामग्री					
		दृश्यबोध	स्थलगत भ्रमण					
१३.	क्रियाका काल, पदसङ्गति र चिह्नको सचेततासहित मौखिक तथा लिखित अभिव्यक्ति दिन	चिह्न, काल र सङ्गति	मौखिक प्रयोग	२			३	
जम्मा सिकाइ उपलब्धि सङ्ख्या - १३				जम्मा प्राप्त/अङ्क		४४		
अभिभावकको दस्तखत :				उपलब्धि प्रतिशत		८४/१		
शिक्षकको दस्तखत र मिति :				ग्रेड		A		

From my next classroom observation, this portfolio belonged to a grade one student. I found his documents with varying values of achievement. But it was found that the achievement level below is re-assessed on a different date, and the second time of learned performance was found to be recorded. It was well maintained as proposed by the NCF. Each theme was assessed with a focus on reaching the learner's maximum of four marks. Another observation presented the next students' portfolio maintained by the same teacher, Rojina Chaudhary, who had calculated each subject. I found the records that the total learning achievement was 84 in English under class three. Then I asked her why the total learning achievement is 84. She replied to me that the theme-wise total obtained marks was 77, which is multiplied by 4, as the full marks calculated as 91.67%

which is A+. So, as far as my understanding, she followed almost all the authentic process and asked her if she had any problems managing the students' portfolios, but she replied to me that she did not. *According to her, they have a weekly practice on each Friday. Before weekly sharing, it was the practice of that school that each teacher had to observe the peer classroom observation and needed to prepare the report, which had to be presented on a weekly basis, in a sharing program where the principal would provide feedback.*

**Figure 6**

*Cummulative Assessment Record*

S.No.	Theme	Working hour	Learning achievement		Obtained marks	Achievement percentage	Achievement grade
			Number	Full marks			
1.	Alphabet	60	24	96	90	93.75%	A+
2.	Me and My Family	18	18	72	69	95.83%	A+
3.	My Daily Life	7	17	68	62	91.17%	A+
4.	Our School	7	21	84	76	90.47%	A+
5.	Our Environment	5	21	84	77	91.67%	A+
6.	My Belongings	5	21	84			
7.	Our Culture	4	22	88			
8.	Communication technology & market	4	21	84			
9.	Fruits and Vegetables	6	20	80			
10.	Hobbies and Interests	5	18	72			
11.	Birds and Animals	7	22	88			
	Total	128	225	900			
	Total credit hour	4					

**Note:**

In the above cummulative assessment record 20 working hours have been included for **assessment, project work and remedial teaching.**

32 working hours = 1 Credit hour

The school should pay special attention to the above-mentioned learning achievement number, full marks and obtained marks while filling the EMIS record.

Prepared by:

Name: *Rojina Chaudhary*

Signature: *[Signature]*

Date:

Approved by:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Even the pair learning has been a wonderful learning platform for the assessment system. In the first interview, a teacher named Rajwai (pseudonym) says, *“Portfolio management is time-consuming and conscious work activities which require the support of school leaders for the betterment. Further, she says that all the teachers from grades*

*one to three have to accomplish the task of portfolios before the terminal result is approved by the principal". She has invited me to attend the result publication day to observe so that I can observe the market of a well-managed portfolio.*

### **Thematic Integration and Collaborative Efforts**

The principal places significant emphasis on collaborative planning. In the first interview session, the principal explained that teachers plan integrated lessons around common themes, ensuring that multiple subjects can be integrated meaningfully. *"This helps students to connect knowledge rather than learning subject-wise performance," he highlighted.* To the question of 'how do you collaborate with the stakeholders in planning?' *He answered that the principal, teachers and level-wise coordinators sit together weekly to review lesson delivery and make necessary adjustments to the assessment process.* To foster collaboration, the school conducts monthly cluster meetings and inter-grade sharing sessions. Similarly, the principal said that *"Teachers also present successful assessment practices and receive feedback to develop the collaborative learning culture within school from practices of each other"* *"One of the newly appointed teachers, Rajwai, also shared her experience that the peer-learning models have improved motivation and have helped new teachers adopt effective methods.*

From classroom observation, Puja Basnet (pseudonym) was teaching the theme on "Hamro Watabaran" in Grade 3 and took students to the canteen to identify biodegradable and non-biodegradable, and the students were instructed to use the dustbin. Similarly, she also made a discussion on the fundamental features of solid, liquid and gas. In her class, I found the integrated learning practices because she herself explained that "Hamro Serofero" is of an interdisciplinary nature of learning, required in other domains of knowledge, without informing students of subject-based knowledge. She was a well-experienced teacher of ten years who was also the focal person for the application of assessment to support the other teachers. The important thing she did was that all the learning outcomes were carefully recorded on students' individual portfolios, which were connected to diverse fields, such as the holistic learning of children.

Again, I observed the workbook of a student to find out how the project work was integrated, whether it was given in pairs or groups, or across the subjects or within a

subject. I saw a notebook of project work on the theme of “Me and my Family”, presented by Manisha Chaudhary, with the information given below:

This kind of project showed project-based integrated activities. Further, the project work presented evidence that teaching activities were integrated but lacked integration across subjects in an explicit way, aligning with CDC's vision for holistic learning in the early grades. However, I found some integrated within the teachers' activities if we do implicit and analytical study. I saw that Rojina did not assess the students' learning performance, but Puja assessed the project work. The practices given above give the meaning that school leaders are consciously working and providing the leadership as needed for the application; however, teachers are not working from the mainstream curriculum guidelines due to their traditional educational practices and lack of parental involvement. I have observed that the assumption of assessment consists of theme integration with regard to thematic teaching, depending on the individual teacher's expertise. Similarly, the teacher has taken the students' learning portfolio not only as record keeping of marks, but also as a mirror for potential remedial and re-assessment. Thus, I found some differences in the assessment practices between two teachers, even within the same school.

### **Teaching Pedagogy and Assessment Tools**

These practices related to teaching pedagogy and assessment present real classroom-level and administrative practices of teaching pedagogy and assessment tools as implemented in School A. The findings are drawn from interviews with the principal and teachers, observation of the classroom and document analysis. Through the interview, classroom observation, and document analysis, I am concerned with how the nine assessment tools, as proposed by the curriculum framework, such as classroom participation, oral work, written work, project and practical work, task completion and demonstration, peer assessment, self-assessment, parents' reaction, talk and discussion, are being practiced in school. *The principal viewed in the interview, “We consider how much a child participates in daily activities”. Learning happens when they speak, play, and move. “In the question of what degree students can learn if the school applies the participation-based pedagogy. He said, “Teachers are instructed to give equal chances to every child during class activities.” Likewise, as a participant teacher, Sapana*

*explained, they give a chance to different students every day to answer questions, read aloud, and join group activities. Another teacher, Rajwai, said “, The group work, questioning, singing, and storytelling to engage students and observe participation levels.*

I asked the teacher if he had any evidence that he had the best academic performance during the glorious events. She replied that most of the students had secured achievement level four, which is at the top, because all the students were given equal opportunities to participate in group discussion while teaching the theme “Hamro Sanskriti” within Our Surroundings in class three. Moreover, from the interviews, it was found that the principal of School A strongly emphasized the use of diverse assessment tools as guided by the integrated curriculum, reflecting his instructional leadership focus. He stated, “*We have directed all teachers to ensure active student participation and adopt continuous assessment methods in every subject area.*” He added that *oral work, project-based activities, and discussion methods are essential in building students’ understanding in an integrated way.* The principal acknowledged some challenges, such as the need for better documentation and consistent application of tools like peer and self-assessment but claimed that teachers are encouraged to use these strategies creatively. Sapana, on her part, claimed that classroom participation is practiced daily through question–answer rounds, singing, and small group work. She further said, “*I ask children to come forward, act, speak, and respond to ensure they’re involved.*” Teachers also reported regular use of oral and written tasks such as story retelling, recitation, and writing on thematic topics. They shared that project work is often assigned with home involvement, especially on themes like ‘Me and My Family’ or ‘Healthy Living.’ They claimed to observe task completion and demonstration informally and noted that talk and discussion are naturally integrated into classroom sessions. However, both principals and teachers themselves accepted that the particular structure-based peer assessment and self-assessment were lacking. Parental feedback was also gathered in a verbal way but not assessed in the formal documents. Overall, the interviews showed that the school’s principal conducted the training to make the teachers efficient for the mastery of assessment tools application, but actual practice was varied among the teachers within the same school, encouraging the integrated use of assessment tools, lacking consistency in formal evaluation processes.

Furthermore, in the interview, Rajwaj proudly shared a good practice from a grade three under the theme “Me and My Family”, which captured the essence of integrated learning and assessment. He recalled:

*Once, one of my students, Aaush (Pseudonym), was very shy and introverted in nature, who could not speak or share his presentation, but I gave him many chances. Then, he presented his project work, which was decorated with color. He created the family tree with a photo and a name. Then he presented in a confident way, which surprised me and his friend in the classroom. He also introduced as, “This is my grandmother. She cooks rice. This is my father. He rides a motorbike.” The class clapped, and a few even asked questions, like ‘What does your sister like?’ and he replied, smiling, ‘She likes mango.*

The principal further added that *this single activity connected English (language use), Social Studies (family roles), Health (eating habits), and Arts (chart making). The teacher assessed Aayush’s learning performance based on oral expression, classroom participation, and task completion, while his classmates gave him stars on a chart as a peer feedback gesture. Later, Aayush also put a smiley face on his reflection sheet, and his parents were informed during a meeting where his work was displayed.*

The interview and some samples of the classroom observation also presented that varied teaching activities were found to be conducted, and most assessment tools were also seen in action, although the applications were varied depending on the individual differences of the teachers, but students’ learning achievement was not assessed and recorded learnt that Students were actively engaged in classroom participation through answering questions, singing songs, and participating in small group activities. Oral work was integrated into activities such as storytelling and reading aloud, with several students confidently sharing their views or experiences. Written tasks were observed in the form of fill-in-the-blanks, sentence writing, and drawing with labelling, though feedback was mostly limited to verbal praise or a tick mark. Project and practical tasks were visible as students showcased work like family trees, hygiene posters, or craft materials. Teachers appreciated their efforts but did not provide a formal evaluation. For example, teachers also utilized the task demonstration, which was seen in role plays and hands-on math practice. Peer interaction was conducted through clapping and star marking, which was

symbolic. The self-assessment-based activities were also assessed in the classroom, where the students marked with a smiley face after the lesson finished, but in general, assessment is conducted during the classroom activities. The principal informed me that they did not have particular policies to involve, but sometimes the parental indirect involvement was made with home assignments-based project work, home support in projects. From the classroom observation, I found that talk and discussion on Hamro Serofero were conducted with discussion about family and on many other topics.

Through the document analysis, I found some partial alignment between the integrated curriculum's assessment expectations and classroom practices. For example, Rojin's lesson plan consists of participation activities, oral questions, and written tasks, as well as a structured and detailed checklist for the student's assessment. I also observed the sample of a student's workbook, which also revealed regular written assignments, checked by teachers with basic corrections or short remarks. As a researcher, observing and analyzing the assessment practices in School A provided deep insight into the reality of classroom implementation. This made it clear that the authentic task was well understood as guided by the philosophy of continuous and formative assessment. Therefore, I found that teaching is making efforts to include various tools such as participation, oral and written work, and projects, but the teachers are required to provide guidance on how to assess the achievement of the students through the use of proposed assessment tools. Tools like peer and self-assessment were used at least once a month. However, parental reaction remained mostly informal. Classroom activities were rich and engaging, particularly in oral discussions and creative tasks, but the absence of clear evaluation tools and record-keeping was essential. They have some doubts about these newly introduced practices. He explained *that mainly the school principal will have to make the pre-scheduled parents meet as well as need-based, and also the time management between teachers and parents for the achievement level, students' feedback, re-assessment and remedial class.*

### **Parents' Involvement for Assessment**

As in the practices revealed in School A, the parents' involvement, as assumed by CDC, which is required for the authentic assessment, is not satisfactory. In my research, data collection with the parents is not the area of interest directly. However, some of the

findings were drawn from the perspectives of both principals and teachers. I have realized that the parents' involvement is the key factor in School A because most of the teachers bring the practices of influence into the assessment practices. Then, research also showed that parental pressure for academic achievement can lead to a focus on rote learning and test preparation, hindering the development of deeper understanding and critical thinking skills (Singh & Serto, 2025). I agree with the practices of School A. Thus, from the perspectives of parents, I found some connection between parents' involvement regarding the assessment practices in the integrated curriculum because they were also one of the stakeholders in the practices of School A, although no direct parents' feedback and reaction were valued. Principal from school A says *"it's is really difficult to convince the parents to make their agreement for the acceptance on formative assessment rather than summative test"* *"Furthermore he says," They forget soon about ongoing nature of assessment integrated with the teaching and learning although they are informed that varieties of assessment tools are used in the classroom teaching period beyond the written test. They ask their students to show the monthly test papers in the notebook. So, it seems that they still need the understanding of authentic assessment practices, which must be remedial and re-teaching with re-assessment, in the question of how do you involve your parents in the assessment practices?* The principal responded that the school generally tends to conduct the parents' workshop at the beginning of the academic session and on the result day as well as in each term. At the beginning of the session, the experts deliver the ways they participate and discuss the significance of this assessment process.

However, on the result day, they enquire with the class teachers about why the students could not secure good marks in the written test. The principal said that *he was tired of convincing the system of how fast they forget the process of assessment because they have already printed in their mind about only the written test, asking him if the parents were not involved directly. He responded that the school distributes the students' portfolios to parents who need to go through each theme and sign along with the suggestion.* The principal again smiles and says, *"Parents put questions only over the absence of the written test mark sheet, although students have secured good marks, and conducted assessment with many practical tools on a daily basis."* He explained the need

and involvement of parents. Thus, aforementioned practices have supported the notion of Budhathoki (2023), who conducted a study using narrative inquiry on teachers' perceptions and practices regarding integrated curriculum in Nepal. The outcomes of his research showed a positive perception of teachers who realized its nature, which is student-centered and activity based. However, he has highlighted some challenges such as inadequate training for teachers, insufficient resources and lack of parental readiness in favour of formative assessment, which is closely associated with the real practices of School A.

On the other hand, Sapana expressed her annoyance with the parents in the sense that they are not willing to participate in the assessment practices. She added that once *she had called the parents to exchange the student's feedback on theme-wise achievement, who was the father of Johan Limbu (pseudonym), but he refused to attend the meeting. Instead, he suggested that I should continue the subject-based teaching and assessment practices. Further, he warned her to change the school if the assessment system is not changed.* Then, she was in a problem because her principal had announced the compulsion and awards for making the maximum number of parents present in the meeting. She was quite upset and discouraged from calling her parents. Though she called other parents, they agreed to attend, exchange feedback and sign the student's portfolio. Then, I was quite interested to ask the next teacher, Rajwai, " Did you call the same parents, named Bhakta Limbu? She said yes, and he agreed to attend also. As the researcher, I became more curious to know how he attended the meeting. She shared the idea that she informed me *he will be the chief Guest of the meeting. If he is absent, the meeting will be postponed.*

When Sapana saw the same parents, she became nervous and refused to greet and interact with them. She shared her encountered cases with the experienced teacher Puja. After that, she shared the case of the parents' differences over the formative assessment. The principal *shared the fundamental assumption that these assessment practices would develop the holistic aspect of the children. Then, he was taken to the respective classroom where his students would study.* The classroom was well decorated with the rubrics on the wall of the classroom, and where the teacher's daily lesson plan was kept. Puja Basnet (Pseudo name) *explained that the learning rate, learning problem and learning*

*proficiency can be observed on the basis of each theme, which could make the transparency in time, focusing on the learning rather than marks.* After all these efforts, he was convinced and committed to continuing to keep in touch with the school. And I questioned all three teachers as to whether there were any other ways to increase parents' participation? Sapana Kafle *responded to me that all the parents were invited to attend the meeting on the day of result publication, where all the parents interact with the subject teachers over what the learners could learn and what they could not learn, as well as required the remedial classroom connecting theme-wise soft skills. All the parents are given the students' portfolio to take home for the detailed analysis of the students' achievement recorded, which they would have to return within a week.*

Then, I visited class two, where Puja Basnet was teaching the theme “My Daily Life” in class three under the mathematics, where she gave the project work connecting with the soft skills as S5.1, with the direct involvement of parents, such as Do you know that child has been patient and tolerant with the social norms and values with your neighbor? If so, please mention the context of where and when. Further, I also observed many other examples of project work collaboration with the parents. These are examples of parents' involvement in the assessment practices. Therefore, we find mixed types of parents' involvement with the internal assessment process. However, parents participated in the activities through the parents' interaction, and work was not counted.

From my observation and analysis, the assessment practices in School A showed a mixed and often challenging picture of parental involvement, keeping the parents reluctant and uncertain about these practices. These practices could be interpreted as a sense of responsibility as a “chief guest. It had been proven that parents' sensitization roles were required to make their active participation visible. This showed a clear gap between the intent of the integrated curriculum and the reality of practice: authentic assessment required parents as active partners, but here their engagement remained more of a challenge than a support.

### **Learning Calculation and Result Publication:**

The students will have varying academic performance on the basis of the theme on different subjects as the cumulative assessment is directed towards further learning to promote quality learning. To answer the question of how the student learning and their

result are calculated and published? The principal responded that the students' learned and unlearned performance was calculated on the basis of each theme, allowing the learners to identify their own potential and achievement. He added more that learning performances are recorded in the individual portfolio. Students' learned performance is recorded in the portfolio for learning improvement, as Black and Wiliam (1998) supported that assessment is the engine that drives learning. On the other hand, he also asked: the learned performance, which was valued by a particular rank after calculation of each theme and cumulated for publishing the result in the form of grade sheets. I was interested to know how the students' learning is calculated and published in the results form. I wanted to see the sample of the student's grade sheets. Therefore, I asked the principal if I could see the students' marksheet. He called a teacher to bring one of the students' portfolios from the classroom. Isha Khadka brought a portfolio belonging to a student of class two. He turned each page of all the subjects on the basis of each theme. Then, I went through theme 2 in class two, 'Hamro Sumudaya' under the Nepali subject, where I had secured 49 marks among 13 total achievement levels with 90%, resulting in A+. Then, I questioned him about how the student secured 90% on this theme. The principal explained to me the *ways to calculate the achievement level (For example, the students' learning achievement number is out of 60. He secured the A+ with 90 %. In this situation, how is his grading and percentage calculated using the formula, such as area-wise (theme=total achievement level% assessed achievement level multiply by 100)? Furthermore, he stressed that he had instructed all the subject teachers to follow the same authentic procedure. He proudly told me that the school conducted the teachers' training to calculate the achievement level of each theme through each subject-wise cumulative record to individual GPA calculation.* He paused sometimes and emphasized his main responsibilities of providing resources, training for students and parents, coordinating and managing, as well as guiding the teaching staff.

Then, I gathered ten portfolios of different classes of different students. I studied it according to each theme of each subject concerning students' performance calculation to hand over to the parents in the form of a marksheet. From the portfolio studies, all the students' portfolio were well managed, but I found the deficiency in my study was some errors too especially of Ankit Basnet((Pseudonym) 'portfolio and others' too, for

calculation of percentage because total achievement and assessed achievement were not well concerned in calculation, Then, I waited for them after school was over. I had tea in the school canteen with them. In our intercommunication, my participants, such as Sapana Kafle, Rajwai, and the participant of class observation, Puja Basnet, were freely open to share the practices and problems. I also presented myself as their friend, learner and supporter to make them feel at ease. I would like to pinpoint the errors I have encountered while studying them, but I felt uneasy saying these are errors. So, being curious to learn the achievements of the same students, I turned the pages; meanwhile, another pair of teachers noticed and pointed out the errors. The subject teacher, Rajwai, was shocked by the mistakes, so she calculated and corrected them on the spot. I realized that it was really the cause, not because of competence, but a deficiency in performance, because they did not have enough technical support. There, teachers themselves were worried because the annual results had not yet been published, but they had not yet been prepared. So, they were taking all the students' portfolios home because they had only completed the calculation of each theme but still remained for the GPA calculation. I questioned Sapana Kafle on how the achievement of students could be calculated for GPA. She showed me the formula for GPA calculation.

Furthermore, Rajwai added that after cumulative marks, percentage and grade finding, weighted grade point (WGP) has to be taken from the multiplication between credit hour (CH) and grade point (GPA), with the utilization of the formula as weighted grade point = credit hour multiplied by grade point.

Grade Point Average (GPA) = Total weighted Grade Points divided by total credit hours. Then, the newly appointed Rodha (Pseudonym) showed her curiosity with the experienced teacher about the progress report, which was to be given to parents on the day of the results. She seemed to be a bit nervous about whether she could complete all the tasks or not because this was her first time applying. At the same time, I was waiting for the sharing of other teachers over the confusion of Rodha. Then, an experienced teacher, named Rojina, brought the practices of assessment in the form of a progressive report, ready to give to the parents. Then, she showed the sample of the final progress report to parents as given in the curriculum guidelines.

The practices of school A depicted that the focal person for integrated curriculum implementation support was lacking and only focused on students' results rather than students' learning and achievement. The school leader was seen as conscious of making the teachers experts for the publication of results and GPA calculation. Teachers in school A were still finalizing results near publication deadlines and even carried portfolios home. The Progress reports still lacked reliability and consistency. Such errors were not due to a lack of knowledge but rather gaps in performance and a heavy workload. As a researcher, I saw this as a weakness in implementation: the philosophy of authentic assessment is clear, but in practice, calculation errors and over-dependence on manual record-keeping risk and the super priority of parents on the written test.

