ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF CONDUCTING ACTION RESEARCH: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY

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A Dissertation

Submitted to
School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in English Language Education

Kathmandu University
Dhulikhel, Nepal

23 July 2026

AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Mohan Prasad Gautam* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Education,* presented on 23 July 2026, entitled *English Language Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Action Research: An Interpretive Study.*

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The production and practice of carrying out action research (AR) on the teaching-learning classroom-related problems at school was one of the major criteria in work performance appraisal forms, especially used in provisions relating to promotion given in the Teacher Service Commission regulation (Government of Nepal [GoN], 2000). Teachers will receive 5 marks out of 100 for preparing a research report on improving their teaching practice in their subject. Teacher Competency Framework also mandates public school teachers to prepare at least one research report and submit it to the school and local level along with the form (National Center for Educational Development [NCED], 2015a). Multiple studies have explored action research as a tool for teachers' professional development. However, so far, none of the research has been found on the practice of preparing and carrying out AR in public schools in Lumbini Province, which requires teachers' commitment, institutional support, and clear policy guidelines for teachers' and students' learning. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of permanently appointed teachers who are required to submit action research to the school, local level, and Education Development and Coordination Unit.

The study employed an interpretive qualitative approach to study the participants' perceptions and holistic experiences of the issue. This study purposively selected three secondary English language teachers, their head teachers, and the Education Officer of a municipality in Lumbini province. I conducted semi-structured

interviews with the participants to get in-depth information and experiences on the selected issue. In the same way, field notes and document analysis were also used as tools for data collection. The theoretical ground of this study was the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky, which incorporated the Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, dialogic processes, and mediation tools that played a pivotal role in learning. This study employed a thematic approach in data analysis that initially transcribed, read, reread, coded, and categorized the data, following the developing themes outlined in Saldana (2016), before presenting, interpreting, and analyzing the data and discussing the results.

The findings explored the discrepancy between the provision and practice of AR. All participants perceived the importance of AR for professional, promotional, and learning achievement. However, insufficient research skills, inadequate facilities, an unfavourable research environment, bias in evaluation, unsystematic promotion, inspection rather than supervision and monitoring, and workload were barriers to producing AR based on instructional problems. They also complained about the unavailability of training, resources, and mentoring, as well as the monitoring system for motivation in innovation and research. Similarly, head teachers blamed teachers for preparing action research within an hour without exploring real issues. Therefore, producing action research by schoolteachers was not efficient; it needed teachers' dedication, commitment, institutional support mechanisms, and practical policy.

Based on the theory, it was clear that AR was practitioners' research that was easy and cost-effective to carry out in the area where problems occurred and that solved the problem dramatically in a very short period of time. Although participants perceived that it facilitates teachers' professional development and promotes students' learning outcomes, they have not been able to carry out and implement it due to workload, inadequate knowledge, biased evaluation of AR, and insufficient resources. Based on this study, future researchers can explore how action research can be directed toward self-reflective inquiry rather than compliance-oriented in schools using direct classroom observation tools and focus group discussions.

…… 23 July 2026

Mohan Prasad Gautam

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शोधसार

अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर उपाधिको लागि मोहन प्रसाद गौतमको शोधप्रबन्धको शीर्षक ''कार्यमूलक अनुसधान सम्बन्धमा सहभागिको अनुभूती, बुझाई र अनुभव ब्याख्यात्मक गुणात्मक अध्ययन" ७ साउन २०८३ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

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प्रा. लक्षमण ज्ञवाली,पीएचडी शोध निर्देशक	उप. प्रा. सिद्धार्थ ढुगाना ,पीएचडी शोध निर्देशक

विद्यालयको कक्षाकोठाको शिक्षण-सिकाइसँग सम्बन्धित समस्यामा आधारित भएर कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान तयारी र अभ्यास शिक्षकको कार्यसम्पादन मूल्याङ्कनको आधारमा गरिने बढुवाको प्रमुख आधार शिक्षक सेवा आयोग नियमावलीमा लेखिएको छ (नेपाल सरकार, २०५७)। उक्त नियमावलीमा शिक्षकले शिक्षण अभ्यासको सुधारको लागि कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान गरे बापत शिक्षकको कार्यसम्पादन मूल्याङ्कको आधारमा गरिने बढुवामा १०० पूर्णाङ्कमा ५ अङ्क प्राप्त गर्ने प्रावधान रहेको छ । सामुदायिक विद्यालयका शिक्षकहरुले अनिवार्य रुपमा कम्तीमा एउटा कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानको परियोजना तयार गरि विद्यालय, स्थानीय तहमा फारम साथ बुझाउनुपर्ने शिक्षक सक्षमता प्रारुप, २०७२ मा उल्लेख छ (शैक्षिक जनशक्ति विकास केन्द्र,२०७२)। धेरै अनुसन्धानहरुले कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान एउटा विधिको रूपमा शिक्षकको पेसागत बिकासमा सहयोग गरेको निस्कर्ष निकालेका छन् । तर आजसम्म लुम्बिनी प्रदेशका सामुदायिक विद्यालयहरुमा विद्यार्थी र शिक्षकको सिकाईमा गरिने कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानमा शिक्षकको प्रतिबद्धता, संस्थागत सहयोग र स्पष्ट नीतिगत निर्देशन आवश्यक पर्दछ भन्ने बिषयमा अनुसन्धान गरेको पाइँदैन । त्यसैले, सामुदायिक विद्यालयका स्थायी शिक्षकहरुले अनिवार्यरुपले विद्यालय, स्थानीय तहको शिक्षा विकास तथा समन्वय इकाईमा बुझाउने कार्यमुलक अनुसन्धानको निर्माण र कक्षाकोठामा प्रयोगप्रति शिक्षकहरुको अनुभव र अभ्यास कस्तो रहेको छ भन्ने यो अनुसन्धानको मुख्य उद्देश्य रहेको छ।

यो अनुसन्धानले ब्याख्यात्मक गुणात्मक खोज(Interpretive Inquiry) विधिको प्रयोग गरी अनुसन्धानको मुद्दामा सहभागीहरुको अवधारणा र सर्वाङ्गिण अनुभव कस्तो रहेको छ भन्ने विषय अध्ययन गरेको छ । यो अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य अनुसार लुम्बिनी प्रदेशबाट तीन जना अंग्रेजी शिक्षक, तीन जना प्रधानाध्यापक र एक जना नगरपालिकाका शिक्षा अधिकृतलाई छनोट गरेको छ । यस अनुसन्धानमा मैले सहभागीहरु सँग अर्ध-संरचित अन्तर्वार्ता लिएर यस विषयमा उनिहरुको गहिरो जानकारी र उनिहरुको अनुभव सङ्कलन छु । मैदानी टिप्पणी र शिक्षकहरुले तयार गरेका कार्यमुलक अनुसन्धानका परियोजनाको विश्लेणलाई पनि तथ्याङ्क संकलनका आधारहरु बनाईएको छ। यो अनुसन्धान लेभ भाइगोसत्स्कीको(Lev

