

ENGLISH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF CONDUCTING ASSESSMENT IN
THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Hari Bhakta Karki* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on *12 November 2025* entitled *English Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Assessment in the Integrated Curriculum*.

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This dissertation examined English language teaching faculties' experience of assessment following the introduction of integrated curriculum for community schools in Kavrepalanchok and Bhaktapur districts. The new curriculum, which was implemented in 2019, was designed to be progressive and aimed at developing 21st-century learning goals for learners. This curriculum emphasized continuous assessment, assessment for learning, and competency development through interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary integration of subjects. The new assessment system measured student competency through non-traditional examinations, *i.e.*, students' progress was assessed through regular classroom instruction and performance.

Prior to the proposed new approach, the majority of educators believed that evaluations are the tests used for summative purposes. The most overlooked aspects in such assessments were the students' engagement in class, the records of assignments, their communication, their projects, and their involvement in extracurricular activities. While the former curriculum system did not address comprehensive components of assessment using the Continuous Assessment System (CAS), the new curriculum succeeded in assessing many of the left-out aspects using an integrated evaluation system. This context positioned this inquiry as a suitable fit for study.

I adopted non-positivist worldview, constructivist paradigm, and Gadamerian Hermeneutic phenomenological approach to bring the lived experiences of the

participants of my study. Three teachers teaching in community schools were my participants. I employed a qualitative data collection method, including in-depth interviews, field notes, observations, and document analysis, to gather information from the participants. I transcribed the recorded information from the participants and employed the nine steps of data analysis process as suggested by Gadamer (1960), further elaborated upon by Fleming et al. (2003) and Ajjawi and Higgs (2007). The analysis process involved identifying the participants' horizon through interviews and determining the researcher's horizon through pre-understanding of the topic, observation, and document analysis. Other steps included identifying 'second order' where both participants' and the researcher's horizons were integrated to find emergent themes. Emergent themes were further used for finding subordinate and superordinate themes.

Five superordinate themes emerged from the analysis. They were initial understanding of Integrated Curriculum, varied but irregularly integrated classroom practices, fragmented assessment practices, challenges in implementing assessment, and the necessity of timely orientation and training. These five themes were further utilized in the meaning-making process, drawing on the participants' lived experiences as expressed in the interviews. Furthermore, the themes were seen in the light of the reviewed literature, as well as with the theory of transformative learning and the constructivist paradigm.

The findings highlight that the teachers had a basic understanding of the integrated curriculum and its assessment. Practically, they still relied on a traditional pen-and-paper-based summative type of examination system rather than a continuous assessment. They demanded proper guidance and oversight from the governing body, and timely workshops and training regarding their proper execution.

The study suggests future research and practical implications for policymakers, teachers (with larger and more diverse samples), students, guardians, and school leaders, encouraging further exploration in the field of Integrated Curriculum and assessment practices.

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12 November 2025

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शोधसार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर उपाधिका लागि हरिभक्त कार्कीको शोधप्रबन्धको शिर्षक “एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रममा मूल्याङ्कन सञ्चालन गर्ने अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षकहरूको अनुभव” २६ कार्तिक २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

.....
सह.प्रा खगेन्द्र आचार्य, पीएचडी

शोध निर्देशक

यस शोधप्रबन्धले काभ्रेपलाञ्चोक र भक्तपुर जिल्लाका सामुदायिक विद्यालयहरूमा एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम अन्तर्गतको मूल्यांकनमा संलग्न अंग्रेजी शिक्षकहरूको अनुभवलाई विश्लेषण गर्दछ। एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम पुराना पाठ्यक्रमहरूसँग तुलना गर्दा अधिक प्रगतिशील हुने उद्देश्यले तयार गरिएको थियो र सिक्नेहरूका लागि २१औँ शताब्दीका सिकाइ-लक्ष्यहरू विकास गर्ने लक्ष्यसहित २०७६ सालमा कार्यान्वयन गरिएको थियो। यो पाठ्यक्रमले निरन्तर मूल्यांकन, सिकाइका लागि मूल्यांकन, तथा अन्तर-विषयक र अतिक्रमणात्मक एकीकरणमार्फत सिकाइ-क्षमता विकासमा जोड दिन्छ। यसमा समावेश नयाँ मूल्यांकन प्रणालीले औपचारिक परीक्षामा मात्रै मूल्यांकन निर्भर नभई नियमित कक्षाकोठा अध्यापन र विद्यार्थीको प्रदर्शनका आधारमा उनीहरूको सिकाइ-क्षमता मापन गरि सुधारतर्फ प्रोत्साहन गर्ने मुख्य उद्देश्य राख्दछ।

नेपालको सन्दर्भमा, पुराना पाठ्यक्रमको प्रयोगका क्रममा धेरैजसो शिक्षकहरूले मूल्यांकनलाई संक्षेपिक उद्देश्यका लागि प्रयोग हुने परीक्षा मात्र भन्ने बुझाइ राखेका थिए। विद्यार्थीका गतिविधिहरूमध्ये कक्षा सहभागिता, असाइनमेन्ट अभिलेख, सञ्चार क्षमता, परियोजना कार्य, र सह-पाठ्यक्रम गतिविधिमा संलग्नता जस्ता पक्षहरू प्रायः बेवास्ता गरिएका थिए। अघिल्लो पाठ्यक्रमले निरन्तर मूल्यांकन प्रणाली (CAS) को प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनलाई पूर्ण रूपमा सम्बोधन गर्न नसकेको भए पनि नयाँ पाठ्यक्रमले एकीकृत मूल्यांकन प्रणालीमार्फत यसलाई प्रभावकारी रूपमा कार्यान्वयन गर्न सफल भएको देखिन्छ। यही कारणले यो अध्ययन उपयुक्त अनुसन्धानका रूपमा आफैँलाई स्थापित गर्दछ।

यो शोधले गैर-प्रत्यक्षवादी विश्वदृष्टि, निर्माणवादी प्रतिमान, र गाडामेरियन हर्मन्युटिक फेनोमेनोलोजी विधि अवलम्बन गरी सहभागीहरूको जीवन-अनुभवलाई उजागर गरेको छ। सामुदायिक विद्यालयमा कक्षा ३ पढाउने तीन जना शिक्षकहरू यस अध्ययनका सहभागी थिए। मैले गहन अन्तर्वार्ता, फिल्ड नोट्स, अवलोकन, तथा कागजात विश्लेषणजस्ता गुणात्मक डेटा सङ्कलन विधिहरू प्रयोग गरेँ। सहभागीहरूसँग प्राप्त ध्वनिमुद्रित सूचनालाई प्रतिलेखन गरी गाडामेर (1960) ले प्रस्ताव गरेको तथा Fleming et al. (2003) र Ajjawi एवं Higgs (2007) ले स्पष्ट पारेको नौ चरणीय विश्लेषण प्रक्रिया प्रयोग गरियो। विश्लेषणमा सहभागीहरूको दृष्ट (horizon) पहिचान, शोधकर्ताको दृष्ट पहिचान (पूर्व-समझ, अवलोकन तथा कागजात विश्लेषणमार्फत), र दुवै दृष्टलाई समायोजन गरी उद्यमान विषयवस्तु पहिचान

गर्ने प्रक्रिया समावेश थियो। यही उद्यमान विषयवस्तुहरूलाई उपयोग गरी अधीनस्थ र मुख्य (superordinate तथा subordinate) विषयवस्तुहरू निर्माण गरियो।

विश्लेषण प्रक्रियाबाट पाँचवटा मुख्य विषयवस्तु निर्माण गरिएका छन्, जसमा क्रमशः एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमप्रतिको प्रारम्भिक बुझाइ, विविध तर अनियमित रूपमा हुने एकीकृत कक्षाकोठा अभ्यास, विखण्डित मूल्यांकन अभ्यास, मूल्यांकन कार्यान्वयनका चुनौतीहरू, र समयमै अभिमुखीकरण तथा तालिमको आवश्यकता रहेका छन्।

यी विषयवस्तुहरू सहभागीहरूको जीवन-अनुभव, समीक्षित साहित्य, निर्माणवादी प्रतिमान, तथा रूपान्तरणकारी सिकाइ सिद्धान्तसँग संयोजन गर्दै अर्थ-निर्माण प्रक्रियामा उपयोग गरिए। अध्ययनका निष्कर्षहरूले देखाए कि शिक्षकहरूलाई एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम तथा यसको मूल्यांकनबारे आधारभूतमात्र बुझाइ थियो। एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रमको व्यावहारिक प्रयोगमा उनीहरू निरन्तर मूल्यांकनभन्दा पनि परम्परागत कलम-कागज आधारित संक्षेपिक परीक्षामै बढी निर्भर देखिए। शिक्षकहरूले नगरपालिका जस्ता शासकीय निकायबाट उचित मार्गदर्शन तथा अनुगमनको आवश्यकता भएको बताए। साथै, प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनका लागि समयमै कार्यशाला तथा तालिम आवश्यक रहेको माग राखे।

यस अध्ययनले भविष्यका अनुसन्धानकर्ताहरू, नीतिनिर्माता, शिक्षक (विशेष गरी ठूलो र विविध नमुनासहित), विद्यार्थी, अभिभावक, तथा विद्यालय प्रमुखहरूका लागि व्यावहारिक सुझावहरू प्रस्तुत गर्दछ, जसले एकीकृत पाठ्यक्रम तथा मूल्यांकन अभ्यासका क्षेत्रमा थप अनुसन्धान र सुधारका सम्भावनाहरू अघि बढाउन सहयोग पुऱ्याउँछ।

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हरिभक्त कार्की
उपाधि उम्मेदवार

२६ कार्तिक २०८२

This dissertation entitled *English Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Assessment in the Integrated Curriculum* presented by *Hari Bhakta Karki* on *12 November 2025*.

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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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ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	Assessment for Learning
ARCS	Attention, Relevance, Confident and Satisfaction
CAS	Continuous Assessment System
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
IC	Integrated Curriculum
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
M. Phil	Master of Philosophy
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCFSE	National Curriculum Framework for School Education
PAG	Pedagogy and Assessment Guide
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TLT	Transformative Learning Theory
TPD	Teacher's Professional Development
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
TV/AV	Television/ Audio-Visual

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I introduce my research issue, my interest in the topic, the assessment modalities in an integrated curriculum, and my approach to the issue. Then, I present the significance of my study, purpose, problem statement, and research questions. Further, I delineate the study area, delimitations, and structure of my research study.

An integrated curriculum, also known as an interdisciplinary curriculum, is believed to connect content across multiple disciplines. Therefore, it is considered to have emerged as an interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, or trans-disciplinary approach as an alternative to traditional curriculum. The multidisciplinary approach focused on teaching different subjects around a common theme. It allowed students to see how themes were connected. Various contents were drawn from several subject areas to focus on a particular theme or topic. In a sense, an integrated curriculum was developed as a multidisciplinary curriculum that featured a similar theme or a common understanding in varied subject areas (Drake & Reid, 2018). As the duo scholars have defined, integrated curriculum is a theme-based interdisciplinary framework designed for the holistic development of learners and to encourage and achieve 21st-century learning goals. Similarly, as stated in a publication of Nebraska Department of Education (2017), “reading, writing, listening, speaking, drama, social studies, math, science, health, physical education, music, and the visual and performing arts were all part of the elementary grades' curriculum, according to the concept of integrated curriculum” (p. 553).

The concept of an integrated curriculum is not entirely new in the world. The concept was believed to have emerged from John Dewey's progressive ideas, which emphasized 'learning by doing,' in the early 1900s (Kilpatrick, 1918). Dewey advocated for integrating learning with real-life experiences, criticizing the fragmented subject instruction format. Later in the 20th century, the concept of project-based and interdisciplinary learning matured and aimed to achieve 21st-century learning goals. Countries such as Finland, Canada, and Australia became models for integrating disciplines, while developing nations (including Nepal) started gradually adopting integrated approaches at the basics.

In Nepali context, the idea of integrated curriculum was conceived through the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2007. Prior to this, subjects like English, Nepali, and Mathematics had theme-based/interdisciplinary integration, and another subject *HamroSerophero* had both interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary integration. With the introduction of the framework, it was envisioned that curriculum would address regular social, cultural, and economic changes, including changes in a diversified context. It further suggested an approach to coordinate instructional methods by integrating various subjects within the curriculum. It was also expected that the traditional assessment system would be modified. Later, Ministry of Education (MoE) (2017) conceptualized skill-oriented educational planning, enabling students to develop a range of both soft and hard skills through School Sector Development Plan. It further suggested that course books should be designed for children at an early age, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary integration of subjects. Based on the formulated ideas, the integrated curriculum for Grades 1–3 was developed and included in the National Educational Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2076 (2019 AD).

The earlier subject-specific curriculum, which primarily included formal and pen-and-paper-based examinations for summative evaluation, did not motivate or support learners in their learning. The National Curriculum Framework 2007 identified major drawbacks in the previously practiced curriculum, which lacked coherence and was not well supported for daily teaching and learning. Keeping this truth in consideration, the Basic Level Curriculum (1–3) 2076 (2019 AD) adopted innovative and classroom-based assessment procedures and activity-based evaluation strategies. It provided ample ground for continuous assessment and assessment for learning, emphasizing that assessment could be a major element of learning and should be integrated with daily teaching and learning. The recent curriculum envisioned to maintaining a systematic record of each individual learner based on the distinct activities they performed in the classroom. These records were used for formative assessment and also for summative assessment. The maintained records were used to measure the overall learning of students. This process was also termed the Continuous Assessment System (CAS).

The basic level curriculum (1–3), also known as the integrated curriculum, comprised four major subject areas: Nepali, Mathematics, Hamro Serofero, English Language, and one local subject. Each subject was framed with the tools, methods,

and procedures for effective classroom instruction and assessment. The curriculum proposed recording tools for the systematic documentation of learning activities and their outcomes. Importantly, the curriculum emphasized ‘assessment for learning’ and advocated for continuous evaluation of learners' classroom activities. As suggested by Jabbarifar (2009), this type of evaluation was an alternative to defining learners' levels and grades. This concept was also elaborated as ‘assessment for learning’ (AFL) and further clarified that assessment could be more efficient because multiple subjects could be assessed in a single task, and capabilities could be assessed in more than one subject (Drake & Reid, 2018). The concept of ‘assessment for learning’ placed emphasis on providing feedback and strengthening learning rather than grading tasks for summative evaluation.

The integrated curriculum incorporated class participation, oral and written works, practical and project-based works, observation, presentation and demonstration, event records, class tests and unit tests, self-evaluation and peer evaluation, and comments from parents or guardians as methods and media for assessment. It provided separate sheets to record and grade each category with rubrics and marking grades. The curriculum also accommodated the needs of differently abled students through a separate evaluation provision.

Study Context

I had a keen interest in exploring some pertinent issues related to educational aspects from the beginning of my MPhil journey in 2019. I was interested in conducting a study on continuous assessment; however, I later discovered that the government was in the process of phasing out the existing curriculum and replacing it with a new one. One of my mentors suggested me to consider a recently drafted curriculum, specifically the Integrated Curriculum. I planned to focus my research on assessment practices included in the integrated curriculum, as it was relevant to my earlier area of interest.

My interest in the integrated curriculum had its deep roots in my professional journey. I started my teaching career at a private school in Banepa. As a teacher, I evaluated my students' learning through a pen-and-paper test model. Assessment was most commonly based on written examinations with a fixed time boundary. After examinations, we provided a tag to the students indicating whether they passed or failed. I believed that such a system of evaluation could not provide adequate opportunities for learning and improvement. Despite this realization, I could not

change the assessment system as it was the prescribed format. After a couple of years, I left the private school and joined the Nepal Police School, where we began implementing a continuous assessment system. We included various activities and began preparing a portfolio for each student. Students were assessed as they engaged in activities such as presentations, project work, report writing, experiments, and records of both in-class and homework assignments. Initially, it was a challenging task for the school administrators, teachers, and students, but we soon became accustomed to them. All activities were evaluated using fixed rubrics, and the marks obtained were combined with the terminal examination scores. Continuous evaluation of students made a noticeable difference in their academic results as well as their life skills.