### **Soft Skills in Classroom Practices**

As the principal of School A expressed, efforts have been made to align classroom teaching with both academic knowledge and soft skills development as guided by the integrated curriculum. He stated that *teachers are encouraged to prepare lesson plans that mainly include communication, collaboration, and creativity tasks. He gave examples such as group storytelling in Nepali, role plays in English, and collaborative problem-solving soft skills in Mathematics. According to him, the school leadership has guided teachers to focus not only on course completion but also on developing children's interpersonal, emotional, and reflective capacities.*

The principal also showed me the banners posted on the wall, which were with regard to movement, participating in the rally complaining with India for Lipulake, Kalapaani and Limpiya Dhura as our land. Then, he described that *this is for the development of the sense of national identity and belonging.* In the question of what your role is in bringing the changes to learners' daily lives? The principal mentioned that *I have made compulsion to make a daily lesson plan integrating the soft skills with each one, also scheduled to celebrate the book less Friday, where we focus on conducting the soft skills activities, which all the teachers should administer weekly. For this, he added that the school administration sends information to parents to make available the materials at school to students. Further, he explained that the school should pay the cost to make the materials available from the market. Before this, the school conducted the parents' meeting at the beginning of the session and distributed the list of soft skills,*

*which the school intended to change some behavioral aspects. Then, he followed and provided feedback as well as facilitated the teacher. He says that he would like to produce the human resource manpower from those who are sound in thinking, communication, leadership, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving, respect for diversity and intercultural understanding, creating them different from other products from other organization.*

From the Teachers' interviews, they confirmed that they intentionally incorporated soft skills while teaching different themes. For instance, while teaching "My Family" in English, Sapana (pseudonym) stated that students introduce family members to peers, which promoted communication and confidence. Still, she continuously expressed that in "Measurement" in Mathematics, students were divided into groups to measure classroom objects, fostering teamwork and problem-solving.

Similarly, in "Mero Serofero", teachers organized map-drawing and group discussion, which highlighted creativity and collaboration. Teachers shared that such practices had made their classes more engaging and meaningful. During the interview with Sapana, she answered the question of how she conducts the classroom activities. Then, she gave the example of teaching the theme "Me and My Family" (Class 2). *While teaching this theme, I focused on developing communication and interpersonal skills. I divided students into small groups and asked them to introduce their family members in Nepali using simple sentences like 'This is my mother. She is a teacher.'* Through role play, they practiced speaking politely and listening carefully. I encouraged teamwork by letting them draw a family tree together. From this activity, I saw that students not only learned new vocabulary but also improved their confidence in expressing themselves, respecting others' turn to speak showing empathy toward friends whose families were in trouble. To the question of *whether you remember the situation in which your students have felt empathy and do the act accordingly?* Sapana Kafle replied that *yes, once, I was a witness to the event when I went to extend heartfelt condolences to the class three students to share the pain of the death of one of the students, when we were in deep silence in remembrance of his father's soul to stay in peace in heaven.*

She further stated: *"All of my students in class three were sobbing with tears in their eyes. Nowadays, we have established the practices that all the students of a*

*respective class tend to attend the funeral process if any one of their family members dies.”* When I asked the question, what are the practices in existence of cooperation and self-management, as well as critical thinking, problem solving, of your students? Then, the next teacher, Rajwai (Pseudonym), *also added that every student has to care for at least one junior student in his/her own choice, searching for the problem which would develop the cooperation and problem-solving skills. Besides, every day in the morning, the first period, the class teacher will have to conduct the circle time where all the students are convinced about what can be done and what can't be done at home. Then. They practice washing, ironing, brushing teeth, buttoning, lacing shoes, and making a tie as an example of self-management, which they have to manage properly either at home or school.*

During the interview, she shared her teaching experiences, such as *"While teaching the lesson 'Hamro Samudhya, I tried to connect students with soft skills. I asked them to introduce the different community helpers in their own words. Furthermore, she told her students to bring their own favorite fruits from home, which they have to share and describe their color, fruits, trees, plants and the environment they are grown in. These activities were aligned with the practices of communication skills and self-confidence.* Then, for the development of group work efficiency, she divided the group on the basis of the profession, such as a doctor, another as a farmer, and another as a teacher. Then, the students were instructed to act out role play, teamwork, empathy, and the importance of relating to each other. She again added that in their workbook, students drew pictures of community helpers and wrote one good habit of each.

This reflected their creative thinking and value-based learning. Similarly, when we were having tea in the school canteen while talking about the soft skills-related activities, A Mathematics Subject teacher was listening to us. Then she wished to share her practices with the example on the Theme: Our Community (Counting Community Objects, Grade 1–2). The teacher said: *"While teaching counting in the 'Our Community' theme, I used objects like a house, a tree, and fruits around the community. The teachers shared another activity-based practice, in which the students were asked to go outside to the school grounds and count the number of trees, shops and houses. These activities support the development of classroom observation skills and problem-solving. I*

*encouraged students to work in pairs and compare their numbers, which promoted collaboration.* In class, the result of counting was presented in front of peers, which promoted their confidence and public speaking skills. I have also observed the workbook of the students, where they also made a small chart showing objects and their numbers, aiming to promote organizational skills.

For classroom observation, when I entered class three, the students were seated in groups of five. The teacher wrote “Hamro Sanskriti” on the board and started by asking students about cultural events they celebrate at home. Pictures of Dashain, Tihar, Chhath, Losar, and Maghe Sankranti were displayed on chart paper. I noticed that the teacher carefully blended soft skills with the subject content. It was the class of Isha Khadka who began the lesson by asking each student to tell one cultural practice from their home, which helped students practice confidence, expression, and active listening. Then, students were required to make a small student group and asked to prepare a short story role. Then, students had to share how their family celebrated festivals like Dashain, Tihar, or Chhath, where teamwork and collaboration were encouraged to respect others’ ideas. The group presentation encourages the students in both public speaking and developing empathy, and for cultural education. The teacher guided students to compare similarities and differences across cultures. This fostered critical thinking. From both teacher guidance and student participation, it was evident that soft skills such as communication, collaboration, empathy, respect, and creativity were intentionally practiced in the teaching of Hamro Sanskriti. Likewise, I also observed the next section, but the same class 3 on the same theme, but with a different teacher, Rodha Khatri. The teacher began the lesson with a discussion method: She asked, “तिमीहरूले घरमा कुन-कुन चाड मनाउँछौ?” (Which festivals do you celebrate at your home?) Then, students raised their hands and shared their experiences. Rodha encouraged active listening by making other students repeat what their friends said. She then divided the class into groups and gave each group a picture card of one festival. The groups were asked to discuss the questions which were written on the board such as why is it celebrated? What do people wear, eat, and do during that festival? And what values do we learn from it? From this lesson, several soft skills were practically visible: Students presented their group discussion findings in front of the class. Example: One student confidently said, “Tihar ma

hidebehind le bhai tika garner Maya dethatching. “While preparing group charts, students helped each other with drawings and writing festival names. I saw one student holding a marker while another colored the picture, working together. Again, she asked: “Dashain ma kasto anand hunchha ra kina mancheharu ekata hunchhan? Students compared Dashain with Lhosar and discussed how both bring family unity. Each group decorated their chart with drawings (kites for Dashain, lights for Tihar, Dhido for Maghe Sankranti). Then she reminded, “Hamro Sanskriti bibidh chha, tara sabai sanskriti sammana garnu parch. Finally, Students clapped after each presentation, showing encouragement.

The assessment practices revealed through classroom observation and workbook analysis also presented soft skills-based activities that were systematically recorded and structured, with limited assessment of soft skills implementation. Overall, School A demonstrated progressive efforts to embed soft skills in the integrated curriculum.

### **Rubrics as an Assessment Tool**

In School, the rubrics are integrated into internal assessment under the integrated curriculum. Data from principal and teacher interviews, student workbook analysis, and classroom observation confirmed that teachers used rubric unsystematically while teaching different themes in each subject. The principal in School A said,

*In our school, we have been practicing rubrics as a key internal assessment tool. All subject teachers are encouraged to prepare rubrics aligned with the integrated curriculum learning outcomes. For example, principal as in English, rubrics for writing tasks assess clarity, grammar, vocabulary, creativity, and rubrics with a focus on accuracy process skills. Furthermore, he says the practice of rubric ensures fairness and transparency in grading so that parents and students also get clear feedback on their child’s performance based on rubric indicators. In response to the question, when and why are the rubrics being used to facilitate the learning performance? Students are informed about the rubric indicators before performing the activity so they know what areas they should focus on. During the interview, he emphasizes the rubrics of mathematics subjects as rubrics are used to check not only the answer but also the process and clarity of steps.*

This prevents students from focusing only on final results. He gives an example of our surroundings in the sense of how the rubrics are being used in the project on this subject. Since this subject is activity-based, rubrics are essential to evaluate projects, presentations, and fieldwork. He told me about a very practical experience relating to the dissatisfaction with the varying marks for the same performance. The students' answer sheets were distributed on the result day to be seen at home.

The participant teacher, Sapana, brought up the parental practices that were the matter of 15 September 2024, a parent of Suman Katuwal (Pseudonym) from class three came with complaints that a neighboring child has secured more marks in comparison to his own child, even for the same performance in the terminal test. The principal *committed to the parent that this won't happen next time, but he was not satisfied with the principal. As a result, he has joined his child at the new school. He told me that it was a very bitter experience for the first time. Therefore, he thought of omitting such inconsistencies for the same performance with the application of rubrics.* For this, the staff meeting was conducted, and they were instructed to prepare and present the rubrics before the classroom activities.

However, the teacher was unaware and unskilled in preparing and applying it in the classroom. Therefore, the principal finalized the teacher training session where the focus was given on how to prepare the rubrics. He said that he had *designed and presented the rubrics of the theme "Me and My Family" (Grade 1). For the theme Me and My Family, I asked students to tell a short story about their family. I gave them a rubric sheet with four criteria: Clarity, Vocabulary, Sentence Structure, and Confidence. Students practiced with the rubric before their performance. "Then, teachers were satisfied and convinced to design and apply the rubrics for the self-assessment and plan for learning based on the criteria presented in advance before starting the class. He added during the interview that the school has developed a culture where students expect to see rubric indicators for each major activity, making assessment transparent and predictable.* After that, Puja Basnet (Pseudonym), as the teacher of our Surroundings (Hamro Serofero) subject, presents the example of the theme: My School (Grade 1) ". For the theme My School, students drew and labeled different parts of their school. She assessed them using rubrics for accuracy, creativity, presentation, and explanation.

“Likewise, the next English teacher, Rajwai, gives the example of *Me and My Family* (Grade 1) such as “Tell a short story about your family” with rubric Criteria such as *Clarity of Expression, understood with ease. Vocabulary Use uses familiar and accurate words (e.g., “mother,” “brother”)* and *sentence structure, uses simple correct sentences (“This is my dad.”)*.

Similarly, from my classroom observation of Kanchan Rai in the English storytelling activity, the rubric was displayed on the classroom wall. They were fluency, expression, voice clarity, and creativity. Students also used peer-assessment sheets with the same rubric.

On Friday, as a book-free day, I visited the school and was permitted to enter the classroom to know the reality of using the rubric in the real classroom. Rojina, as an English teacher, was conducting the storytelling program for the Grade 3. During class, she displayed the rubric chart on the board and assessed each child, including the Criteria: Fluency, Expression, Voice Clarity, Creativity, etc. My classroom observation also showed that self-assessment and peer-assessment were practiced with the same rubric. I witnessed myself that Laxmi Ojha (Pseudonym) secured the highest marks in storytelling. I also observed the class of Kanchan in Nepali reading class under the theme: ‘Mero Vidyalaya’ of Nepali subject in class one, where students were assessed using rubrics: Fluency, Pronunciation, Comprehension, and Expression. Then, the next student, Ramesh Khatri, secured four marks, and the other students secured fewer and provided feedback to locate the areas for further improvement.

Overall, I interpreted the rubric practice in School A as progressive and innovative, with strong leadership supporting the preparation and application of the rubric’s depth. The rubric applied after the teachers' training to support them in developing has created consistency in scoring. The students’ judgmental assessment will be more verifiable and justification for the parents. The practices of rubric have started from the guidelines of the principal who has prepared the criteria of rubric for the teachers’ encouragement. Therefore, the leaders should always show the ways the principal himself observed the class using rubric and prepared to present its usefulness. As the researcher, I have viewed the rubrics as a tool to locate the area of further improvement if it is presented in advance of delivering the lesson. However, the

classroom observation and students' documents presented that the rubric was not applied completely. The interview with my participant displayed that they did not have time to prepare the rubrics. If it was used to some extent as well, this was not found in the specific form as assumed by the integrated curriculum.

### **Application of Assessment Tools in School A**

From the principal's interview, it was clear that School A has institutionalized authentic assessment as guided by CDC in the integrated curriculum to almost the maximum extent. The principal highlighted that *assessment is not only focused on written examinations but also on continuous observation, project work, portfolios, group activities, and performance-based tasks. According to him, teachers are instructed to prepare rubrics in advance, focusing on both academic achievements and soft skills like communication, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking.* Furthermore, he also explained that parents were oriented towards this authentic system so that they can support children at home. Principal shared assessment practice is not limited to paper and pencil tests but is continuous, holistic, and child-centered. He emphasized that *the school uses thematic and activity-based assessment, focusing on the holistic development of the child.* He also tries to make clear with the example: In the theme "Our Surroundings", students were assessed not only on naming objects but also on their ability to explain their use and show care towards the environment. He answered the question of What are the ways to assess the students? *Teachers were encouraged to assess the students through portfolios, project work, oral presentations, and activity-based tasks.* He further highlighted that *rubrics had also recently been introduced to make the assessment more systematic, transparent, and child-centered.* Moreover, he shared the practice that he was applying in School A, which emphasized reporting not only on academic performance but also on personal growth, participation in activities, and behavior. Reports were shared with parents during meetings, where teachers explained both strengths and areas for improvement. Then he also added *that the real assessment practices from the application point of view can be studied by the teachers, too.* I asked him if you had any challenges with its application? Then, he replied to me with a strong keenness to share *"parents have still less preference and belief in formative assessment over subjective test and complained about the marks instead of GPA and trained and experienced teachers were*

*very difficult to appoint. He further says that the main task of a private school is to train and develop only the human manpower because teachers leave the school soon.*

During interviews with the teachers, I asked Sapana Kafle (Pseudonym), *When and where do you assess your students?* She answered *me that teaching and assessing the students' learning are integrated in day-to-day classroom activities.* Instead of relying only on written tests, they used questioning, group discussion, and project work to track progress. However, she added more, *"We had a pre-scheduled exam. Again, in the interview, I asked the next question, " Don't you take the terminal exam?" She told me that they do the written test, but it will have only the value of marks because the school has its own obligation to neglect subjective tests.*

Then, I questioned the next participant, Rajwai, about how she assessed the students' learning. She stated that *the curriculum has given us the achievement level, aspects for assessing and an assessment tool which we have to apply.* To clarify more, she also showed the photocopies of the curriculum which was being assessed by her. Then I wanted to be clearer about the principal's statement that they were using not only the written test but also the assessment tools proposed by the curriculum. Therefore, I asked her what *other assessment tools, beyond the written test, you was using in the classroom while teaching?* She smiled and turned the pages of the curriculum (National curriculum framework and explained to me the assessment tool she was using, such as class participation, oral task, project work, pair assessment, self-assessment, parents' reaction, talk and discussion, classroom observation, etc. Then I further questioned *how you rate the learning achievement?* The participant, Rajwai Basnet, responded to me that *learning achievement is assessed by the basic for 1, the basic for 2, the proficient for 3, and the advanced for 4. How do you decide to rate a certain achievement level on each theme?* That was my question. She presented her classroom practices with the support of Rubrics. She presented the rubrics to all the students before teaching for their self-assessment and quality learning. She says, *"Rubrics are the most important and measurable assessment tools so that learners themselves identify their level of learning and unlearned"*. She again turned the pages of the curriculum (page 136, CDC, 2019) and explained to me about the rubrics on the theme of 'Me and My Family' under mathematics. It has given clear criteria for valuing the achievement learned with certain

marks, such as either 1, 2, 3 or 4. They explained that *they used a rubric-based assessment to track student progress. They focused on daily classroom activities, project work, and participation. They also shared that they integrate soft skills like cooperation, respect, and communication into their assessment.*

The interview guiding question to Sapana was: *When and where do you record the marks? She responded to me that the students' secured marks were recorded in a separate students' portfolio, which they showed and explained.* They took me to their classroom and displayed the individual portfolio with space to keep the record twice, containing date and marks under each heading. Furthermore, she fulfilled my desire to ask questions, such as *how you arrive at the stage of the result.* She presented all the formulas to calculate the percentage and Grade first on the basis of each theme. Then, she had to take out subject-wise cumulative assessment records under each subject and finally present the weighted grade point (WGP) and GPA calculation. After all, she would give the record to the exam committee. She also added that *"it's a compulsion to get the sign from all the parents on each theme, but it's very hard to collaborate."*

Likewise, I also observed the classroom of Rojina as the non-participating teacher of my English class on the theme: Fruits and Vegetables, where children were asked to draw, label, and describe fruits. Rojina used rubrics with criteria such as clarity of expression, creativity, accuracy, and effort. I also observed each and every portfolio of students, asking my participant, Sapana Kafle. I found out about students' learning on the basis of rubrics through students' portfolios. The portfolio was maintained with the fundamental assumption of CDC with regard to regular assessment and re-assessment. But I found that the students were assessed only the first time, although they had secured below three marks when asked about the portfolio to Rajwai.

Then, I saw the workbook of Ramesh Khatri to see the practices of assessment on the theme: Our Community under mathematics. I found that Ramesh was engaged in measuring and counting local items (like shop goods, vegetables, and people in the neighborhood). The rubrics were pasted on the workbook containing problem-solving process, logical reasoning, and correct application for measuring or counting. Then, I also studied the notebook of the next student, Suman Shrestha. The notebook belonged to Hamro Serofero, Theme: Our Surroundings. I found that he prepared the group charts

showing local festivals or community helpers, including rubrics such as participation, collaboration, neatness, and correct information. Similarly, I also visited the notebook of Precious Khatri (Pseudonym) in the Nepali Theme: 'Our Culture'. He was given a home assignment to list down the cultural practices in your community.

The practices given show that assessments do not focus only on written examinations but also on continuous observation, project work, portfolios, group activities, and performance-based tasks. This practice has shown that teachers tend to present the rubrics in advance, including the soft skill, although it is partially repeated. I have found that the paper-pencil test is also taken as one of the written tests, but high priority is seen for the application of some assessment tools as proposed by the curriculum, which is proven by the teacher's daily lesson plan. This school has emphasized that it uses thematic and activity-based assessment, focusing on the holistic development of the child. Another important interpretation of the practices presented here refers to the fact that the teachers' individual differences also matter for the authentic assessment because theme integration, soft skills integration with thematic content, portfolio management and parents' involvement are only observed person-dependent and vary, although the school leaders are cooperative and teachers are acknowledged with the authentic practices.

### **Feedback and Remedial Practices in School A**

The principal of School A emphasized that feedback and remedial teaching were taken as an integral part of learning in the integrated curriculum. He answered the question of *when to provide the feedback. Feedback was provided immediately in the classroom and also in written form in students' workbooks.* He mentioned that the school had recently adopted authentic rubrics proposed by CDC to make feedback specific and constructive. For weak learners, the school runs remedial classes twice a week after regular school hours. In the question of *whom do you provide the feedback and remedial class to the learners?* The principal said that the school emphasized continuous feedback to students and used remedial classes for those who could not achieve the targeted learning". He explained: *Our teachers do not just give marks; they provide oral and written feedback on how students can improve.* He remembers the event once when the result was published, a dispute had arisen between a teacher and parents because the child

had secured only two marks on the theme. *I called the parents, and I complained to the teachers.* Then, he reminded me of the system of feedback with the re-teaching if any student secured less than three marks. Further, he said that teachers had not conducted the re-teaching and re-assessment since no feedback was supposed to be given while teaching the theme on ‘Birds and Animals’. Then I visited the student’s portfolio. That child had secured only two marks on speaking because the teacher said that the student could only participate in short conversations and talk about the present, past and future (CDC, 2019, p. 218). To make him calm, he says, *“I have to say sorry for the mistake of my teacher because the authentic assessment in integrated requires frequent feedback for further improvement.* Then, I asked him *if you are in the office, how does you ensure that your students are receiving immediate feedback?* In the interview, the principal replied to me that he did cross-checking once a week.

On the other hand, during the interview, the principal of School A highlighted that remedial classes had been established as an important part of supporting low achievers. According to him, the school had a policy to identify students who were struggling through continuous classroom observation, workbook checking, and teacher feedback, and then place them in short, focused remedial sessions. The principal explained, *“We do not want any child to feel left behind. Remedial teaching helps us to bring them closer to the expected learning outcomes step by step”.* He stressed that remedial classes were usually run after regular school hours and sometimes during activity periods. From the principal’s eyes, *remedial classes are seen not as punishment, but as an opportunity to give focused attention.* In the interview, he added the experience of the result of the parents’ meeting. In meetings, parents expressed that they were happy because the school gave extra attention to their children. One parent shared, *“My son was shy to speak in English, but after the teacher called him for extra class and asked us to practice at home, now he can say simple sentences about his things.”* Teachers confirmed that parents were encouraged to support remedial activities at home, like labelling objects in English or asking children to describe their school routines.