Vygotsky) सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक सिद्धान्तका अनुभव आदान प्रदान, क्रमिक सहयोग,मध्यस्थता र निकटस्थ विकासको क्षेत्रजस्ता विधिहरुले सिकाईमा कस्तो महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्छन् भन्ने बिषयमा आधारित छ । यसैगरी,यस अनुसन्धानले बिषयगत विश्लेषण बिधिको(Thematic approach) प्रयोग गरि तथ्याङ्कलाई सालदानाको (Saldana) कोडिङ संरचनाका आधारमा तथ्याङ्कको प्रस्तुती,ब्याख्या र बिश्लेषण गरेको छ ।

कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानको प्रावधान र आभ्यासको बिचमा अन्तर भएको निष्कर्ष प्राप्त भएको छ । पेसागत बिकास, बढुवा र विद्यार्थीको सिकाई उपलब्धी बृद्धि गर्न कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानको महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका रहेको सबै सहभागिहरुले अनुभुति गरे तापनि अनुसन्धान सीपको अभाव,आवश्यक सुविधाको अभाव,सुपरिवेक्षण भन्दा निरीक्षणमा जोड,पक्षपाती कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानको मूल्याङ्कन,कार्यबोझ,अनुसन्धानात्मक वाताबरणको अभाव जस्ता बाधा-अबरोधहरुले गर्दा शिक्षकहरुले शैक्षणिक समस्याहरुमा कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान गर्न सकिरहेका छैनन् । उनिहरुले तालिम, अनुगमन,स्रोत-साधन,निरन्तर मार्गदर्शन र उत्प्रेरणा अनुसन्धान र खोजको लागि नभएको र नपाएको भन्दै आलोचना पनि गरेका छन् । प्रधानाध्यापकहरुले शिक्षकहरुले यस वीधिलाई सशक्तिकरण र कक्षाकोठा केन्द्रित समस्या समाधानको रुपमा लिनुपर्नेमा, केहि घण्टामा वास्तविक समस्यामा आधारित नभईकन कार्यमूलक औपचातरिकताका लागि मात्र कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान तयार गर्ने गरेको आलोचना गरेका छन् । त्यसकारण, विद्यालयका शिक्षकहरुको कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान निर्माण र प्रयोग त्यति प्रभावकारी देखिएको छैन । कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानलाई प्रभावकारी बनाउन शिक्षकको प्रतिबद्धता, लगनशीलता,संस्थागत सहयोग संयन्त्र र व्यावहारिक नीतिको आबश्यकता यस अनुसन्धानको निष्कर्ष रहेको छ ।

सिद्धान्त अनुसार कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानमा अभ्यासकर्ता नै अनुसन्धानकर्ता हुन्छ र जहाँ समस्या आइपर्छ, त्यहीं ठाउमा छोटो समयमा कम स्रोत-साधनको प्रयोग गरेर समाधान गरिने अनुसन्धान हो । कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानले शिक्षकको पेसागत बिकास,बिद्यार्थीको सिकाई उपलब्धिमा महत्वपूर्ण सहयोग गरे तापनि कार्यबोझ,कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धान प्रतिवेदनको परिक्षण नहुनु,नीतिगत अस्पष्टता,ज्ञानको कमी,स्रोत-साधनको अभावले गर्दा शिक्षकहरुले यसलाई कक्षाकोठामा आधारित व्यावहारिक,बास्तविक समस्या अनुरुप बनाउन सकेका छैनन् । कार्यमूलक अनुसन्धानलाई प्रक्रियागत औपचारिकताभन्दा पनि स्व-प्रतिबिम्बात्मक, खोजमूलक अनुसन्धान बनाउन तथा कक्षाकोठा अबलोकन र केन्द्रित छलफलजस्ता थप तथ्याङ्क सङ्कलनका साधनहरुको प्रयोग गरि भविष्यमा अनुसन्धान गर्न सकिन्छ ।

.....

७ साउन २०८३

मोहन प्रसाद गौतम

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation, entitled *English Language Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Action Research: An Interpretive Study,* was presented by *Mohan Prasad Gautam* on *23 July 2026.*

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

…… 23 July 2026

Mohan Prasad Gautam

Degree Candidate

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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.

…… 23 July 2026

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DEDICATION

My family members, such as my father, mother, wife, lovely daughters, Guru, Guruma, and well-wishers, who never let me down and always supported and inspired me during my research journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of the dissertation required support, encouragement, and inspiration from several hands. It is a collaborative and rigorous study on the phenomenon; it was not possible to accomplish this task without unwavering support, insights, encouragement, and help from numerous people and organizations. I was blessed with consistent encouragement throughout my dissertation. I acknowledge the people who directly and indirectly provided guidance, advice, direction, and constructive feedback to succeed in the dissertation. I am privileged to extend my thanks to the kind-hearted people.

First, I want to specially thank my dissertation supervisor, Prof. Laxman Gnawali, PhD, for his unwavering support and timely guidance and feedback throughout the dissertation. His dedication to students is praiseworthy; he always telephoned me and inquired about the dissertation, scaffolding me to engage in research work. He read my writing several times and provided comments and compliments on the methodology section, American Psychological Association (APA) formatting, citation, and data analysis procedure assisted me to work better. Similarly, I profoundly thank my co-supervisor, Asst. Prof. Siddhartha Dhungana, PhD, for his valuable suggestions and guidance helped me to give a proper shape to my dissertation.

I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Hem Raj Kafle, PhD, Director of Academic Excellence, Kathmandu University, whose academic excellence and feedback during the preparation of the proposal encouraged me to explore the issue. Similarly, I extend my sincere gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Tikaram Poudel, PhD, Head of the Language Education Department, whose critical insight and unforgettable compliments motivated me to see the phenomenon critically. I am equally indebted to Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi, PhD, for his insightful session on English Language Teaching (ELT), which helped me to find the research gap. In the same way, my deep gratitude goes to Prof. Khagendra Acharya, PhD, for planting the seed of knowledge about research methodology. Likewise, I am equally grateful to Lava Deo Awasthi, PhD, for imparting foundational knowledge of Education.

I want to thank Assoc. Prof. Bharat Neupane, PhD, who also supported the research by prioritizing. My gratitude also goes to Surendra Prasad Bhatt for sharing

research writing and APA 7th edition formats. I acknowledge all academic and administrative members of Kathmandu University School of Education for creating an academic environment during my MPhil study. I think I am lucky to have had the opportunity to be selected for the MPhil in English Language Education (ELE) 2022 batch because it created a professional network to enhance my educational practices. The session was in blended mode, so I could study along with my profession from my own residence.