Nevertheless, debate on the relevance of continuous assessment started among teachers. Some teachers with a traditional pedagogical mindset opined that the assessment was intended only for students who needed improvement in their grades. They further expressed that the study habits of students were destroyed by the continuous evaluation structure. Against this current, I advocated for a system that continuously assessed students. When I joined the MPhil program and chose the same issue for my research, the government of Nepal introduced modified assessment modalities through an integrated curriculum.

Problem Statement

Globally, assessment practices have undergone a shift from the traditional pen-and-paper model towards regular, formative, and continuous assessment. Scholars such as Black and William (1998) and Stiggins (2005) highlighted that assessment should be an integral part of the entire classroom instructional process, fostering feedback and student engagement. Despite such pedagogical advances, studies from various countries reveal that teachers continue to struggle with implementing formative assessment effectively (Heritage, 2021; Wylie & Lyon, 2015). Recent studies also highlight persistent difficulties in translating formative assessment theory into practice. For example, Almahal et al. (2023) mentioned that teachers with a positive mindset, having the necessary facilities and willingness, faced significant challenges in aligning their understanding, teaching-learning practices, and assessment structures in Sudanese medical institutions. Similarly, Jansen et al. (2023) exhibited that continuous and formative assessment positively encouraged students' intrinsic motivation and learning outcomes when accompanied by constructive

feedback and a sense of competence. Many education systems, particularly in developing countries, continue to rely heavily on examinations that evaluated rote memorization rather than focusing on conceptual understanding and skill development. This trend, where the gap between assessment-related policy and actual classroom practice failed to effectively advocate assessment as an instrument to measure learning and understanding, was concerning.

In Nepal, the MoE introduced the concept of an integrated curriculum with the aim of addressing the expected shift from traditional practices in 2007, which later flourished into reality with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) (2019). The integrated curriculum envisioned numerous changes in the teaching and learning process, primarily aiming to promote continuous and competency-based assessment models. Several Nepal-based studies in the field of assessment highlighted the continuity of traditional models, which were largely summative and pen-and-paper-based (Dhungel, 2024; MoE, 2017; Poyck et al., 2016). Specifically, the MoE (2017) noted that most teachers were unfamiliar with the expected goals of formative assessment. They also failed to perceive assessment as a tool for enhancing learning, as they used it mainly as a means of grading students. As observed in the study of Dhungel (2024), teachers were unable to apply assessment strategies due to a lack of adequate training and deeper understanding of classroom contexts. From my observation as a school teacher, I have also observed that assessment practices partially emphasized terminal written examinations, labeling students as “graded” or “non-graded.” This type of assessment practice provided limited opportunities for learners to improve their competencies through regular feedback and reflection. Despite the integrated curriculum’s core focus on continuous evaluation, teachers often failed to address the principle of integrated curriculum in reality. Consequently, there was a wide gap between assessment policies and teachers’ pedagogical practices. In this context, the present study examined how basic-level teachers implemented assessment within the integrated curriculum and how they conducted assessments in their day-to-day classes.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored English teachers’ experiences in conducting assessment following the implementation of Integrated Curriculum at the basic level (grade 3) in the community schools of Kavrepalanchowk and Bhaktapur districts.

Research Question

1. How do basic-level English teachers in community schools experience the Integrated Curriculum assessment practice?

Significance of the Study

Timely revision and improvement of the curriculum is a regular process. With the passage of time and contextual changes, the existing curriculum fails to meet the evolving demands of learners and society. Practitioners claim that the curriculum prepared for the school level could not meet the expectations of targeted learners and lacked clear instructional guidance for practitioners (Curriculum Development Centre [CDC], 2019). It was also assumed that many teachers and school administrators were unaware of the provisions of the new curriculum. Additionally, due to an inadequate supervision and monitoring, the expected outcomes of the curriculum were not fully achieved.

Essentially, the new curriculum was designed to help students develop creative skills, critical thinking abilities, and collaborative thinking and communication skills. However, a clear gap existed between the objectives set by the curriculum and its actual classroom practice. In this context, this study was considered useful in exploring teachers' practices, challenges, and feedback.

This study aimed to explore the assessment practices employed in an integrated curriculum, focusing on the lived experiences of practitioner teachers, particularly how they utilized evaluation, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they adopted to overcome those challenges. The finding of this study is expected to be useful for practitioner teachers, as it provides insights into the difficulties faced by teachers themselves. It also highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the integrated curriculum and its assessment practices. Insights gained from this research are expected to assist policy-making authorities, such as the Curriculum Development Centre and municipal offices, in evaluating their effectiveness and providing guidelines for further reform. The study may offer direction for policymakers to formulate informed strategies by addressing identified weaknesses. It can also create opportunities for future researchers to explore emerging trends and practices in integrated curriculum and assessment. Future studies can focus on the perspectives of students, guardians, school leaders, and subject experts.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to exploring the lived experiences of English teachers regarding their assessment practices within the integrated curriculum. The focus was specifically on the assessment activities, strategies, and tools used by these teachers to evaluate students' learning and language abilities. The scope of the study was the experiences of English teachers teaching within the integrated curriculum framework and thus did not include students, school leaders, or teachers of other subjects.

Since the study adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological design, the findings rely on the interpretive process. As such, the insights represent an interpretive understanding rather than an attempt to generalize.

Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined the research issue, introduced the integrated curriculum and its evolution, and highlighted the shift toward continuous, competency-based assessment in Nepal. It explained the gap between curriculum expectations and teachers' classroom practices, which led to the purpose and central research question focused on English teachers' assessment experiences. The chapter also presented the significance of the study for practitioners, policymakers, and future researchers, and concluded with the delimitations, specifying the study's focus on English teachers' lived experiences within a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The most recently implemented curriculum in Nepal, Integrated Curriculum, replaced the traditional curriculum. The recent curriculum contains various concepts, theories, and models of assessment that are different from the earlier curriculum. Assessment itself was a fundamental element of both curriculum and pedagogy. Rather than focusing on theoretical aspects, it was considered more beneficial to examine the usefulness and appropriateness of assessment in both curriculum and pedagogy.

To capture the nuances of the progress from traditional curriculum to integrated curriculum, this chapter begins by reviewing the concept of ‘assessment’, which is followed by the review of the relevant literature that was found using the key words ‘curriculum’ and ‘assessment’ to identify the role of assessment within the curriculum. Furthermore, literature related to integrated curriculum and assessment was reviewed, paying attention to Nepal-based literature on integrated curriculum and assessment. Additionally, policy documents related to the integrated curriculum were reviewed. Through the reviewed literature, the research gap for this study was identified. This chapter concludes with a detailed description of the theory, specifically Transformative Learning Theory, which served as the theoretical framework.

Assessment and its Function

Assessment is a foundational element of the educational process and is defined as a systematic procedure for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to gauge students' achievement of learning objectives (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). It serves multiple intertwined purposes, including diagnosing learner readiness, guiding instructional planning, and evaluating learning outcomes at various stages—before instruction (diagnostic), during instruction (formative), and after instruction (summative) (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In integrated or thematic curricula, assessment does more than merely measure learning; according to Black and Wiliam (1998), effective assessment actively enhances learning by shaping instructional decisions and fostering student self-awareness.

Assessment refers to the concrete tools and methods educators use to evaluate student learning within curricular contexts. These tools and methods include traditional written assessments (essays, tests), oral assessments (interviews, presentations), performance-based tasks (experiments, role-plays), portfolios, self- and peer-assessment, and digital or online formats (quizzes, interactive platforms) (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014). Such variety allowed educators to capture students' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective development in authentic ways. Gardner (2006) and Harlen (2007) argued that applying a variety of assessment models in the classroom enabled teachers to address diverse learning styles. Furthermore, these approaches supported expected skill development in learners and strengthened the reliability of assessment practices.

Curriculum and Assessment

This section reviews the literature related to the interconnection of assessment and curriculum. Understandably, assessment is a major component of both curriculum and pedagogy as the outcomes of the curriculum and teaching–learning processes are measured through assessment. A number of studies have examined the interrelation. For instance, Armour-Thomas and Gordon (2013) studied the relationship between assessment and pedagogy, clarifying the rationale for learning-centered assessment. Their study highlighted the effective integration of assessment systems, curriculum, and teaching–learning processes as a medium for learning, which are regarded as essential components of pedagogy. A research by Westbrook et al. (2013) positioned curriculum as the guiding framework for teaching and planning, while portraying assessment as an integral and formative part of instructional practice that enhanced learning when appropriately applied. This study identified gaps between curriculum goals, assessment practices, and actual classroom realities in emerging-country contexts.

The National Institute of Education of Adam et al. (2014) presented a report titled *Pedagogy and Assessment Guide (PAG)*, which outlined the purpose of pedagogy and assessment. The report clarified the reasons for assessment and the interrelationships among teaching, learning, and assessment. It also highlighted 'assessment for learning,' the key characteristics of assessment, and various assessment methods. The report clearly demonstrated the close relationship between pedagogy and assessment.

The discussion above reveals a close relationship among curriculum, pedagogy (teaching and learning), and assessment (evaluation). The curriculum, as a whole, encompasses teaching, learning, and evaluation procedures. To explore the concept of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, these elements need to go hand in hand.

Development of Integrated Curriculum in Nepal

This section presents a review of four major official documents related to the integrated curriculum in Nepal. The review attempts to show the relationship among these four documents, namely the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (NCFSE) 2007, the School Sector Development Plan 2016–2023, the National Education Curriculum Framework, 2076 (2019 AD), and the Basic Level Curriculum, 2076 (2019 AD).

The NCFSE 2007 introduced the integrated approach to curriculum development in the context of Nepal. The framework aimed at addressing the concept of learning for learners, highlighting factors related to learners and learning. Learning and learners were influenced by various changes in both local and international contexts. To address the changes in the context, as well as the subject content, major subjects were integrated, and methods of teaching and learning were coordinated. The framework also envisioned methods for evaluating and assessing students, prioritizing evaluation and assessment as essential elements of classroom instruction. It suggested preparing school- and classroom-based assessments of two types: formative and summative. It provided sufficient grounds for the use of continuous assessment to promote students fairly and liberally and to enhance their specified behaviors, skills, and academic accomplishments.

The School Sector Development Plan 2017 included the structure of the curriculum, instructional methods, and approaches to assessing learners. The plan emphasized preparation and implementation of a revised curriculum. It further envisioned learning goals and targeted skills to be developed among learners and presented comprehensive planning for curriculum improvement, including assessment frameworks, textbooks, and learning materials. In addition, it suggested the development and implementation of an integrated curriculum for students in the early grades.

Following these initiatives, the government introduced the National Education Curriculum Framework, 2076 (2019 AD), which proposed the introduction of

integrated curriculum and provided guidelines for its implementation at the basic level (Grades 1–3) nationwide. The integrated curriculum included theme-based teaching and learning, combining various subjects and their corresponding learning outcomes. There was a total of six subject-related activities, and each subject was allocated 832 working hours. The curriculum for Grades 1–3 was implemented in all schools from 2020 following revisions that incorporated feedback from the piloting process. The integrated curriculum was introduced to replace the traditional content-based curriculum, with the primary aim of addressing its limitations and promoting effective learning.

Based on this framework, the Basic Level Curriculum (Grades 1–3), 2020 was developed, incorporating assessment processes and methods identified as continuous assessment. This process included classroom instruction as a part of the assessment modality rather than measuring student ability through traditional examination practices. The regular and continuous assessment embedded in the integrated curriculum not only provided learners with regular feedback but also guided teachers in planning overall teaching and learning strategies while measuring targeted learning outcomes and skills. The curriculum suggested maintaining a portfolio for each student, which included in-class and homework assignments, project work, achievements, observation records, and attendance records. Updated records were shared with guardians on a monthly or terminal basis or after the completion of targeted subjects or lessons.

The Basic Level Curriculum (Grades 1–3), 2020, emphasized assessment as a continuous and regular component of daily teaching and learning. Learning progress was measured through regular classroom tasks, with formative and remedial approaches applied to support students in achieving minimum competencies. Assessment results were documented by subject and learning outcomes in individual portfolios, which helped the teachers monitor progress of the students and get informed for future instructional planning. Teachers and guardians were also expected to motivate learners to engage in self-assessment, reflection, and improvement of their learning practices.

The discussion above demonstrates how the concept of the integrated curriculum emerged in Nepal. It was initiated through the National Curriculum Framework (2007) and further supported and elaborated by the School Sector Development Plan (2016–2023). Based on the Plan, the National Education

Curriculum Framework, 2075 (2018 AD), proposed the preparation of an integrated curriculum for the basic level (Grades 1–3). The concept was ultimately realized with the finalization and implementation of the Basic Level Curriculum.

At the basic level, the integrated curriculum was assessed through the methods such as the Continuous Assessment System (CAS) and portfolio-based assessment. Continuous assessment was carried out through classroom activities, thereby minimizing reliance on terminal pen-and-paper-based examinations. Assessment was typically conducted after the completion of each theme, providing learners with opportunities to revise their work if it did not meet the required standards. In addition, the integrated curriculum incorporated portfolio-based assessment, which involved systematic documentation of each student's work and evaluation of their competencies. Portfolios included samples of homework, projects, reflections, and feedback from teachers. Overall, assessment in the integrated curriculum focused on learning progress, and students were evaluated based on learning achievements, skill development, and changes in behavior and attitude.

Integrated Curriculum and Assessment

In recent years, scholars have studied assessment modalities in various countries by examining approaches such as the STEM system, the ARCS model, authentic curriculum assessment, interactive curricula, case-based assessment, and tailored animation for cognitive assessment. This body of research encompasses investigations into both theory and practice of existing assessment models, including systematic literature reviews and case studies. For example, Konstantinidou and Evagorou (2025) examined existing STEM education policies and practices in Cyprus and found both policy and praxis in a paradoxical state. Similarly, a study conducted in Indonesia on teachers' literacy efficacy in assessment found that such literacy was influenced by mediating factors such as training, workshops, assessment courses, and self-reflection, which supported the implementation of assessment practices (Hull & Vigh, 2025). One of the important yet long-recognized human characteristics—resistance to change and difficulty in learning new practices quickly—remained evident in recent research (Kojana & Mukuna, 2024; Thorjussen & Wilhelmsen, 2025). Teachers, particularly during pre-service and later in-service training, tended to show limited interest in adapting to new changes.

It is worth mentioning that the United States was one of the pioneering countries contributing significantly to the development of an integrated curriculum

and its assessment practices. Other countries around the world later adopted this approach to improve their education systems. STEM education began around 2000 and subsequently expanded to incorporate the arts, forming STEAM. Since then, education leaders recognized the importance of a holistic and interdisciplinary education system and continuously adapted it worldwide. This expansion introduced significant challenges related to assessment, as teachers could no longer rely on traditional assessment methods in integrated curriculum classrooms. One of the major challenges identified was mapping the curriculum and textbooks (Al-Eyd et al., 2018).

Drake and Reid (2018) conducted a mixed-methods study in the American context to investigate the relevance of an integrated curriculum in developing 21st-century skills. The study highlighted the close relationship between integrated curriculum and 21st-century learning goals. The findings indicated that an integrated curriculum supported the development of a wide range of skills, including imagination, creative thinking, analytical problem-solving, effective communication, collaboration, digital awareness, socialization, and self-discipline. In this context, the integrated curriculum particularly supported students' digital literacy compared to other skill areas. In another study, Alghamdi (2017) examined the impact of an integrated curriculum on student achievement in Saudi Arabia. Life-based learning activities and student-centered approaches were employed for the treatment groups. The findings suggested that an integrated curriculum could alter the pace and quality of learning when instructional activities were implemented in alignment with thematic guidance.