Likewise, Sapana Kafle only presented her classroom teaching practices through her experiences. She assessed students based on how they performed in real-life tasks based on the rubrics. For example, in the English theme “My Belongings”, students were

asked to bring their school bag, pencil box, or favorite book and describe them in English. She used rubrics to check. If weaknesses were found, teachers provided individual feedback such as “*You described your bag well, but forgot to mention its color. Next time, add more details*”. Similarly, she gave the example of another theme teaching on “Our School” under Hamro Serofero. Students were taken on a school visit where they had to identify and write about places like the library, office, classroom, and playground. Teachers then used rubrics to assess things such as Observation skills (Did the child notice details of the school?), Drawing/writing skills (How well did they represent their school?), Presentation in class (Did they share confidently?). And she remembered the feedback, “*Your handwriting is clear, but check the spelling of ‘library’*”. After each task, feedback was given immediately. For example, Rajwai, as my participant teacher said: “*When students wrote a short paragraph under Mero Serofero (My Daily Life), I do not just correct spelling. I write short comments like ‘Good effort, try to add more details’ or ‘Well-structured sentences, but check punctuation.’ This motivates them to improve*”. She mentioned that peer feedback was also encouraged, if the students were in large numbers, where one student reads aloud, and others suggested improvements. Due to the time constraint as a remedial practice, she generally kept a list of students who needed extra support. I asked her, “*Why do you provide immediate feedback to your students?*” She told me that *immediate feedback is so useful because students improve after re-teaching to improve their learning*. She gave the example that if a student secured below four marks, s/he would be given a chance to point out the mistakes, where extra efforts would be required. She shared the good practices of improvement a lot from this single effort. Even after re-teaching, if students could not improve or secure the same marks below, they discussed in the staff meeting about the cause and responsible factors why the particular child was weak. Then, low achievers were recommended for the remedial class. Rajwai said, “*Her school is conducting the remedial class in small groups for 15 days, where she is one of the remedial teachers.*”

After the interview with the teachers Sapana and Rajwai, I observed the class of Sapana at first and found the equivalent of what was expressed in the interview. She taught English (Theme: My Belongings) and told her students about their belongings. Then, students wrote the sentences “*This is my bag. it is blue.*” but forgets to use capital

letters. Then Sapana circled the mistake and wrote “*Use capital letters at the beginning.*” The teacher also gave verbal praise like “*Good try! You can improve more.*” Then, I observed the class of Rodha Khatri in Hamro Serofero (Theme: Our School), when students drew a picture of their classroom and wrote short sentences (e.g., “This is my class. There is a board.”). She provided feedback such as “*Add more sentences about your friends or teacher*”. Before the class started, I saw both teachers presenting the rubrics. In the request of the principal, I also observed the Example of Feedback and Remedial Teaching of Kanchan Rai, who had given the task (Class 3, English – My Daily Life): Write 5–6 sentences about “My Morning Routine”. The students did the task, and Kanchan was providing the feedback with the comments: “*Well done. Try to use time words like ‘first, then, next, finally.*” I was watching whether she would provide remedial action or not. Students who missed sequencing were asked to orally retell their routine using pictures (wake up, brush, breakfast, go to school) after she provided the ways. They then easily rewrote it with the teacher's guidance.

I also observed the class of Rajwai as a participant. During observation of a Grade 3 English class, she taught and assigned a task with a question: *Write five sentences about your morning routine.* Then, students first discussed their ideas in pairs. They wrote in their workbooks. She went around, checking each student’s work, giving instant oral feedback like “*Good, but use capital letters at the beginning*” or “*Try using ‘then’ instead of ‘and’ to connect sentences.*”

At the end, the teacher called three students to read aloud their sentences. The class clapped, and the teacher corrected gently where needed. The weak students were later grouped for the remedial class to participate the next day, in the morning at 6:00 am. Although Puja was not my participant, I liked to observe her class in the same class but in a different section because she was already experienced. It was observed that the classroom was activity-based. Students were involved in role plays, group discussions, and drawing tasks under themes like “My Daily Life” and “Fruits and Vegetables.” After the tasks, she asked each group to present, and then they gave both positive comments (e.g., “Good teamwork,” “You spoke clearly”) and suggestions for improvement (e.g., “Next time, use more English words,” “Try to draw with labels”). This showed that formative assessment was happening in real time.

After the classroom observation, I requested one of the students to collect the students' notebooks also. Then, I analyzed them where I found them in the notebook belonging to a student, with specific comments instead of just ticking answers. For example, in English, she had given the question to write a few sentences about your bag. She had checked with a red pen, "Good sentences, add one more about your bag", "In Hamro Serofero: Try to write in full sentences instead of single words"

Thus, students' workbook analysis and classroom observation made it easier to conclude that the feedback and remedial teaching practice were conducted for both the students' feedback and remedial classes, although individual teachers enhanced some differences. However, the learning records were not recorded in the students' portfolios.

Figure 7

Student's Portfolio

कक्षा : ३ ४. गौरी विद्यालय		विषय : नेपाली		विद्यार्थीको नाम : सुकुती गेजेल		सङ्कलन : ३	
शिक्षक उपलब्धि	परिक्षण गर्ने पक्ष	पुस्तक	निर्दिष्ट पाठको सुझावहरू मिति	छात्र अक्षर	छात्रको सुझावहरू मिति	अक्षर	सङ्कलन
१. उपयुक्त भाषाको प्रयोग गरी कुराकानी, गना, क्लमफल र प्रश्नोत्तर गर्ने	सुनिश्चन र सुनिश्चन	बुगाबानी, कस्योको कस्यो र कस्यो, क्लमफल, प्रश्नोत्तर	०२-०९	३			
२. विषयवस्तुका आधारमा कुराकानी र क्लमफल गरी सिधिल अभिव्यक्ति दिन	सुनिश्चन	निश्चित मन्त्र	०२-०९	३			
३. पारिभाषिक, विद्यालयीय र सामाजिक परिचयमा प्रयोग हुने शब्द परिचय गरी प्रयोग गर्ने	शब्दपरिचय	सन्ध्या, अन्धकार र प्रेम	०२-११	३			
४. उत्तरी उत्तरी ध्वनि तथा गणना संरचना भएका शब्दको प्रयोग गरी भाषिक सञ्चार गर्ने	पठन अभ्यास र वर्ग विभेदीकरण	गर्भ उच्चारण, निश्चित कार्य	०२-११	३			
५. सन्दर्भ सामग्री पढेर विषयवस्तु भोज गरी लेख्न	पठन अभ्यास र पुनरावलोकन	सन्ध्या, अन्धकार, प्रेम, उठे वा उठ्यो	०२-१२	३			
६. शब्द, वाक्य र अनुच्छेदको अनुसन्धान, सुनिश्चन, निर्देशित लेखन र शिर्षकलेखन गर्ने	लेखन अभ्यास	अनुसन्धान, सुनिश्चन, निर्देशित, शिर्षकलेखन कार्य, रचना	०२-१२	३			
७. पाठमा उपलब्ध शैली प्रयोगमा आउने शब्द, लय शब्द तथा शीर्ष शब्द पढ्न	सङ्केतन र विमर्शलेखन र शब्दपरिचय	गर्भ निर्माण, उच्चारण, निर्देशित कार्य	०२-१५	३			
८. रूप, भिन्ना, घुमा, आरचनी, उल्टोपल्टो जस्ता सङ्केतात्मक अभिव्यक्ति भएर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त गर्ने	चिह्न, काल र सङ्केत	मौखिक प्रयोग	०२-१६	३			
९. शब्दव्युत्पत्तिको चिन्तन र शिर्षकलेखनमा शब्द परिचय गरी प्रश्नोत्तर गर्ने	दृश्यचित्र	चित्र, अन्धकार, सन्ध्या, प्रेम	०२-१६	३			
१०. प्राप्त सूचना तथा पढेका सामग्रीका आधारमा विषयवस्तु, पात्र र घटनाको भोज गरी प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त गर्ने	पठन बोध	सूचना प्रयोग	०२-१७	३			
११. पाठका चरित्र, परिवेश र घटनाको वर्णन गर्ने	पठन बोध	सूचना प्रयोग, क्लमफल र प्रश्नोत्तर, वर्णन	०२-१७	३			
१२. स्थानीय परिवेश, सन्दर्भ तथा विषयवस्तु चिन्तने शीर्षक वा विषयवस्तु सुन्ने गरी अनुच्छेद लेख्न	लेखन अभ्यास	शिर्षकलेखन कार्य	०२-१९	३			
१३. पाठका आधारमा घटना वर्णन, अनुभव वर्णन, बुझा लेखन र तार्किक विश्लेषण गर्ने	पठन बोध	सूचना प्रयोग, क्लमफल र प्रश्नोत्तर, वर्णन, विषयवस्तु शिर्षकलेखन	०२-१९	३			
१४. तथ्य, सन्दर्भ, सूचना र पूर्वज्ञानमा आधारित छई मौखिक र सिधिल उत्तर दिन	पठन बोध	क्लमफल र प्रश्नोत्तर	०२-२०	३			
१५. पदसङ्गति मिलाई लेखनीयता र क्रियाका कालको उपयुक्त प्रयोग गरी वाक्य तथा अनुच्छेद रचना गर्ने	चिह्न, काल र सङ्केत	मौखिक प्रयोग, निश्चित प्रयोग	०२-२१	३			
१६. लिखित, वचन, पुरान र आदरका आधारमा सल्ल वाक्यमा परिवर्तन गर्ने	चिह्न, काल र सङ्केत	वाक्यान्तरण	०२-२२	३			
१७. शब्दका वर्ण विभाजन गर्ने र वर्ण जोडेर, घरेर, भिन्नेर वा हटाएर र परिवर्तन गरेर नयाँ शब्द निर्माण गर्ने	सङ्केतन र विमर्शलेखन	गर्भ सङ्केतन, गर्भ निर्माण	०२-२३	३			
शिक्षकको दस्तावेज :		शिक्षकको दस्तावेज र मिति :	मिकाइ उपलब्धको अक्षरको नोट	३			
			मिकाइ उपलब्ध प्रतिगत				

Then I also observed the students' portfolio, where I could not find marks that had not been recorded a second time after feedback and remedial class. Then, I questioned Rajwai Khatri for not recording the marks of re-teaching and re-assessment after the feedback and remedial teaching. Now, this classroom observation supported the practice revealed through the students' Workbook and students' portfolios. The work of low achievers showed frequent corrections and teacher comments such as "Try again," "Good attempt, improve spelling," or "Say it aloud three times." Teachers also inserted smiley stickers or stars in remedial workbooks to motivate students.

From my point of view, as a researcher, School A had good practices in assessment, but also some clear gaps. Teachers gave feedback through oral and written comments, used rubrics, and arranged remedial classes for weak students. They further provided additional assistance in small groups requiring parental involvement, which showed care for their children. However, I observed that in practice, the students' feedback was used with the use of either verbal or written comments for further improvement, such as the feedback, limited to correcting small errors like spelling or punctuation. It seemed students were not helped with the errors with the specific rubrics and the main part of understanding.

From the principal's interview, I came to learn that teachers sometimes did not re-teach or re-check after giving feedback, so students could not improve fully. In students' notebooks and portfolios, I found project work and some records, but not enough evidence of how remedial support changed learning.

Overall, the school followed the theme-based teaching by using formative assessment, but with no proper follow-up and recording, the impact of these efforts remained limited. In reality, it was clear that teachers sometimes failed to give re-teaching and re-assessment, meaning feedback was not often considered for systematic improvement. Moreover, workbook and portfolio analysis revealed that remedial learning outcomes were not consistently documented, raising concerns about accountability and long-term tracking of progress. While School A had established a culture of feedback and remedial support in line with integrated curriculum ideals, the lack of structured follow-up, standardized recording, and emphasis on deeper learning limited the full effectiveness of these otherwise promising practices.

### **Practice of Grade Teaching System in School A**

Newly introduced Nepal's integrated curriculum is strictly based on a thematic approach out of various models. Certain themes are introduced in different classes, where every subject includes the same themes, so that learning becomes deeper and deeper. Students are repeatedly involved in the themes so that the concept becomes clear and helps to remember and apply throughout life. For example, 'Me and my family' is a theme where social behavior, language skills, mathematical calculation, health and physical education and even creative arts can be learned, which would be fruitful for life long. That means inside a theme, different disciplines could be studied, which helps to learn life skills.

I wanted to know whether there was grade teaching or not, as assumed by the CDC. So, I questioned the principal as to *how grade teaching is being implemented in your school*. Then, he responded to me, *there are two sections: Venus and Earth. In class one, we strictly followed grade teaching. One teacher stays with the same group of students for the whole day. They are Kanchan and Rojina in a separate section. The same teacher teaches English, Nepali, Mathematics, and Mero Serofero and local. I believe that in the early years, children feel safe and attached when they have one caring teacher. The teacher can also better understand the students' weaknesses and strengths. In classes two and three, we practice semi-grade teaching*. Then, I said to him, *Why don't you apply the grade teaching in class two?* The principal, as the participant answered, *refused to work as the grade teacher because they were new and untrained*. He further added that: *We don't get teachers in time, we are still not enough to fulfil the assumption as proposed by CDC for a short period of time. He stated that s/he should be experienced, mature, trained and must have the educational background. We have a compulsion to appoint the teachers from the management stream, so how is it possible to assign them to the grade teaching system?* Again, I asked him a question: *What are the differences in grade and semi-grade teaching practices in your experience?* According to him, *in the classroom context of practice, grade teaching in Class 1 helps the teacher focus on the holistic development of small children without burdening them with subject fragmentation. One teacher takes responsibility for all subjects (English, Nepali, Math, Hamro Serofero, Local) in Class 1, which builds a close bond between teacher and*

*student for bonding and emotional security.* However, in his context of school, in Classes 2 and 3, semi-grade teaching was practiced. Here, two to three teachers shared subjects, for example, one teacher taught language subjects such as English, next teacher teaches Nepali, another teaches Math and Science while another for Hamro Serofero etc. He also put the views about the good point of the semi-grade so as he shared that this could make the workload balance and ensure students gradually adapt to multiple teachers before entering subject-based teaching in higher grades. He displayed the classroom schedule of both nature who had prepared it.

Now from the interview with the Sapana Kafle was expected to confirm the sharing of the principal about the teaching practices in school A. Her response was also found the similar to her principal: *Yes, there is a grade teaching system in our school only in class one where I taught last year as a grade teacher in class one because, the IC system demands grade teaching. In the grade teaching system, one teacher has to teach all the subjects and if we combine, within one topic, we teach children all the subjects. Then it will be easy for the learners.* I asked her another question “*How did you feel about teaching all subjects to the same students in grade one?*” She replied to me “*At first, it was challenging, because I must prepare for different subjects. But I feel happy because I know each child very well. For example, if a child is weak in writing Nepali letters, I can connect it with English writing practice and give them extra time. Students also trust me more because I am with them for the whole day. They see me as both a teacher and a guard.*”

Again , I questioned her as “*How is semi-grade teaching in your classroom different from full grade teaching?*” She answered: “*In class two, we practice semi-grade teaching. I take English while another teacher takes Nepali and Mathematics. Likewise, the next teacher teaches Mero Serofero. Students are slowly learning to adjust with more than one teacher. Sometimes it becomes difficult because the level of discipline changes with different teachers. But overall, children are enjoying it, and it helps them get ready for higher grades where subject specialization is necessary.*”

It was the turn of Rajwai Basnet who was a grade teacher in class one. I asked her “*what is grade teaching and how is it practiced?* She replied me “*I think students of class one is very young and they need more care and love, security, so school has managed the*

*grade teaching system in class one. One teacher manages all subjects in grade one including students' portfolio and ECA also.* Rajwai Basnet, Kanchan Rai and Rojina Chaudhary were completely responsible even for the learning and taking responsibility in complete sense where the less accidents also take place in the school compared to the other classes in class two and three. We all of we have to be updated with the contents of multiple subjects “Furthermore, she said,” As the grade teachers, it will be easy to conduct the integrated nature of project work although it as risk taking and burdening for us. Then I observed both classroom practices as follows:

<p><b>Observation Note</b></p> <p>Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2025</p> <p>Venue: School A, Classroom of semi-Grade</p> <p>Teacher Name: Puja</p> <p>Period: (3<sup>rd</sup> minute)</p> <p>Class :3(Semi-Grade)</p> <p>I saw the teachers entering the class for different periods. In semi grade teaching, Students sometimes compared the styles of the teachers, but they were gradually adjusting in higher studied gradually</p> <p>I have seen that three teachers were managing different subjects She repeated the words, kept silent, I will report the class teacher and different teachers. Before she asked the question, she asked the students' name. Further, she also says, please bring the assignment regularly</p>	<p>Observation Note:</p> <p>Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2025</p> <p>Venue: School A, Classroom of Grade Class :1(Grade)</p> <p>Period (3<sup>rd</sup> minute)</p> <p>Teacher Name: Kanchan</p> <p>During classroom observation, I also observed that one teacher managed all four subjects in class, one in a friendly manner. From the classroom observation in class one, Students seemed comfortable and less distracted. They were free to ask questions because the teacher knew them well. The students were asking that miss Tapaai Mero Ghar aaunu la Bholi.Miss aaja Haami sgaai Tiffin Khaau la.</p>
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I saw Students' Workbooks (Grade One) where the same teacher checked all subjects, and feedback comments were similar across subjects, like “Good writing,” “Improve handwriting,” or “Try again”. These feedbacks were consistent, which showed the teacher's close monitoring. I had also done analysis of students' Workbooks (Grade

Two and Three) where different handwriting and feedback styles were visible because of multiple teachers. Kanchan said: the errors committed in Mathematics were maximum but less feedback in English showing variation on the basis of individual differences of the teachers.

From my researcher's point of view, the grade teaching practice in School A appeared thoughtful but also inconsistent. In Class one, I found that complete grade teaching is quite useful because the students feel more secure with the single grade teacher. The integrated curriculum also supported the grade teaching practices as in the class one. However, the grade teaching puts the additional stress on the teacher to manage all subjects by the single teacher which is hard to find the subject expertise and quality. In grades 2 and 3, the practices revealed that the semi grade teaching in school contributed to reduce teaching workload of the teachers

The students' feedback and assessment practices were different from teacher to teacher contributing to the irregular practices in student support. From the student workbook and portfolio review, I found some differences between the semi grade and grade teaching that students achieved more regular inputs for the further improvement over the unlearned achievement whereas the teacher's attention was less focused in semi grade teaching practices, so it is uneven and sometimes superficial. Although the principal emphasized alignment with CDC guidelines, the lack of properly trained teachers and dependence on those from non-educational backgrounds had limited the effectiveness of both teaching and assessment practices.

### **Assessment Practices in School "B"**

School "B" is also graded A by the municipality in Morang District but unlike School "A," its assessment practices was studied based on the interview with the principal and two teachers, classroom observation and document analysis. The cases of practices which have been taken from my informants of School B has been explored as below:

#### **Assessment Variation within Interschool Approaches**

In the first interview, the principal highlighted that assessment in Grades 1 to 3 follows a different pattern because of the integrated curriculum. He added in the interview that the upper grad assessment practices are based on both semi formative and

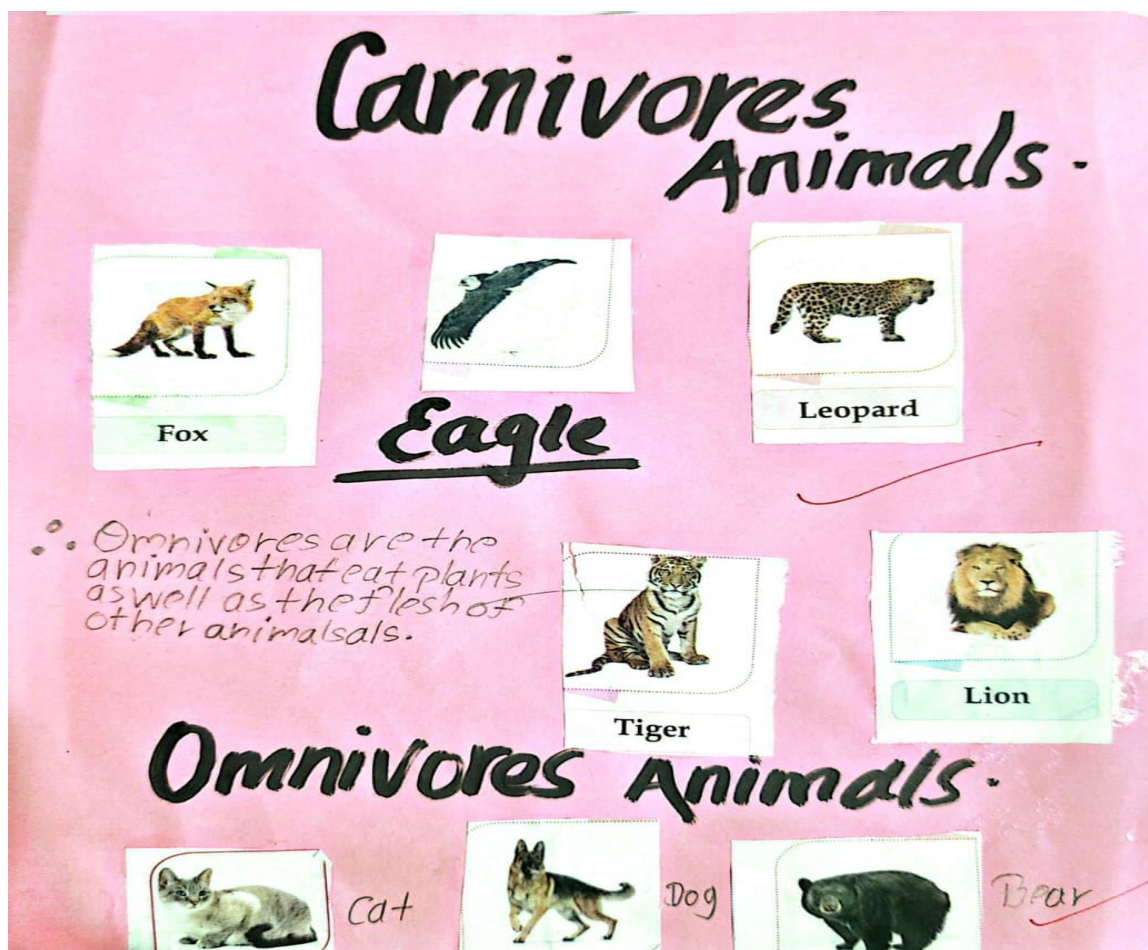
summative test and lower grade assessment practices existed based on the complete formative nature. The lower class (std 1 to 3) applies the continuous observation, portfolios, classroom activities, and project-based tasks. For younger learners, the process is more developmental and formative emphasizing holistic growth rather than memorization and test performance. In answering the question *"How do you see the assessment practices as different between class from class 1 to 3 and other higher classes?"*, he stressed that its assessment is based on formative nature, need based, new approaches however it is very hard to apply. Principal A says *"Assessment of integrated is the end of the pencil -paper test. But assessment of Higher level is conventional, but easy to administer recognizing as the formative test. He says "it's easy to conduct assessment for lower level of students because teaching and assessment is at the same time where the student's learning portfolio is really time consuming. He accepted the facts that the authentic assessment application was found to be partial similar to the assessment practices applied from (std 4 to8). we have semi -grade system because same teacher can't bring the quality product."* He explained furthermore, *students were assessed even through the terminal test consisting of 50% and 50% from the continue assessment practices"* Again, he added further: *the assessment practices in school B were easy to administer because all the stakeholders of the lower class were required to be collaborated and their contribution is equally important. However. the practices were quite impractical.*

Similarly, the interview with participant Smriti Karki at School B was taken as a burden because no frequent training and sufficient time were given to the teacher. As the participant, Smriti Karki, says *'This is an opportunity for holistic development.'* She added that *this assessment continues with the teaching, which is not possible in a complete sense, but she claimed: It is practiced well.* She presented the criteria for assessing the students' learning performance, which was not aligned as proposed by CDC. However, she accepted the practices of the terminal because she admitted the partially applied formative-based test was authentic, with an emphasis on the summative test. For example: Oral question and written question. *Another participant, Anjana Limbu (Pseudonym), also put her thoughts that she had been trying to apply the authentic but time-constrained and parental belief, along with some scarcity of technical aspects,*

forced me to rate the student achievement beyond the standard of the integrated curriculum. The principle acknowledged the real, authentic assessment practices between the lower class (1 to 3) and higher class (above 3) in theoretical reality, with the claim of problems in real practices due to teachers' scarcity, limited resources, parents' beliefs and time constraints, which created only the burden, although it had opportunities for the learners.