I also want to thank my participants and the head teachers for providing authentic information and analyzing the phenomenon deeply. I am indebted to the Educational Officer at Buddhabhumi Municipality for encouraging me to accomplish the research. I want to thank the head teachers and teachers for sharing their real experiences regarding my research at any time. Special thanks to all the research committee members of the Language Department for their technical support and guidance in completing this dissertation.

I thank my parents, Gunraj and Bimala Gautam, and my wife, Khim Kumari Subedi, for their unconditional love, support, and encouragement in completing this dissertation. Without their support, I wouldn't have done this. Finally, my sincere acknowledgment goes to my daughters, Aarju and Aarya, for their interest in my dissertation and their supportive presence throughout the time I wrote it.

Mohan Prasad Gautam
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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
APA	American Psychological Association
AR	Action Research
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CEHRD	Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
CNT	Confederation of Nepalese Teachers
EAR	Exploratory Action Research
EDACU	Education Development and Co-ordination Unit
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELE	English Language Education
ELT	English Language Teaching
ERO	Education Review Office
ETC	Educational Training Center
EYS	Education, Youth, and Sports
FEDUC	Foundation for Education Change
GoN	Government of Nepal
HT	Head Teacher
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KU	Kathmandu University
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
MA	Master of Arts
MEd	Master of Education
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
MLA	Modern Language Association
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MPhil	Masters of Philosophy
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NELTA	Nepal English Language Teachers Association
NTCF	National Teacher Competency Framework

PAOR	Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect (Cyclical process steps in Action Research)
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SCT	Socio-Cultural Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEE	Secondary Education Examination (School Educational Examination)
SESP	School Education Sector Plan
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	Study Monitoring Committee
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TPSS	Teacher Professional Support System
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
ZAD	Zone of Actual Development
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The study, *English Language Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Action Research: An Interpretive Study*, explores and analyzes the teachers' context, provision, practice, and challenges of carrying out action research in public schools. It investigates how the action research they conducted facilitates their professional growth and changes in students' learning. This section presents the study's background and context, the rationale for the research, the statement of the problem, the purposes of the research, the research questions, and the delimitation of the study. A brief outline of this section is presented at the end.

Unveiling the Root of the Research Issue

My journey in the teaching profession began at an institutional school when I was a bachelor's student at a public campus. I thought teaching was an easy job because I enjoyed working with new buds who were supposed to bloom. My duty was to teach them and make their parents satisfied with my teaching. However, my principal advised that they had been teaching in such a way that parents had never complained about their subject matter, and the result for all students had been at least first division. Though there were many problems in the classroom, such as students' hesitation to speak, poor writing skills, limited vocabulary, and grammatical errors, both parents and the principal expected high marks and percentages.

In such a situation, I had no options except using memorization and recitation techniques to overcome the problems. So, I made the students memorize grammatical structures, vocabulary, and the format of controlled and guided writing. Students were assigned tasks for memorization, like parrot learning, and as a result, they memorized sentences, paragraphs, and essays without understanding. After completing my master's degree, I was recruited as an English teacher to teach at the +2 level on contract. My enthusiasm for teaching was at its peak, as I was eager to teach effectively what I had learned during my studies that was engaging students in the esteemed activities. Nonetheless, I encountered issues that were more serious than those at the lower-secondary level. I read about action research in my degree course that it was useful for solving the problems that were present in the workplace. But I didn't research classroom issues since there was no provision to fill out the work

performance form for *Rahat* (temporary recruit teachers). There was no research and innovation culture in most public schools. I didn't even notice any teachers rigorously engaging in research. After three years of teaching at the +2 level, I succeeded in the top competition of the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) Exam for a secondary-level English teacher. It was a turning point for my career development, and I was sent to a popular public school in Rupandehi district.

My excitement and eagerness were elevated, thinking that I could transform the public-school teaching and learning atmosphere by applying my insights. I planned to conduct action research if I found problems similar to those in previous schools. When it was time to fill out the work performance evaluation form, Minraj Sir (pseudonym: Mathematics teacher) suggested that I prepare action research by searching on the internet. He further added that young minds could easily catch technical matters, unlike older minds, who could not find the relevant content on the internet. Teacher Service Commission (TSC) regulations stated that every teacher should attach a research report along with the work performance evaluation form, so the teacher must conduct action research on the classroom teaching issue (Government of Nepal [GoN], 2000). Similarly, the Ministry of Education (MoE) published the Teacher Competency Framework (National Center for Educational Development [NCED], 2015a) that mandates in-service teachers to submit Action Research (AR) to the school and District Education Office. However, a report on AR in schools submitted to the Education Review Office (ERO) by Maharjan et al. (2018) found that the majority of schoolteachers did not complete any action research.

I encountered another reason when I reviewed research reports drafted by public school teachers that were submitted to the resource center, municipality, and Education Development and Co-ordination Unit (EDCU). I found that they produced reports without exploring classroom teaching-related problems. I discovered that teachers covered the same topics, objectives, plans, actions/interventions, and observations, and revealed the same findings. Phyak et al. (2024) also found that some reports just described classroom activities, results, and recommendations, without focusing on what classroom problems were addressed. I am currently working as a vice-principal at Modal Public School. During my professional and administrative practice, another surprising event happened at my school: Mathematics and Science teachers submitted action reports generated on the internet within minutes by changing only the cover page. Phyak et al. (2024) mentioned in their research report

that there was a copy-and-paste trend of producing action research throughout the country. They further shared that teachers duplicated reports to meet the requirement of submitting at least one action research for promotion purposes.

These situations have been striking in my mind for many years. So, it is necessary to explore whether public schools' permanent teachers are producing quality, standard action research by exploring the real issues that exist in the classroom, or not; what challenges and difficulties they face while carrying out action research; what unethical practices exist in conducting action research; and how they perceive/experience action research for enhancing their successful career development. How does action research help to change students' learning achievement (outcomes)? To find answers to these questions, I attempted to conduct a research study on the topic 'English Language Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Action Research.'

Community school teachers are required to conduct action research every year for promotional purposes. They are obliged by educational policies. Therefore, every permanent teacher completes at least one action research report each year. Similarly, every year, every teacher submits a complete action research report to their head teacher. They systematically manage and keep records of action research. It is a provision that the local government and schools should appreciate and reward teachers who develop their profession and improve the learning achievement of the learners. The teacher professional development framework states that the local government organized seminar/ conference to disseminate their knowledge and expertise (Centre for Education & Human Resource Development [CEHRD], 2023).