Marshall (2018) conducted action research to explore teachers' perceptions of an integrated curriculum by examining the experiences of six primary-level teachers in Caroline, Portland, USA. The study concluded that implementing an integrated curriculum was an effective instructional strategy. Likewise, Maba (2017) conducted a study in Indonesia to explore teachers' experiences with assessment practices embedded in the 2013 curriculum. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews with a school principal and an elementary teacher. The findings revealed that teachers were not fully prepared for effective implementation due to insufficient training, preparation, and institutional support. Furthermore, Fu and Sibert (2017) examined teachers' perceptions of factors influencing the implementation of an integrated curriculum in K–3 classrooms in Ohio, USA. Surveying forty-two teachers from ten schools, the study found that

although teachers held positive attitudes toward integrated curricula and recognized their effectiveness in early grades, they continued to face significant implementation challenges.

Anwar et al. (2018) reviewed literature on integrated curriculum practices in medical education, emphasizing the need to align curriculum design, implementation strategies, and evaluation systems. The study discussed both advantages and disadvantages of integrated curricula in the Pakistani context and reported improved learner performance under integrated models.

Studies consistently indicate that learners benefited when activities were implemented appropriately in alignment with curricular guidelines. Jonathan (2019) presented a report on the challenges and opportunities of an integrated Social Studies curriculum, noting that such curricula supported localized content, interdisciplinary coverage, and regular evaluation mechanisms. Similarly, Boidy and Moran (1994) examined the use of integrated curriculum and authentic assessment to improve learning across subject areas, highlighting students' difficulties in transferring classroom learning to real-life situations and suggesting authentic and continuous assessment as a solution.

Integrated curriculum and international assessment practices are also central to educational reforms in Japan and other countries. MacDonald (2006) compared educational reforms in Japan and the USA using fieldwork data, emphasizing the role of assessment in developing diverse learner competencies. A comprehensive case study in Lesotho explored classroom practices and assessment methods among school teachers (Ralebese, 2018). Data from document analysis, observation, and interviews revealed that teachers often did not apply curricular methods as intended, largely due to prior teaching habits. The study recommended stronger orientation and monitoring of instruction and assessment. Similarly, Park and Kim (2020) examined science teachers' preparedness for integrated science instruction and assessment, finding that teachers employed various instructional strategies to conduct process-oriented assessments and provide immediate feedback.

Recent Nepal-based studies highlight assessment practices within the integrated curriculum and revealed gaps between policy expectations and classroom realities. Koirala and Neupane (2023) examined poor assessment implementation in STEM-based integrated curricula based on their study of head teachers' experiences. Prajapati (2024) identified weaknesses in feedback practices, while Sigdel and Sherpa

(2024) reported the continued dominance of pen-and-paper assessments over competency-based approaches. Similar findings are reported by Paudel (2024), who highlighted teachers' limited awareness of authentic assessment practices. Furthermore, Aryal (2025), and Kunwar and Acharya (2025) identified major challenges such as inadequate institutional support, diverse teaching contexts, and parental preference for traditional examinations. These studies also reveal teachers' heavy reliance on written examinations due to limited training, time constraints, scarce resources, and insufficient monitoring and guidance from policymakers.

In summary, the reviewed literature underscores a growing global emphasis on integrated curricula aligned with 21st-century learning goals. While integrated approaches promoted creativity, critical thinking, and real-world learning, assessment remained a major challenge. Traditional paper-based methods continued to dominate despite policy advocacy for authentic assessment. These challenges are largely attributed to insufficient teacher preparation, limited resources, and unclear implementation guidelines. Overall, effective implementation of new assessment requires systemic reform through curriculum redesign, sustained teacher professional development, and coherent policy support.

Research Gap

The extent of literature reviewed for this study demonstrates effectiveness of an integrated curriculum, particularly at the early grade levels. Recent studies in the field of assessment implementation indicated that teachers are aware of the use of assessment for learning and competency development; however, their actual practices do not align with curricular expectations. Bhandari and Kshetree (2024) and Kafle and Neupane (2025) reported several challenges faced by teachers in implementing assessment policies. Their studies highlighted multiple shortcomings, including overcrowded curriculum guidelines, inadequate institutional support, insufficient professional development opportunities, and limited infrastructure. These findings clearly indicate a gap between assessment policy and classroom practice in Nepal.

Next regarding methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology has been widely used as a research design across diverse fields to explore the lived experiences of professionals. Ray et al. (2023) adopted this approach to collect experiences in nursing and health sciences. Similarly, Sabnis and Wolgemuth (2024) employed the same methodology to explore adolescents' experiences of sex education in the United States. Edling (2025) applied hermeneutic phenomenology among higher education

professionals to examine the relationship between academic knowledge and the management of classroom complexities. The reviewed studies underscored the significance of hermeneutic phenomenology in disciplines such as education, nursing, and management.

In Nepal, phenomenology in its various forms has been adopted across multiple disciplines, including education, management, leadership, and health. In line with recent studies, Upadhyaya (2024) employed a phenomenological case study to explore the practices of school teachers in Pokhara. Sherpa et al. (2024) used phenomenology grounded in lived experiences to examine the perspectives of school leaders in Dolakha. Likewise, Sigdel (2023) applied interpretative phenomenological analysis to document school teachers' experiences in Bhaktapur, while KC et al. (2022) utilized descriptive phenomenology in the health sector to explore women's illness experiences in Pokhara.

Although hermeneutic phenomenology is not a new research approach, it had been less frequently adopted in Nepal. Kongsuwan and Dahal (2023) used hermeneutic phenomenology to interpret nursing care experiences. Similarly, Niroula (2023) and Nepal (2023) explored the lived experiences of migrant mothers and teachers' experiences of integrating critical thinking into English classrooms, respectively. Niroula (2023) also applied hermeneutic phenomenology to examine teachers' experiences with ICT integration.

The foregoing discussion establishes a clear research gap in the field of the integrated curriculum. First, there have been a limited number of studies focusing specifically on integrated curriculum implementation. Moreover, most existing research concentrate on teachers' lived experiences and general classroom practices. With the exception of Prajapati (2024) and Aryal (2025), very few studies have examined assessment practices within the integrated curriculum. Other researchers, such as Koirala and Neupane (2023) and Kunwar and Acharya (2025) addressed assessment-related issues within integrated curricula. Furthermore, the lack of research exploring assessment practices in integrated curricula through the lens of hermeneutic phenomenology revealed a significant gap, which this study sought to address.

Theoretical Framework

In alignment with my research problem, research questions, and research design, Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1978) was identified as the

most relevant theoretical framework for this study. According to Mezirow (1996, as cited in Taylor & Cranton, 2013, p. 162), learning is the process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action. The theory addresses experiences that formed the basis of individuals' usual expectations, including thoughts, opinions, and ideals, and embodied empathy, inherent goodness, and the desire for transformation. Mezirow (1997) described transformative learning as a process in which learning became possible by constructively guiding individuals to reinterpret their experiences for meaningful change. In this study, the lived experiences of practitioner teachers regarding assessment practices within the integrated curriculum were collected and interpreted to construct meaning.

Transformative learning emphasizes continuous and lifelong learning. The idea presented by Lavrysh (2015), which advocated a comprehensive approach to lifelong learning, served as a foundation for the transformative learning paradigm in adult education. As noted by Sutherland (2008), the more cerebral and individualized aspects of lifelong learning are embedded in Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Learning is viewed as an ongoing and limitless process, in which individuals of any age and context continuously engaged. In this study, the experiences of practitioners involved in the assessment of the integrated curriculum were explored. Transformative learning theory was found to be particularly relevant, as the study aimed to document the experiences of teachers as adult learners and students as continuous learners.

Transformative learning theory focuses on the learning processes of adults and the interpretation of lived experiences. Mezirow emphasized core concepts such as the centrality of experience, which encompasses actions, beliefs, efforts, challenges, reactions, and learners' wishes, convictions, perspectives, and fears, thereby representing the totality of life experiences. The phenomenon examined in this study centered on teachers' overall experiences of practicing assessment within the integrated curriculum. Consequently, it was essential to capture teachers' voices, beliefs, reactions, perspectives, and lived experiences related to the phenomenon.

Drawing on the key features of Transformative Learning Theory, Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1991, 2000) conceptualized a series of stages through which learners underwent meaningful change. The process of change begins with a disorienting dilemma, in which individuals encounter situations that challenged their existing

assumptions and habitual practices. In the context of the integrated curriculum, this stage is reflected in teachers' encounters with new assessment approaches that differ from traditional methods. This is followed by critical reflection, during which learners reassess their practices, prior knowledge, and establish viewpoints. In integrated curriculum implementation, this stage is evident when educators reflect on their classroom strategies and assessment tools. Rational discourse represents the next stage, involving dialogic interaction through which new understandings are constructed, such as teachers engaging in professional discussions to implement assessment practices. Perspective transformation follows, marking a shift from previous interpretations to new ones, as teachers transition from traditional content-based pedagogy to skill-based and thematic approaches. Transformative learning theory further acknowledges that emotional, conceptual, and social influences play significant roles in reshaping perspectives. Finally, action-oriented change signifies observable transformation in future practices, which, in this study, involved teachers applying revised assessment strategies and language teaching practices aligned with the principles of the integrated curriculum.

A phenomenon is understood as a synergistic whole shaped by the interaction of inputs, processes, and outcomes rather than as a mere aggregation of individual components. The Meaning emerges through interaction and communication rather than from isolated elements. This understanding is supported by Niroula (2023), who emphasized the interplay of multiple components and processes in his investigation of English teachers' experiences with ICT. This perspective aligns with Transformative Learning Theory, which posits that prior beliefs (inputs) are transformed through interaction and introspection (processes) to produce new attitudes and behaviors (outputs). Accordingly, lived experiences constitute a dynamic and holistic process consistent with the principles of transformative education.

Transformative learning theory has been widely applied in qualitative research, particularly in phenomenological studies (Belus, 2025; Wilson, 2025), as well as in narrative inquiry, case studies, and action research, to explore adult learning, professional change, and meaning-making processes (Merriam & Bierema, 2008; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). The theory has been used to examine adult learning experiences across various professional contexts. For example, Pan et al. (2025) applied the theory in pharmacy education; Wu et al. (2025) employed it in English language education; Ng et al. (2025) used it to explore nursing practice; and

Niepraschk (2024) applied it among management students to foster innovative business practices.

Despite its wide application, several scholars have noted limitations of transformative learning theory. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) argued that the theory was Western-oriented and individual-centered, emphasizing critical reflection and personal autonomy. Brookfield (2000) further contended that the theory overlooked broader social and cultural influences on learning. Additionally, Cranton and Taylor (2012) highlighted the difficulty of empirically measuring abstract transformation.

This study involved an exploration of teachers' lived experiences as they transitioned from traditional, content-oriented teaching to a skill-based, thematic approach within the integrated curriculum. This transition required teachers to question long-held beliefs about teaching and assessment, a process that aligned closely with the core principles of transformative learning theory.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on integrated curriculum and assessment, highlighting global and Nepal-specific shifts toward continuous, competency-based evaluation. It identified persistent gaps between policy and classroom practice and noted limited research on teachers' assessment experiences within the Integrated Curriculum. Transformative Learning Theory was adopted as the guiding framework to understand how teachers interpret and change their assessment practices.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detail of the research design, specifically a qualitative phenomenological approach, to illuminate the lived experiences of English teachers practicing the integrated curriculum in grade three. It further describes the philosophical foundations of the study, including the ontological stance of relativism and the epistemological position of subjectivism. The study employed hermeneutic phenomenology, as developed by Gadamer, to explore teachers' assessment practices. In addition, the chapter details participant selection procedures, the meaning-making process, and the ethical considerations guiding the study

Research Design

With the aim of exploring teachers' experiences of assessment in the integrated curriculum, the study used a qualitative research design. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), qualitative research aims to understand the complex experiences and meanings of human beings from naturalistic grounds. Integrated Curriculum, as a relatively new educational dimension in Nepal, offered the flexibility to capture teachers' voices, classroom realities, and the nuanced challenges of implementation.

Philosophical Consideration

Philosophical considerations shaped the overall direction and design of this research study. My beliefs about assessment directly informed the philosophical foundation of the research. I believe that assessment within an integrated curriculum is pivotal, particularly in the early grades, for achieving improved academic performance. The integrated curriculum emphasizes internal evaluation as a core component of assessment. This alignment highlights a formative and continuous model of assessment that is embedded in everyday classroom activities to support learners' overall development (Popham, 2008).

Ontologically, I adopted a relativist position, believing that realities related to assessment within the integrated curriculum are locally and socially constructed through interactions among participants. Consequently, knowledge varied across

contexts and emerged through the sharing of lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ontology of this research was grounded in the teachers' lived experiences of assessment practices within the integrated curriculum. As the study was situated in Kavre and Bhaktapur, the realities identified were context-specific and could not be generalized. Epistemologically, the study followed a subjectivist stance, recognizing that knowledge was co-constructed through interaction between the researcher and participants and was shaped by the researcher's own experiences and context (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

From an axiological perspective, as a phenomenological researcher, I emphasized prolonged engagement with participants. This approach allowed me to acknowledge and reflect upon my values and potential biases, positioning the study as value-laden. While the study did not seek to distort teachers' lived experiences, I remained unbracketed in the meaning-making process, consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Phenomenology as Research Method

I employed phenomenology as my research method. According to Eagleton (1983, as cited in Groenewald, 2004), 'phenomenology', the science of pure 'phenomena' and similar study highlight the collective understanding of numerous characters and their lived experiences of particular perception. Langdrige (2007) defined phenomenology as a discipline that collects individuals' understanding of the phenomena they live, which means lived experience. In the words of Creswell and Poth (2016) Phenomenology is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants. In my research, I explored how teachers understand and describe the assessment of the integrated curriculum in their daily classroom practices. The aim was to uncover the meaning of their lived experiences as perceived and articulated by the participants themselves.

As phenomenology is an 'umbrella term' consisting of a variety of approaches to explore the lived experience of the practitioner in the field of education, nursing, and teaching. These varieties are used differently in the different contexts as Descriptive, Interpretive, or Hermeneutic. Common to all is uncovering the experiences of practitioners and making meaning. (Neubauer et al.2019; Smith et al., 2021; van Manen, 2016). I adopted hermeneutic phenomenology by Gadamer (1975), which has given more focus on history and the dialogical process. This process

aligned with the study's objective to explore lived experiences, which were interpreted in relation to language, culture, and their social context, rather than being merely reflected.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as Gadamer envisioned it, focused on from dialogues in relation to language, culture, and their social context. These dialogues created a common ground among researchers and participants through the fusion of their common horizons. This research approach originally followed a five-stage framework for data analysis, which was later expanded into nine stages in 2007 (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). The details of these stages are presented below:

Table 1

Hermeneutic Phenomenology Framework

Steps	Activities
One	Choosing an appropriate open research question
Two	Identification of pre-understanding
Three	Gaining understanding through dialogue with participants (Interviews and diaries)
Four	Transcribing/iterative reading/preliminary interpretation of texts to facilitate coding/identifying first-order (participant's horizon) constructs.
Five	Identifying second-order (the researcher's horizon) constructs = integration
Six	Meshing the horizons/themes are developed and challenged by the researcher = aggregation
Seven	Linking the literature to the themes identified
Eight	Critique of the themes/reporting final interpretation at this point in time (fusion of horizons)
Nine	Establishing trustworthiness

Source: Alsaigh and Coyne (2021)

Initially, in alignment with the research framework, I developed open-ended interview questions to elicit the participants' lived experiences. To make the process more relevant and deeper, the selection of the research sites and participants was concurrently carried out while finalizing the interview questions. Next, I visited my research sites, met the participants and began maintaining dairies with all reflective

records. These reflective records have their roots in Gadamerian hermeneutics and take into consideration my prior values during the interpretation process.

I purposefully selected three schools from three different municipalities near my vicinity. Then, my further research work proceeded with visit of the three schools: two schools located in Kavrepalnchock district (one in Banepa and another in Dhulikhel municipality) and the third in Suryabinayak municipality of Bhaktapur district.

My first research site is the school located in the Banepa municipality. When I arrived, the academic environment, with its well-maintained classrooms, a library boasting a rich collection of reading materials, an impressive playground, a well-groomed team of teachers, a well-followed timetable, staff that provided students with their homework copies, and many more, won my heart. Frankly, I was quite impressed with the overall environment of my first research site. Notably, I encountered an English teacher using an Internal Evaluation Record, a tool provided by Banepa Municipality, designed to support the documentation of continuous assessment practices. Similar registers were also scattered in the teachers' common room. On the very day, I came to know that the school has a system of administering terminal examinations for students in grades 1-10 for all subjects as part of the assessment.