**Figure 8**

*Student's Weekly Based Project Work.*



From classroom observation, I also noticed students' notebooks containing weekly project work where a student was asked to classify the animals, lacking many activities-based teaching pedagogy and assessment tools, with the priority given to the assessment through a written test due to time constraints and parental beliefs. However, the use of project work as an assessment tool should be aligned with curriculum

guidelines and conducted based on specific themes on the basis of need as demanded by the particular theme.

While the principal highlighted the importance of formative, need-based approaches such as portfolios, projects, and observation, in reality, teachers also assumed these methods as a burden due to the portfolio management practices and private school-based assessment policies. The weekly project work presented that the classroom activities were not aligned with on the basis of the thematic approach. The theme generally tended to present the practices without strong alignment to CDC guidelines or thematic integration. Parents' preference for written tests.

*The participant teacher, Anjana, herself viewed that the assessment practices in School B also reflected the school's reliance on terminal exams (50% weightage), further pushing teachers toward traditional summative practices. This creates a gap between the curriculum's vision of holistic development and the school's actual implementation, making assessment more of a formal requirement than a meaningful tool for learning. The classroom observation and students' workbook show a gap between what was said and what was actually practiced. Overall, while School B attempted an integrated assessment, a lack of training, reliance on summative tests, and limited use of rubrics weakened its authentic practices.*

### **Portfolio Management and Documentation Practices**

During the interview with the principal, it was clear that portfolio-based assessment in School B was not an observable practice because they did not have the time due to the workload. However, this stance is opposite to the National Curriculum Framework's recommendations for holistic development. The principal pointed to the *lack of parental engagement*, suggesting that *parents do not value portfolios and are more concerned with traditional exams*. This perspective also led me to view portfolio management as an impractical burden rather than a valuable assessment that aligns with the curriculum. *The principal of school A highlighted: The Students' portfolios are important documents within the integrated curriculum. This portfolio consists of identifying the students' performances. He further added that the teachers should take complete responsibility for portfolio management, as the assessment practices in the classroom were viewed by the principal in response to what the required documents are*

and the roles of the teacher in the students' portfolio management. I observed that the school had developed its own separate students' portfolio, which was shortened to maintain the presentation presented by the participant.

Then, the interview of the principal presented that *students' portfolios are being completely implemented; the teachers have to focus on only assessment rather than teaching*. This portfolio practice of School B was just the opposite of the assumption by the National Curriculum Framework, which the principal himself agreed with. During the interview, while talking about the students' portfolios, one of the teachers who was my participant, Anjana Rai, told me that they have managed the portfolios separately. She had given me the sample of the portfolio, which is presented below:

**Figure 9**

*Student Portfolio: School B*

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT FORM 2082 (GRADE 1-8)		2 <sup>nd</sup> Trimester																			
Grade: ५ Subject: हिन्दी Teacher: [Redacted]																					
Learning Achievement Scale: Excellent Learner-4, Good Learner-3, Normal Learner-2, Weak-1																					
Theme/ Lesson	Basic Learning Achievement	Assessing, observation, parents response																			
		[Redacted]																			
मौखिक विद्यालय	प्रश्नोत्तर मूल्य	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	
	स-स्वर वाचन र मीतपठन	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४
	पलिङ्गा र अलिङ्गा पहिचान	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४
हास्य वातावरण	कविता लयवाचन गर्ने	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४	
	शुद्ध र अशुद्ध शब्द पहिचान	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	
	छुटका महत्त्व बताउन ।	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	
मौखिक सिर्जना	सरुको वर्ग हटाइ द्यां शब्द बनाउन	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	२	२	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४	
	मेतपरे बाजारकू बनाउन	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	
	शब्द र अर्थको जोडी मिलाउन	४	४	४	४	३	४	४	३	३	४	४	४	४	४	३	४	४	४	४	
TOTAL LA OF STUDENT		२६	३६	३६	३६	३२	३६	३६	२२	२२	३६	३६	३६	३६	३६	३३	३६	३२	३२	३६	
		३५%	३०%	३०%	३०%	२९%	३०%	३०%	२६.६६%	२६.६६%	३०%	३०%	३०%	३०%	३०%	२९.६९%	३०%	३०%	३०%	३०%	

From document analysis of School B, differentiated assessment practices remain irregular, and the practiced sample of portfolio presented some main learning achievements, aspects of assessment, assessment tools, regular assessment and re-assessment, which only partly reflect the intent of the integrated curriculum.

From the classroom observation, I found that they did not apply the concept of thematic approach for the application of assessment practices with regard to conducting the soft skills-based activities, teaching activities to fulfil the achievement level proposed by the curriculum. From the observation of the documents, I found only photocopies of the curriculum and textbooks. I saw only the students' portfolio management, not of each theme, but on a terminal basis. I also observed the terminal based on the assessment indicators, opposite to the assumption of an integrated curriculum. I also studied some samples of students' notebooks, which were managed in a separate, subject-based class. Finally, I told my participants to show the planned diary belonging to them. It was observed without an integrated plan on the basis of yearly, terminal and daily plans, with the discussion among the teachers on the common themes. So, classroom observations showed that teaching methods were largely textbook-driven and teacher-centered. Student learning was assessed through formal tests, and there was no evidence of an integrated curriculum or activity-based teaching. The school did not maintain student portfolios because both the school leader and teachers were convinced of the application in the beginning, although the principal declared and claimed to use the curriculum proposed assessment. They have similar views that they showed many more opportunities for theme-based teaching and assessment but put the blame on the system and the time frame. Student documents available were graded test papers and notebooks. Therefore, School B prepared the students' portfolio, keeping the limited indicators and also missing some of the themes.

### **Thematic Integration and Collaborative Efforts**

As in the assumption of an integrated curriculum in assessment practices, the principal said that they had been trying to apply it to some extent. Despite the principal's awareness of integrated assessment practices, their authenticity and importance from the practical point of view, the teachers were still teaching and assessing subjects separately. There were no regular meetings or collaborative efforts to create integrated teaching

lessons with the assessments. I asked the principal if he managed the meeting among all the stakeholders to make it clear. He only conducted the general meeting but did not focus on the assessment practices. He himself stated that the *school's current approach is purely subject based.*

Manisha said that teachers and parents don't have the time and resources. The collaborative and continuous assessment practices among the principal, teachers and parents, which were necessary for it to be a meaningful tool for learning, were lacking. According to Manish, this school had only the platform to collaborate with the parents on the result publication day and exchange feedback. To respond to the question of how often you conduct the meeting to share the themes among the pair of teachers? She explained that they did not have the practice of meeting to make a plan to integrate thematic teaching. Instead, if she had a problem, she shared it with the school coordinator. In the interview, the principal said that the parents did not want to collaborate for the formative assessment in nature. They focused on the summative test because they prioritize the rank rather than the learning outcomes.

However, the interesting thing is that the sense of collaboration has been expanded to society. Rather, they collaborated with the bank, police offices, social services, scouts and Red Cross Society, where students practiced developing the soft skills although they do not have the correspondence with the theme. The principal recalled the program he had organized 'The Rising Star', *where each student had to perform the activities on the stage with the collaboration of the Global Foundation of Training and Research Center.* The participant, Anjana Rai, from class two, stated that *We stay together to discuss the students learned and unlearned achievements informally, but they do not make a plan for further improvement."*

From the classroom observation, it was proven that there was no plan for thematic integration for teaching, assessment, remedial feedback and stakeholder engagement, but the principal encouraged doing this in theory but not in practice. When I was observing the classroom of one of the teachers, she was working with the students' portfolio, which they had to complete with different indicators such as discipline, hygiene and sanitation, homework, classroom activities, and regularity. She added to me that they assessed their students through the continuing assessment practices.

As the curriculum requires the collaborative efforts among the stakeholders to make the integrated teaching and assessment plan, they do not create a cooperative environment. From the interview and classroom observation, it is clear that the school focused on the summative test rather than including all the essentials of the integrated curriculum. There was no portfolio, no soft skills integrated, no thematic sharing, surface feedback, and no remedial teaching. It was found that collaboration was a priority only among the social organizations, prioritizing the marketing strategies rather than the learning outcomes.

### **Teaching Pedagogy and Assessment Tools**

The assessment practices were apparently studied from the interviews, classroom observation and analysis of the student workbooks and portfolios. While the integrated curriculum emphasized continuous, child-centered, and varied assessment, the practices in School B showed that teachers and the principal claimed to apply these practices, but the actual implementation appeared only partial and limited. In the interview, the principal confidently stated, *“We follow the assessment tools of the integrated curriculum. Our teachers make sure that students participate in activities, complete tasks, and provide students with feedback through remedial teaching.* However, when prompted about consistency, he admitted that implementation depended on individual teachers and classroom situations. He explained that written work and oral questioning were the most common practices. In the interview, the principal acknowledged: *“Our teachers know that integrated assessment requires participation, projects, and continuous observation, but in reality, only about half of these tools were practiced without a thoughtful plan. We give more importance to written work and tests because they are easier to manage”.* He answered me the question of “what your role for the teaching pedagogy and assessment tools will be?”, indicating that he only encouraged and created the cooperative environment for teachers. He further explained that *limited training and a lack of structured formats have prevented teachers from implementing tools like peer and self-assessment effectively.* The principal, however, encouraged teachers to at least conduct the discussion methods and small project tasks wherever possible. He responded to my question of *how to use the rubrics as teaching pedagogy and authentic assessment tools,*

as his school did not have practice in using rubrics, although it was important in the integrated curriculum.

Manisha Karki, as a participant teacher in the interview, says, “*We always encourage students to answer in class and take part in group activities. This shows us how much they are learning. She brings the practices in this school that Oral questioning is part of every lesson after completing the lesson. We ask them to read or retell stories. Still, these oral tasks were not assessed formally; feedback was limited to verbal praise.*” Another participant, Anjana Rai, highlighted it as the strongest practice for assessing students from the partial assessment tools. She further says, “*Written assignments are given daily, and we check them regularly*”.

From the classroom observation, I found that the teacher was teaching on the basis of activities, as proposed by the curriculum to some extent, such as group discussion, project work, question answering, problem solving, field work, demonstration, games and exercises, self-study, and interaction. For example, my participant, Smriti, drew pictures of fruits and vegetables on the board. Students were divided into small groups and asked to discuss *which fruits they eat daily. And which vegetables do they grow in their home garden?* When she was teaching the theme ‘Fruits and Vegetables’, I saw that each group shared their answers, and the teacher guided them to name local and seasonal fruits. This helped in vocabulary building and knowledge of local food.

Likewise, I wanted to observe the next class of Deepa Thapa (Pseudonym) to see the further practices of teaching pedagogy aligned with assessment at the same time. Then, I entered the classroom, and the students were presenting the Project Work on Theme: *Animals and Birds* from class two because she had already assigned a project: *Make a small chart about animals you saw around your home.* For this project work, students collected pictures of cows, goats, hens, and pigeons. Likewise, some drew pictures themselves at home on the basis of the instructions of the teacher. Then the charts were displayed in class, and each student explained their work, which supported creativity, research skills, and oral presentation.

Finally, I observed one of the teachers, Khusbu Rai (Pseudonym), as a non-participant in my research, using the problem-solving techniques on the theme: *Numbers*

*in Daily Life* from class three. The teacher gave students a practical math problem: “*If one apple costs ten rupees, how much will five apples cost?*” Then, students solved it in their copies and then explained how they got the answer, which encouraged logical reasoning and application of math in daily life. It was observed that only a few students participated in the classroom activities, but there was no system for assessing the level of students’ participation.

Still, Workbooks and lesson plans are also a priority over the lecture and written task. I found the students’ notebooks containing repetitive exercises with tick marks as corrections. The project work, such as posters and drawings, was found in the student’s portfolio, lacking a structured assessment. No checklists, rubrics, or parental feedback forms were available. Most of the project works were based on the textbook, and the assessments were broadly linked with written activities. The workbook of students, where Manisha had given the assignment based on oral questioning and classroom participation, which were used occasionally, but without record-keeping.

From my point of view as the researcher, School B showed incomplete and irregular use of teaching pedagogy and assessment tools. The classroom observation showed that whatever teaching pedagogy was used, such as group discussions, projects, fieldwork, and problem-solving, it was applied without rubrics, records, or systematic follow-up. Further, the classroom observations revealed that not all the students were encouraged to participate, emphasizing the written test and oral questions and the feedback was provided with ticks or verbal inputs. The integrated curriculum was expected to keep the record in the student’s portfolio, but in practice, it was not documented. The principal of school B acknowledged these gaps but left the responsibility to each teacher, with no need for planned training or collaborative planning. My tool for the data collection showed that the teaching was still textbook dependent, and also the exam-focused assessment tool. The teachers claimed that it was more rhetorical than practical because the child-centered tools, like peer/self-assessment, were almost absent.

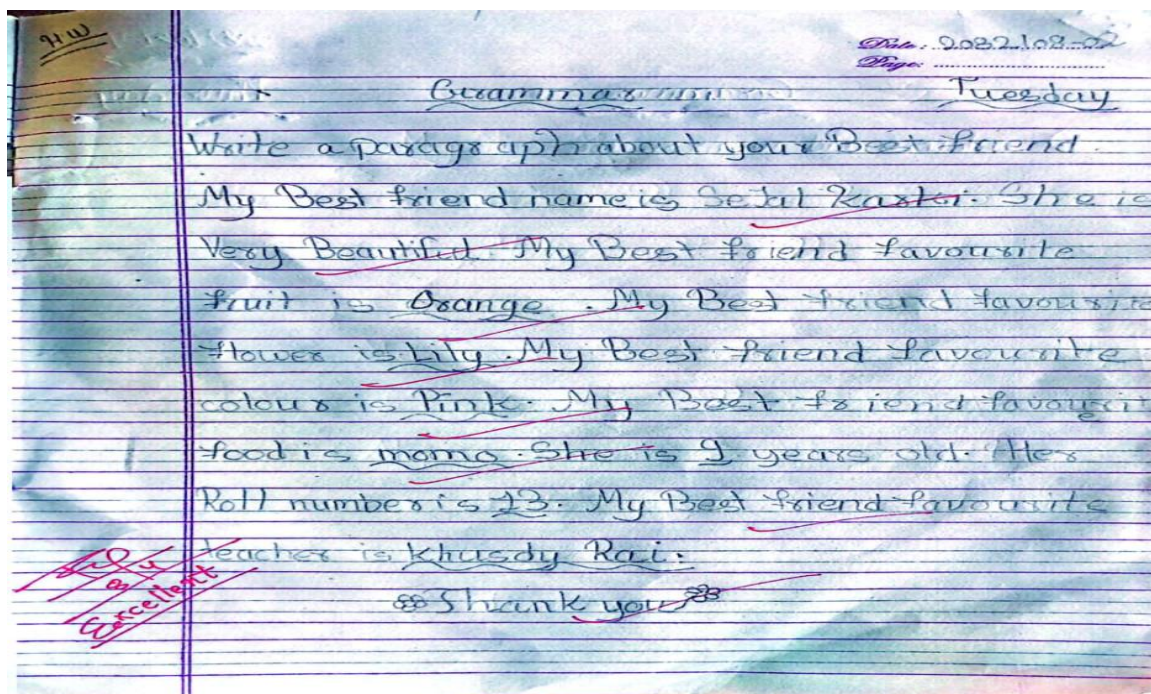
### **Rubrics Practices as Both Teaching Pedagogy and Assessment Tools**

From the interview with the principal and teachers, it was found that although they claimed to follow the integrated curriculum, rubric were not used as a teaching

pedagogy or as an assessment tool. Both the principal and the teachers stated that assessment is mostly carried out through traditional methods such as written tests, oral questioning, and homework checking, rather than applying structured rubrics. Furthermore, the principal said, “*We are not using it due to the lack of trained teachers, financial resources, and time constraints*”. The teacher named Anjana Limbu shared that rubrics were rarely discussed in teacher meetings and not introduced in their classroom practice. Another teacher, Manisha, was confused about understanding the meaning and use of rubrics. Anjana was also untrained and inexperienced in the preparation and application of the rubrics, and they were used. The principal of School B asserted that we had some variation in marking the students’ learning performance due to the lack of proper use of the rubrics because teachers did not have the training, resources, and time factors in the private school.

### Figure 10

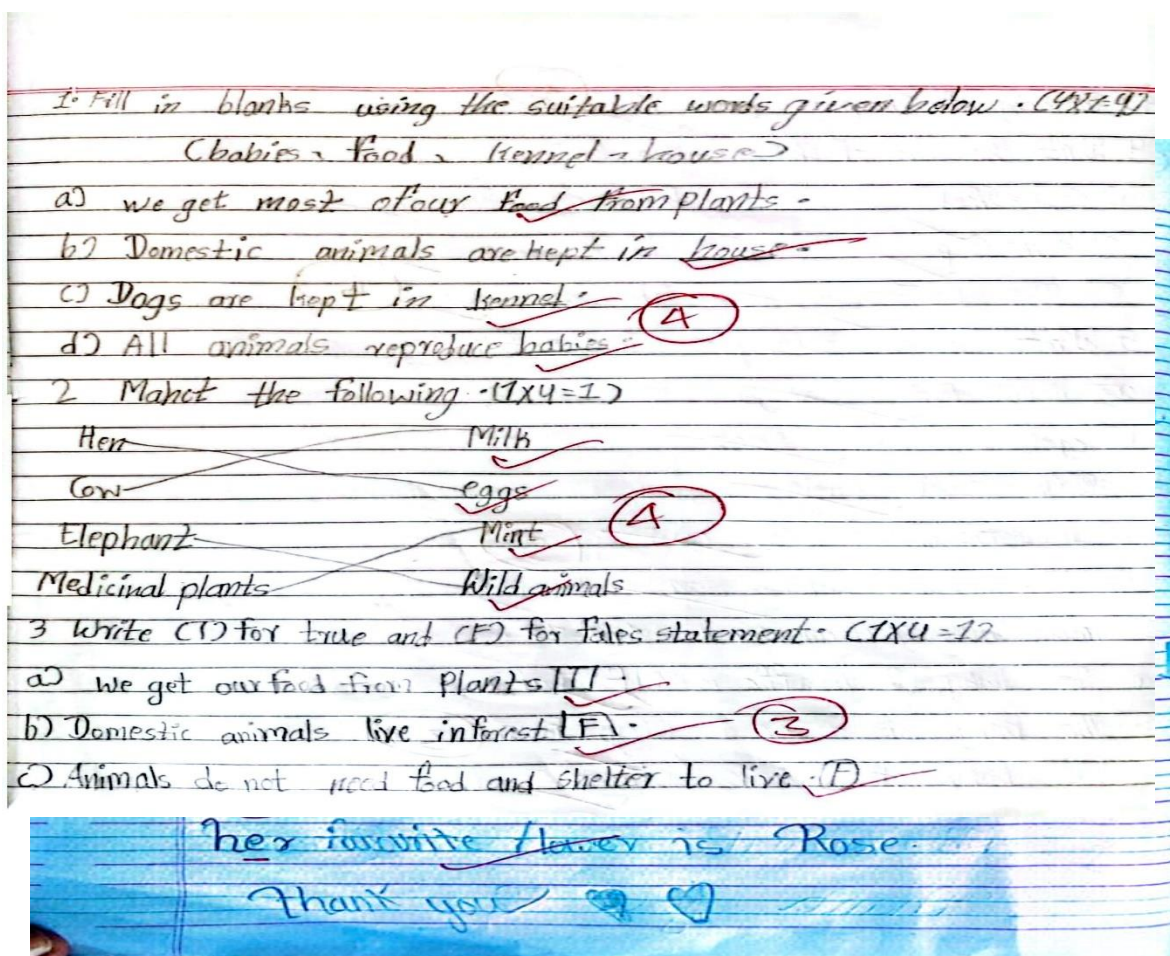
*Teacher’s Feedback and Assessment Samples:*



Observation of classroom teaching from grades one to three further confirmed that rubrics were not applied in daily teaching-learning processes. Teachers engaged students in some integrated curriculum strategies such as group discussions, question-answer sessions, games, and problem-solving activities beyond the rubrics. Instead, teachers only gave general comments such as “Good,” “Excellent,” or “Needs Improvement,” which did not provide clear learning guidance. Students completed the work in their exercise books. She collected the notebooks and marked them with ticks and smiley faces. However, no rubric was used to evaluate specific aspects such as neatness, sequence of daily activities, clarity of ideas, or creativity in presentation.

### Figure 11

*Student's Workbook Observation:*



Analysis of students' workbooks also showed a lack of use of rubrics. The students' work was only tick-marked or given short comments. There was no sign of the

use of systematic evaluation criteria based on integrated curriculum principles. When I asked Manish Karki to collect the students' portfolios, the students were not assessed on the basis of specific rubrics. They were just given the marks on different indicators, based on the way the teachers like. I also found in the students' workbook belonging to a student that he had secured three marks, and I asked the teacher about the criteria used. The teacher replied that the students would be almost absent from school. Further, I questioned her about how many days he was absent, but the teacher could not confirm the achievement level calculation process.