Action research is an all-in-one research approach for teachers. It keeps practitioners up to date on their profession in an ever-changing world of knowledge. Kurt Lewin is considered the originator of action research (Kemmis et al., 2014). He developed the theory of action research, which operates in a cyclical process involving problem identification, intervention, and evaluation. It is also called teacher research, which involves the systematic investigation of classroom problems and is used to develop interventions to solve them and improve the overall classroom environment.

This research adopted an interpretive qualitative study design, following Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012). I believe that this study would support public school teachers in carrying out action research meeting quality standards while taking

ethical and quality considerations into account. This can be accomplished by providing guidance and resources to help teachers conduct ethical, high-quality research, ultimately leading to improved teaching practice and student outcomes. This part highlights background information, justification, and the statement of the problems, purposes, and questions, and the last section delimits my study. Finally, this section follows the chapter summary and concludes the section.

Context of the Study

I have been in the teaching profession since 2008. I began teaching at an institutional school. At that time, I was studying at the bachelor's level, so I didn't have sufficient knowledge and practical skills to teach lessons effectively. As a result, I faced numerous challenges in teaching: irregularity, high dropout rates, behavioural problems, overcrowded classrooms, and class bunking. I also faced classroom problems while teaching the English language to lower-secondary students, such as inhibition about speaking, inability to comprehend reading passages, inability to write even a single correct sentence, and no participation in group work, role play, and classroom activities. I didn't know how to overcome these challenges. I was in a dilemma about continuing in the teaching profession or abandoning it. Similar to most novice teachers, I didn't have the knowledge and strategies to teach learners effectively (Bertram, 2023). They face problems in the early days of their teaching (Cakmak, 2013). Barriers often concern students, institutions, teachers, curriculum, methods of teaching, and the classroom environment.

Teachers need to develop new strategies by accumulating their previous experiences and mentoring from experts to overcome challenges in enhancing their practices and learners' competencies. I attempted to solve the problems with the help of experienced teachers who had been teaching there for more than a decade. Though the essence of the English curriculum is to enable learners to develop communicative competence, my students couldn't produce a single sentence in English properly. I tried to attend training workshops organized by the training center, but I was never selected because I was a teacher at an institutional school. The government neglected private school teachers in training. Therefore, my teaching strategies were completely based on the books of school and university.

After teaching at an institutional school for three years, I sought a job at a public school, thinking that I would get better opportunities than at an institutional school. Luckily, I was selected as a contract higher-secondary English teacher. I was

excited to teach at a public school where I had passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC). I thought the school would provide curriculum and supplementary materials to facilitate teaching; however, there was also a lack of teaching resources at the school. Though I prepared lesson plans before going to the classroom and prepared the necessary materials, I found more severe problems in comparison to my previous school. I discovered students' habits of chewing tobacco, smoking, drinking, and drug addiction. Moreover, common problems such as high absence rates, negligence in doing homework, poor sanitation, and inability in the four language skills existed. I couldn't find an academic environment at the school. Therefore, I informed the Headteacher about the real condition of the school. He called a parents' meeting to address the behavioural problems of those students. I, along with the headteacher, teachers, parents, and students, discussed the serious issues and decided that parents and teachers would jointly engage to overcome severe problems, and classroom challenges could be solved by providing supplementary materials and using information and communication technology (ICT) tools in teaching activities.

After teaching for six years at a public school and a private-sector school, I was recruited as a permanent secondary-level English teacher. It was a turning point in my life because it was at the higher school level that I could be in a position of school leader and run the school in accordance with my expertise. Teacher Professional Development (TPD) training is mandatory for permanent teachers, and I was called to participate in training. It was a one-month training aimed at enabling teachers to teach effectively by addressing challenges found in classroom teaching. I was exposed to new teaching strategies, digital literacy, and the importance of action research for teachers. Training plays an important role in imparting theoretical knowledge and practical skills to the participants. It provides pedagogical, technological, and professional skills and builds confidence in teaching by applying new approaches and methods (Roshid & Haider, 2024). Similarly, Bhatia and Khugshal (2020) mention that TPD is the process of developing teachers' capacity to perform tasks in the present and future. TPD became a milestone for my professional development, which enhanced my language, research, classroom management, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Training facilitated my learning about the importance of action research in teaching and the use of new methods or interventions for improving teaching practices. It involves a deep investigation into one's teaching practices to enhance

instructional methods. This type of research encourages teachers to delve into persistent problems they have encountered, employing a process of preparation, implementation, observation, and reflection (Richards & Farrell, 2005). It helps language teachers access valuable insights into their teaching practices, which in turn helps them better evaluate their performance. By engaging in action research, language teachers identify their instructional areas of development, a proposed plan of action, and further examination of the effectiveness of that plan of action (Herrera, 2018).

I started my teaching career with enormous obstacles and barriers. Although I acquired theoretical knowledge from the university curriculum, my practical and professional skills were at an infant stage. Therefore, I struggled to establish my career in the teaching field. With assistance from experts and senior teachers, participating in virtual English Language Teaching (ELT) conferences, webinars, certification training, and customized workshops, I learned about action research, which made my teaching profession more effective and meaningful. It is research that helps practitioners identify workplace problems and ways to provide remedies to address them. AR empowers language teachers to investigate and enhance their classroom practice, thereby fostering effective professional development (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Consequently, AR became a capsule to cure classroom teaching diseases.

Moreover, action research helped me identify and explore issues that existed in my classroom and encouraged me to use effective strategies or interventions to address the existing problems. It became a milestone for improving students' learning achievement and also strengthened my professionalism. Consequently, it helped me keep myself updated with new knowledge and changing educational practices. Collaboration with experienced teachers also played a significant role in my professional development. Through these experiences, I have grown as an educator, equipped to explore, understand, and improve existing teaching practices.

Rationale of the Research

AR is a mandatory task for public school permanent teachers; it is teacher research (Johnson, 1992) because a real teacher is a researcher. MoE prepared a school sector reform plan (2009-2015) that mentions that in-service teachers are mandated to participate in one-month professional development training every five years to update their knowledge and skills through action research (MoE, 2009).

Similarly, research and innovation play a prominent role in enhancing creativity and problem-solving skills, so teachers and students are motivated to participate in action research to improve the existing situation of the classroom mentioned in the school education sector plan (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology [MoEST], 2022). Moreover, existing teacher service regulations state that teachers will get 5 marks out of 100 marks if they attach an action research document to the performance appraisal form for their promotion (GoN, 2000). These policies highlight the importance of AR at school.

The exploration of teachers' experiences and practices in the preparation and production of action research in public schools for developing a culture of engaging in research and innovation is not only for work performance appraisal, as policy mandates. But also for teachers' professional development and enhancement of learners' learning outcomes by designing a plan and policy regarding teachers' support system at the school and local level (Thapa, 2014). The research is also significant in providing suggestions to the concerned authorities for reforming the provision of research and innovation in teachers' work performance appraisal for promotional purposes. One study has highlighted that action research is an effective teacher development plan, and it is essential as one of the major contexts for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4, though in Nepal it is less effective (Negi, 2026). It shows that research on teachers' perceived practices based on their experiences could verify the effectiveness of action research in their professional context.