As my second research site, I visited a school located in Dhulikhel. When I consulted with the participant, who was a female teacher, to find a feasible time for my visit, she informed me that she was also busy on Saturday. Her school had organized a day of training for all the teachers. However, when I learned that the focus of the training was the internal evaluation system, I became thrilled to reach that point. I was impressed to learn that the daylong training was funded by the school itself. The training consisted of three segments: grades 1-3 teachers in the first, grades 4-8 teachers in the second, and grades 9-10 teachers in the third. I thought they had segmented the teachers based on variations in their internal evaluation system.

The school is located in the eastern foothill of Dhulikhel. Accessibility was not that easy as the landscape was uphill and remote. The school, with its scattered buildings, looked beautiful to visitors, but it had plenty of difficulties due to the distant location of its academic buildings. Notably, basic-level classes (grades 1–3) were conducted in buildings located approximately five minutes' walking distance from the main academic block. This school is recognized as one of the model schools

within Dhulikhel Municipality. As part of the assessment, this school also has a system of pen-and-paper terminal examinations for all levels and subjects. The subject teachers maintained their own records of their students' assessments.

Another week, it was the turn to visit third research site, the school in Suryabinayak, Bhaktapur. The school, although located within the Kathmandu Valley, was unexpectedly lacking in physical infrastructure, with very old and congested academic buildings, dark and poorly furnished classrooms, and limited resources. The quite congested teachers' workspace, where the teachers' mobility, stay, and work were tough, made me feel awkward. Regardless of all these discomforts, some teachers were busy with their daily lesson plans in a standard booklet designed and provided by the Suryabinayak municipality. My query regarding assessment practices was addressed, indicating that they also used pen-and-paper-based terminal examinations. They had not started any of the internal assessment practices as the municipality had not provided them with the official record-keeping register that had been made available in the previous academic year.

My visit to all three sites informed me that there were at least some common practices of assessment, although they did not meet the expected standard. All the schools had a tradition of pen-and-paper terminal examinations. In addition, they had some teacher-led assessment record system, and at least some limited exposure to a continuous or internal evaluation system. The teacher's internal evaluation was found to be assisted by the municipality in two schools, except in Dhulikhel. These common points indicated that discussions and cross-sectional practices regarding assessment modalities had been commonly carried out in all the schools. Such practices demonstrated alignment of assessment with the curriculum framework.

Following the prescribed steps in research process, I started with interviews and reflective diaries. I scheduled my visits and interviews with the selected participants. The first round of interviews was conducted at their school setting at the participants' convenient time. Being mindful of ethical standards, I clarified the purpose and scope of my research to all the participants and obtained their informed consent. I shared the interview questions in advance so that they could mentally prepare themselves for the open-ended questions. To ensure their comfort and familiarity, the participants' schools were chosen as the interview sites. As all the participants were English teachers, the medium of interviews remained English. Following the schedule, all the interviews were taken and recorded using an audio

recorder. Simultaneously, I used every evening of my site visit to maintain reflective diaries.

In the fourth step, I personally transcribed all the interviews. To ensure data authenticity, transcription was done verbatim paying attention to pauses and fillers. To ensure the accuracy of transcription, all transcriptions were shared with the respective participants, and their approval was obtained. The transcriptions were iteratively perused to form the ground for interpretations of the texts. From these readings, comingled with color coding, first order construct or participants' horizons were identified.

For the fifth step, I framed the researcher's horizon, also known as the second-order construct, using the framework of Gadamerian data analysis. The process was strengthened by the integration of the participants' horizon with the researcher's horizon. The integration of horizons was supported by interview data and observation notes. The notes were collected from the research sites periodically, through engagement in informal interactions, and observation of the teachers' classroom activities and documentation. These visits helped me deepen my understanding of the participants, the sites, and, even more deeply, my research context. Reflections of the visits contributed significantly to integrating horizons, data analysis, and the entire meaning-making process.

In the sixth step, data interpretation began with the development of themes. The horizons of both the researcher and participants were explored, integrated, and analyzed to identify emergent themes from the entire dataset. In accordance with the hermeneutic circle of understanding, the emergent themes were elevated to form subordinate and superordinate themes.

The seventh step aimed to establish the linkage between the superordinate themes and the reviewed literature. The themes were further connected to a theoretical paradigm based on transformative learning theory. This course of linkage relativized and contextualized the findings within academic discourse.

In the eighth step, the integrated superordinate themes were critiqued and interpreted. Emphasis was given to the deeper level of interpretive analysis, keeping the fusion of horizons the major Gadamerian principle at the core. This process helped the researcher develop a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences.

The final step focused on the significance of establishing the trustworthiness of the entire research process. I ensured this by maintaining a comprehensive audit

trail, considering all relevant ethical guidelines, and including appendices with relevant documents. Alignment with the principles of qualitative trustworthiness contributed to enhancing the research with credibility and rigor.

Participant Selection

As suggested by Gadamarian hermeneutic, the participants were not only the data source but also the co-interpreters in the meaning-making process. I chose three participants from three different schools. They were chosen as they had at least three years of experience teaching English within an integrated curriculum and its assessment practice. I selected three participants based on the suggestion from sources such as Creswell and Poth (2016), who recommended three to ten participants; Smith et al. (2021), who suggested three to six; and Duffy and NíMhúiríle (2024), who supported in-depth lived experiences rather than numerical representation. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2016) focused on exploring the depth of lived experiences that can be collected even with a smaller number of participants. As Vagle (2018) affirms, it is the “depth of engagement,” not numerical sufficiency, that determines the rigor and validity of phenomenological inquiry. In the process of meaning making, participants were assigned pseudonyms: participant 1 as Ujeli, participant 2 is Rita, and participant 3 is Jitu. The following table presents information about the participants:

Table 2

The Participants of Study

S.N.	Participant	Gender	Location	Teaching Duration
1	Ujeli	Female	Banepa-13, Kavrepalanchok	20 years
2	Rita	Female	Dhulikhel-8, Kavrepalanchok	15 years
3	Jitu	Male	Suryabinayak-8, Bhaktapur	9 years

I am currently residing in Sanga, Kavrepalanchok, which provided me with contextual familiarity and access to nearby community schools and their assessment practices. As school-level education is governed by local-level governments (Rural municipal and municipal governments), I planned to choose three schools from three

municipalities near me – Banepa, Dhulikhel, and Suryabinayak. As an actively engaged member in teaching profession, I have established professional relationships with teachers working in these schools. Those teachers initially helped me select the site and assisted me in identifying the right participants. The selection was further suggested by the concerned school administration at the time of seeking approval. The selected participants were two females and one male. To align with the objectives of this study, the study required teachers who are currently involved in the assessment practices used in grades 1-3, with priority given to those with more experience.

Gaining Understanding from Participants

I employed the process of semi-structured, in-depth interviews in a natural setting to capture authentic, lived experiences of the participants. The participants were encouraged to express their experiences in as much detail as possible. Follow-up questions were also added during the interviews, as the researcher's historical assumptions and understanding is argued to play a vital role in the dialogic process. This ongoing approach, which is considered the foundation of the hermeneutic circle, enabled deep engagement with the participants' horizons (McLeod, 2025; Ramsook, 2018; Ray et al., 2023). In Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology, meaning is constructed through conversational engagement rather than through objective measurement. Regarding data collection, Gadamer (2004) and Vagle (2018) stated that the interaction between the researcher and the participants plays a vital role in determining understanding between the researcher and their participants. This interaction is also shaped by their history and cultural horizons.

Observation of the Site

I spent a considerable amount of time observing the sites and activities of my participants in the classroom. While observing the classroom, my primary focus was on classroom activities, language functions, and continuous assessment practices, as well as the documentation of these practices. During these sessions, I noted that some reading and writing activities were assigned as part of the ongoing evaluation. While listening and speaking skills appeared to receive less emphasis in practice, participants reported that they utilized audio-visual tools for listening activities and thus created opportunities for student speaking. Although these practices were not directly observed, they were documented in the teachers' internal assessment records. An observation sheet was prepared, and a checklist was maintained to document the details. A more detailed reflection on these observations is provided in the

Researcher's Horizon section, in accordance with Gadamer's hermeneutic data analysis framework.

Quality Standards-Ensuring Trustworthiness

As suggested by Treharne and Riggs (2015), I adopted strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. For credibility/truth value, I provided accurate information about the participants, undistorted descriptions of the observations, and plausible interpretations of the participants' experiences. Further, I triangulated interview data with expert opinions, memos, and engaged with participants over an extended period. Next, to ensure transferability, I provided detailed accounts of my research participants, situation, and setting in the research reports, and I did purposeful sampling while selecting participants as well. I believe that the findings of this study can be transferred to the groups with similar contexts. Furthermore, I prepared necessary guidelines for the interviews, including probing statements/questions, and included almost identical core questions for all the participants to maintain dependability. Similarly, I maintained an audit trail by verifying and re-verifying the obtained data and documenting the entire research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Guidelines

Creswell and Poth (2016) asserted that ethics in research is the researcher's responsibility that he/she needs to follow during the research work. In my research, I ensured responsibility by obtaining all participants' consent to participate voluntarily. Further, they were informed about the research purpose, procedures, and duration prior to the interview. They were also informed about the risks and benefits, the data use process, and their rights to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, I respected the autonomous views and opinions expressed by the participants and also provided an opportunity for them to express their views freely. I also ensured the privacy of my participants by assigning pseudonyms to each one. No discrimination was made based on gender, ethnicity, religion, qualifications, or experience; all participants were treated equally and with respect. Furthermore, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research to address any ethical dilemmas as they arose, consistent with contemporary qualitative research ethics practices (Li, Furlong & Lester, 2025).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the overall methodological aspects and process are articulated. The methodology employed in this study grounds on philosophical assumptions,

research paradigms, and research design. The study adopted a Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology to explore English language teachers' experiences and practices of conducting assessment in integrated curriculum. The chapter concluded by addressing ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, and the importance of context, spatiality, and temporality in shaping how portfolio assessment practices evolve in various educational settings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING HORIZON

I have selected three participants from three different schools: two from Kavrepalanchowk and one from Bhaktapur. The participants' original names are replaced by Ujeli, Rita, and Jitu. The chapter presents each participant's horizon followed by the researcher's horizon, three sub-categories related to the horizon observed: linguistic event, action, and thought process. Participants' horizons were developed from the interview responses, and the researcher's horizons were developed from the interview data, observation sheet, and diary entries. The themes were developed from the integration of both participants' and the researcher's horizons as per the idea by Gadamer (1975).

Participant 1 (Ujeli's) Horizon

Participant Ujeli was a seasoned community school teacher with more than two decades of teaching experience. Her teaching journey began around 23 years ago, and she has worked at multiple schools in the Kavrepalanchok district. Initially, she taught in the school near her home in Dhulikhel, and she was transferred to the current school in Banepa in 2075 AD after passing the Teacher Service Commission. Initially, she taught multiple subjects; for the past three years, she has been teaching English. Her extensive experience across various contexts, including urban and semi-urban areas, has shaped a deeply reflective and practical perspective on teaching, curriculum reform, and student learning. Currently, she teaches English in grades 2 and 3.

During our first meeting, we were introduced by one of the teachers with whom I first contacted for participant selection. I sought help from my colleague, Bharat Sigdel, to connect with the teacher, and he recommended her as my participant. I took her interview on my second visit. She had class when I reached there. I waited a few minutes at the school grounds, and later she took me to the staff room, where I met many other teachers. I greeted everyone and shared my purpose of the visit, to which they agreed and our interview started. We decided to stay on one corner of the balcony outside the computer lab.

While responding to the questions related to her understanding of the Integrated Curriculum, Ujeli shared that, she was not exactly clear about what it really meant initially. Later, she learned about the concept when she attended an orientation

session organized by Banepa Municipality. Her early notion of integration was about connecting different subjects and promoting practical life skills. She explained:

Integrated Curriculum means connecting various subjects. It includes educational content focusing on behavioral and life skills. It aims to equip children with practical skills by teaching them life-relevant competencies.

Over time, through in-service training, multiple phases of TPD, and online modules organized by the Curriculum Development Center, she gradually developed a clearer understanding. She now recognizes the curriculum's core intent as focusing on five major behavioral competencies, including personal, interpersonal, and civic skills. As she puts it, "Now, I understand it better." This move – from 'connecting various subjects' to 'focusing on ... behavioral competencies' – in her understanding of integrated curriculum demonstrates a real transformation.

Ujeli's understanding of the curriculum continued to evolve with practice. Initially, she lacked clarity on how to integrate other subject areas into her English lessons; however, she later began consciously incorporating them into her English teaching. "While teaching English, if topics from other subjects came up, I could integrate them right then and there," she said.

Regarding assessment, Ujeli told that assessment emerged as the most challenging part of implementing the Integrated Curriculum. Although she used the curriculum's recommended tools, such as projects, parent feedback, and periodic tests. She found the practical guidance vague. "There are nine assessment tools... I use all of them," she noted, adding, "The assessment part is very confusing. It's not very clear. It would help if the curriculum were more precise." Her classroom record-keeping showed a 4–3–2–1 rating system, with students evaluated based on daily work and portfolio evidence. She mentioned that she has also been supporting learners through remedial classes. Yet, she acknowledged difficulty in assessing each skill area separately listening, speaking, reading, and writing especially within the limited time and resources available to primary teachers. She added.

Her instruction was highly interactive and often grounded in real-life contexts. To teach speaking, she encouraged students to read aloud, described objects, and discussed their own experiences. "I make them read paragraphs, talk about them, describe objects, share what they like," she said. She used multimedia, such as YouTube videos, on a classroom television to support listening and comprehension. Regarding speaking, she added that it was difficult because of the learner's mother

tongue that is Tamang. This note highlights the effect of linguistic and social background on hindering curriculum implementation and preventing the achievement of expected learning outcomes.

Furthermore, responding to my query and reflecting on her own classroom practices, she also admitted. “Sometimes I feel I’ve done well; other times I think something is missing.” This reflective stance is an essential element in hermeneutic phenomenology, which values teachers’ inner experiences as much as their outward practices. She reiterated that the assessment aspect of the curriculum remains the most unclear and burdensome, particularly with the expectation to evaluate different skills separately.

Ujeli concluded by pointing to gaps in curriculum clarity and the need for further training. “There are many behavioral skills included, but it's not clearly mentioned how to implement them.” She further stated that the instructions added in the curriculum are unclear and insufficient. She demanded further orientation to make that easier.

Participant 2 (Rita’s) Horizon

Rita, a Master's degree in English and Education, had over 15 years of experience teaching English. She mentioned being passionate about implementing child-centered strategies in the classroom to foster language skills. She informed that her classes typically begin with activities such as storytelling and phonics awareness. Sometimes she used language games, songs, and rhymes based on a thematic lesson. She believed these activities assist in the learner’s holistic development. She further stated, “Initially, I thought it was just combining different subjects into one lesson. I didn’t fully understand its emphasis on real-life context and skill integration.”

She admitted that her understanding was shaped by her orientation and through her own practices and experiences. Now, she has conceptualized IC as a holistic approach that integrates language with other subjects in real-life situations. It enables learners to develop 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration.

Rita recalled her initial ambiguity. “I wasn’t sure how to plan lessons or assess students across integrated areas.” Her uncertainty depicted the challenges that teachers faced at the initial phase of adopting new curriculum or pedagogical approaches. Responding to the query about how she started her regular class, she mentioned. “I started with a warm-up (song or rhyme) and then introduced new

vocabulary, conducted activities like role play, and read from books. I also included writing and drawing activities connected to the topic.” Her students actively participated, as she described, “They listened, responded, acted out, drew, read aloud, and worked in groups or pairs. They were encouraged to express themselves freely and relate English to their daily life.” These activities highlight the fact that the students participated actively in the pedagogical practice.