Dahal (2022) studied that rubrics were observed as beneficial tools for internal assessment in Nepal, particularly in focusing on the priority for fairness and providing clear inputs for the improvement of students. According to teachers, the rubrics were valued for their ability to enhance students' engagement and self-assessment. But school B classroom practices were not aligned with the ideas of Dahal. Despite valuing the rubrics, the teacher felt additional loads to prepare, blaming the time constraint. The findings of my study also showed that the rubrics were not used in real practice, although the integrated curriculum expected them to be. The principal and teachers said: *The students were assessed through written and oral tests, along with homework checking.* Both classroom observation and students' workbook analysis showed that the teacher used words like "Good " and "Needs Improvement", but these were not based on clear criteria. For keeping the students' portfolios, the marks were given without proper explanation, and even the teachers could not clearly say how they were calculated. This showed that assessment practices were not consistent and systematic, lacking clear feedback for learning. So, while the school says it follows integrated assessment, the lack of effective rubrics makes the practice weak, unclear, and less useful for student improvement.

#### **Learning Calculation and Result Publication:**

From the interview with the principal of School B, it was found that the school follows a mixed approach in preparing students' results. The principal explained that *"our system gives weightage both to internal and external assessments, but in practice, 50% of the marks are taken from internal records such as portfolios, assignments, and classroom activities, while the remaining 50% is taken from written summative tests."* He

mentioned that this method was easier for teachers to manage and also satisfied the expectations of parents, who would prefer visible exam marks. The principal further argued that they were “*applying assessment practices to some extent in line with the integrated curriculum, but not in their complete form*”. The principal explained that assessment was carried out mainly through traditional techniques such as written class tests, oral questioning, and homework checking. The principal further stated that: *Our teachers follow the integrated curriculum themes, but for assessment, we still mostly check students’ answers in copies, take short oral tests, and observe classroom participation. We haven’t applied the rubric yet because most teachers feel it is time-consuming and complicated. Instead, they give immediate feedback like ‘very good’ or ‘try again’. Instead, the school has prepared its own simplified portfolios for students, which mainly include notebooks, copies of classwork, and some drawings.* He further clarified that the school did not conduct the calculation of marks or publish results as in the integrated curriculum guidelines. In the interview with Manisha Karki, she explained that they generally used tools such as oral questioning, written exercises, games, and small projects, but without structured rubrics. For instance, when teaching the theme “Our Environment” in class, she asked students to bring leaves, stones, or flowers from their surroundings and share their names in the classroom. Students’ participation was appreciated, but there were no rubric or clear criteria for assessment; the evaluation was based on her personal judgment. Anjana, my research participant, said, “*When I teach the theme Fruits and Vegetables, I ask students to name fruits they eat at home and then write their names in English. I check their spellings in the copybook. This becomes my way of assessing them.*”

When I observed the class of Suman Shrestha (Pseudonym), he was teaching the theme “My Daily Life” in class three. In the classroom, students were asked to prepare a short diary of their daily routines. The activity was checked, and marks were given with 3, but these marks were simply entered as part of the “portfolio record” without using detailed criteria. The teacher clarified that later this score would be combined with the final exam result in a 50/50 ratio to prepare the final grade. Then, I asked him *why he gave three marks*. He answered me that *he is an average student, without specific criteria. This mark would be calculated and the result published.*

Analysis of students' portfolios and result sheets confirmed this practice. Portfolios contained students' assignments and class activities, but no rubrics or clear performance levels were attached. The progress reports showed marks, divided into two columns: internal assessment (50%) and summative test (50%). GPA calculation was not systematically practiced; rather, percentage scores were directly converted into grades. When I saw the students' copybooks, exercises on Fruits and Vegetables consisted of fill-in-the-blanks ("Apple is a ..... We eat .... daily") and matching (fruit to picture). Teacher feedback was limited to a tick (✓) for correct answers and a cross (X) for mistakes. But no descriptive feedback or rubric-based comments were found. Portfolios mainly contained worksheets with similar activities, without evidence of criteria-based assessment.

From the progress report analysis of particular students, only the achievement from assessing the students on the basis of partially designed indicators was found. The students were assessed each term with a 50% value and calculated to sum up to 50% in each terminal exam. In the interview with the principal and teachers, they expressed that the students' results were published, and students' progress reports were also handed to parents, similar to Basic Level Education (From class 4 to 8), but the assessment process was different. I clearly observed no mark calculation on the basis of the theme, subject-wise cumulative marks, and PA calculation, with a specific formula for result publication was lacking. I also noticed, on the second visit to School B, the absence of using students' portfolios as proposed by the CDC. However, students were assessed, and marks were calculated, creating their own portfolio in each term.

From my study, it appeared that School B implemented a mixed assessment approach in theory, but not fully in practice. While the assessment through portfolios, classroom activities, and projects contributed 50% of students' assessment, the remaining 50% was dependent on the written tests, oral questioning, and simple observation. The students' achievements were often marked and assessed based on subjective judgment in the absence of clear criteria or rubrics. The feedback was limited to ticks, crosses, or brief comments, offering little guidance for improvement. The portfolio presented to parents, containing the worksheet and copies of the students, lacks associations with the themes

identified underpinned by the previously set objectives of thematic integration in relation to the NCF 2019.

### **Soft Skills as Assessment Practice**

In the interview, the principal admitted that they mostly emphasize written exams and oral questioning in the class. *Students' understanding is tested at the end of lessons or units through short class tests. We do not strictly follow the integrated curriculum's prescribed tools, such as portfolios, rubrics, or theme-wise assessment. However, sometimes, we try to observe students' creativity and participation informally.* In answer to the question: *What is your role in the application of soft skills to your school from the leadership perspective?* The principal added, *I believe soft skills like communication, teamwork, and creativity are very important, but in reality, they are not assessed systematically. Sometimes, teachers evaluate these indirectly, for example, through students' class participation or their behavior during group work, but we lack a formal format for recording such assessments. As a leader, I feel the need to strengthen teachers' capacity to adopt authentic assessment tools, though the practice is still limited here.* During the interview, I reminded him about his focus on soft skills for students' behavioural change. He mentioned that *we didn't have practices.* But he claimed its use, although it was not applied for assessing the students' assessment.

During the interview, Manisha Karki said that they were not assessing soft skills, but they were conducting the soft skills-related activities. For example, she said she *has given the students the home assignment to draw the picture pasted on the chart paper. Then, they have to describe it in the classroom, which would develop their communication skills as well as soft skills. But they don't account for the assessment of soft skills-based activities.* Likewise, the participant Anjana Limbu also explored the practices. *We also conducted small written tests at the end of the unit. The marks were recorded in the register, but no portfolio is maintained. The assessment is more exam-centered, even though sometimes we use creative tasks like drawing or writing a story, especially in language subjects".* She talked about the challenges of activity-based teaching and assessment practices due to parental beliefs and priorities. She remembered the event of the home assignment that she gave her students to write about: *Where do you live? What does your father do? How many family members are at your home? These*

were home assignments, but the parents of the respective child complained because the child could read and write them easily. So, she has to teach beyond such cases. It showed that soft skills were applied even without the plan of teaching to guide the students for the practical education enhancement.

From the classroom observation, I wanted to see the practices of rubrics as an assessment tool. Therefore, I entered the classroom to observe the class on the theme: “Mero Sirjana” (my creation), where one of the teachers, Anita Neupane (pseudonym), asked students to write a paragraph on My Imagination of a Garden. Students described flowers, birds, and trees in their own words. Some wrote two or three sentences, while others wrote longer paragraphs. After they finished, the teacher called two students to read aloud their writing. Here, the assessment process was mainly oral feedback from the teacher, such as “*Good, you wrote about birds. You can also add colors.*” However, no rubric or theme-wise assessment criteria were used. The teacher checked notebooks but did not record progress in a structured way in the students’ portfolios.

Ismail et al. (2022) conducted a case study in the United States, which examined the performance-based assessment in science and Mathematics integrated curriculum. The findings of the study referred to the fact that it helps to promote students’ learning and students’ participation, requiring adequate teacher support for the contextual alignment in private schools. But in School B, I found that the learning could not be observed in practice because assessment was mostly informal, limited to verbal comments or ticks in students’ notebooks. Although the rubrics are essential for applying as the assessment and assessment for learning, rubrics, portfolios, or structured criteria were not found to be prioritized to record or evaluate students’ progress. The principal highlighted the reasons, such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and parental opposition, that stop the appropriate application.

Therefore, interviews, classroom observations and students’ portfolio analysis confirmed that soft skills were only observed casually but were not formally used to assess the students’ learning performance, and students’ participation. Additionally, it showed a clear gap between the integrated curriculum’s goals and actual practice in School B, where soft skills were encouraged but not included in formal assessment, limiting evidence of students’ holistic development.

### **Feedback and Remedial Practices in School B**

The practices of feedback and remedial class in School B were not systematically aligned with the guidelines of the integrated curriculum. The absence of rubric and students' portfolios, which were important, indicated that the practices were only partially applied. The principal shared the practices in the interview as *"We try to provide feedback to students after classwork and written tests, but it is not based on any structured rubrics. Teachers usually give oral comments like 'good,' 'improve handwriting,' or 'study hard.' Sometimes, we also write short notes on their copies. Formal documentation of feedback is lacking, but we try to encourage children personally."* I wanted to know if there are any leadership roles for applying the feedback and remedial classes with the assessment in School B. The principal said, *We provided feedback and remediation, but we don't connect with the assessment.* He highlighted that *remedial activities are necessary but difficult to manage regularly due to workload and limited training. So, he mentioned in the interview that they did not have the practice of connecting with the assessment.* Simply. They pointed out the mistakes and showed the ways for correction. It was clear that the achievement level before and after the feedback and remedial teaching was not recorded in the student's portfolio. As a school leader, the principal tried to encourage teachers to address students' weaknesses, but they lacked a clear framework for remedial action. There was no follow-up system to check how feedback helped in students' progress. According to the principal, *teachers usually give oral comments or corrections in class, but there is no formal structure. Soft skills like confidence, creativity, or collaboration are very important, but we have not developed a proper format to assess and improve them. Sometimes, these are guided indirectly through classroom interaction.*

During the interview, a participant teacher, Manisha Karki, expressed *the practices of assessment in connection with the feedback and remedial class, which encouraged the students to correct the errors. But the errors made in the learning performance are not assessed.* She further explained that *re-teaching is also conducted on the basis of marks on the possible questions in the terminal exam. However, assessment and re-assessment are not in practice with the use of different assessment tools. It is well known that most students take the tuition class as a remedial class when*

*they feel weak, but the achievement of improvement is not assessed and recorded in the student's portfolio. She brought the practices of keeping the students at the front desk to pay full attention to the unlearned contents. Especially, two desks are arranged by the subject teachers if we feel that particular students are weak. Another teacher, Anjana Limbu, also stated that she would check the exercise books and pointed out the students' mistakes, asking them to correct them. She further shared that, if she could find errors, she would just underline and say, "Try Again". She added, "However, we don't keep records of the feedback as portfolios. Remedial activities happened in the form of extra explanation in the next period or sometimes during free time."*

The students' workbook observation showed that the teachers would give the students feedback with verbal words, which had been written in the notebook as "very good", "keep it up", or "improve your spelling." Some students were asked to read aloud their sentences for correction. However, no formal rubric, detailed comment, or written feedback was used. The students' portfolio could not reflect the students learned and unlearned performance clearly. In students' feedback, no further discussion was made about the remedial teaching if the students were below average. The interesting thing in School B was that students' achievement was never classified as below average, average, proficient, or advanced level.

The practices from the interview, students' workbook analysis and classroom observation revealed that in School B, informal and unstructured feedback and remedial classes were not aligned with the integrated curriculum. Most teachers chiefly provide comments verbally, for instance 'Good', or 'Try Again', or any brief notes written in children's notebooks, but they are seldom recorded in systematic portfolios or any connections to assessment outcomes. The headteacher highlighted the significance of feedback and remedies, although there was a lack of clear guidelines, a follow-up mechanism and any system for supervising learners' progress. The principal added: *Remedial support often happens ad hoc, such as extra explanations in class, seating weaker students at the front, or encouraging tuition outside school, but the impact on learning achievement was neither assessed nor documented. He further mentioned: Teachers themselves recognize the limitations: while they correct mistakes and encourage improvement, they do not evaluate learning gains, use rubrics, or track*

*performance levels (e.g., below average, average, proficient, advanced)*. Critically, this shows a gap between the integrated curriculum's expectation for continuous, formative assessment and the school's actual practice, where feedback is used mainly for encouragement rather than improving learning outcomes or guiding remedial teaching.

### **Practice of Semi-Grade Teaching System in School B**

The principal of school B presented the teaching system for exploring assessment practices from grade one to three. *This school follows the semi-grade teaching approach right from Class One. We do not have grade teaching as proposed by CDC because of limitations in staff training and teacher availability.* In the school, Subject teachers are appointed to teach separately one by one. He said, *"This helps in managing workload and ensures that teachers can focus on their subject expertise.* I asked him about the requirement of grade teaching practices for the application of the integrated curriculum. He explained that *we do not get trained and experienced teachers.* He did not believe that some teachers could teach and assess the knowledge of different subjects. He said that, as the leader of this school, he would prepare the routine on the basis of the educational market and availability of the teachers, and the role of the subject teacher was to teach and assess the students, following the criteria developed by the school. In response to my question *"who is responsible for assessing and publishing the result?"*, he said *all the subject teachers will have the responsibility to complete the contents and assess the students, considering the 50% from the continuing assessment practices and 50% from the written test in the terminal exam.* He answered me that Grade teaching helped the same teacher to teach all the integrated common themes; but in semi-grade teaching, before tiffin time, one teacher and after tiffin, another teacher would teach, which was in existence in School B. Furthermore, he explained that when one teacher had to manage all subjects, assessment would become generalized.

According to him, *"Teachers rely mostly on oral questions during class and written tests. We are not able to design subject-specific rubrics or portfolios as proposed in the integrated curriculum."* In fact, sometimes, the assessment was based only on the impression of the class teacher rather than on formal tools. The school principal highlighted another difficulty: *"We cannot arrange enough time for teachers' collaboration because of the tight school routine. This makes it hard to plan thematic*

*units or grade teaching methods.* The principal himself, as the school leader, was not satisfied with the quality of teaching in the present context because of the lack of trained and experienced teachers. *He further said that the difficulty is that one teacher alone cannot manage all areas equally. I am good at language but not confident in Mathematics, so to assess the students' learning performance, if we have an entirely grade-teaching system. Although the grade teaching has many opportunities, we cannot arrange enough time for teachers' collaboration because of the tight school routine. This makes it hard to plan thematic units or grade teaching methods. As a leader, I strongly feel that grade teaching could support holistic learning, but practically, it has not been implemented here due to challenges, both technical and managerial. For instance, although a teacher managing one grade seems fascinating theoretically, it is exhausting indeed. Furthermore, parents also prefer higher marks or exam-based results of their children, which results in adherence to conservative disciplinary practices instead of new student-focused techniques and methods.* In the interview with the teacher, the participant named Anjana Limbu mentioned that *the difficulty is that one teacher alone cannot manage all areas equally. I am good at language, but not confident in Mathematics. So, we end up teaching our strong subject areas, not fully practicing grade teaching.* Then, another teacher shared her experiences about the practices. *"I write marks directly in the register based on oral answers, but there is no schedule or set criteria".* She realized that all the classroom activities did not match the assessment practices with the assumption proposed by the integrated curriculum in school B. Although she knew the system, she herself was not using the assessment practices in the classroom because of the time constraints, lack of training and resources, as teaching and assessment were not conducted at the same time.

When I observed the class of one of the teachers, she wrote the name of the subject as science in the classroom. I asked her, *"Do you have a separate subject like science which is integrated within our Serofero?"* She replied to me that *the school administration does not believe in only the content for providing knowledge related to science from our surroundings.* Then I asked her: *How and when do you assess your students' learning performance?* She shared her practices that *she assesses her students in each term with 50% and from the classroom activities with 50% connecting the partial*

*indicators*, as assumed by the CDC. As expressed in the interview, I witnessed that the same teacher taught two classes before tiffin and after the next teacher as a semi-grade in class one. I observed another teacher's classroom who was teaching in class three on the theme "Measurement". During her teaching, she said to the class that *this particular question is very important for the examination, containing five marks*. This was opposite to the assumption of assessment practices in the integrated curriculum.

The analysis of students' workbooks and class records showed that there was no evidence of grade-based teaching assessment. Each subject was taught and recorded separately. There were no portfolios, no thematic integration of learning outcomes, and no rubrics. Marks from oral and written tests were noted in registers without connection to the integrated curriculum's guidelines.

In School B, the semi-grade teaching system was used because of the lack of trained teachers and limited staff. In this system, teachers taught the same class at different times (one before lunch, another after lunch). The principal believed that this helps manage teachers' workload and allows them to focus on subjects they know best.

Black and Wiliam (1998) studied and found that authentic assessment not only assesses student learning but also promotes it, providing valuable feedback to both students and teachers, which can foster deeper understanding and enhance critical thinking. These practices also promoted the development of 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, communication and creativity. However, authentic students' feedback was not applied in School B. This system prevents proper implementation of the integrated curriculum. The integrated curriculum requires grade teaching, where one teacher handles all subjects for a class, enabling thematic teaching and integrated assessment. Because of semi-grade teaching, learning and assessment are fragmented. Teachers mainly use oral questions and written tests, and marks are recorded separately for each subject without rubrics, portfolios, or connection to integrated learning outcomes.

In addition, teachers state that they do not have adequate time for collaboration and planning units that are thematically integrated. As a result, the assessment was mostly grounded on individual judgement instead of any mechanism. Whereas, the parents favor exam-based evaluation, which lacks continuous assessment, thematic foundation and learner-centered assessment recommended by the integrated curriculum.

In general, the semi-garde teaching provision in School B reflects a practical compromise because of the limitations of staff and resources failing to be aligned with the curriculum objectives.

### Summary Comparative Matrix

Themes	School A	School B	Interpretation
Portfolio Management and Document Practices	Good	Poor	School A follows well-organized portfolios, samples of work, and progress records. School B lacks systematic portfolio management and documentation.
Practices of Rubrics and Soft Skills Assessment	Partially applied	Poor	School A did not use a rubric-based evaluation but partially used a soft skills assessment. School B did not apply simple rubrics, nor did it apply them partially.
Curriculum Alignment with Assessment Practices	Partial Alignment	Poor Alignment	School A shows moderate alignment between the assessments. School B's assessments remain exam-focused and subject-based, and integrated curriculum themes.
Students' Learning Feedback and Remedial Teaching	Limited	Poor	School A practices systematic feedback sessions and regular remedial support for struggling students. School B provides occasional and informal feedback.
Learning Calculation and Result Publication	Grade-Based and Descriptive	Traditional Marks-Based	School A used grade-based evaluation with qualitative remarks that reflect student progress. School B still follows a marks and ranking system. School

Practices of Grade Teaching	Moderate	Moderate	School A follows grade teaching in class one and semi-grade teaching in others. But School B uses completely semi-grade teaching.
Thematic Integration and Collaborative Efforts	Moderate	Minimal	School A demonstrates partial theme-based collaboration among teachers. School B's teachers plan individually with limited coordination.
Stakeholder Involvement and Collaboration for Student Assessment	Moderate	Weak	School A involves parents in workshops, project discussions, progress sharing, and cooperative assessment activities. School B engages parents only during the publication.

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## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discussed and explored the internal assessment practices within the integrated curriculum (1 to 3) in the private school context, based on my findings from Chapter IV. I also discussed the roles of principals, parents and teachers in implementing internal assessment practices. This chapter highlights the key insights which were drawn from the thematic analyses of assessment practices within School A and School B. Further, the discussion and the meaning-making process have been drawn from the participant interviews, document analysis, and observations. In addition, the discussion has been informed by theoretical interpretation, review of relevant literature and self-reflection under the key insights of the research. This chapter has been guided by my two research questions: How is the existing situation of internal assessment practice within the integrated curriculum? And in what ways the principals and teachers play roles in implementation. I attempted to capture school culture regarding assessment practices of integrated curriculum in private schools, the practice of remedial teaching and learning process and the assessment strategy used by the schools within the Curriculum Framework.

#### **Internal Assessment Practices within Two Private Schools: From Constructivist Learning Perspectives**

The internal assessment practices within integrated curriculum should focus on formative and diagnostic assessment, involving continuous feedback, holistic learning and remedial teaching (CDC, 2019; Black & William, 1998). Instead of exam-centric assessments, it supports competency-based, continuous assessments. The assessment tools include using rubrics, project work, and portfolio management and integration of methods such as thematic integration and soft skills development. The findings show that the internal assessment practices within the two case study schools remain varied and inconsistent. The key components of internal assessment practices, such as using rubrics, portfolios, theme-based assessment, and remedial instruction, as assumed by CDC

(2019), are inconsistently implemented. This inconsistency lies in depth, breadth and alignment with CDC guidelines.

The findings in School A showed that tools such as rubric, project work, portfolio, group work, and oral tasks are aligned with the authentic assessment practices as proposed by CDC. The purpose of these tools also goes beyond students' achievement, highlighting the use of soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and creativity. Assessment was fundamentally embedded in day-to-day instructional activities, aligning with curriculum intents. The focus of assessment practices in School A was mostly to support students' higher-order thinking and creativity rather than rote memorization (Gulikers et al., 2004; Wiggins, 1998).

On the contrary, School B mostly depended on conventional assessment methods, including written tests and oral exams. While teachers occasionally used creative tasks such as drawings or short compositions, evaluation focused mainly on correctness, neatness, and completion. Portfolio- and rubric-based assessments were absent, and assessment schedules were inconsistent. This shows that the assessment practices applied in School B do not generally support the objective of CDC's (2019) integrated curriculum framework. Findings from School B are consistent with the findings of earlier studies in Nepal, indicating that both public and private schools mostly rely on traditional terminal tests and oral exams (Koirala & Neupane, 2023).