Action research helps teachers' professional development, allowing them to grow and enhance their teaching practices. The ELT instructors, education officers, administrators, teacher trainers, researchers, resource persons, educational supervisors, school administrators, and policymakers will benefit from this study. Furthermore, it plays a vital role in planting the seed to establish the culture of producing quality action research in public schools, fostering a commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in education.

Statement of the Problem

National Education Policy **(**2019**)** mentioned collaborative research as an important tool for continuous professional development. Every public-school permanent teacher should be required to complete at least one action research report each year. Teachers who conduct teaching-related research and recommend teachers

for promotion receive 5 out of a possible 100 points (GoN, 2000). Similarly, the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) launched a program of carrying out action research every year, including eighty units at the district/region level (MoE, 2016).

Furthermore, teachers do action research on classroom teaching and learning problems after attending ten days of face-to-face training at the training center mentioned in the TPD framework (National Center for Educational Development [NCED], 2015b). These policies, regulations, and plans obliged teachers to do action research in educational institutions. However, Maharjan et al. (2018) reported that most of the school teachers didn't conduct action research because of additional burden and workload. In the same way, Phyak et al. (2024) found that the tendency to copy and paste prevailed throughout the country. The conditions for conducting action research by public school teachers across 75 districts were very poor (Maharjan et al., 2018).

Similarly, some researchers (Al-Mamri et al., 2022; Antonio, 2020; Badaila, 2021; Tursini, 2019) have explored challenges such as inadequate knowledge, workload, insufficient time, lack of teachers' support systems, no incentives and rewards, and high resource requirements for the effective implementation of AR in school. I also observed and reviewed action reports of secondary-level English language teachers (Narsuddhin, Himlal & Bharat) submitted to the municipality, the education development and coordination unit, and found that most of them were copied from others' work. When I was seeking research documents in the storeroom of the municipality, at that time, one senior Head-teacher asked me about the purpose of turning the pages of the document. I briefly explained the aim of my study; he expressed his dissatisfaction with teachers' commitment to action research, stating that "*they did not write reports seriously; it was like the job of a shirker".*

The studies carried out by researchers, such as Al-Mamri et al. (2022), Antonio (2020), and Tursini (2019), derived their findings based on schools and colleges in an international context. Their scenario was different from Nepal. Similarly, Badaila (2021), Phyak et al. (2024), and Maharjan et al. (2018) have drawn findings based on questionnaires only, interviews through Zoom and telephone, and interviews with concerned authorities and teachers, both public and private, who have already participated in AR training, respectively, without exploring deep and holistic contextual reality. This research mainly focuses on exploring and analysing secondary-level permanent English language teachers' contexts, provisions, practices,

and challenges for undertaking AR for their professional growth and changes in students' learning based on their narratives**,** employing an interpretive research design.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the secondary-level English language teachers' contexts, provisions, practices, and challenges for their professional growth based on their narratives on applying action research.

Research Questions

1. How do English teachers share their professional contexts, practices and challenges while executing action research as a part of their professional engagement?
2. How do headteachers explain the teachers' practices as part of professional engagement for better performance?
3. How do the teachers explain their perceived narratives on the changes in the students' learning achievement as a result of AR?

Delimitation of Study

This research examines the area of secondary-level English language teachers' contexts, provisions, practices, and challenges for their professional growth based on their narratives on applying action. Moreover, this study is delimited to the perceptions of head teachers towards teachers' commitment to research and innovations on educational issues. The research is also delimited to a qualitative interpretive design. Similarly, this study is delimited to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which focuses on learning and development occurring through interaction with more knowledgeable others (MKO), mediation tools, and scaffolders.

It focuses only on permanently appointed secondary-level English Language teachers' experiences, their head teachers' observations, and supervision and monitoring by the education officer on the practice and production of action research. Although action research has been effective in transforming the entire school environment, this study did not consider the involvement of other participants who are temporarily appointed by the school management committee. Additionally, the study was conducted on a limited number of participants in a particular environment; therefore, it is context-specific, so its results may not apply to all situations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter is all about the introduction. It aims to explore and analyze the secondary-level English language teachers' contexts, provisions, practices, and challenges for their professional growth based on their narratives of applying action. It also presents the rationale for the study, its purpose, research questions, and delimitation of the study. Overall, it explains why this research is important and necessary and provides foundations for understanding the research problems.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the relevant literature is a major component of research. It is a crucial component of the research process and adds value to practically every phase of the research process (Kumar, 2005). According to Bruce (1994), it forms a crucial section of the thesis, serving to provide context and validation for the research conducted (as cited in Arshed & Danson, 2015). I used various sources, including Google Scholar, Nepal English Language Teachers Association (NELTA) journals, and Education Review Office (ERO) documents, to review existing studies. This chapter consists of four main parts: thematic, theoretical, policy, and empirical studies.

Action Research Cycle

According to McKernan (1996), the origins of action research go back to the late nineteenth century w thin the context of the science in Education movement and several different societal endeavors (as cited in Burns, 1999). Progressive educators, according to John Dewey, also contributed to its development, advocating for a democratic approach to fit the purpose and need where educational stakeholders collaboratively address shared issues (Knoll, 2016). Burns (1999) states that in the 1940s, Kurt Lewin introduced an inquiry method encompassing an action cycle with analysis, fact-finding, planning, implementation, and evaluation stages.

Action research is defined as a classroom inquiry undertaken by a practitioner to find out and resolve real-world issues and difficulties in teaching. In this regard, Carr and Kemmis (1986) mention that AR is a reflective investigation carried out by practitioners within a social context, aiming to enhance their practices. Teachers carry out research at their school to reform and improve the educational environment by following a systematic process of identifying issues to address in their classroom setting.

Richards and Farrell (2005) conclude that AR is a means of enhancing teachers' classroom practices through systematic investigation of their own practices following a process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. As a result, teachers not only improve their teaching but also develop their profession. Teachers empower their ability through reflecting on their practices and engaging in the

research process. They suggest embracing the cycle of action research, such as plan, gather data, intervene, and reflect.

It combines research and action through a series of cycles that involve: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Thus, it supports researchers in exploring the problems that exist in English language teaching and using new strategies to overcome them to transform whole educational situations. Therefore, this becomes an avenue for the professional growth of educators. It helps teachers to prepare authentic research by exploring the pertinent issues and overcoming them by adapting the cyclic process of AR.

Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)

Worldwide, educational systems have been changing with the advancement of science and technology. Teachers are changing agents, equipped with new knowledge and skills, and sharpen their educational practice (Ahmad Zaky El Islami et al., 2022). Teacher professional development is a collaborative strategy that facilitates teachers' ability to manage the classroom, understand the subject, and develop students' learning. Teachers develop their profession by engaging in professional networks, participating in online and virtual conferences, and training. Sharma (2023) notes that participating in training, workshops, and engaging in research helps teachers enhance their profession. Teachers' development platforms help teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and develop new strategies to improve students' learning.

Documenting various teaching methods, reflecting on them, looking at beliefs, values, and principles, engaging with peers regarding important issues, joining in workshops and webinars, working on projects with peers in the classroom, and doing research are all common strategies for teacher development. Among them, action research is a major avenue for professional development. Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) define action research as being conducted by practitioners (classroom teachers) in their classroom to bring about changes to the system (as cited in Nunan, 1992). It is a way of investigating and exploring new ideas that add new styles and dimensions to teaching. Therefore, it is one of the avenues for teachers' professional development.

Action Research and Teacher Learning

Teaching is a dynamic profession that requires teachers to continually adapt their strategies and techniques to meet the needs of their aspiring students. Therefore, teachers should engage in innovation and research to make their teaching and learning fruitful and comprehensive. Nowadays, action research has gained significant

popularity within educational institutions, urging educators to engage in projects of this nature to sustain and enhance their professional growth. Spaulding and Falco (2013) claim, "action research is used in school settings to foster the professional activities of individual educators in the classroom and in larger-scale efforts to create learning communities" (p. 17). Research helps teachers create teaching strategies to cope with issues in EFL lessons.

By conducting an action research project, language teachers can improve their abilities to analyze their practice in addition to gaining extensive knowledge about their teaching methods (Richards & Farrell, 2005). They receive inspiration and motivation to perform better the next time through action research. AR focuses on a specific context, making its findings more applicable compared to research conducted in external settings. AR aims to facilitate further development, and it is a research approach that many teachers engage in to address issues that arise during classroom instruction. Through AR, teachers learn how to effectively overcome the issues, hurdles, and obstacles in their instructional engagements.

Compliance-Oriented versus Inquiry-Oriented Practice

AR involves systematically investigating classroom issues through self-reflective inquiry. It is a cyclical process of exploration, evaluation, and improvement of the current state of affairs (Somekh, 2006). AR researcher follows a spiral process, such as plan, action, observation, and reflection, to reflect on their own practices and improve the teaching environment of the classroom. Compliance is a mandatory activity in which teachers need to participate, as set by the policy at the federal and local level, without being autonomous (Mohammad Nezhad & Stolz, 2025).

Regulations, plans, and the teacher competency framework mandate that permanent public-school teachers must submit an AR report to the school and local level for their work performance appraisal for their promotion (GoN, 2000; MoE, 2009, 2016; MoEST, 2022). It obliges teachers to prepare an AR report, even though they do not have the knowledge and professionalism to prepare it systematically. Teachers will be awarded 5 marks out of 100 marks in promotion if teachers submit an AR report along with the action performance appraisal form (GoN, 2000). However, the marking criteria have not yet been developed by the government, so supervisors and the review committee are free to allocate marks using their personal judgment. Therefore, teacher participant Narsuddhin stated that "*producing a copy of the report couldn't evaluate the actual performance of teachers; the policy should be*

reformed by incorporating criteria such as presentation of findings of AR at the local level." The main purpose of AR is systematic inquiry into classroom problems and to address them by implementing the AR cycle, and incentives and policy also played a pivotal role in motivating and continuing it. Therefore, this theme focuses on balancing between developing teachers' positive attitude towards their professionalism and restructuring policies to overcome pitfalls.

Theoretical Review

The purpose of the socio-cultural theory (SCT) is to elucidate the connection between an individual's cognitive processes and the surrounding cultural, institutional, and historical circumstances. This theory was advocated by Russian psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009). SCT has a significant role in exploring the experiences of professionals in particular fields. Lantolf (2008) proposes that Vygotsky's viewpoint suggests that the genesis of knowledge formation should be pursued not within the individual's cognition, but within the shared social interchange involving a more knowledgeable person and one with less knowledge (as cited in Shabani, 2016). Furthermore, Ratner (2002) advocates the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT), which holds that the core of human cognitive operation is essentially an intermediary procedure orchestrated through cultural objects, engagements, and ideas (as cited in Lantolf et al., 2015).

An academician brings innovative ideas to their field to advance their career using mediational tools. Regarding educators' development, the original conviction that they deliver in the classroom helps them stay updated on the dynamic nature of the world and its insights. For this reason, research is more prominent in the English language classroom within the Institution. Kumaravadivelu (2001) regards using action research as valuable for enhancing a teacher's professionalism and fostering self-discovery and growth. It bridges theoretical and practical knowledge, encouraging an empowered teacher's role and advancing autonomy (as cited in Shabani, 2016).

Like learning, TPD is a continuous, lifelong process because it doesn't happen overnight. The journey of the teaching profession is not easy; it is said that a stone which can tolerate the pain of the chisel is fit to be a statue for a temple. Therefore, teachers commit several errors to achieve professional growth. Vygotskian perspective asserts that teachers' learning is a mediated process that is affected by tools and signs. Tools in the form of expert guidance and assistance as an external

source of mediation, and signs as an internal source of mediation help the teacher extend their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The internal tools are such as motivation, emotional support, rewards, and encouragement. Therefore, during follow-up professional development, external mediators such as the curriculum, teachers' guides, articles, teaching materials, research workshops, textbooks, classroom equipment, and internal mediators like professional journals, newsletters, and online forums can significantly affect the teachers' ZPD progression (Eun, 2008).

In this regard, action research is one of the activities for professional growth, as given in the Teacher Development Framework (CEHRD, 2023). Practitioners may face difficulties in practicing AR in their professional context; external mediation tools such as curriculum, textbooks, teacher's guides, and occasionally joining the virtual teacher development workshop would serve as guidelines in conducting AR

The dialogic process involves meaningful dialogue and interactions with the participants, mentor, and instructors as the demand of the subject or phenomenon. It helps both teachers improve their teaching and learning because teachers are concerned with investigating hurdles in teaching, and students are worried about improving their achievement. The involvement of teachers, students, and concerned authorities throughout the research process contributes to making the study more reliable and authentic (García-Carrión et al., 2020). These efforts helped teachers improve students' learning and their self-improvement. It is said that two heads are better than one head, so improving existing practice does not solely depend on the teachers but on numerous efforts and supports that need to play a significant role in changing classroom dynamics. Similarly, Wells and Mejia-Arauz (2006) conducted a collaborative AR project and found that meaningful dialogue between teachers and students advanced classroom teaching.