She carefully tried connecting class work and homework. “Class work included practice activity based on the lesson—drawing, labeling, matching, and sentence-making. Homework was usually a continuation—drawing something from home, writing a sentence about it, or practicing rhymes.”

Rita reported being familiar with curriculum guidelines for assessment. “Yes, I studied the guidelines provided by the curriculum and attended orientation sessions.” Her assessment methods were grounded in real classroom tasks and integrated into her daily teaching. Regarding listening, she highlighted the activities she is currently doing,

I tell stories or play audio clips connected to other subjects like health or environment. Then I ask simple questions to check their understanding. I also use picture identification, such as ‘I say point the cat under the tree,’ and students show me the correct picture. Another fun way is sequencing... I give them three pictures to arrange based on the story.

Regarding speaking, she shared, “They talk about pictures, objects, or familiar topics... describe a market scene or share what they brought from home in ‘show and tell’. We also do role plays, going to a shop or visiting a doctor.” To facilitate reading, Rita begins with the basics and builds comprehension. “I begin with letter and word recognition using flashcards. They read aloud short rhymes or stories. I also give matching tasks and jumbled sentences to arrange.”

Writing is gradually developing. “I start by copying simple sentences.” She added that she has been utilizing techniques such as dictation, image description, providing guidelines for sentence starters, and labeling activities related to body parts or available objects in the class. She further stated that she generally assesses grammar activities, spelling, simple sentence formation, and sometimes handwriting as well for writing. Overall, her assessment approach is continuous and holistic. As she said,

I keep anecdotal notes; collect their work in portfolios, and sometimes use peer or self-assessment tools like smiley faces. I ensure that each activity is connected to real-world classroom tasks and themes. This way, I get a full picture of each child's progress in English without creating stress or pressure.

She had developed collecting all the assigned of the learners in their portfolio. She also encouraged in using self-assessment practices of the learners after each activities which she believes reduces the stress of the children leading effective language learning.

When asked about a recent assessment, she recalled, "I assessed story comprehension by having students retell a story with pictures." She further added that the significance of assessment was related to speaking skills. She recorded the assessment using a standard checklist, and the activity was equally helpful in assessing sequencing and vocabulary.

Another important element in the integrated curriculum is its assessment record. In the question of how you maintain the records, she stated: "I maintain a record for students based on learning outcomes. I update it after every major activity or unit." Her response indicates that she has been prioritizing documentation, maintaining records of continuous assessment.

She further mentioned the challenges she has been facing with assessment practice and keeping records. She acknowledged that continuous assessment is helpful for a better understanding of students, but it takes more time, and in the absence of authentic assessment tools, it becomes more complex. She further mentioned that keeping all records manually is really troublesome, and she also wished that digital tools could ease her workload. She also added that the school is unable to make parents aware of the significance of continuous assessment.

The overall responses of Rita reveal that her transformation from an initial novice teacher to a confident teacher, as well as her efforts to implement curriculum guidelines in a proper manner. This transformation illustrates Gadamer's philosophy in the voice of hermeneutic fusions. Her instructional reflection shows that the integration of effective assessment practices significantly assists in shaping learning habits and skills in learners.

Participant 3 (Jitu's) Horizon

Jitu, a permanent resident of Khotang District, one of the remote places in Koshi Province, was working in Bhaktapur District as a primary school teacher. He

had been at the same level since 2076 BS. Before this, he had received a few more years of experience teaching at a private boarding school. “Yes, before that I taught in a boarding school as well,” he noted, adding, “Yes, I taught English. The medium of instruction there was English.”

Reflecting on his teaching journey, Jitu described his role as an English teacher from Grades 1 to 5. Since his appointment, he has remained at the primary level and exposed to the demands of integrated curriculum reform. However, when asked about his first impression of the Integrated Curriculum, he admitted, “When I heard about the Integrated Curriculum, I didn’t think much about it at first. I had no clear concept.” This initial inability shows near disinterestedness and naivety of him towards the new curriculum.

Over time, through exposure and informal learning, his understanding of the curriculum got refined. “Now I have some concepts from books and scholars,” he said. “The Integrated Curriculum connects all subjects together. It’s a holistic curriculum. There are themes in the curriculum, and each subject’s content is based on those themes.” He gave an example from classroom practice: “For example, there’s a theme ‘Me and My Family.’ That theme appears in English, Social Studies, and Nepali as well.” His recognition of thematic overlaps suggests an evolving conceptual horizon where disciplinary boundaries begin to blur in practice.

Jitu expressed that teaching English at the primary level is really challenging. He further stated, “I faced numerous challenges while teaching English at the primary level. English is not our native language, so students had trouble understanding. I had problems too—especially with vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence making.”

He mentioned that learners mainly struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence making. As English is not their native language, they had a limited understanding and struggled to build language skills.

He spoke frankly regarding the integration of subjects. Regarding the questions, did you have any idea about integrating subjects? He expressed, “No, I didn’t think that way. Later, I came to know the curriculum was integrated and realized we could link subjects, but still, we mostly teach them separately.” He shared that he developed the integration of ideas later, but it is not yet in practice. Still, they have been teaching each subject separately.

In terms of classroom practice, Jitu is observed to begin his English lessons by revisiting previous content. “Generally, I ask previous day’s questions, spellings, or

vocabulary,” he said. While he prefers using English, he admits to sometimes relying on Nepali: “I mostly use English to start the class, but sometimes I use Nepali too.” When asked about student support tools, he shared, “Students don’t use dictionaries. Teachers give the meanings and write everything on the board.”

Jitu’s teaching focuses heavily on textbook reading, spelling, and pronunciation. “Mostly, they focus on reading the textbook. Then we do writing, spelling, and pronunciation tasks.” Listening and speaking tasks are seldom practiced: “Not much. Sometimes I give them a chance to speak—like about their holidays or daily routine—but listening and speaking tasks are very limited.” When asked to rank the four language skills based on classroom priority, he stated, “First is reading, then writing, then speaking, and last is listening.” His emphasis on reading stems from exam-based motivation: “I believe reading is very important. In exams, students are given reading passages and exercises. They must be able to read and understand to pass. Also, reading supports writing and other skills too.”

Assessment practices in Jitu’s class primarily focuses on written tests. “We assess them mostly through written tests,” he explained. “The curriculum says 100% internal evaluation, but we rely heavily on written exams.” When asked whether he assessed the four language skills separately, he replied, “Not separately. We do general assessments based on written exams.” He further acknowledged that he had not deeply studied the assessment guidelines: “No, I haven’t gone through them deeply.” It shows Jitu’s real assessment practices

Although the school utilizes a ready-made book that aligns with the integrated curriculum, formal assessment practices, such as maintaining individual portfolios or conducting continuous observations, are minimal. “Yes, and it follows the same integrated curriculum approach,” he said, referring to the book. Regarding student work, he said, “Mostly they write in the textbook. Sometimes they copy it into their notebooks too.” When asked which method students preferred, he responded, “They enjoy both. But writing in the book is more secure because notebooks can be misplaced.”

Assessment records were not maintained this year, I was informed, due to external limitations. “No, the municipality hasn’t provided any forms this year.” However, the school did conduct mid-term exams. “Yes, we conduct mid-term exams with half the full marks. It’s mainly to assess their level, not counted in terminal exams.” Reflecting on past record-keeping experiences, he shared, “We used it, but

mostly for formality. We filled it ourselves without conducting separate activities.” When asked whether strict use of assessment forms would be helpful, he said, “Yes, it would be helpful, but it's difficult. It takes a lot of time, especially if you have 5–6 classes per day.”

Jitu has not received any formal training on integrated assessment practices. “No, I haven't,” he admitted. “I consulted other teachers. They gave me some ideas. I followed what others were doing.” He strongly believed that guidance and support would improve practice. “Yes, if we get proper guidance or shortcut ideas, we can do it better. Without help, it feels difficult.”

Finally, Jitu commented on the challenge of large class sizes, especially when assessing individual students. “Yes, it's difficult to assess individually when the class size is large. More students require more time.”

To conclude, Jitu's responses exemplified how a teacher is positioned at the intersection of policy expectations and real classroom practices. Initially, he was unaware of the curriculum expectations, but as he enriched himself, he faced challenges such as the written exam culture, limited time, and a lack of formal support from the school administration and governing body. In his narratives, he genuinely emphasized that capacity-building trainings, regular and systematic monitoring, and follow-up are required for the effective implementation of the integrated assessment.

Researcher's Horizon

Following the Gadamerian hermeneutic circle, the researcher's horizon was considered a crucial step in the meaning-making process. In this section, the researcher presented his understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher further described his positionality, pre-understandings, expectations, as well as biases and prior knowledge (Gadamer, 2004; Fleming et al., 2003). In this study, I presented my preconceptions about the integrated curriculum, my expectations regarding classroom conduct, assessment practices, and documentation. I remained unbracketed throughout the study and engaged in multiple interactions with the participants and their horizons.

Research Site A

Site A, the nearest research site, was a secondary school, located in, Kavrepalanchok, within Banepa Municipality. The school was well-resourced in terms of physical infrastructure. Situated at the top of Sanga Bazaar, it attracted students not only from the local area, including nearby residents, but also from the

neighboring district of Bhaktapur, as the location lies at the border between Kavre and Bhaktapur.

Linguistic Events

I chose this site because the school has a practitioner teacher in my area of study. During my first visit to the site, I accompanied my colleague and met a math teacher, who recommended Mrs. Ujeli as a participant. When we reached there, the time was around 11 am. He was introduced to the lady teacher who had just come out of the class. She seemed a little nervous and confused at the beginning. I greeted her and explained the research topic, objectives, and her contribution as a participant. She said nothing, just nodded her head to participate in my research. Ultimately, we exchanged contact information and agreed to meet again soon. The personal connection with the teachers provided me easy way to reach to the participant.

During my second visit, the time was fixed via telephone. When I reached there, she was in her class. I joined her in the class and spent about 15 minutes observing. She felt a little uneasy with my presence. The students seemed confused in my presence inside their classroom. I stayed inside the class and started filling out my observation form. It seemed that she was not well prepared for the class that day.

After the class, we both went to the staff room and started a conversation about the class. She explained her limitations regarding the activities conducted in the class. I informed her about the strengths she demonstrated in her class, such as her high student participation and effective motivation techniques. I further informed about the purpose of my study and the interview questions. She became ready for the interview. I realized that clearly informing participants about the research process and purpose provides them with an opportunity to open up and express their experiences in a detailed manner.

Action

During the observation, I noticed that the classroom was well-decorated with charts and paintings, and the floor was well-carpeted. The classroom looked clean and cozy, with sufficient airflow and light from two windows. Most of the charts were teacher-made, a few were readymade, and a few rough charts were student-made. The classroom has no digital aids, but the school has a TV room where the class visits to watch videos. The wall color was smooth. The overall classroom environment seemed comfortable. Overall, the classroom environment was comfortable, indicating

that the school has maintained a sound learning environment, though the integration of ICT in regular classroom instruction remains limited.

The class was conducted using a lecture method; students were just listening and making no response at all. The teacher explained that she had been using pairs for reading and also assigned group project work. She further stated that she used the TV room for listening and to show relevant videos, but I did not observe her using AV aids during the observation. Next, feedback and the student support system were not strictly followed. There was no record of feedback, but they had categorized students according to their performance in the class.

Ujeli was carrying the Basic Level Curriculum - 2076 in her hand. She had the Evaluation Record Book with her, along with a few records of assessments that had been conducted earlier. However, no evidence of assessment was recorded except for the scored marks. Although the record book contained clear instructions and rubrics for continuous assessment, the assessment appeared to be separated from daily classroom instruction. Only written exams, reading, class work, and homework were generally evaluated. Moreover, there were no fixed tools for assessing language skills separately. Portfolio management was not done systematically, although students' assessment evidence (such as test papers) had been stored roughly. In practice, written exams were used to measure students' progress and to determine their grades. In general, the assessment system appeared to be dominated by written examinations, with limited implementation of continuous and formative assessment practices. Despite the availability of guidelines and rubrics, systematic portfolio management and skill-based language assessment were not evident.

With only nine students, the teacher and students were comfortable with each other; however, in the English class, the Nepali language was mostly used for instructions. Students were only engaged in teacher-guided reading activities in class, and there were no tools to measure their reading skills. As a result, students struggled to read English texts, and they often used their textbooks as worksheets. Nevertheless, the students did not complete the assigned work in the proper manner.

The lesson planning was not effectively carried out, as she mentioned that she had recorded it in her diary, but it was not available during the observation. Assessment planning was also not prepared or made systematic as part of prior planning; however, continuous assessment records were kept systematically in the register provided by the municipal office. According to the record, assessments were

conducted after the completion of each theme, and marks were awarded in the order of 4, 3, 2, and 1. It was found that students scoring less than three had been placed in remedial classes, which were conducted during regular school hours rather than in extra time. Furthermore, there were no formal forms for collecting guardians' feedback or for maintaining progress tracking sheets. This showed that teacher could not manage to carry all the activities smoothly.

Thought Process

Though the site was rich in its physical resources, such as buildings, classrooms, and classroom decorations, these elements were not fully integrated into daily classroom instruction. The materials available inside the classrooms appeared to be kept permanently in place and were not updated after the completion of the themes. Moreover, despite the comfortable classroom setting, instruction was largely teacher-centered, relying mainly on the lecture method, which resulted in minimal student participation. This indicated a noticeable gap between the classroom environment and the pedagogy. Although the teacher reported using pair work and group activities, these practices were only minimally observed during the visit, and no previous records were found to provide solid evidence of their implementation.

During my observation, it was found that the teacher was not instructing the English class using the English language. She primarily used Nepali in her instruction, which made me consider how this approach might impact students' development of the targeted language skills. Overall, a clear gap appeared between actual classroom practice and the curriculum's demands. Consequently, it failed to meet the curriculum's intentions of fostering skill development and subject integration. Overall, a clear gap appeared between actual classroom practice and the curriculum's demands.

The assessment practices, planning, remedial support, parental communication, and feedback collection—key elements of the Integrated Curriculum and its assessment—appeared to be given limited priority. Relying solely on terminal written exams for final evaluation did not fully meet the curriculum's requirements. The four language skills were also not assessed separately due to the lack of appropriate tools. Further, IC demands that each student's portfolio, which is basically used for progress tracking, was not well-maintained. There was not much evidence of classroom activities and assessment records. Assessment was conducted in a rough manner, without being incorporated into daily lesson planning. Although the 4-3-2-1

scoring system was followed effectively, remedial classes were not conducted in accordance with the curriculum's guidelines. Moreover, there was no planned or formal system for communicating with guardians, and feedback collection was also not carried out in a formal manner.

Research Site B

Linguistic Event

The next research site I chose was in Dhulikhel, located on the slope of a beautiful village, about 4 kilometers from the main city of Dhulikhel. I selected this site because two of my college classmates were currently teaching there, and I had often visited during my free time in the past. I was already familiar with about 60 percent of the teachers at the school.

I consulted one of my friends, Mr. Rupesh Nepal, regarding my research and the selection of participants. He suggested that the participants be allocated to me. On my way to school, I planned the interview roughly in my mind; however, I was often distracted by the road conditions. The road was slippery and muddy, so I had to concentrate more on my driving. Initially, I had planned to visit the school earlier, but before setting off, I confirmed the road conditions with Rupesh. He informed me that the road was fine and also suggested that I visit on another Saturday to meet and interview my participants, as the entire teaching team was currently engaged in an orientation session on the internal evaluation system and its documentation.

When I reached there around 1:30 PM, it was the time of the lunch break. I even shared the lunch with them. The head teacher, Mr. Ramesh Badal, welcomed me on the way to his office and introduced me to the session facilitator, Mr. Chandra Mainali, who was the head teacher and English teacher at a school in Bhaktapur. I shared my research topic with him, and he also offered some useful suggestions. After the break, the teachers returned to the training hall, so I planned to spend the time with my participants and proceed with the interview. For this, one of them offered me a seat in the staffroom.

Action

We completed the interview in around one hour, after which she invited me to stay in the training hall. The hall was small in size and lacked comfortable seating arrangements. At the front, there was an interactive board that the facilitator was using by connecting it to his laptop for display. The discussion focused on the conduction and documentation of internal evaluation, based on the guidelines

provided by the CDC for grades 4–8. Teachers shared their own assessment practices, while the facilitator suggested ways to align these practices with the policy.