My study is also aligned with other past research, which was conducted in private schools in Kathmandu valley (Dhungel, 2024) and also in government schools. The inconsistent implementation of authentic assessment practices found within the two private schools of this study has similarly been noted in other studies as well. Despite the CDC's mandate, there is a lack of consistency across both private and public schools in the depth and quality of implementation of internal assessment practices in lower grades. This study has additionally found that the quality of implementation of authentic assessment tools (such as portfolio, rubric, thematic management) varies, not only across schools, but more importantly from class to class within a school (as discussed in Chapter IV).

The variations in internal assessment practices across two case study schools are further unpacked below, with reference to the implementation of four main aspects of

authentic assessment: portfolio management, rubrics and soft skills development, feedback and remedial teaching, and learning calculations and result publications.

### **Portfolio-Based Assessment Through a Constructivist Lens**

Portfolio management is a key method of assessment in an integrated curriculum (Hartley et al., 2015). As it underpins student-centered pedagogy and helps to capture cross-subject learning, students' reflection, and real-world contexts, it supports the implementation of constructivist learning (Janssens et al., 2022). However, despite the CDC guidelines and curriculum intent, the practices of portfolio management significantly varied in depth and quality across two case study schools.

In School A of this study, portfolios were maintained but often treated as an additional burden, particularly because parents were unwilling to purchase or engage with them. In addition, portfolios in school A were prepared subject-wise rather than student-wise, which does not meet the curriculum's requirement for integrated, student-centered documentation (CDC, 2019). In addition, portfolios were maintained only at the terminal level, while daily records of student learning were absent. These findings informed me that the past studies on student portfolio management in private schools in Nepal are often challenging (Dhungel, 2024; Shrestha, 2025). It creates an extra procedural burden for both teachers and parents, as it often requires parents' signing off, involves extra cost, requires helping their children in collecting artefacts, and they often may not have clarity of how it contributes to their children's overall learning and grades.

Like School A teachers in School B considered portfolio management as an impractical burden and additional workload rather than a valuable assessment tool that promotes holistic learning. This is consistent with the findings from the study of Dhungel (2024) that the teachers in private schools in Nepal resist extra workload such as portfolio-based assessment due to heavy teaching schedules, time constraints, parental pressure and short class periods. The principal's perspective on portfolio-based assessment in School B sheds further light on the procedural challenge in private schools in its successful implementation. According to the principal, if portfolios are fully implemented, as intended by CDC (2019), teachers may end up spending their whole time on student assessment, rather than teaching. Therefore, assessment in School B was largely dominated by oral questioning and written tests. Similar findings have been noted

in other contexts where traditional assessment dominates, despite curriculum reforms (Zeichner & Wray, 2001). The school's B portfolio management system, not necessarily on a theme-by-theme basis as the policy intends, but mostly on a terminal basis and separately taught subject basis (as discussed in Chapter IV), can be attributed to local, practical solutions for curriculum and assessment implementations based on their school contexts and constraints. However, from the constructivist learning perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), these locally-tailored, primarily exam-focused assessment practices do not align with the idea of assessment as an active learning process, where teachers provide scaffolding through continuous feedback on the student portfolio, and students actively engage in dialogues, reflections and take ownership of their own portfolio (Hartley et al., 2015).

### **Constructivist Approaches to Rubrics and Soft-Skill Development**

Research suggests that rubrics, if used effectively, support constructivist learning principles, even in lower grades (Vygotsky, 1978). The effectively constructed rubrics make the learning goals transparent to the students, promote learner agency, and foster collaborative learning, considering students as learning partners. Therefore, rubrics serve as important scaffolds for learners. As envisioned by CDC's (2019) curriculum framework, it discourages subject-knowledge tests and promotes the development of soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, and cooperation (Andrade, 2000). This is pivotal in constructivist learning. Research such as Panadero et al. (2017) and Andrade and Cizek (2010) has shown that soft skills are both systematically essential to develop in lower grades.

In School A, soft skills were incorporated into teachers' lesson plans, instead of being embedded in each thematic unit. Classroom tasks such as group work, role play, and problem-solving were found to encourage learners to practice soft skills such as communication, collaboration and empathy. This supports previous research by Voogt and Roblin (2012), which argues that lesson planning is an important pedagogical tool for systematically incorporating soft skills. However, rubric-based assessment practices were not consistently implemented across all themes suggested by the CDC curriculum. Rubrics were relatively recent assessment tools for School A. As a result of the school's

effort to make the assessment more formative and constructive. Rubric used in School A were also inconsistent from class to class and from teacher to teacher.

Most teachers in School A only used sample rubrics provided by the CDC, rather than constructing their own rubrics based on themes and soft skills, due to constraining factors relating to time pressure, poor pedagogical knowledge, and parental expectations regarding old assessment methods. Constructing own rubrics by teachers based on local themes and contexts has been found challenging in private schools in Nepal (Oli, 2024). Teachers in private schools relatively have heavy teaching loads, limited preparation time and limited opportunities for training and professional development. Regardless of these challenges, School A teachers had recently initiated using some locally constructed rubrics to assess student performance in storytelling, reading, and project activities. However, their application is in the beginning stage. Brookhart (2018) assumed that rubrics can be slowly implemented by transforming the traditional assessment methods in resource-limited schools, which requires sustained training to be effective. In conclusion, the integration of soft skills and lesson planning can lead to the use of rubrics, illustrating a progressive shift for the holistic assessment in School A. However, the practices are supposed to be developed, which requires stronger institutional support for consistency.

In School B, the principal and teachers highlighted the importance of soft skill development, such as communication, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving. The assessment practices, as proposed by the curriculum Framework, also remained largely fragile and unstructured. Soft skills-based activities were seen only casually in limited classes, but formal documentation was lacking. This indicates a gap between the integrated curriculum's objectives and actual classroom practice. Some teachers also presented soft skills related activities such as storytelling, presentations, and group work. However, the assessment was limited to verbal comments, ticks, or occasional marks in students' notebooks. Rubrics were not used systematically, and theme-wise assessment was absent. Teachers designed their own versions of assessment tools that did not align with the CDC's (2019) achievement levels. Oral feedback, such as 'try again', 'improve your handwriting', used by most teachers in School B, did not seem to promote meaningful learning and did not align with the constructivist learning approach (Vygotsky, 1978). This feedback, mostly based on teachers' subjective judgement, did

not create opportunities for students to critically think about their own assessment work, self-assess, reflect and find areas for future development (Sáiz-Manzanares et al., 2017). Like School A, the principal and teachers in School B reported similar constraints, such as lack of teacher training, limited financial and material resources, and parental focus on summative exams, as key barriers to authentic assessment practices.

Overall, findings from this study support the previous studies that teachers' pedagogical knowledge, scaffolding, structured assessment tools, supportive school environments and regular, structured feedback systems are critical for promoting successful implementation of authentic assessments such as rubrics and soft-skills development, helping learners to co-construct learning and holistic skill development (Black & Wiliam, 1998). However, challenges remain, especially in private schools in Nepal, for consistent and effective use of these assessment tools. Not only do the external and institutional environments, such as parents, resources, and time constraints, impact success, but also due to the variation in teachers' own pedagogical competence and willingness, the effective implementation of these assessments varies across classes in private schools. Regardless, as evident in School A, it can be argued that informal assessment methods and oral feedback can somehow still foster soft skills and holistic learning, particularly in low-resource contexts, where formal tools like teacher-created rubrics and portfolios may not be feasible (Stiggins, 2005; McMillan, 2013). They further argue that teachers' observations, group discussion, and experiential activities such as role play can partly compensate for the absence of structured assessment tools like rubrics. However, they may not provide significant evidence for the holistic development of the child.

### **Feedback and Remedial Teaching: Zone of Proximal Development**

The main purposes of feedback and remedial teaching within an integrated curriculum are to support early identification and correction of learning errors and address learning gaps for learners. From Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) perspective, remedial instruction helps to address individual learning needs of learners by the teacher's targeted scaffolding and enabling learners to complete the tasks that they cannot independently complete. However, my study suggests that this principle of constructivist learning does not fully translate into

classroom practices, especially in private schools in Nepal, where a large variation is evident in the quality and depth of assessment practices among schools and classes.

School A generally had a policy to identify students who were struggling through continuous classroom observation, workbook checking, and teacher feedback, and then place them in short, focused remedial sessions. Both stakeholder interviews and observation data indicate that remedial teaching was not considered as a punishment strategy for weak students. Instead, it was viewed as a way to scaffold learning for students who could not otherwise achieve the targeted learning. Remedial classes were usually held twice a week, usually after school hours and sometimes during activity periods. It was also evident that parents were encouraged through parent-teacher meetings to support remedial activities at home. Many teachers used authentic rubrics proposed by CDC to make feedback specific and constructive. As was observed in a teacher's class in School A, who provided extra practice in remedial sessions for a few students by using real objects (bag, book, pencil, shoes) and guided sentence-making, it was clear that at least some teachers in School A were attempting to provide targeted scaffolding in students' ZPD, reflecting alignment with constructivist learning principles (Andrade & Cizek, 2010; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

However, the other aspects of remedial instruction, such as follow-up re-teaching and re-assessment, were not consistently recorded in School A (see Chapter IV), limiting accountability and tracking of long-term improvement. So, it was not evident from the portfolio and other documentation how remedial instruction improved students' learning and holistic development. In addition, although individual, written feedback was in practice in School A, feedback often focused on minor errors (such as "good idea but try to expand sentence", "Try to use time words like first, then, next, finally") rather than providing enough scaffolding to support students' understanding of the curriculum's key concepts. Although the School had established a culture of feedback and remedial practices, along with parental involvement, the lack of structured follow-up and comprehensive documentation (e.g. in students' workbook and portfolio) reduces the overall effectiveness of these practices, highlighting a gap that does not effectively meet the ideals of integrated curriculum. Research has shown that the combination of immediate feedback, rubrics, remedial sessions, and clear

documentation collectively makes the formative assessment and scaffolding more meaningful and effective for improving student learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

On the contrary, feedback and remedial practices were relatively weaker in School B. Feedback was predominantly restricted to summative evaluations such as oral comments (“try again”, “very good”) and general written remarks (“improve handwriting”, “write neatly”). The fragmented assessment practices did not support the idea of assessment for and as active learning (McMillan, 2013; Stiggins, 2005). It impacted on the effective implementation of the integrated curriculum.

It was also evident that most weak students in School B were asked to take extra tuition classes as a remedial process, but the achievement of their improvement was not assessed. Re-teaching was occasionally conducted on the basis of the marks students had achieved and focused on possible exam questions in the terminal exam. However, such exam-oriented tuition classes are theoretically different from remedial instruction (Walker & Zhang, 2024). Although they both generally target the weak students, the tuition classes center on exam readiness and a performance-oriented approach, rather than embracing diagnostic and developmental approaches. From Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist learning perspective, an extra tuition class, without re-assessment and re-teaching practices in place, does not support scaffolding learners step-by-step in conceptual understanding and deeper learning. In addition, the students' portfolios did not clearly reflect the students' learned and unlearned performance. This shows that without structured follow-up and collaborative practices, students' holistic and soft skills development can remain underdeveloped.

### **Learning Calculation and Result Interpretation as a Constructivist Process**

Authentic assessment is not just about engaging students in authentic tasks, but it also involves how teachers interpret the evidence of student engagement and make objective and transparent judgments about their learning progress (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). From a constructivist pedagogy perspective, learning calculation (interpreting evidence) requires teachers to analyze student work, identify patterns, make meaning and communicate results that inform continuous learning (Shepard, 2000). The findings from School A show that the school claims to follow authentic,

theme-wise assessment practices, calculating student performance per theme and subject and compiling them into cumulative grades and GPA, as guided by the CDC (2019). The principal demonstrated how portfolios were used per theme to compute achievement levels using specified formulas. The findings in Chapter IV also showed that the teachers caught errors in the process of the result calculation and also corrected the errors by using the mid-process for accuracy. This indicates that the result publication system in School A was largely consistent with the philosophy of authentic assessment as per CDC's (2019) framework. However, reliability remained a major issue because of the errors in manual calculation and the heavy workload for teachers. This supports the claim made by Andrade and Cizek (2010) that the school's assessment system should warrant reliability and fairness in result calculation and interpretation. Similarly, other studies, such as Brookhart (2018), suggest that although authentic assessment tools, such as portfolio-based assessment, are important for constructive learning, their implementation can be challenging due to consistency and a low-resourced environment. This can then impact the reliability and trustworthiness of results.

This insight is in line with School B. Although the principal asserts that 50% of students' grades come from internal assessments (portfolios, class activities) and 50% from external/summative tests, the practice diverges. Internal assessment methods were not clearly and objectively outlined, and assessment criteria were usually based on teachers' subjective judgment. In support of this finding, Dhungel (2023) argues that most schools in Nepal tend to prioritize summative assessment and superficial record-keeping, instead of putting efforts into implementing authentic assessment. In addition, although the progress reports' internal and external scores informed final grades, a consistent approach in GPA calculation was absent in School B, impacting procedural transparency. This shows that in School B, result publication is more of a procedural formality rather than evidence of meaningful assessment aligned with learning goals. Black and Wiliam (1998) argue that if assessments are based on simple marks or teachers' subjective judgments without having transparent and structured criteria, their efficiency in the scaffold of student learning will be compromised.

### **Grade Teaching for Holistic Development**

Research has shown that grade teaching practices in primary schools help the holistic development of children, as they support the integration of social, emotional and value-based curriculum by incorporating transformative and student-centered methods (Miseliūnaitė & Cibulskas, 2024). The findings from both case study schools highlight the challenges of implementing the integrated grade teaching in private schools and why semi-grade teaching systems in the context of Nepal's integrated curriculum can be a viable solution.

In School A, Grade One was found to fully follow the grade teaching system, where one teacher would tend to teach all subjects. Both the principal and teachers reported that this grade teaching system supported holistic development as students saw the connections across different subjects and received continuous feedback from their teachers. Nevertheless, from Grade Two onwards, School A applied a semi-grade teaching system. According to the principal, semi-grade teaching was imperative for the school because of the frequent turnover of teachers. In support of this finding, Thapa and Bhuiyan (2025) shed light by highlighting that the teaching workforce retention is a major problem in private schools in Nepal due to the increasing trend of teacher movement for financial opportunities. Therefore, semi-grade teaching allows the administration the flexibility to recruit and transition to new teachers, as the experienced instructors can guide the novice ones in applying the integrated curriculum. This shows that although the school accepts the philosophy of the integrated curriculum, management challenges and teacher instability push them toward a mixed, hybrid approach (Kreijkes & Greateorex, 2024). This aligns with previous research suggesting that grade teaching in early years gives students opportunities for fostering a sense of security, continuity, and stronger teacher-student relationships. This is critical for early learning. Instead of its merits, switching from grade teaching to semi-grade from grade two resulted in inconsistent applications of assessment practices. This lack of uniformity in teaching models across different grades creates disproportionate learning experiences for students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). It also jeopardizes the school's commitment to holistic development. Like School A, School B's inclination to a semi-grade teaching model was the result of resource constraints experienced due to the scarcity of the teaching

workforce in private schools. The principal of School B held a similar view to the principal of School A, arguing that the semi-grade instruction is a pragmatic approach to managing teaching workload. It also offers flexibility for teachers to concentrate on their discipline-specific strengths. Nevertheless, this approach does not align with the integrated curriculum framework (CDC, 2019). It also jeopardizes the value of thematic integration and holistic learning.

Semi-grade teaching could be a viable option for private schools where comprehensive grade-based teaching across early grades is a challenge. It can somehow help to tackle the current crises of the teaching workforce and staff retention in private schools. Despite its merit, this model, though, undermines the relational bond between teachers and students and negatively affects the sense of safety for children (Miller, 2007). In addition, the semi-grade teaching does not help to create conducive environments for integrated curriculum application (CDC, 2019). Furthermore, from a constructivist learning perspective, semi-grade teaching does not create opportunities for collaborative and learner-centered assessment (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget (1973) further argues that isolated teaching practices undermine authentic application of integrated assessment and holistic skill development.

### **Role of Principals in Implementing Assessment Practices: Instructional Leadership Perspectives**

From an instructional leadership perspective, the role of principals in implementing authentic assessment practice is not just limited to administrative tasks (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This theory argues that the leadership strategies employed by the principals, including setting direction, supporting teachers, scaffolding, and monitoring, directly impact the assessment quality (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This study reveals that the leadership approach is a major influential factor in the success of authentic assessment practice in private schools. Due to varying degrees of leadership approaches, the assessment practices of School A and School B were notably different. Therefore, it can be argued that principals' leadership approaches – through their vision, scaffolding, monitoring and collaboration influence the way assessment is enacted in the classrooms.

### **Principal in School A: Instructional Leadership Vision and Constructivist Practice**

The principal of School A showed a strong understanding of the integrated curriculum, as outlined by CDC (2019). He also recognized the roles of principals, teachers and parents in the success of authentic assessment practice. His understanding and vision of integrated curriculum was also reflected in classroom assessment practices, consistent with CDC's framework (2019). Assessment in School A relied mostly on continuous assessment practices through portfolios, with only minimal weight (4 marks) added from written tests. According to Black and William (1998), without leadership support, classroom assessment culture does not yield positive learning outcomes. Furthermore, Shepard (2000) argues that the success of authentic assessment practices (such as portfolios and performance tasks) is dependent on systemic guidance from the school leaders.

This study suggests that, due to limited support from local government and opportunities for external training, principals' roles in private schools need to be more constructive leader for successful implementation of authentic assessment practice. As constructive leaders, principals can scaffold teachers' professional development by creating a supporting pedagogical environment for authentic assessment practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Similar to the approach taken by the Principal of School A, leadership can also co-construct assessment knowledge through peer collaboration and encouraging reflection for continuous assessment improvement (Yildirim & Kaya, 2019). Scaffolding refers to the instructional approach originated by Vygotsky (1978) and is related to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can do with support. The scaffolding and ZPD were partly evident in School A's leadership. The findings of the research in school showed that despite challenges with the parental limited involvement and teachers' priority on summative tests as well as the efforts of the principals to organize regular meetings, peer observations, and inter-grade sharing reflect constructivist leadership. Supporting teachers' Zone of Proximal Development to minimize their assessment literacy gap, the principal in School A provided resources, encouraged collaborative workshops through monthly planning meetings, portfolio reviews, and weekly discussions with teachers and coordinators, and monitored teachers' use of internal assessment.

In School A, principal leadership created a school culture in which internal assessment practices were not only an administrative requirement but, more importantly, a tool to promote holistic child development. Instructional leadership theory suggests that principals' guidance, support and monitoring significantly shape teacher practices (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The principal actively guided teachers to implement continuous, theme-based assessments for using portfolios, rubrics, project work, group activities, and oral tasks. This reflects the principal's role as an instructional leader (Hallinger, 2005). In addition, the principal of School A used students' learning data and results to interpret and identify students' learning needs, monitor their progress, and make informed decisions regarding remedial strategies. The principal functioned collaboratively with teachers to analyze the data, identify patterns in learning gaps, and plan targeted remedial instruction for holistic child development (Marzano et al., 2005). This aligns with the instructional leadership approach.

### **Principal in School B: Transactional Leadership**

As opposed to constructivist leaders, transactional leaders put emphasis on administrative tasks, measurable outcomes (such as exams, results, and grades), and bureaucratic compliance (Hyseni et al., 2021). They do not value the necessity of collaboration and innovation for educational transformation, and their approach is generally resistant to pedagogical change. The principal's assessment approach in School B was compatible with the principles of transactional leadership. His focus was primarily on administrative tasks, such as handing out the photocopies of the curriculum to the teachers. The teacher did not show genuine enthusiasm in providing guidance to each teacher to apply authentic assessment. His role was mostly limited to monitoring and supervising the summative tests and exams. Although he attempted to engage parents through limited consultations and meetings, parental voice was often devalued in actual assessment practice. Their genuine engagement and collaboration in assessment design and implementation were not evident. As opposed to constructivist leaders, the School B's principal did not show proactive collaborations between parents, teachers and schools. This demonstrates transactional leadership. Instead of playing an active role in curriculum innovation and transformation, transactional leaders tend to concentrate on daily teaching routines and exams. Despite his acknowledgement of the importance of

authentic assessment tools, his poor inclination to assessment transformation reflected poor implementation of the NCF 2019. This shows a theory-practice gap in School B. This gap has been found in previous studies as well (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Shepard, 2005). School principals theoretically agree on the value of authentic assessment, but they are resistant to changing their actual assessment practices. In addition, other studies, such as Wiggins (1998) and Gulikers et al. (2004), illustrate that school leaders moved summative test practices to authentic practices. From the instructional leadership perspective (Hallinger, 2005), principals play a critical role in supporting teachers to implement assessment reforms. However, without a clear leadership vision and a supportive scaffold, classroom practices tend to be inconsistent. This finding is consistent with other studies in Nepal, such as the one carried out by Shrestha (2020).

The principal in School B only highlighted challenges such as time constraints, parental dissatisfaction, teachers' prioritization of written exams, lack of teacher training, and unequal government support for private schools. Consequently, School B developed its own portfolio and assessment tools but did not fully adhere to the authentic assessment procedures assumed by CDC (2019). Unlike School A, the assessment in School B was based on a 50% weightage from continuous assessment and 50% from written tests. According to Torrance (2007), in the absence of leadership-directed follow-up, formative assessment tends to become symbolic, as opposed to transformative. A study conducted by Paudel (2024) argues that the principals who actively monitor and scaffold teachers' professional development are more likely to result in the successful implementation of integrated assessment.

This study claimed the effective application of internal assessment practices of integrated curriculum in the context of private schools in Nepal, which also depends largely on the instructional leadership of school principals and the availability of resources across school types. In private schools, principals who serve as constructivist leaders tend to guide teachers in incorporating authentic assessment tools in daily teaching. Principals' instructional leadership through monitoring, feedback, and professional support is crucial to ensuring that teachers adopt assessment strategies aligned with curriculum expectations (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood & Jantzi,

2008). However, even when principals understand assessment frameworks, implementation is constrained by their genuine willingness and readiness to implement, resource limitations and parental preference for summative exams.