The classroom is a space where knowledge is co-constructed through a dialogic process (as cited in Chadd, 2024). He further claimed that the dialogic process is aligned with Vygotsky's SCT theory, which focuses on creating a learning space and respecting participants' experiences to elevate cognitive development. The dialogic platform encourages and motivates students to bring diverse insights and experiences into the classroom, which ultimately leads to their learning achievement. According to Vygotsky's SCT, a dialogic process creates an encouraging environment in the classroom where learners identify their cognitive potentiality through reflecting on the learning process in relation to the social mediation tools that affect their

learning (as cited in Chadd, 2024). Analyzing these notions, it can be summarized that knowledge is created and constructed through engaging in dialogue and conversation. As a result, both teachers and students increase their activities for the advancement of teaching and learning.

The dialogue in the school environment affected teacher development. Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory was a fundamental framework for understanding how social interaction influenced cognitive development. The conversation between head-teachers and teachers regarding classroom issues and the environment where teachers carried out research and innovation, as well as the motivation of local government, community, and colleagues, influenced learners' and teachers' development. English teachers advocated that context, attitude, proactiveness, friendly dialogue, seminars, and training were encouraged for them to carry out action research. An elementary notion originating from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory was the ZPD, which elucidated how children undergo learning and developmental shifts. Vygotsky (1978) defines ZPD as the gap between a child's current developmental stage, determined by their ability to solve problems independently, and the potential developmental stage, revealed by their ability to solve problems with adult assistance or in partnership with a more skilled peer (as cited in Lantolf & Beckett, 2009).

It is the space where students can perform a task or solve a problem under guidance or in collaboration with more knowledgeable others before they can complete such tasks independently. It pertains to delineating the learner's existing developmental stage and the subsequent achievable stage facilitated by intermediary symbolic and contextual instruments. The proposition stands that extending such a notion beyond educational contexts to encompass adults, particularly language instructors, allows for an exploration of how these educators can effectively navigate through ZPD phases to cultivate expertise. The teacher's ZPD is the space between his/her current level of teaching knowledge, which includes his/her content (theoretical) and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and his/her next (target) level of knowledge, achievable with the support of others.

Scaffolding and support in Vygotsky's theory focus on the importance of providing appropriate support and scaffolding to facilitate learning. English language teachers were concerned about how to overcome problems in the language classroom, such as developing learners' autonomy and enhancing speaking/ communicative

skills, reading, and writing skills. A few of the teachers shared that the classroom has a bundle of problems, so it is difficult to get rid of the problems. The novice teachers and lethargic teachers had similar experiences concerning classroom problems because their present instructional knowledge and skills were insufficient to overcome the problems and reach the potential level. ZPD is conceptualized as the difference between what an individual can do independently and what he or she can do with mediation (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009). Mentoring, training, and workshops related to action research and innovations function as mediations for teachers' development.

Action research helps teachers identify a student's ZPD, enabling them to adapt to new interventions and use them in their instruction to suit each student's needs and promote the best possible learning outcomes. As a result, teachers continuously develop their capabilities through Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, such as workshops on action research, training, and interactions with knowledgeable others.

Teachers are facing a dozen barriers inside the classroom; they can't overcome them by themselves, so they are struggling at the stage of ZPD. Here, they need support from head teachers, trainers, supervisors, and resources to conduct research systematically to achieve their potential level. Therefore, dialogic processes and mediation tools play a pertinent role in becoming independent learners. It is noted that initially, teachers encountered problems in exploring issues, formulating research questions, and procedures of AR, Scaffolding, mediation tools, and dialogic processes to help them overcome these challenges. When teachers are assisted, they can accomplish tasks easily. Ultimately, they become research scholars; they carry out research inside and outside of the classroom on various issues at the Zone of Actual Development (ZAD). It is the stage where learners complete tasks without getting help and support from others.

Policy Review

Community schools' teachers are bound by educational policies. They are obliged to participate in collaborative exploration and investigation. Every permanent teacher is required to complete at least one action research report each year. Teachers who conduct teaching-related research and recommend teachers for promotion will receive 5 out of a possible 100 marks (GoN, 2000). Similarly, the School Sector Development Program (SSDP) launched a program to carry out action research every year, including eighty units at the regional and district levels. It also states that every

district and province should conduct training to prepare action report documents and qualify teachers to produce reports (MoE, 2016).

Similarly, the TPD certification training program will last 30 days and be divided into two phases, each lasting 15 days. During both phases, the 15 days will be split into two parts, with the first part lasting 10 days and conducted in face-to-face training at a training center. After completing the first 10 days, the trainee teacher must prepare a school-based report focused on their teaching practice or practical work. The report will be worth five credit hours. Teachers conduct action research on classroom teaching and learning problems after attending ten days of face-to-face training at the training center (National Centre for Educational Development [NCED], 2015b).

In the past, the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) provided Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) training for teachers' development to assist in implementing TSC regulation thirty-two (GoN, 2000). It also developed a training package for action research training in the cascade model. In this training, trainers prepare participants to carry out action research to explore issues in teaching activities. NCED was the sole Government agency responsible for teacher professional development. The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) implemented a set of policies to guide the professional development of teachers across seven distinct policy areas, including career development, qualification enhancement, professional development, teacher accountability, school leadership, public-private cooperation, and institutional capacity (MoE, 2009). This plan and framework recommended methods and strategies such as job induction training, one-month certification training, mentoring, action research, peer work, and self-evaluation for teachers' professional development. These recommendations in the plan are associated with the experiences of teacher participants in overcoming barriers to introducing AR at school.

The government agency, the Department of Education, was merged, including three offices: NCED and Distance Education. The main purpose of establishing NCED is to train teachers and officers. These organizations are equally responsible for educators' development. Nowadays, the training curriculum is designed by the Department of Education, and the training delivery platforms are Education Training Centers (ETCs) in seven provinces. They include an action research session in the TPD module.

Similarly, every year, every teacher submits a complete action research report to their head teacher. They systematically manage and keep records of action research. It is a provision that the local government and schools should appreciate and reward teachers who develop their profession and the learning achievement of the learners. The local government organized seminar/ conference to disseminate their knowledge and expertise (CEHRD, 2023).

The current and living document of education, School Education Sector Plan (SESP), recommends that the local level establish and implement a teachers' professional support system (TPSS). The local level has been provided with provisions for implementation procedures according to the local context. AR is considered transformative research for quality education at the local level; therefore, teachers are mandated to produce two AR reports, disseminate their findings at school, and submit them to the municipality (MoEST, 2022).