During the session, I also shared the practices followed at our school. Later, I realized that our assessment practices had been slightly modified compared to the roadmap provided by the CDC. The facilitator appreciated our approach, my understanding, and our documentation methods. At our school, teachers are provided with a ready-made diary that includes annual planning, terminal planning, continuous assessment records, and assignment records. Additionally, each teacher receives a record-keeping form for internal evaluation, one for every grade and subject, which contains subject-specific assessment rubrics.

I completed the interview in around 1 hour, and then she approached me to stay in the training hall. The hall was small in size with no comfortable sitting arrangement. There was an interactive board that the facilitator was using by connecting from his laptop for display. The discussion was focused on the internal evaluation conduct and documentation guidelines provided by CDC for grades 4-8. Teachers were sharing their assessment practices, and the facilitator was suggesting the alignment between policy and practice. I also shared our school practices. Later, I realized we had a few modified assessment practices in comparison to the roadmap by the CDC. The facilitator appreciated our practice, my understanding, and our approach to documentation, as we have a ready-made diary for a teacher that includes annual planning, terminal planning, CAS records, assignment records, and more. The teachers were also provided with a record-keeping form for internal evaluation, which included subject-wise assessment rubrics for each grade.

The next day, I revisited for class observation, and I directly reached Grade 3, where she was teaching English. I gave my introduction in the class and then sat in the corner of the classroom. I took out the observation form and started listing the available things inside the classroom. Regarding the classroom environment, there was ample space available, allowing for easy conduct of movement activities. The floor was well carpeted, with a thick mattress for each student. The seating arrangement was circular, resembling a rectangular table. The classroom wall was not plastered, but it was all covered with charts and paper-made decorations. The wall featured a separate display board, which was mostly covered by the students' creations, including a few that were student-made and contributed to the assessment. The classroom had no digital aids except a watch. Overall, the classroom seemed

well-organized, with all the available aids kept in their designated places.

Additionally, the classroom displayed students' drawings and handwriting samples.

The classroom instruction was partially student-centered during observation. The teacher made students read the text themselves and find the answers themselves. During the process, the teacher reached out to students to check their progress and provided feedback. Regarding the use of languages, the teacher used more Nepali and less English. The teacher informed us that she used an interactive board for listening and video, but mentioned that the room was located in the next block, and it was difficult to manage the time to get there. The basic level (1-3) block was within a five minutes walking distance from the main block where the AV room is situated. A remedial class was conducted for students who were unable to achieve the minimum grade during the assessment, and a record was maintained showing the comparative grades achieved before and after attending the remedial sessions. In addition to this, feedback to the students was provided orally, and occasionally, feedback from guardians was also collected; however, the records were not available at the time of observation.

As mentioned by participants, she conducted an assessment at the end of each theme; however, there was no fixed plan regarding the conductor tools used. She assessed language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) separately. She had been using short written tests, project works, as well as regular assessments. These activities were conducted without prior notice to the students. It had no fixed rubrics, but their marks/grades were on record.

The participant had no lesson plan as she had been planning it on the spot during class. Her classroom instructions were largely based on the CDC textbook. All the activities were not formally documented, but the student's assessment score was recorded in the school-made format, which is handled by the Exam Coordinator. The students' progress tracking system was not formally managed, and no system for recording evidence of each student's activity. The individual student portfolios were maintained and stored in a cupboard inside the classroom. It contained students' personal information and terminal scores without evidence of the assessment carried out. The teacher was not fully aware of the curriculum and learning outcomes set by it.

Thought Process

The school's location existed in a remote setting, and the landscape was sloped and slippery, which seemed to challenge the children's friendly school environment. Next, how could the teacher reach their daily commute on the same road, which normally remains muddy during summer and dusty during the dry season? Difficulty in traveling may hinder the performance of both teachers and students. The school had scattered blocks that may hinder sharing practices among teachers, as well as co-learning among students. Despite difficulties in all the aforementioned physical environments, the observed classroom was well-managed, with ample space, seating arrangements, decorations, and a display board featuring student-made items that were managed purposefully.

Next, in the English classroom, the students were not really motivated to communicate in English. Emphasizing the target language too much can be harmful, as students may fail to develop their language skills in the target language. The ICT tools may help develop language skills, but the available interactive board was located in the next block, within a 5-7 minutes walking distance, with a difficult pathway. The overall classroom instructions lacked proper planning (daily lesson plan), along with assessment planning. The instruction was based on a ready-made textbook, which was questioned for its ability to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Regarding students' engagement, they were involved in a reading activity individually and found answers to the activity in the textbook. Although the teacher was making rounds and tried to reach each student, it may not have been sufficient to identify each student's errors.

The overall practice superficially was appreciable, as mentioned earlier in the interview. The teacher had ample theoretical knowledge about IC and its assessment model in English, but it was not strictly followed. The assessment was conducted at the end of each theme, but was not recorded in a well-organized format, with no pre-planning and no standardized tools suggested by CDC guidelines. The language skills were assessed separately, but with no intention of formative assessment; rather, the goal was to complete the task and keep it as proof to show if somebody asked. The teacher claimed to carry remedial classes for low performers and kept comparative grades on the same sheet. At the same time, students' portfolio management was done poorly in a single record book. The demand for IC, or the integration of thematic

instructions with other disciplines, was rarely followed, as the school had separate teachers for each subject.

Research Site C

Linguistic Event

Site C is located in the village near Sanga, and lies in Bhaktapur district. Currently, the local government (rural and municipal) has been monitoring education at least up to the school level (grade 12). I chose this site to explore the practice variations among the different local levels. The site situated near my location made it easy to access.

The site comes under the Suryabinayak Municipality. I contacted one of my college friends, Mr. Dhana Bahadur Bista, who is currently working there. In our informal meeting, I shared with him my thesis writing and area of study, and asked if he could help me find a school teacher who might be willing to participate. He suggested the name of Mr. Jitu. I agreed with his recommendations and fixed the date to visit the school. My obligation to ask for a friend's help to get access to participants provided me sense of importance of friend circle in research work.

On the day of my first visit, I made a call to Mr. Bista to ask about the location and availability of the participant on that day. He guided me to the location via phone, and I arrived there around 11 pm. I parked my motorbike under the big Peepal tree. There was a temple near it. I observed a narrow school building from the outside, and during that, I heard some unclear sounds from the students inside. I called Mr. Bista outside, who was in his class. We had a few informal conversations, and he approached me inside the school. We entered from a narrow gate and reached the first floor through a narrow ladder. I saw a few teachers inside a small chair in the staffroom. He called Mr. Jitu outside the staffroom and introduced him to me. I greeted him, and he just smiled. He was feeling a little uneasy as we were meeting for the first time. Teachers inside the staffroom looked at me suspiciously. Mr. Bista suggested that we moved to a science lab on the floor above for our further conversation, and also explained to Mr. Jitu about my visit to the school. Mr. Jitu nodded his head and led me to the science lab. The teachers' skepticism could be a manifestation of their fear of outsider entering their workspace.

We began our conversation informally, starting with questions about his introduction, teaching experience, and a bit about his school. I informed him about my research topic, objectives, and the interview process. He agreed, and I started

recording. In between two students came to ask for the computer lab key, and our interview got disrupted. We continued again and spent almost 45 minutes. We ended with the school bell for the tiffin, and we both walked downstairs to the staffroom. On the way, we met Mr. Bista, who approached me for tea. We three entered the staffroom. The room was crowded and uncomfortable to sit in. I greeted everyone and shared my purpose to visit their school. The next room belonged to the Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher, who were not present at the school that day. Utilizing tiffin time, Mr. Jitu and another teacher were busy preparing lesson plans from the booklet provided by the Municipality office. I shared a few of my experiences regarding IC and its assessment models. One of them mentioned it is the duty of the municipality or government to work further for execution, and a few others agreed with his opinion. During the conversation, one of the teachers was the mother of a 10th-grade student at our school. She also shared some of our school practices. That conversation helped to build up rapport with teachers.

Action

When the researcher entered the classroom to observe, the teacher began his class by asking a few questions to the students about the previous class; however, the students were unable to answer any of the questions. Then, the teacher assigned the reading comprehension to the students. The students were trying hard to read the text. The teacher stood in front and just watched the students reading. The classroom had traditional types of benches with 9 students. The sitting seemed uncomfortable. The ground floor had small windows, so light hardly reached. The classroom contained one whiteboard facing south, with two display boards on either side. The display board featured a job distribution chart, a daily schedule, a calendar, classroom rules, a daily routine, and several teacher-created charts. None of the pasted materials were related to the English subject. The wall color seemed uneven, as if it had not been maintained for the last five years. It showed the timely necessity of school's classroom maintenance along with use of innovative pedagogy.

The teacher primarily used the lecture method for instruction; he also provided students with time for self-study. The teacher served as the facilitator, but the primary language used was mostly Nepali. The classroom has no visual aids, and the teacher did not mention the AV/TV room. The teacher claimed he used a mobile phone for listening purposes, but this was not observed during the session.

The assessment was based on the terminal pen-and-paper model, which is carried out every three months and grades the students accordingly. The teacher claimed that he had been administering internal evaluation tools, such as oral tests and class tests, but no evidence was available at the time of observation. The assessment seemed more summative, and the behavioral and skill development parts were neglected. They had the internal assessment record book last year, which was provided by the municipal office, but it did not arrive until the observation for this academic session. The subjects are taught separately by different teachers, with no evidence of integration. The regular classroom instruction was separated from the assessment practice, but immediate oral/written feedback was provided to the student in the regular class. There was limited practice of the continuous and classroom-based assessment.

The good practice in the class was that they had a pre-planned lesson with lesson plans provided in a booklet by the municipality, but I doubted that it was followed strictly. The continuous assessment part was neglected, and no record of internal evaluation was updated till the date. Progress tracking sheets and portfolios for individual students were not available during the observation, except for the students' exercise copies.

Thought Process

The site is situated within the valley and the municipality, and the physical infrastructure of the school and classrooms do not appear to be well-managed. In the absence of basic necessities like comfortable seating and adequate lighting, it won't be unreasonable to expect a quality academic environment. In comparison, the science lab was fully furnished with numerous tools and cupboards. The school is undergoing a slow modernization process. The classroom instruction was based solely on textbooks, which may not meet the demands of IC and address the diverse interests of students, as well as their language development.

The available evidence showed that the assessment practice is less formative and largely summative. The assessment planning, conduction, documentation, and feedback seemed less effective, as IC demands continuous and skills-based assessments in regular classroom instruction. The English class had given less emphasis on language skills, mainly speaking. Reading and writing were practiced, but evidence was not maintained, and skills development, behavioral development,

and portfolio management were largely neglected. It showed a huge gap between policy and practice.

Integrated Horizon

The participants' and the researcher's horizons are aligned for themes. Firstly, through the aggregation of horizons between the participant and researcher, emergent themes emerge. Then, emergent themes are narrowed down to form subordinate and superordinate themes. This stage of Gadamer's data analysis, further elaborated by Alsaigh and Coyne (2021), followed each participant's horizon, along with the researcher's detailed understanding of the topic, and observation, is presented in detail. The lived experiences that participants hesitated to share or failed to share are presented in detail through the researcher's lens. The extracted subordinate theme and superordinate themes are presented below:

Table 3

Integration of Themes: Superordinate and Subordinate

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme
Initial Understanding of the Integrated Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unclear concept and information at the beginning -Enriched concept through training -Recognition of IC as holistic, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary
Varied but Irregularly Integrated Classroom Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mismatch between theoretical understanding and real practices -Limited practice as per demand of IC -Lessly linked with language skills -Lacks interdisciplinary integration -Use of activities like, warm-ups, vocabulary work, role play, pair work and group work -Major focus on Reading, writing -Attempt for use of ICT but access and time hinder
Fragmented Assessment Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No specified and abstract guidelines

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of varied assessment tools (written test, project work, listening, reading, writing) -CA lessley adopted, largely used terminal; pen-paper test -Inconsistency in portfolio maintain and other documentation -Huge gap between classroom instruction and assessment -Skill and competencies are neglected.
Challenges in Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unclear assessment guidelines -language barriers; mother tongue influence -Lacks authentic assessment tools and parents awareness -Time consuming, class size, period load, limited resources
Necessity of Timely Orientation and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training sessions improved understanding and difference in practice -Trained teachers are aware about rubrics, tools, and guidelines -No formal training for some teachers -Only limited in peer learning

Superordinate Theme 1: Initial Understanding of the Integrated Curriculum

This superordinate theme explores how participants initially understood the IC. The analysis found that most participants lacked a clear understanding of it. Later, through orientation, training, and personal efforts, they somehow grasped the theoretical concept. All participants expressed understanding of IC as holistic, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary, where themes can be integrated across various subjects simultaneously. The subordinate themes, such as unclear concepts and information at the beginning, enriched the concept through training, recognizing IC as holistic, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary, thereby addressing participants' understanding of IC.

Regarding the initial understanding of IC, all the participant Ujeli expressed, “Integrated Curriculum means connecting various subjects. It includes educational content focusing on behavioral and life skills. It aims to equip children with practical skills by teaching them life-relevant competencies.” She expressed that she had been teaching in the basic (1-3) grade since 2075 BS. Initially, she was totally unaware of its concept and usefulness. She further added that she became aware after attending an online orientation by the Municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic. She knew the practical implementation part after attending TPD training in two phases. She commented, “I wasn’t sure what the Integrated Curriculum was. However, we received orientation from the Municipality. During that time, I also took Teacher Professional Development (TPD) training.”

Second participant, Rita, also expressed a similar understanding of IC. She said, “Initially, I thought it was just combining different subjects into one lesson. I didn’t fully understand its emphasis on real-life context and skill integration.”

Rita expressed that she had heard about the concept a long time ago, during its piloting, when she attended random online sessions during the COVID pandemic. She learned about it during the preparation for TSC examinations. As a practitioner, she had been doing it for the last three years. She further mentioned, “Now I see it as a holistic approach that connects language with other subjects and life experiences. It helps learners develop critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills.”

The third participant, Jitu, expressed that he neglected it at the beginning, as he was teaching at a private school at that time. Later, when he got selected for his permanent posting in the government school after completing the TSC examination, he started exploring it. At the beginning, he said, “When I heard about the Integrated Curriculum, I didn’t think much about it at first. I had no clear concept.”

He further expressed his understanding that he got basic knowledge from other teachers and available documents. Now he understood the IC as the medium that connects all the subjects together, as he mentioned: “The Integrated Curriculum connects all subjects together.” He further added IC as a holistic curriculum, but he actually did not explain how it is holistic. Regarding the integration of subjects, he stated an example: “There are themes in the curriculum, and each subject’s content is based on those themes. For example, there’s a theme “Me and My Family.” That theme appears in English, Social Studies, and Nepali as well.” This statement

demonstrated that his understanding had been enriched through self-exploration and collaborative work with colleagues.

In conclusion, all participants had a basic understanding of IC, albeit not in detail, at the beginning, and this understanding was further developed through various media. Their further response about IC and its practices is guided by it.

Superordinate Theme 2: Varied but Irregularly Integrated Classroom Practices

Participant teachers shared that they adopt a variety of practices in the classroom to make classroom instruction effective. Participant Ujeli shared her experience about classroom instruction, “I start by preparing the students—telling stories, using materials to draw their attention, then slowly transitioning to the content.” She tells the stories orally, based on books or additional books, as a brainstorming activity. She further added, “I integrate different skills like speaking, writing, and presenting.” During class, she integrated language skills to keep the classroom engaging. Similarly, participant Rita stated that she used activities like songs/rhymes at the beginning of class. Sometimes she uses role play, reading books, and drawing as well. She further stated, “I start with a warm-up (such as a song or rhyme) and then introduce new vocabulary. I conduct activities such as role-playing and reading from books. I also include writing and drawing activities connected to the topic.”