### **Parents' Collaboration for Assessment Practices**

Findings from this study suggest that parents are strong influences in implementing authentic assessment practices in private schools. Parents' preference for marks and terminal exams puts institutional and bureaucratic pressure on teachers in preparing students for tests, resulting in the dominance of paper-and-pencil assessments. In private schools, parents often demand exam scores rather than formative feedback, which pressures teachers to give more importance to written tests. Authentic assessment tasks, such as those related to performance development and portfolios, offer a deeper understanding of student learning achievements. However, their implementation remains confined when the classroom culture dominates exam-oriented practice (Shepard, 2000). Similarly, Black and Wiliam (1998) argue that formative assessment improves learning outcomes, yet in both schools it was overshadowed by summative exam practices due to the exam-oriented culture where parents' expectations and preferences overwhelm. Other qualitative studies, such as Darling-Hammond and Adamson (2014) also suggest that the parental pressures and unsupportive school cultures discourage schools from transitioning from exam-focused assessment to authentic assessment.

Findings suggest that both School A and School B do not have robust systems to engage parents in the implementation of authentic assessment practices that align with Nepal's integrated curriculum framework (CDC, 2019). Neither school had the good practice of parents participating in the assessment process, as assumed by the integrated curriculum (CDC, 2019). School had its own separate system to make them feel like the essential parts of assessment, whether it was during the class activities or at the end of each term. In School A, parents were initially invited at the beginning of the academic session for an orientation where the principal and experts explained the assumptions of the integrated curriculum and authentic assessment. Nevertheless, this collaborative approach did not last long throughout the year. Although the school made some efforts to educate parents about formative assessments, parents tended to expect written test results and questioned the teachers regarding the poorer marks received by their children. This

finding is consistent with a study by Black and Wiliam (1998), who argue that without the understanding and support of parents and students, formative assessments do not yield their intended impacts. Without their acceptance and recognition of its value, schools are likely to revert to summative assessments after a trial for a certain period.

Like School A, School B parents had low engagement in formative assessments. The practice was established among the parents to return their children's portfolios to schools without signing them, without the involvement of schools or parents. This shows poor parental awareness and a lack of enthusiasm to actively take part in curriculum implementation. In both schools, parents stressed the priority of summative assessments over formative ones, and they are not actively involved in continuous assessment processes. Goodall and Montgomery (2023) highlight the value of genuine parent-school collaboration and mutual agreement on curriculum objectives for effective implementation of progressive assessment. However, their conventional mindset regarding the measurement of their children's learning achievement through final exam scores can be a hindrance in educational transformation (Janssens et al., 2022). Parents' poor assessment literacy can negatively influence the success of formative assessment practice (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). This is particularly important in private schools in Nepal, as they are the key to influencing the school system. Therefore, ad-hoc parental engagement through one or two information-sharing sessions is not sufficient (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Strategies for continuous and deep engagement throughout the calendar year are to be implemented to reform parental assessment culture. The constructivist approach puts emphasis on collaborative engagement of parents in co-constructing assessment for and as learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Such collaborations encourage active engagement and meaningful learning.

Overall, the findings suggest that both School A and School B are required to improve parental engagement strategies. Rather than just inviting parents during orientations and result days, parents can be proactively involved as learning partners through continuous workshops, two-way communications, and training. Goodall and Montgomery (2023) argue that sustained collaboration between parents and schools is important for improving assessment practices and promoting holistic child development.

### **Reflection on Policy Versus Implementation in Practices**

The review of Nepal's education policies, such as the National Curriculum Framework 2019 and the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016–2023), highlights that the country strongly emphasizes the continuous formative and authentic assessment within the integrated curriculum. These policies stress continuous, participatory, and skill-based assessment instead of focusing only on written exams (CDC, 2019; MoEST, 2019). This is aligned with global frameworks such as UNESCO (2025) and OECD-PISA, which also stress competency-based and authentic assessment as the basics for promoting student learning. Research studies (Torrance, 2007) further show that authentic assessment helps students learn by doing, develops critical thinking, and supports holistic development. Thus, both national and international policy, as well as academic research, confirm that authentic assessment is not optional but central to modern education practice. However, the reality of classroom practices in private schools often falls short of these policy goals.

School A demonstrates the maximum application of authentic assessment practices. The principal and teachers not only understood the assumptions of the integrated curriculum but also attempted to institutionalize them. The assessment practice was conducted by multiple methods, such as portfolio, groupwork, oral presentation, performance-based tasks and anecdotal record. Teachers engaged in collaborative planning and thematic integration, though with some inconsistency. The classroom observations also presented that students were assessed for focusing not only on academic marks but also on soft skills such as communication, creativity, and cooperation. The workbooks showed evidence of inconsistent feedback. These practices are very close to what national policies (i.e. NCF, 2019; SSDP, 2016–2023) and international guidelines (UNESCO, OECD) recommend. However, the finding shows that the gaps remain in consistency, reassessment of weak students, and systematic record-keeping. Still, compared to the general practice in Nepal, School A has maximized the application of authentic assessment in the integrated curriculum.

School B, on the other hand, has also applied authentic assessment, but to a much lesser extent. The principal is aware of the curriculum's goals, but teachers mostly rely on written tests and self-designed tools. About 50% of assessments are based on paper-and-

pencil exams and the rest on class tests, with very little evidence of project work, performance tasks, or authentic portfolios. Parents are not fully involved, as portfolios are often returned unsigned, and they prioritize exam positions over holistic progress. This shows that while School B has partially adopted authentic assessment ideas, the practice is weak and far from the expectations set by policies, research, and theories. The main reasons are a lack of teacher training, parental dissatisfaction, time pressure, and insufficient leadership follow-up.

When comparing both schools, a clear picture emerges that authentic assessment is widely recognized at the policy level, but its translation into classroom practice differs by leadership, resources, and teacher motivation. School A represents an example of strong instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), where the principal guided teachers to adopt authentic assessment to the maximum extent. School B reflects weaker leadership and collaboration, resulting in limited application. From a constructivist perspective (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978), authentic assessment gives students opportunities to learn actively through real experiences. School A supported this constructivist idea better, while School B relied heavily on rote and summative evaluation.

In conclusion, both national and international policies, as well as prior research and theory, demand that authentic assessment must be fully integrated into teaching and learning. The findings show that School A has applied it to the maxim. This chapter presents the conclusion, implications, and journey reflection of the study on internal assessment practices under Nepal's integrated curriculum in private schools to some extent, though with some gaps, while School B has only partially applied it, with maximum reliance still on traditional methods. This proves that while Nepal has strong policy intentions, actual classroom practices vary, and leadership plays a crucial role in how far authentic assessment is truly realized in schools.

### **Is This Curriculum Practically Relevant?**

The critical insights from Schools A and B reveal that while the integrated curriculum appears progressive in theory, it is not practically relevant in the school context.

The experiences from School A and B raise serious doubts about the practicality and validity of the integrated curriculum. Can a curriculum be called effective when its implementation depends so heavily on the leadership of principals, the uneven training of teachers, and the lack of context-sensitive pedagogy? The classroom practices showed that the teachers refused to work as grade teachers, and they realized that working as grade teachers was not possible because they have responsibilities of portfolio management and are required for thematic integration along with the collaborative planning to apply in the classroom situation. Furthermore, it can also be observed that parents are supposed to be dissatisfied with the formative exam, highlighting the summative test, preferring the written test because they had limited time and resources. Parents, on the other hand, show dissatisfaction with formative assessment. Neither teachers nor parents were involved in its development, and if no school-specific assessment strategies were designed for private schools, how can this curriculum claim to be relevant or workable? These gaps clearly prove that the curriculum, in its current form, is not good, lacks stakeholder ownership, and must be changed to ensure real practicality and validity in the classroom. Thus, Effective instructional leaders purposefully align school resources such as time, staffing, budgets, and materials with instructional goals to maximize student learning. In collaborative planning, leaders create an environment where instruction and assessment are consistently strengthened (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). The student portfolio prepared by School B in its own choice has also created the question of whether this freedom must be made or be limited to the format as proposed by CDC. Recent research has also shown the impact on assessment practices.

These realities show that the curriculum is neither context-oriented nor practicable, as it neglects the voices of teachers and parents during its development, resulting in a visible gap between design and implementation.

### **Knowledge Construction**

This study reveals that despite policy intent and curriculum reform, an inconsistency and a clear gap persist between the intended ideals of constructivist assessment and their actual implementation in classroom practices in Nepal. The findings from my Chapter IV showed a stronger alignment with authentic assessment practices

proposed by CDC in comparison to the assessment practices found in the school. However, the assessment practices presented from classroom observation, workbook analysis, and interview in both school A and school B, authentic assessment was not yet fully practiced in the daily classroom Activities. Findings from this study match with similar past studies in Nepal, which show a clear gap between what the teachers know in theory and what they actually do in the classroom. (Bhattarai & Pant, 2021), also highlighted the theory and practice gap. Likewise, both Bhattarai and Pant (2021) and CDC (2019) argue that understanding the ideas or the theories of authentic assessment does not guarantee its consistent and impactful application in real classroom practice. The successful application of constructivism in the classroom in Nepal was hindered by the challenges associated with parental expectations regarding summative assessments and grading, school resource constraints, teaching staff shortage, weak institutional support, exam culture, and limited opportunities for professional development in Nepal, because the institutional support is weak, and the exam-focused culture remains strong. In addition, teachers receive limited training and professional development, which makes it harder for them to adopt new assessment approaches.

This study also showed that school leadership strongly influences how assessment is practiced in teaching and learning activities, along with the assessment practices, and school leadership has a direct impact on the authentic and constructivist assessment practices in the classroom. This theory also supported the idea that assessment leadership is an important component of effective instructional leadership (Sandvik et al., 2024). The study argues that principals' assessment leadership, which includes clear guidelines and school visions concerning assessments, promoting shared expectations among teaching staff for assessment quality, and offering ongoing training, feedback, and professional dialogue (de Vries et al., 2022; Swaffield, 2011), can assist in promoting constructivist classroom practices. This also promoted assessment literacy among teachers on how they can use authentic tools such as portfolios and rubrics. The principal of School A showed better assessment leadership by setting up workshops, helping teachers with portfolios and rubrics, and collaborating with teachers for the use of soft skills. This resulted in the effective use of multiple assessment tools in the classrooms in School A, promoted remedial teaching, and framed learning as an active process where

assessment informed and supported learner growth (Vygotsky, 1978). The principal of School B, on the other hand, put less emphasis on assessment leadership and kept traditional tests as a priority. As a result, School B focused mainly on oral questioning, written tests, and limited use of rubrics, portfolios, and thematic integration. Therefore, this study reveals that in order for constructivist learning to take place in classrooms among students, principals require first modelling the constructivist learning practices with teachers by promoting peer collaboration, reciprocal dialogues, and professional scaffolding.

Finally, this study sheds light on holistic child development by revealing that the holistic intent remains conceptually strong but pedagogically fragile in the Nepalese context. Although assessment practices in integrated curriculum highlighted holistic child development, including the cognitive, emotional, social, physical, moral, and creative domains of learning (Sisk-Hilton, 2020), findings from this study indicate that assessment practices and classroom instruction are still dominated by cognitive and academic domains. Emotional, creative, and moral dimensions of holistic education are rarely assessed and encouraged systematically. Therefore, this study argues that what ‘holistic education’ means should be interpreted and defined according to the school, community and cultural contexts. Implementation of holistic education should be contextually and culturally responsive. Teachers in disadvantaged and low-resourced classrooms lack tools, resources and competence to assess non-academic growth, and parents’ expectations for visible academic outcomes further reinforce the narrow, academic focus of child development.

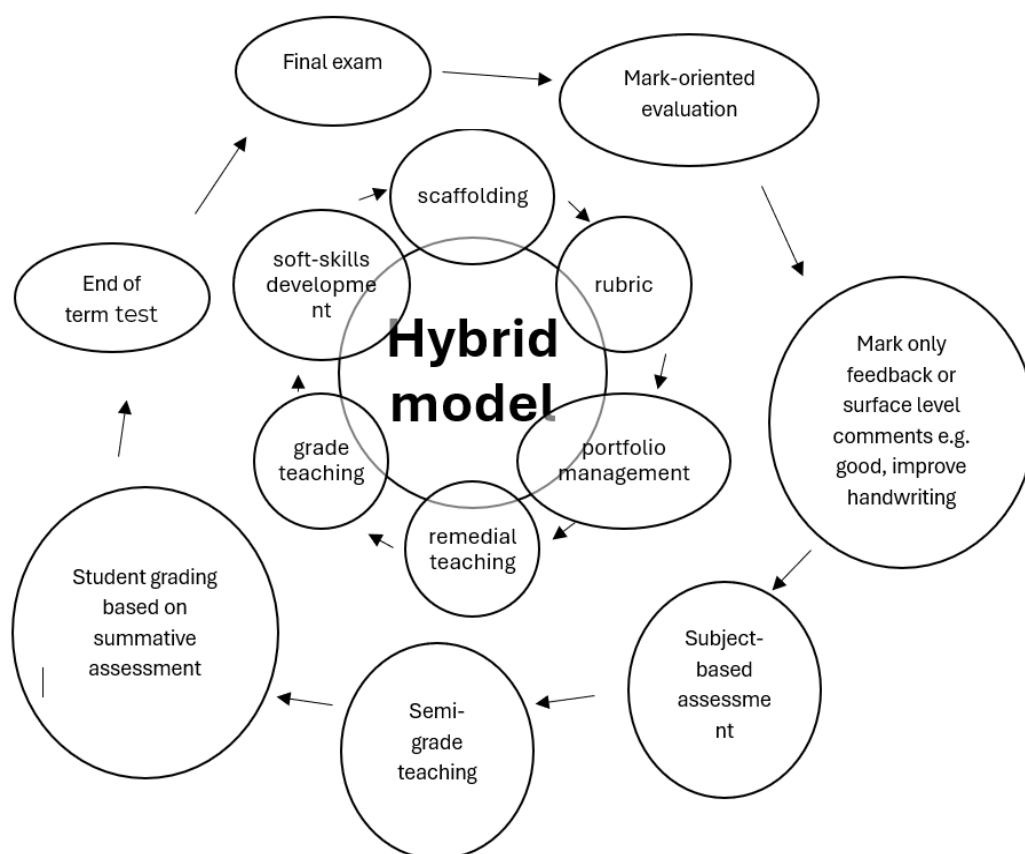
### **Hybrid Model**

Reflecting on the overall assessment practices in two case study schools, it can be argued that the full application of authentic assessment practices within an integrated curriculum, as recommended by the CDC (2019) framework, is not always practical in private schools in Nepal. Written exams remain the dominant method of student evaluation. Various administrative, systemic and organizational barriers prevent private schools from implementing assessment practices that are fully grounded in constructivist principles. Despite some alignments of School A with constructivist principles, their approach can be considered as a “hybrid model”. It is a context-responsive way of

implementing assessment practices within an integrated curriculum. It is neither a traditional, subject-based approach nor is it a fully integrated, authentic assessment. This middle ground, where the mix of the curriculum envisioned in the integrated curriculum and subject-based curriculum Framework is enacted, can be a more realistic way moving forward for assessment practices for private schools in Nepal. It supports cross-disciplinary links and is responsive to local contexts and constraints. This hybrid model is presented in the following diagram:

**Figure 12**

*Hybrid Model*



### Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the discussion carried out based on the interpretations of information presented in chapters IV four themes understanding key actors' the findings suggest that I have discussed with analysis and insight from principals and teachers' interview, classroom observation and students 'document analysis for applying the authentic assessment Overall, the study reveals that although both principals possess

theoretical knowledge of authentic assessment under the integrated curriculum, their practical implementation differs markedly. It can be shown that both School A and School B understand the concept of authentic assessment under the integrated curriculum, but their practices differ in depth and consistency. In school A, portfolios, rubrics, classroom observations, and some thematic integrations were applied while reflecting stronger instructional leadership and partially constructivist principles. However, challenges such as weak re-assessment, unorganized portfolios, and parental pressure for exam results limited full authenticity. School B, on the other hand, relied heavily on written tests and oral questioning, with portfolios and soft skills assessment treated superficially, reflecting weaker leadership with portfolios and rubrics used inconsistently, and greater barriers including parental expectations, lack of training, and limited resources, time constraints and fragmented implementation. In both schools, parental involvement was minimal, and exam orientation remained dominant, showing a gap between national policy goals and classroom reality. Overall, the study highlights that while School A demonstrated stronger alignment with authentic assessment practices, School B lagged, and in both cases, authentic assessment has yet to be fully institutionalized.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTION

This chapter consists of three main sections: the conclusion, which summarizes the findings of the study and answers the two research questions; the implications, which outline the relevance of the findings for principals, teachers, parents, policy makers, syllabus designers, and future researchers and school leaders and the journey reflection, which captures the researcher's personal experiences, struggles, and successes throughout the MPhil research process.

#### **Conclusions**

The initial conclusion of the first research question examined the implementation of authentic assessment within the integrated curriculum. This research presents authentic assessment practices which are based on the contextual factors in private schools. This suggests that an integrated curriculum is still unapplicable and heavily influenced by school culture, leadership, teachers' skills, and parents' expectations. Although the principals and teachers of both School A and School B recognize the importance of authentic assessment, the way they put it into practice differs widely. For example, School A presents stronger use of portfolios, rubrics, classroom observations, and project-based tasks as the core part of assessment. In school A, the weaknesses remain especially in re-assessment procedures, systematic record-keeping, and theme-based portfolio management.

On the other hand, School B, on the other hand, continues to depend mainly on written tests and oral questioning, using authentic assessment tools only in a limited and surface-level manner. This suggests that both schools understand the idea of authentic assessment, but its actual implementation is still incomplete.

Another conclusion that was in line with the second research question looked at how principals and teachers can help with assessment practices. The findings of this research also indicate that school leaders have a direct impact on the variation of assessment practices in both schools. The principal of School A adopted a better constructivist and leadership approach, setting the workshops, meetings, monitoring

teachers, supporting teachers for the portfolio management and rubric application and preparation and also pushing for the use of soft skills. These leadership practices observed in school A are aligned more with the constructivist ideas, but he accepts that the time constraints and parental pressure create hard practices.

On the other hand, the principal of the school gives less priority to teaching guidance because he believes that his teachers can do better. He never makes a plan for workshops, teachers' training and parent-teacher workshops. They put focus on the traditionally applied test. Find no wide range of assessment tools, rubrics, re-assessment and purposeful continuous feedback and remedial class lacking the authentic use of students' portfolios because of less practice of the instructional leadership practices. Thus, this scene also shows that leadership is very important in deciding how assessments are conducted in the classroom. The variation of assessment is shaped by the variation of leadership among school leaders. It can be observed that the roles of teachers and parents are hidden within the roles of the principal. For example, Teachers at School A try to use a variety of real-world methods and get students involved in activities that are not just tests, but they still need more training and consistency. But parents at this school weren't very involved and still thought that test scores were more important than other skills. The study showed that the teachers in School B applied only the written questioning in oral because of a lack of training and resources. Due to a lack of training and resources, teachers at School B mostly used traditional methods.

My study indicates that the school principal requires not only robust leadership but also ongoing teacher training and active parental engagement for authentic application of assessment practice.

The third conclusion also depicts the realistic picture of assessment to be applied as assumed by CDC, depending on some essential factors as instructional leadership, training, experienced teachers, parental and resources. The policy expectations with the gap become more obvious in private schools, where the government does not provide support for the sources or training. We have a trend of having the scarcity of teachers in the present private educational market, and the working teachers are also unprofessional with the newly changing curriculum of education, which has made it even harder to use authentic assessment.

Moreover, the lack of adequate research and evidence-based guidelines in the Nepalese context results in schools frequently facing challenges in reconciling classroom realities. These insights indicate that although the principals and teachers are aware of the theoretical background of internal assessment. The absence of portfolio management, rubrics, and feedback leads to inconsistent and subject-focused text. This means that if we don't get better support and work together, the real assessment will stay incomplete, and the culture of exams will continue to be the most important thing.

Teacher capacity is another key factor. For example, teachers in School A are making the effort to apply the authentic assessment process, but still the existing teachers need more support to ensure consistency and acknowledge the depth in their assessment practices. In School B, teachers rely mostly on traditional assessments because they have limited training, fewer resources, and fewer opportunities for professional development. In both schools, parents exert a strong influence; most parents continue to value exam scores over other forms of assessment, pushing schools toward summative tests and weakening the goals of the integrated curriculum.

This study validly evaluated the assessment system under the integrated curriculum of institutional schools in Morong district, considering the roles of the school principals and teachers. The results show that both School A and School B principals understand the ideas of authentic assessment, but their practices are very different in terms of depth and consistency. For example, School A has a strong theoretical understanding of instructional leadership, but in practice, it only uses constructivist practices, portfolios, rubrics, classroom observations, and project tasks. However, both schools have trouble with re-assessment, keeping records in a systematic way, and parents putting pressure on them to achieve the position with the summative test. School B uses more traditional tests and oral questioning, and portfolios and no rubrics are used to some extent. This shows that School B minimizes the weak instructional leadership, less training, resource constraints and parental involvement.

My research finding depicts the insights that authentic assessment in private schools is determined by principal leadership, teacher training and parental involvement, where the government neglects to support private schools. Teacher training and parental involvement are hindered, while government neglects regarding resource allocation in

private schools further hinders progress. This study satisfied the research gaps in exploring the practical application of assessment in integrated curriculum policy by comparing the case of two different schools from the perspective of both principals and teachers. It underscores the enduring nature of an exam-driven culture and responds to the research questions by illustrating both the advantages and disadvantages of current practices, the significant impact of leadership, and the contextual factors that affect effective implementation. The study ultimately finds that authentic assessment in Nepal's private schools is only partially institutionalized. To achieve the comprehensive objectives of the integrated curriculum, stronger leadership, teacher development, parental involvement, and systemic support are essential. The study finds that leadership, teacher capacity, and parental support all play a role in whether authentic assessment can work in private schools with the integrated curriculum.

Another conclusion of the first research question explores how authentic assessment is being practiced under the integrated curriculum. The remarkable conclusion from the findings reveals that both School A and School B principals and teachers are aware of the importance of authentic assessment, but the depth of practice differs due to a lack of practice. For instance, School A implements students' records, rubrics, observation records and project-based activities to examine academic and soft skills. These attempts show the close associations with integrated curriculum objectives, although there exists a gap in reevaluation, systematic records, and the theme-based portfolio arrangements.

For example, School A applies portfolios, rubric, classroom observations, and project-based activities to assess both academic and soft skills. These practices reflect stronger alignment with integrated curriculum goals, though gaps remain in re-assessment, systematic records, and theme-wise portfolio organization.

On the contrary, School B, which is highly dependent on the traditional assessment system, written and oral questioning, with portfolio and rubrics employed, advocates the prevalence of exam-oriented culture.

Another research question is aligned with the second research question relating to the guiding practices of the principal for the assessment practices. My research findings also show that leadership directly shapes the nature and degree of assessment in both

schools. This highlights that leadership plays a key role in shaping how assessment is carried out at the classroom level. This explores the role of teachers and parents. As a result, in school, the principal role encourages the teachers to apply various assessment tools to apply the authentic assessment practices for the child's holistic development, and also students participate in activities beyond the test, but they still need more consistency and training. Parents in this school, however, were not much involved and continued to value exam results more than other skills. In School B, teachers mostly used traditional methods because of limited training and resources, and parents also supported exam-centered learning. These practices lead me to conclude that for the authentic assessment practices to work well, the school requires not only strong leadership but also continued teacher training and active participation of the parents.

More broadly, this study lacks application because of the challenges, such as limited support of the government for private schools, shortage of trained teachers, and lack of parental involvement and context-based assessment guidelines. However, the importance of the formative nature of authentic assessment is highlighted through policy documents like the NCF 2019, and private schools are struggling to apply these expectations because they lack resources, training, and structural support.

Overall, in both cases, only the partial application of the authentic assessment practice is found by considering only the contextual factors of the private school. The aims of the integrated curriculum cannot be fully realized without stronger instructional leadership, ongoing teacher development, regular parental orientation, and supportive policy mechanisms. These findings help explain how policy ideals interact with actual school conditions and show that the long-term success of authentic assessment depends on leadership, teacher competence, parental cooperation, and system-level support.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for School Stakeholders**

This section includes the usefulness of my research, which can facilitate the related stakeholders as follows:

#### **Implications for Principals**

The findings of this study highlight that school leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality and authenticity of assessment practices. The principal, having the

principal's strong instructional leadership, organize the teacher workshops to monitor classroom practices,

The nature of the principal enhances the fostering of collaboration, and providing continuous guidance creates an environment where authentic assessment under the integrated curriculum can thrive. Beyond administrative duties, principals need to take an active pedagogical role by promoting the use of portfolios, soft-skill evaluation, formative assessment tools, and project-based learning. This research also provides principals with practical insights and theoretical understanding, enabling them to apply both instructional leadership and constructivist principles to assessment practices. The challenges, such as re-assessment, portfolio management and exam-oriented pressure observed in school A and B can be addressed by close monitoring of the principal for the students towards more holistic learning outcomes. Moreover, principals can use this study as a learning resource to model and sustain a school culture that aligns classroom practices with policy intentions and fosters meaningful parental engagement. My research highlights that joint efforts of all the stakeholders are required to establish the school culture, which focuses on the students' learning portfolio, portfolios, soft skills, re-assessment practices, students' feedback, remedial teaching, and formative tools and engaging parents to lessen the parents' expectation over the summative.

### **Implications for Teachers**

The teachers are primary stakeholders for the implementation of assessment practices because their knowledge, skills, and commitment largely determine the effectiveness of authentic assessment. My research shows that the teachers possess continuous professional development in the core part of the integrated curriculum rubric design, portfolio management, classroom observation techniques, thematic integration and students' feedback, as well as result publication with the value of grade or GPA instead of marks converted to percentage. The teachers will adopt formative assessment, shifting from subject-centric test that fosters holistic child development. The principal can support and facilitate the teachers with his collaborative plan and instructional leadership skills, aligning classroom practices with the goals of the integrated curriculum. Moreover, by considering the role of the parents in authentic assessment, the teachers can create a more supportive learning environment, making parental involvement. In the

future, teachers can apply these insights to improve assessment practices, effectively bridging gaps observed in schools like A and B and ensuring that assessment contributes meaningfully to both student growth and the overall educational development of the school.

### **Implications for Parents**

The study highlights that parental pressure for marks and terminal exams often undermines the implementation of authentic assessment. The parents are essentially required to be sensitized to the importance of formative and process-based evaluation. This can be useful for accepting the use of portfolios, projects, and soft skills development, as these approaches work for the holistic growth of children. The parents can understand the assessment practices as proposed by this curriculum through participation in meetings, workshops, and students' portfolio management rather than only a summative-based written outcome. This research shows that parents have a crucial role in supporting authentic assessment. They can help reduce resistance to new practices, which can encourage child-centered learning, and contribute significantly to the overall development of their children. Through understanding the role of both the principal and teachers in reinforcing practices that enhance students' learning and skill development.

### **Implications for School Management**

Thus, school management should also inform and enhance the stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities to make involvement for the effective, active and meaningful practices. This research facilitated the school management committee by exposing the practical gaps of the integrated curriculum through highlighting the areas which require immediate attention to support the child holistically. First, the parents understand the fact that it shows that effective implementation cannot rely solely on policy directives but requires strong leadership, continuous teacher training, and realistic planning. So that they can work and make decisions to bring the effective practices as assumed by the CDC, they can make them stand as the standpoint for the complete aspects of requirements for the development of the child.

Likewise, the management committees should therefore prioritize capacity-building programs, encourage collaborative lesson planning, and create supportive conditions for teachers to adopt authentic assessment practices.

Then, secondly, the findings reveal the dissatisfaction of parents with formative assessments, which suggests that management must strengthen communication channels with parents. Therefore, this can orient them to the value of holistic evaluation and involve them in decision-making processes. Third, the lack of integrated involvement between teachers and parents in curriculum design points to the need for management committees to advocate for stakeholder participation in future curriculum reforms. The management committee can address these gaps by working as the bridge between theory and practice. The management committee can also acknowledge that assessment strategies are both context-oriented and practical for private schools. Ultimately, this research guides school management to rethink its role not just as an implementer of curriculum but as an active mediator between teachers, parents, and policymakers.

### **Implications for Policy Makers**

This study can also highlight that, while national frameworks like the NCF 2019 and SSDP 2016–2023 strengthen the authentic assessment, practical assistance for implementation in private schools is limited from both the research and my professional career perspectives. From this research, it is apparent that the policy makers and the curriculum designers also develop a clear vision to apply the assessment practices from only the contextual understanding (i.e. private school-specific guidelines in Morang). This research also encourages them to prepare training modules to bridge the gap between policy and classroom practice. The curriculum designers can adopt such strategies so that the resources and professional development opportunities can be extended to private schools, which often lack government support, teacher training, and sufficient instructional materials. They can also incorporate the practical strategies into syllabus design, such as preparing the rubrics and sample portfolios, through step-by-step assessment procedures. The ideas of such strategies can help schools apply authentic assessment more effectively if these practices are applied through a comprehensive understanding. The findings of this study suggest that policy revisions can also address parental collaboration, strengthen teacher capacity, and provide mechanisms to support schools like School A and B in overcoming challenges related to re-assessment, portfolio management, and holistic evaluation.

Thus, aligning policies with the realities of school practice, policymakers can narrow the gap between curriculum intentions and classroom implementation, promoting consistent, meaningful assessment across private schools.

### **Implication for Researchers**

The significant research gap is highlighted in understanding how the private schools in Nepal implement authentic assessment under the integrated curriculum. This finding supports researchers who can conduct broader comparative studies across different regions. Further, the researchers can also explore the long-term effects of authentic assessment on students' learning outcomes and test the relationship between school leadership styles and assessment practices. Additionally, they can also adopt the hybrid model of assessment, investigating parental perceptions and cultural factors that reinforce exam-oriented traditions, which would provide more contextually relevant strategies for educational reform. The future research can also utilize my research work as a valuable resource, as the literature review offers foundational insights into the challenges and successes of authentic assessment in private schools. From my research, many other researchers can also conduct the research work, spreading the light that my research cannot capture. My research would be the foundation for further research work relating to various facets of internal assessment practices.

Moreover, researchers can also adopt these findings to contribute to exploring practical solutions to the problems observed in the practices of schools like A and B, such as gaps in re-assessment, portfolio management and teacher capacity, contributing to more effective and evidence-based educational policies and practices. These researchers can also support further research work on context-based research on the private schools in Nepal.

### **Implications for Educational Leadership Practices in Nepal.**

The findings of this research provide valuable inputs for enhancing the educational leadership practices within the Nepali school context, which especially implement authentic assessment under the integrated curriculum. The school leaders can also acknowledge that the traditional approach to educational leadership in Nepal has focused heavily on administrative and managerial tasks rather than instructional leadership. However, the challenges identified in Schools A and B show that today's

schools require leaders who can guide teaching and learning more directly. The school leaders can also identify the ways in which they can exercise the successful leadership tasks from the practices in school A and school B. The finding of my research also strengthens the educational leaders who can lead the schools with the spirit of constructivist and instructional leadership skills because they can walk the path of instructional, collaborative, and transformative in their approach. Further, they can also accept that leaders can determine the educational strategies of the teachers.

First, this highlights that strong instructional leadership is crucial for improving assessment practices. For example, when school principals consistently support the teachers through classroom observation, frequent teacher training, and constructive feedback. This also helps to shape an environment where authentic assessment is not only practiced but also valued. This shift from simply managing the school to actively mentoring teachers creates a culture where assessment becomes meaningful and aligned with integrated curriculum goals.

Second, the implementation of the integrated curriculum requires leaders who demonstrate transformational leadership qualities because leaders have to inspire a shared vision, motivate teachers, and encourage innovative assessment strategies like portfolios, rubrics, project work, and soft-skill evaluation.

Third, the research shows the importance of distributed leadership because it was observed that authentic assessment cannot be carried out by the principal alone; it requires the involvement of class teachers, subject teachers, coordinators, assessment in-charges, and even parents. The Sharing of the responsibilities, promoting teamwork, and creating structures for collaborative planning and monitoring can facilitate that assessment practices are consistent and effective across the school.

Fourth, the findings emphasize the role of leadership in engaging parents and teachers because Many parents still prefer exam-based evaluation. The principal needs to create a supportive environment to participate in the assessment process through communicating openly with parents and explaining the benefits of holistic assessment. The principal's role can be crucial for involving the parents in assessment strategies in activities such as portfolio exhibitions, orientation programs, and student-led conferences.

When parents understand the purpose of authentic assessment, they are more likely to support the school's efforts and reduce pressure on teachers and students.

Finally, this research is beneficial for the school leaders in private schools to engage in continuous learning for assessment practices. The school leaders agree with the facts that the Leadership development programs, which are conducted at municipal, provincial, and national levels, need to focus on assessment literacy curriculum implementation plan and strategies for assessment literacy. This research is useful for educational leaders to stay updated with the current research and policy in the educational sector. Then, the leaders are better prepared to understand the authentic intentions and support teachers to apply those intentions in classroom practices.

### **My Reflection**

I have rich experience working in a private school from two angles, as a principal and a teacher from class two to university level. I have had many fluctuations in my education and profession to arrive at the present state. I have heard that it's very hard to study for an MPhil degree because it requires a higher level of hard work and skills, but it can make us proficient in education when I was the principal of one of the private schools in Morang District. I planned to apply the authentic assessment as assumed by CDC. However, assessment was lacking in practices in many schools when I interacted with the principals and teachers at different schools. This interaction and visit have made it clear to me that the textbook and curriculum were also taken to be the same documents. I have also found in my school that there are problems with the application. My teachers also liked to employ the subject-based exam, neglecting the formative nature of the test, which ultimately intends to apply the formative test along with the continuing student's portfolio, application of soft skills, and thematic integration based on a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach. These shortcomings are widely found in all the private schools in the setting of Morang District. Therefore, I was strongly dedicated to doing further research on exploring assessment practices of the integrated curriculum in private schools in Morang district. Two research questions follow: How is the existing situation of internal assessment practice within integrated curriculum in private schools in Morang? In what ways are principals and teachers

playing their roles in implementing assessment in Grades 1-3? I came to join my MPhil Degree with the aim of upgrading and researching to fulfil my hunger.

My MPhil journey began with planting a small seed of curiosity in my heart. My MPhil journey started with a simple question in my heart: How can assessment really support children's learning? The beginning of my aims is to study to upgrade my own school and contribute to some meaningful new changes in the educational domain. But stepping into the research journey was not easy at first. I only set a goal to reach a higher level of study. But I never thought or imagined how much I would have to struggle. Then I still remember the excitement of my first classes, meeting with professors and friends who inspired me, and the nervousness of presenting my first assignment. Keeping the balance of my role as a school principal, a parent, and a student was difficult, yet this hardship and these challenges gave me new energy. It felt like slowly climbing a hill, step by step, with hope in my eyes.

The more my journey became difficult, and the journey moved ahead, my struggles became a source of happiness, and my struggles became my guide as a teacher. During my dissertation, visiting my sites, collecting data from schools, and writing late at night felt never-ending. Interviewing with the principals and teachers, classroom observation and students' workbook analysis showed me the gap between theory and practice. Working late into the night, reading and typing chapters often felt exhausting, but I got the happiness of completing a draft or getting positive feedback from my own supervisor. Collecting data from principals, teachers observing classrooms, and analyzing student portfolios was not only part of the research. Sometimes I struggled with time, sometimes with doubt, but every obstacle made me stronger and more committed. Each small success, like finishing an interview, designing a tool, or shaping a theme, felt like crossing another milestone on a beautiful journey.

Now, as I reach the end of this path, I see how much this journey has changed me. My study journey began with confusion and ended with satisfaction and confidence. This research has guided me to be patient, disciplined, and courageous. I came to realize that MPhil study was never just about writing a thesis. It was about discovering myself as a leader and a learner who can contribute to education. More importantly, this journey has contributed to reshaping me both personally and professionally. It enhanced my strengths

through my research skills and deepened my understanding of educational leadership. From the role of the principal, I took the assessment practices in both schools not as a mechanical process, but my role was like a transformative tool that can shape children's learning experiences, and as a parent, I have also learned the value of time from the behavior of my daughter and the emotional balance. And as a learner, I have discovered the courage to challenge my own beliefs and grow beyond my comfort zone. The struggles were real, but so were the lovable successes that made me smile along the way.

Today, I stand proud, knowing this journey is not an end but the beginning of new possibilities ahead. Then, I stand stronger, more grounded, and more hopeful, ready to take everything forward. I have learned the true role and skills of an academic leader, researcher, and lifelong learner. The challenges were real, but the lessons and small successes made the journey meaningful. The important things that my learning has contributed to understanding different styles of leadership from a practical point of view in my school and career, too. Furthermore, I also got more encouragement even for my PhD study. This study facilitated me to adopt the different leadership strategies within this span of my MPhil career (2023 to 2025).

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## APPENDIX

**Interview Guiding Questions**

1. How do you view the assessment practice differently between Grade (1 to 3) and other class?
2. How often is internal assessment conducted in your school? Is there a standardized assessment schedule?
3. How do you ensure that adequately trained teachers are required in implementing authentic assessment practice in integrated curriculum? Are there any specific training needs or gaps?
4. What are the factors that you need to consider in making classroom schedule?
5. What is your plan and management to integrate all the teachers to share the common theme to have the mastery of knowledge in different subjects?
6. How do you judge and provide feedback to your teachers for learned and unlearned?
7. What are your expectations from students and how do you make sure that your students have achieved the target?
8. How do you create the balance between parents' belief on subject based exam and its authentic assessment?
9. Which theories and leadership roles have applied in your school for application?
10. What is your plan to develop the integrated curriculum based Manpower after their appointment from the market? And what do you prioritize either on teacher management or development for preparation of required manpower in need based market?
11. How is your role for teaching, assessment, and portfolio –Management and soft skills application and management of documents, Materials and sources?
12. How does your school ensure that assessment policy align with integrated curriculum framework and do you monitor and evaluate the implementation of assessment in your school?
13. , How do you foster the collaboration among the teachers to share the best practices in assessment?
14. How do you involve the parents and other stakeholders in the assessment process and what assessment tools do you recommend and provide feedback to your teachers?
15. What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing internal assessment practices and how do you as the head teacher address these challenges?

### **Interview Guiding Questions for Teachers**

1. How do you provide feedback to students based on internal assessment data to inform your teaching and improve students' learning?
2. What are the main challenges and opportunities in implementing internal assessment practices in integrated curriculum? And how do these challenges impact your teaching and students learning?
3. How do you connect the same repeated theme with knowledge of different subjects in your teaching?
4. When and how do you assess the learned performance of students in different subjects?
5. What will be your efforts if you are sure that your students could not fulfill the learning achievement level?
6. Why and the remedial teaching and re assessment has been conducted?
7. What are the soft skills that particular theme has been developed in your own students? And what do you think that either this curriculum is based on knowledge or subject?
8. How do you keep the record of assessment on the basis of thematic teaching and which subjects are integrated within "our surrounding"?
9. Which documents are important to keep the record of assessment and how do you make it transperence among all the stakeholders?
10. What are the various other activities can be carried out to have behavioral change through soft skills in real practice and do you consider in developing soft skills conveyed by each theme in each subject?
11. What aspects of your students are developed from your teaching as the holistic development of child?
12. 11What challenges have you faced to apply and how do you solve it?
13. How do you make make your students more achievable all the achievement level even for poor?
14. What are the aspects of development having to be fostered for holistic development of child and how do you keep the balance in the use of formative and summative assessment in your classroom?

15. What are the challenges and opportunities to integrate the theme within many varieties of knowledge, to develop soft skills and portfolio management?

Teacher's Plan in School B

Grade : 2 'Emerald' class teacher: Osin Gurung Date : 2082-04-19

Period	Subject	Lesson/ Page No	Specific Objectives	Materials Used	Evaluation/ Assignment	Teacher's Name	Signature
1 <sup>st</sup>	Math	Bar Graphs	Students can count numbers using Pictograph	Daily used materials	Complete classwork	Osin Gurung	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	विद्युत		- घरमा प्रयोग गरिने विद्युतीय सामग्रीहरूको नाम र प्रयोग बारे जानकारी द्दा ।	—	क. का घरेर आउने	Manisha Karki	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	सैरोपरी						
4 <sup>th</sup>	Computer	Technology in Everyday life	- students will learn to do exercise from this lesson	Daily used materials	Read	R.P	
5 <sup>th</sup>	पुस्तक	पेज नं. 908	पुस्तक गते	11	गोडा मिलाउने	R.T.R.	
6 <sup>th</sup>							
7 <sup>th</sup>							

Grade : 2 'E' class teacher: [Redacted] Date : 04-19

Period	Subject	Lesson/ Page No	Specific Objectives	Materials Used	Evaluation/ Assignment	Teacher's Name	Signature
1 <sup>st</sup>	Math	Multiplication	Students can solve problems of multiply	Daily used materials	do in book Page (200)	[Redacted]	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	English Grammar	Our environment	Students will learn the things which they can see in our surrounding.	11	write the things that you can see	[Redacted]	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	स्थानीय	—	- विभिन्न शब्दहरू भन्दा सको सको ।	11	In Copy	[Redacted]	
4 <sup>th</sup>	Science	Parts of plant	- Students are able to know about different parts of plant	11	fill in the blanks	[Redacted]	
5 <sup>th</sup>	पुस्तक	पेज नं. 86	स-सक वाचन गरीदिनु	11	पुस्तक	[Redacted]	
6 <sup>th</sup>							
7 <sup>th</sup>							

Date: 2082/7/27

**DAILY LESSON NOTE**

Day: Thursday

Period	Subject	Class	Topics	learning Activities	Achievements	Evaluation Tools	Remarks
1 <sup>st</sup>	Maths	2	Currency	* Showing pictures of money to the students. * Letting students to identify money. * Telling about the difference between note and a coin. * Whose picture is on the note? * What number is written in the note?	* Students will be able to tell difference between note and coin. * Students will be able to identify the amount of money.	* Pictures * Discussion * Observation	* Learning skill (CS:2) * Application skill (CS)
2 <sup>nd</sup> 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Grammar	2	Reading Comprehension	* Guiding students to read the passage. * Asking students about the characters involved in given passage.	* Students will be able to read the passage.	* Discussion	* Thinking skill(s)

Class Teacher

Coordinator

Principal

Date:

**DAILY LESSON NOTE**

Day:

Period	Subject	Class	Topics	learning Activities	Achievements	Evaluation Tools	Remarks
				* Helping students to solve the exercise. * Finding noun and pronoun from passage.	* Students will be able to say the characters of the story. * Students will be able to identify noun and pronoun.	* Home work * Observation	* Learning skill (CS:2)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Science	2	Personal Hygiene	* Discussing exercise * Helping students to write Question Answer * Helping students to solve the exercise.	* Students will be able to read and write Q/A and exercise.	* Discussion * Classwork observation	* Learning skill (CS:2)

Grade : 2 'Emerald'

class teacher: [Redacted]

Date: 2082-04-16

Period	Subject	Lesson/ Page No	Specific Objectives	Materials Used	Evaluation/ Assignment	Teacher's Name	Signature
1 <sup>st</sup>	Math	Practice at board	It will help <sup>students to</sup> solve problems at board.	Daily used materials	in copy	[Redacted]	[Signature]
2 <sup>nd</sup>	English	Our environment	Students will write about weather	"	-	[Redacted]	[Signature]
3 <sup>rd</sup>	इंग्लिश		सबै रोगवार बच्चा उपग्रहण जानै छन,	"	In copy	[Redacted]	[Signature]
4 <sup>th</sup>	science		1 page handwriting	proxy		[Redacted]	[Signature]
5 <sup>th</sup>	इंग्लिश	पृ. नं. १००	मनाबलित पाठन रचना	Daily used materials.	पृ. नं. १०० को २	[Redacted]	[Signature]
6 <sup>th</sup>						[Redacted]	[Signature]
th						[Redacted]	[Signature]