Participant Jitu stated that he generally starts his class with a review of the previous class and continues with word meanings and vocabulary, but he typically uses the Nepali language for instructions. He further stated, “I ask the previous day’s questions, spellings, or vocabulary. I mostly use English to start the class, but I also occasionally use Nepali.”

Though the beginning of the classroom seemed varied and organized, the rest of the classroom activities seemed contradictory. During observation, it was found that the classes were not conducted in accordance with the concept of an integrated curriculum. The previously mentioned understandings were not utilized in the classroom. The English classroom was dominated by the Nepali language, which all three participants agreed on during the interview, as well as observed during the classroom visit. That resulted in limitations in language skills development. Participant Ujeli reported that she used the Nepali language for instruction, and similar thoughts were expressed by the remaining two participants, Rita and Jitu, respectively.

Participants claimed to have integrated subjects according to the theme during the interview, but similar practices were not observed during the observation. While reviewing the routine, the school had allocated a separate schedule for each subject, and classes were conducted separately. Participant Ujeli expressed her understanding of integrating subject and theme; however, no solid record or evidence of subject/thematic integration was available during the observation. As she responded, “The curriculum includes five major behavioral skills, like personal, interpersonal, and civic competencies. We must relate these skills to relevant themes and teach them accordingly.”

The second research site had a semi-block model classroom arrangement. Participant Rita was responsible for teaching three subjects: English, *Serofero*, and grammar. However, different time slots were allocated for each subject, and practice was conducted similarly. She also had no evidence of integration among subjects. Participant Jitu also expressed that he was responsible for teaching only English, and no practice of sharing among teachers had developed to date. To summarize, subjects are taught separately in a traditional manner. The classes were not integrated as guided by IC as subjects are integrated interdisciplinary: language (English, Nepali, local), Science (health, nature, plant, animals...), arts and creativity (drawing, music, drama) etc. and transdisciplinary/thematic ideas like: ‘Me and My Family’ is taught in Language, Maths, *Serofero* as well. Furthermore, skill development and competency-based activities were not practiced.

Another important element in classroom instruction these days is the integration of ICT in learning. The use of ICT has proven beneficial in the process of learning the English language. The participants claimed they use ICT tools like TV, mobile phones, and Interactive Boards for videos or listening, but rarely. Participant Ujeli stated, “I show videos on a dedicated television. It runs YouTube and helps make it easier”. However, her statement indicates that she did not utilize ICT in the planned manner to achieve specific learning outcomes. Next, Rita shared her difficulty, as the school had an interactive board (which was used during the first visit for a training session), but it was located in the next block, and it took time to reach there. Jitu’s school had no AV room, so he stated during the observation that he sometimes uses his personal mobile phone to listen to and watch videos. It shows that the use of ICT in classroom instruction is not done remarkably.

Superordinate Theme 3: Fragmented Assessment Practices

The Integrated Curriculum (Grades 1-3) in Nepal demands a holistic, child-oriented, and competency-based assessment, shifting away from the traditional pen-and-paper model of examinations. The assessment is considered part of regular classroom instructions and learning. The assessment models in IC include continuous assessment, portfolio-based assessment, formative assessment tools, and no formal exams up to grade 3, as well as the development of higher-level thinking skills.

'Assessment practices', the core of this study, vary from school to school. As mentioned above, the CDC has published guidelines for classroom instruction and carrying out assessments. While collecting information from participants and during class observations, it was found that most assessment tools were not used meaningfully. All three participants expressed their awareness of IC and assessment, but the process was not carried out as they understood it. Regarding English, not all language skills are equally assessed, as most participants reported focusing more on reading.

I make them read paragraphs, talk about themselves, describe objects, share what they like, etc.(Ujeli)

I use letter/word recognition activities, reading aloud, matching words to pictures, comprehension questions, and jumbled sentence arrangements.(Rita)

Sometimes I give them a chance to speak—such as about their holidays or daily routines—but listening and speaking tasks are very limited. (Jitu).

The responses above show participants giving priority to reading, then writing, and speaking and listening. Formal records of each language skills assessment and their competencies were not found to be maintained systematically. Ultimately, the students' evaluation was based on the mid-term or terminal examination, and continuous assessment was not employed. As participant Ujeli commented that she has been conducting a terminal examination at the parents' request. Next, participant Jitu mentioned, "We assess them mostly through written tests. The curriculum says 100% internal evaluation, but we rely heavily on written exams." In Jitu's school, the condition was pathetic. The subject teacher had no record of assessment, and undoubtedly, he expressed that the evaluation was based only on the terminal examination. Although Rita provided a detailed account of assessing language skills separately using various tools, no solid evidence was present during the observation. It shows a clear gap between policy and practice. The assessment was not continuous,

formative, and learning oriented; rather, it was taken as a task that was to be completed and provide a tag to the students' grades, which may not exactly align with the objective of IC.

The next important part of assessment in IC is managing students' portfolios and recording their achievements after each assessment. As all the participants claimed they had maintained the student's record, it was not found to be updated during the observation. The participant only had a daily attendance register and students' exercise copies. The curriculum requires one student, one file, which includes their assignments, projects, achievements, attendance, and other relevant information. This file must be sent to the guardians on a monthly basis to collect feedback. The participants' school had no such practice, nor was there a formal visit schedule for parents.

Apart from the above-mentioned aspects of assessment practices, the researcher observed a few additional aspects that were lacking in the practice. As curriculum guides have planned assessments following abstract guidelines, it was found in real practice that they were often carried out without proper planning. Moreover, proper documentation of each assessment appeared to be partially or not completed at all. Participants expressed their opinion about documentation as follows. Ujeli mentioned, "I keep records in a book—what students have achieved is clearly noted. We use a 4–3–2–1 rating system. Those scoring 4 get rewarded, and we help others improve accordingly."

According to her, a ready-made booklet was provided by the municipality office, and she has been recording only the students' scores in the format provided. She expressed that she also informally carried remedial classes for those students whose scores were below 2, and they were reassessed after the remedial class, with an improved score recorded. In this regard, Ujeli did all the tasks as guided by the curriculum.

Rita expressed her experience of record keeping as follows, "I maintain a record for students based on learning outcomes. I update it after every major activity or unit."

Her response was based on her understanding, but the documentation part was mismanaged. She had no solid evidence to support her claim. She just smiled and said, "I will begin now." This indicates the real situation in the field.

Jitu expressed during the interview that he had done the documentation informally the previous year and was waiting to obtain a similar record book this year as well. He mentioned, “We used it, but mostly for formality. We filled it ourselves without conducting separate activities.” And about this year, he further mentioned, “No, the municipality hasn’t provided any forms this year.” The school and the teacher themselves did not prepare any format.

In summary, the findings demonstrated that teachers have some awareness of practicing assessment in IC; however, there is a clear gap between the policy and practices in schools. As IC demands holistic, competency and skill-based and child-centered assessment, but the adopted approaches are fragmented, exam-based, and poorly documented. In the English classroom, the findings highlighted that teachers tend to prioritize speaking, while other skills are often neglected. The core elements of assessment in IC, like systematic documentation of all classroom and assessment evidence, portfolio preparation, and timely updates, receive minimal attention. Assessment is largely based on written exams and treated as a formality rather than a continuous process and a tool for building competency in learners. The above evidences show that without proper planning and support, we cannot expect solid outcomes from the existing classroom and assessment practices.

Superordinate Theme 4: Challenges in Implementation

This theme supports the fact that the implementation of IC in the Nepalese context cannot be separated from its challenges. As the progressive curriculum IC aims for holistic skill development, child-centered, and competency-based classroom instruction and assessment, teachers face several obstacles that affect its effective execution in the classroom. These obstacles emerge from issues like structural and pedagogical limitations, which result in a gap between policy intentions and actual classroom practice. The analysis of participant responses revealed the major challenges that teachers faced during classroom practice, such as unclear assessment guidelines, language barriers, the influence of mother tongue, a lack of authentic assessment tools, parents’ awareness, time-consuming tasks, large class sizes, high period loads, and limited school resources.

Participant Ujeli mentioned confusing assessment guidelines as she felt difficulty in conducting the assessment. As she mentioned, “the assessment part is very confusing. It’s not very clear.” She followed the guidelines from the available documents, but she could not exactly cope with it. She further suggested, “It would

help if the curriculum were more precise.” It shows the participant's irritation while practicing assessment in the classroom.

Participant Jitu expressed his opinion that he had not reviewed any formal documents, such as a curriculum or implementation guidelines. He further stated that he did not find its necessity because he was not following continuous assessment. He commented, “No, I have not gone through them deeply.” This indicates his lower engagement with the official documents, which could be helpful to carry out the classes effectively. The above statements indicate study of available documents, directives, and participants’ understandings of it on their way are the greater challenges in the implementation of assessment.

Next, participant Ujeli expressed mother tongue influence as a challenge to achieving expected outcomes. English language skills can be hindered by one's mother tongue. She shared that most of the students were from the Tamang community, which struggles with the Nepali language. She commented, “Most of our students are from the Tamang community. Their mother tongue is Tamang. They struggle with Nepali, so English is even harder.”

As per my observation, it was Ujeli’s pretext. She made little effort to help the students’ speak English; rather, she used the Nepali language freely in the English class. The next two participants were also using Nepali mostly in their English Class. This practice raises critical concerns about nonalignment between policy expectations and classroom reality. The integrated curriculum demands strong communication skills, emphasizing the balanced development of all four skills, which directly deprives students of the authentic opportunity to communicate in English.

All the participants expressed their challenges in assessment practice as follows:

It is time-consuming, and recording everything manually can be tiring.

Availability of digital tools could help. (Rita)

It's difficult. It takes a lot of time, especially if you have 5–6 classes per day.

(Jitu)

It's challenging to assess each skill separately, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The curriculum trains us holistically, not in separate parts. (Ujeli)

Rita shared her difficulty as the assessment part takes a lot of time and the unavailability of digital tools, which minimizes their time for recording digitally.

Keeping a manual record proved to be really challenging. Jitu commented that he had to take 5-6 periods every day, and keeping all records was troubling. Ujeli expressed the difficulty of assessing each student's language skills separately. She further shared that she views orientation as a comprehensive process, but still struggles to implement small elements, such as language skills, integrating classroom instructions and assessments, and utilizing assessment tools. She further stated that there was another difficulty, primarily related to behavioral development, which she neglected due to a lack of proper guidelines. She said, "There are many behavioral skills included, but it's not clearly mentioned how to implement them." Jitu further shared his difficulty as, "It's difficult to assess individually when the class size is large. More students mean more time needed." His focus here was on the class size.

In summary, the insights under the theme reveal the major challenges that teachers face in implementing assessments in IC. The challenges include unclear and complex assessment guidelines, the influence of mother tongue on English instructions, a more time-consuming process, teachers' heavy workloads, and a lack of digital resources. Although teachers demonstrated a few examples of good practices, the limited efforts are insufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. By being self-reliant, it would be better if teachers sought alternatives in developing assessment tools, record-keeping systems, language skills development, and time management strategies.

Superordinate Theme 5: Necessity of Timely Orientation and Training

During the analysis of participants' responses and the integration of horizons, it was identified that practitioners lacked both theoretical understanding and practical techniques regarding assessment. Participant Ujeli expressed that she had guidelines and attended orientation and TPD, but still lacked a clear understanding of the major theme of IC and its assessment conduct. Her statement, "More training is still needed," regarding the assessment of behavioral aspects like soft skills, highlights the inadequacy of training and orientation. Rita also expressed the necessity of further orientation from the school, municipality office, or other governing body. Jitu stated that he had no experience with formal orientation and training regarding it, and even for the record, the school was unable to manage itself and was waiting for the municipality office to provide it.

As discussed in the first theme, all participants agreed that they enriched their understanding of IC after they attended the orientation sessions, which provided them

with the basics for carrying it out. During observation, Ujeli maintained a systematic record book, as per the IC's demand, and updated it after each assessment, which was appreciable. She became able to manage all this because she attended the orientation and TPD session in different phases. Rita attended an orientation session on conducting assessments under IC, and she claimed that she adopted the ideas she learned during the session in her classroom, finding it really helpful. She commented, "I assessed story comprehension by having students retell a story with pictures. The purpose was to assess speaking, sequencing, and vocabulary use. I recorded observations in a checklist." According to her, she was not aware of such a practice before attending the session.

Jitu's practice differs from that of the other two participants. He had not attended any formal sessions about IC to date. He has been conducting assessments based on his understanding and in accordance with the suggestions of his colleagues. He commented on the necessity of expert advice or training, "If we get proper guidance or shortcut ideas, we can do it better. Without help, it feels difficult."

To sum up, the self-realized practice could not meet the demand of IC, and the assessment was also not carried out as guided by the curriculum. This suggests the necessity of adequate orientations, training, workshops, and other formal and informal sessions to enrich the practices. I believe such sessions were conducted at the beginning when IC was piloted or implemented.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, as guided by the Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology framework, I first presented the horizons of the three participants based on their interview responses. I then outlined my own understanding and observations as the researcher's horizon. Following this, I integrated these horizons to develop the emergent themes, including both subordinate and superordinate themes. Each superordinate theme was interpreted and discussed in relation to the participants' responses, which collectively represented the major findings of the study.

CHAPTER V

ESTABLISHING LINK

Linking the themes with previously studied literature, theory, and paradigm is the next important step of Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology. In this chapter, I attempted to align all five superordinate themes emerged from the integration of horizons with the review literature, my theory of transformative learning, and my constructivist paradigm. The linking showed:

Integration of Findings and Literature

The first theme, ‘Initial understanding of the integrated curriculum,’ is somewhat aligned with the previous two studies included in the review section. Poyck et al. (2016) and MoE (2017) explored teachers’ unawareness about curriculum goals and expected outcomes. Next, NCFSE 2007 noted that teachers share a similar understanding of assessment with examinations, lacking a broader understanding. This concept supports participants’ unclear or partial understanding of IC, aligning with earlier findings that teacher in Nepal and globally often starts with a weak understanding.

The second theme, ‘varied but irregularly integrated classroom practices,’ aligned with the previous studies of Drake and Reid (2018), Ralebese (2018), and Maba (2017). Drake and Reid (2018) explored the idea that an integrated curriculum would be useful for achieving 21st-century skills if classroom instruction were conducted according to the guidelines of IC. Next, Ralebese (2018) studied teachers who lacked integration skills, and Maba (2017) investigated irregular practices in assessing integrated curricula. The thematic analysis of this study, ‘inconsistent integration,’ aligns with local and global studies, showing an irregular and partial enactment of IC.

The third theme, fragmented assessment practices, highlighted the gap between policy and practice. Similar findings were highlighted by Black and Wiliam (1998) and Harlen (2007), with the major finding that formative assessment supports better learning. This finding supports the core theme of IC's assessment for learning. Next, Paudel (2024), Sigdel and Sherpa (2024), and Aryal (2025) examined policy practice gaps in the Nepalese context regarding assessment. They explored teachers

who were familiar with authentic assessment, but in practice, they adopted the same traditional tool—a written exam (pen-and-paper test)—neglecting policy shifts toward formative and continuous assessment. The subordinate themes, such as exam-based summative assessments, poor documentation, and weak portfolios, are aligned with the findings of the above-reviewed literature.

The fourth superordinate theme, 'challenges in implementation,' expressed the real trouble participants faced. They expressed their experiences in a critical manner, describing some policy dilemmas and suggesting constructive ways to move forward, which aligned with the adopted theory of transformative learning. The subordinate themes, such as unclear guidelines, mother tongue influence, large class sizes, and resource limitations, somehow aligned with local and global findings. Fu and Sibert (2017) explored teacher preparedness as the major factor affecting the implementation of IC in America. Furthermore, Prajapati (2024) and Kafle and Neupane (2025) have highlighted the challenges in the Nepali context. Prajapati (2024) found no uniformity in the practice of continuous assessment, and Kafle and Neupane (2025) identified challenges, including a lack of timely professional development, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient guidance, support, and monitoring.

The fifth theme, the necessity of timely orientation and training, demands timely guidance and professional development sessions for practitioner teachers. This feeling was also expressed by the participants during the interview, as well as by the researcher, who observed the necessity of it during the observations. This theme aligns with the previous studies included in the review sections, such as Ralebese (2018), Hull and Vigh (2025), and Jonathan (2019), with the major findings being the necessity of timely professional development sessions for the effective implementation of IC. Ralebese (2018) emphasized the importance of orientation and proper monitoring for a successful outcome of IC. Similarly, Hull and Vigh (2025) examined the positive impact of training and workshops on the implementation of assessment literacy within IC. Furthermore, Jonathan (2019) found that the requirement of an integrated curriculum and its localization are supported by training.

Integration of findings with Theory

I adopted the theory of transformative learning to explore the lived experiences of English teachers in assessment practices under an integrated curriculum. According to Mezirow (1991, 2000) and further elaborated upon by Illeris (2013), transformative learning theory encompasses steps such as disorienting

dilemmas, critical reflection, rational discourse, perspective transformation, and action. Here, I demonstrate how the themes align with the aforementioned steps of transformative learning theory.

Transformative learning begins with a disorienting dilemma, which means new situations/learning that challenged old beliefs and understanding. In my study, teachers' initial unclear or partial understanding of IC reflected their traditional teaching style. Initial orientation and exposure through training and classroom practices created dilemmas that created confusion about IC and its implementation. Hence, teachers' limited initial understanding illustrates the starting point of transformation, where old beliefs are challenged by the new curriculum and its expectations. The first theme, 'Initial Understanding of IC,' aligned with the step.

The second theme, 'Varied but Irregularly Integrated Classroom Practices,' aligns with another important step in transformative learning: critical reflection. Teachers with irregular integration with subjects (sometimes linking subjects, sometimes not) showed that they are in a transitional phase between old and new practices. This type of practice, generally, testing new ideas and questioning traditional practices, is referred to as critical thinking. Teachers practicing IC and assessment with no stable practices are denoted here as reflection, where meaning is still being constructed but not yet stabilized.

Teachers' full dependency on traditional pen-and-paper-based examinations reflected old frames of reference, which I mentioned earlier in my framework, as the involvement of transformative learning in questioning long-held practices and beliefs about teaching and assessment. Their recent awareness of CAS, but not fully able to implement it, is exactly the harshness Mezirow stated as trying to adopt new practices in a raw manner, challenging old assumptions. This sort of confusion is elaborated as a partial transformation.

The fourth and fifth themes also showed direct alignment with key components of transformative learning. The major challenges faced by teachers in carrying out assessments promptly were the availability of resources, large class size, and unclear guidelines. These challenges act as disorienting dilemmas. Teachers utilized the same challenges as the medium to find solutions, and some only adhered to traditional practices, such as using the Nepali language in English class and administering written tests. The above examples showed contextual barriers for transformation. Next, training and workshops provide ample space for teachers to

reflect on their practices and analyze them critically through dialogue and discourse. These two are important components of transformative learning. The superordinate theme, 'necessity of timely orientation and training,' demonstrated that teachers can shift their practice from traditional to progressive IC practices.

Chapter Summary

This chapter connected the five superordinate themes with existing literature, transformative learning theory, and the constructivist paradigm. The themes aligned with previous studies showing teachers' limited initial understanding, irregular integration, and fragmented assessment practices. Reported challenges, such as unclear guidelines, large classes, and limited resources also reflected common findings in earlier research. The need for timely training echoed the broader literature emphasizing professional development. The themes further aligned with transformative learning processes, showing teachers encountering dilemmas, reflecting on their practices, and gradually shifting from traditional to integrated approaches. Overall, the chapter linked the study's findings coherently with theory and prior scholarship.

CHAPTER VI

FUSION OF HORIZONS

This study examined the lived experiences of English teachers in practicing assessment within an integrated curriculum in some community schools in Nepal. With the aim of shedding light on the real practices to teachers, the study employed a Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology approach. The entire study is guided by Transformative Learning Theory and examined how teachers understood, interpreted, and enacted IC-based assessment. The study was based on the responses of three English teachers at grade 3, currently teaching in two schools in Kavrepalanchok and one in Bhaktapur district. The responses were mainly obtained through an interview. I also observed their classroom practices and analyzed their available assessment records. The five superordinate themes emerged:

- Initial understanding of IC
- Varied but irregularly integrated practices
- Fragmented assessment practices
- Challenges in implementation
- Necessity of orientation and training

According to the responses given by the participants at the initial stage, they had no clear understanding of IC and its assessment. Gradually, they had basic ideas about it with the help of orientation, training, and self-exploration as they felt it necessary. But overall, considering their responses and my observation, I had a question in my mind: can teachers conduct classes as per the aim of IC with only basic knowledge? IC is not only about understanding its basic concept but also possessing practical pedagogical skills, effective lesson design, and a connection between assessment and expected learning outcomes. Next, having basic knowledge only has ability to create awareness among teachers, but carrying it effectively requires deeper conceptual and practical ideas.

Classroom instruction was placed at the heart of IC. Continuous assessment, soft skills development, and level-wise competencies were to be guided by regular classroom instructions. The questionable aspect was the lack of classroom instruction; assessment was not made a part of instruction and lower priority was given for soft

skills development. Some positive aspects that were gathered from observation and response included the start of class activities, such as reviewing previous class material, brainstorming, warm-up exercises, role-playing, group work, and pair work, though they were practiced very sparsely. The participants expressed their opinions about the use of ICT for improved learning and documentation; however, the available ICT resources were also not fully utilized, as most of their records were maintained digitally. They maintained it handwritten in the register roughly. The above findings showed that the traditional classroom practices, with less emphasis on soft skills development like collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, etc., limited the use of interactive methods like role play and brainstorming, separation of assessment and classroom instructions, neglected the use of ICT, which may be the obstacles to achieving the goal of IC.

Regarding assessment practices, the findings revealed a lack of uniformity across schools. Although supporting materials, such as curriculum, assessment guidelines, digital textbooks, and teacher guides, were available for free access on CDC websites, teachers were often unaware of these resources or neglected to utilize them. Assessment practices seemed largely based on traditional pen-and-paper tests, where continuous assessment and classroom-based assessment were reserved for formality. Teachers understood assessment as terminal examinations making them practice summative evaluation of learners. While some participants mentioned conducting remedial classes for academically weaker students, no formal records or documentation supported these claims. Furthermore, assessments were not carried out in the manner prescribed by the curriculum, which recommends evaluation after the completion of each theme. The integration of subjects and the use of classroom instruction as the foundation for assessment were largely overlooked. Similarly, essential practices such as achievement tracking and portfolio preparation were neglected. Such an overlook highlighted the significant policy practice gap in assessment practices.

Participant teachers mentioned various challenges they faced during their practice. As they mentioned, curriculum guidelines were unclear to them, and it was difficult to follow them without proper orientation. Similarly, the influence of mother tongue among students made it too challenging to learn English. Participants expressed a dilemma about using authentic assessment tools, as parents primarily demanded written examinations. Moreover, teachers' shared continuous assessment is

time-consuming, which makes them busy. This concept suggested that teachers were still expected to adhere to traditional classroom instructions. Other challenges mentioned, such as teachers' heavy workload, limited physical resources, lengthy documentation, and a lack of ICT tools, were genuine. At this point, the challenges were obvious, but in some cases, the simple work that could be managed by teachers themselves was also neglected. This indicated teachers' reluctance towards IC and its assessment. In conclusion, without teachers' willingness, systemic reforms, professional development, and community awareness, the transformative vision of IC was unlikely to be realized in classrooms.

The fifth theme highlighted the necessity of further orientation and timely training regarding classroom instruction and assessment of IC. Participants mentioned that they had a better theoretical understanding of the basic concept of IC after attending a few formal and informal sessions. They further mentioned that to refine their practices in line with the demands of IC and its goals, they required more classroom-based practical training and development sessions. Participant Ujeli, who attended TPD sessions at different phases, had better classroom practice and records of necessary documentation compared to Jitu, who had not yet attended any such sessions. Jitu explored some ideas and learned from peers, which seemed inadequate to meet the goals of IC. These findings suggest several important arguments. First, theory without practice cannot transform pedagogy; teachers require opportunities to see and practice how IC principles can be applied in real classrooms. Second, institutional and demand-based TPD ensures the uniformity across teachers' assessment practices; the concerned authority needs to give priority to systematic TPDs. Otherwise, outcomes vary, as seen in the cases of Ujeli and Jitu, who achieved their goals through individual initiative. Third, self-learning and peer assistance are necessary, but they may not have the same depth, structure, or accountability as formal training. Finally, ongoing professional development is not simply a supplement but a precondition for successful IC implementation, as it enabled teachers to critically reflect on their existing practices, overcome structural barriers, and adopted an authentic assessment approach.

Most of the findings, as pointed by superordinate themes like initial understanding of the IC, varied classroom practices, inconsistency in assessment practices, challenges in implementation, and the necessity of timely orientation and training, largely aligned with findings of the majority of studies in the country and

abroad (Ralebese, 2018; Prajapati, 2024). However, some findings like: teachers' evolving perception of IC beyond mere subject linkage toward holistic and trans-disciplinary learning, detailed portrayal of how IC appears in classroom language-focused activities rather than just "general subject integration, evidence of how assessment fragmentation manifests, linguistic diversity as a practical obstacle to IC implementation, and Informal, peer-based professional learning compensating for lack of formal IC training uniquely stood aloof in this study. They seemed organic or original to my research setting.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest several implications for different levels of the education system in Nepal, ranging from the policy level to classroom practice. At the policy level, the CDC needs to prepare clear and practical guidelines for conducting classroom activities and assessments. Although the guidelines are available in both print form and online, practitioner teachers reported confusion in applying them. As school-level education falls under the authority of local bodies, municipal offices, and their respective education departments, these departments are expected to conduct timely orientation and refresher programs for teachers. Municipal offices hold a core responsibility for monitoring and ensuring the effective execution of the school-level curriculum. The findings indicate that the implementation of the integrated curriculum (IC) is more effective in schools where local governments actively engaged in monitoring and providing guidance.

Another implication highlights the role of the school itself. Schools rely heavily on the documents prepared by the CDC or expect necessary documents from the municipal offices. However, schools can autonomously adopt practices such as preparing individual students' portfolios and updating them in a timely manner. Portfolios can serve both as progress-tracking tools and as evidence of continuous assessment. Schools need to develop systems for maintaining digital records of individual students' assessment grades, remedial records, attendance, and guardian feedback by incorporating ICT tools. Such systems make documentation more efficient. School leaders can ensure the effective implementation of IC by conducting regular inspections and providing guidance. The integration of classroom activities with assessment can also be effectively carried out by the schools themselves. Schools can include various skill-oriented sessions in the annual plan and implement them in alignment with students' learning. Another important yet often overlooked area is

guardian education. Schools can use this as a means to orient parents about the objectives of IC, the assessment system, and the roles and contributions expected from guardians, serving as a crucial stepping stone for effective implementation.

Teachers are considered the primary agents of effective IC implementation in the classroom, as they are the actual practitioners. The practice of IC becomes meaningful when teachers are proactive. They can adopt effective practices through peer learning within the school or from external sources. Collaboration with nearby community or private schools through exchanges and visits at both personal and institutional levels benefits all parties. Moreover, teachers can independently explore various online sources to learn about classroom practices, assessment methods, remedial classes, skill development, and other relevant areas.

Finally, the study was limited to a small number of participants in two districts near the Kathmandu Valley. Future researchers could include a larger number of participants from across the country to explore the varied approaches to IC implementation. Students and guardians, as major stakeholders of IC, could also be included in future studies. Additionally, exploring the experiences of school leaders (head teachers), education officers, and representatives from private schools could provide valuable insights. The experiences of curriculum designers and subject experts, as key stakeholders, could also contribute significantly to improving teaching and learning practices.

Reflection

I started my research journey with very limited basic theoretical knowledge and practical insight about the Integrated Curriculum (IC) and its assessment. Hence, I considered this study not only as an academic exercise but also as a personal and professional journey. During this study, I spent a few months observing participants' planning, classroom conduct, assessment practices, and documentation. Engaging with teachers' lived experiences revealed the complexity and challenges of classroom realities that are often overlooked in policy discourse.

Reflecting on the three participants, Ujeli stood out as demonstrating the most effective classroom practices. Her prior in-service TPD on IC seemed to have a meaningful impact on her professional development, as evidenced by her ability to implement IC in her teaching. She engaged willingly with the research process, contributing thoughtfully during the interview. I noticed that she maintained a standard register to track students' progress and updated it in line with the

assessments conducted. However, the use of these records appeared limited, as the school continued to prioritize terminal written exams at the request of parents. As an English teacher, she predominantly used Nepali in the classroom, which may have constrained the development of students' language skills. Nevertheless, her awareness of IC, assessment practices, and classroom management was impressive. Most strikingly, her enthusiasm for teaching and her eagerness to enhance her practices were evident, suggesting that motivation and reflective practice play a critical role in effective IC implementation.

In contrast, Rita seemed to possess stronger theoretical knowledge but lacked sufficient practical experience, which may have limited the translation of knowledge into classroom practice. Jitu appeared less experienced in both understanding and implementing IC principles, highlighting the need for targeted professional development and mentorship. Reflecting on these differences, it became clear that both formal training and hands-on experience are essential for teachers to effectively implement IC, and that ongoing support, motivation, and reflective practice can significantly influence teaching quality.

As a researcher, my initial expectations about IC implementation in schools were challenged when I did not receive the anticipated response from the participants. My expectations proved inaccurate during classroom observations and while collecting documents such as progress trackers, assessment evidence, and student portfolios. I had expected that, with nearly seven years of IC implementation in Nepali schools, traditional pedagogy would have been largely replaced by the new system. I anticipated that teachers would be proficient in applying IC principles and that I would observe engaging and innovative classroom practices.

Looking retrospectively, this study provided me with the opportunity to reshape my understanding of IC and its assessment practices. Earlier, I believed that the failure to achieve curriculum objectives was primarily due to the teachers. In due course, I realized that many other factors affected implementation, such as unclear policy guidelines, lack of timely orientation, and insufficient monitoring. This realization was eye opening. I enriched myself by listening to teachers' experiences, observing real practices, and analyzing the available documents. My research approach—hermeneutic phenomenology, expressing my understanding through the researcher's horizon—was itself a transformative process. I became convinced that a

progressive teacher requires orientation, care, and support to implement innovative ideas in the classroom.

Ultimately, this study has been an important contribution both to scholarship and to my personal growth as an academic practitioner. I am now convinced that research is not only the study of an issue but also a process of transformation for the researcher, the classroom practitioner, and the classroom itself.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the fusion of horizons by integrating participants' experiences with the researcher's interpretations. The findings revealed teachers' limited initial understanding of the Integrated Curriculum, inconsistent instructional integration, and fragmented assessment practices, alongside contextual challenges such as unclear guidelines, limited resources, and heavy workloads. The need for timely orientation and practical training emerged as a critical factor for improving IC implementation. The chapter also outlined implications for policy makers, local authorities, schools, and teachers, emphasizing systematic support and professional development. My reflection on the research highlighted how engaging with real classroom practices reshaped personal assumptions and reinforced the transformative nature of both teaching and research.

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APPENDIXES

Interview Questions

1. How do you share your teaching journey at the basic level?
2. What was your familiarity with integrated curriculum when exposed to you in the beginning?
3. How is your present perspective toward integrated curriculum different from the previous one?
4. What do you do in a regular English class? or What methods and strategies do you use to teach English in the classroom?
5. How is the present teaching experience different from the current curriculum's prescription of integrated disciplines?
6. How do you make connections with other subjects while teaching English?
7. What instructional practices do you implement in class to associate classroom activities with homework?
8. How do you ensure and assess the learner's English language skills in the IC setting? (methods/tools of assessment, continuous assessment, assessing after remedial class)
9. How do you utilize 'Assessment for learning' in your classroom?
10. How do you mention the challenges you face in facilitating and assessing English in the Integrated Curriculum? What could be your suggestions for those challenges?
11. Describe your experience of instructing and assessing English in the IC using one sentence/ metaphor, how do you do it and why?
12. Are there any important issues that you missed to share as an ELT facilitator? Please mention it in detail.