AR is mandatory for in-service teachers, as developed by the School Sector Reforms program, requiring all public-school teachers to compulsorily attend thirty days of professional development training and apply their knowledge and skills through practicing action research. The Ministry of Education introduced a teacher competency framework in 2015a, which requires teachers to prepare at least one action in a year. (Phyak et al. 2024). Therefore, all public permanent teachers have to submit an AR report to the school and local Government to fulfill the criteria for promotion given in the work performance appraisal form. National Teacher Competency Framework (NTCF) also includes teachers' engagement in research and innovation as part of their professional competence GoN (2000), CEHRD (2023, 2026), MoE (2009, 2016), MoEST (2022), and government directives state that innovation and research were compulsorily carried out in schools by educators to transform their teaching strategies for producing globally competitive learners. TSC Regulation 32 (B) examines teachers' AR for promotional purposes (GoN, 2000). It is an incentive for teachers to engage in research and innovation for professional and academic achievement. For this purpose, action research can be a convenient research method in an academic context.

Empirical Review

Before initiating any research, the investigator must have gone through prior dissertations, theses, articles, and documents related to his/her research issue. Numerous studies were carried out on teachers' professional development. I found

some research on how action research helps to enhance educators' development and enhance students' learning in different contexts. I found a common consensus regarding teachers' development modality throughout the world. Nonetheless, the research findings vary from one context to another. The relevant studies related to my issues are reviewed in detail.

In the context of Oman, Al-Mamari et al. (2022) conducted a study on AR practices in Omani public schools. A mixed-method approach and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. It was discovered that action research was hardly practiced by English language teachers due to the additional burden, insufficient time, and a lack of support systems from institutions and governmental agencies. The study found the challenges of executing AR in school. It also recommended some remedies such as providing incentives, training, and space for disseminating their findings. However, it didn't seek the criteria for incentives and responsibilities to implement AR in the classroom.

In a similar vein, Al-Abri (2019) found that the perceptions of teachers regarding action research were highly positive using exploratory action research. They stated that it helped teachers to develop knowledge and skills, but he raised the issues of discrepancy between perception and practice in the context of Nepal. An interpretive study by Fajardo Mora (2013) on the pre-service teachers' construction of meaning using an interpretative qualitative study of the social studies subject found that teachers constructed meaning in teaching social studies, employing their previous knowledge, assumptions, and acquired dispositions.

In research conducted in the Indonesian setting, Thamrin (2011) explored teachers' perception of classroom-based action projects positively because it helped teachers become aware of their practices and students' learning issues. Nevertheless, he found that lack of mentoring, support, collaboration, and time are major barriers to the successful implementation of AR. Its findings are similar to those of Al-Mamari et al. (2022).

In a similar context, Tursini (2019) revealed AR as a tool for empowering teachers and strengthening students' achievement. He investigated the effectiveness of AR in updating teachers' knowledge and skills and showed dissatisfaction with practice and stated that implementation of AR depended on the teachers' motivation and their needs. It raised the issue of contradiction between perception and practice only but didn't discover bridging techniques to overcome such prevailing issues.

Antonio (2020) researched in the Philippines' context and found that teachers had a good acquaintance with the theory, process, and potential challenges while undertaking AR; however, they had similar problems with not doing research, such as engagement, additional burden, and workload. They raised a serious issue that did not affect their over-performance rating system. Motivating teachers and raising awareness of their professionalism were major challenges to practicing AR in the classroom. Their conclusion was similar to the teachers' experiences in my research.

In the same way, a research study by Herlina et al. (2018) discovered that teachers varied in their perception of utilizing AR in school. The majority of them understood the importance of action research for addressing students' problems, but they were unaware that it is a self-reflective inquiry that helped them to improve their practice. However, some teachers didn't conduct AR because they were not certified public servants by the government. This situation reflected the Nepalese teachers' condition, in which only permanent teachers produced AR because they were mandated to submit an AR report in their annual work performance appraisal file. Teachers who are appointed as *rahat*, temporary, contract, local, province, and federal volunteer teachers and institutional/private school teachers never carry out AR. In my observation at my school, I found that undertaking AR was only the responsibility of permanent teachers. Other types, except permanent teachers, never show interest in innovation and research.

In the context of Nepal, teachers didn't conduct research by exploring issues because the trend of copy-paste throughout the country has prevailed so far. In this regard, Phyak et al. (2024) conducted research on Nepalese EFL in-service teachers' beliefs and practice of AR; they revealed the gap between teachers' perceptions and practices. They found that teachers copied and pasted and submitted to their respective offices due to poor report-writing skills. The practice of duplication of reports was found throughout the country. They suggested that teachers needed mentoring and institutional support to develop a culture of producing original reports.

Tripathi (2022) researched to discover how AR helped teachers solve classroom problems utilizing the action research method. He spent seventy-five days in the class and explored pertinent issues such as irregularity and bunking class. Through the rigorous attempt to practice AR in the classroom, he investigated solutions to overcome the problems.

Similarly, research carried out by Rauteda (2025) disclosed that EFL teachers' perception of the effectiveness of AR was beneficial because it accelerated teachers' confidence, career, and students' learning. The findings were derived from a questionnaire to two hundred participants. Paudel (2024) researched the importance of AR for EFL learners to enhance their speaking skills following the systematic cyclic process. Shrestha et al. (2023) explored the EFL teachers' perception of Exploratory Action Research (EAR) and highlighted that EAR is very useful in low-resource contexts like Nepal because it doesn't require high costs to implement. It is a reliable approach to change the overall classroom situation.

In the same way, Gnawali's (2013) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) dissertation mentioned that AR is a teachers' development strategy that transforms EFL teachers into autonomous practitioners applying interpretative inquiry. In the same vein, Badaila's (2021) dissertation found that there was valuable relevance of AR for EFL teachers, but most of the teachers did not have sufficient knowledge of action research. They were ignorant about the importance of action research, so they took it as an extra burden and as demanding high resources to implement it effectively.

In the narrative inquiry by Basnet (2019), it was investigated that AR is a prominent means of boosting teachers' competencies and students' achievement. In the context of Nepal, teachers did not show sincerity in research and innovation in the school context. Maharjan et al. (2018) submitted their research report to ERO, making the use of survey method. The main purpose of the study was to explore the policy and practice of action research in schools. After analyzing the recorded data, it was found that although schoolteachers realized the importance of conducting AR in schools, most of the teachers did not conduct AR. Similarly, the need to conduct AR was also understood by head teachers (HTs); however, they did not include it in the school's annual program and budget. The main reasons for not conducting AR by schoolteachers are that they consider AR activities as extra tasks and feel an additional burden.

Gap Analysis

After reviewing past national and international research studies, I discovered contextual, practical, and analytical gaps that make my research unique from others. Almost all the studies were conducted outside Nepalese contexts, using mixed, narrative, survey, action, and experimental methods focused on teachers' professional development through action. Very few of them were carried out in our contexts,

applying narrative, action, and survey designs. However, I did not come across any research study that delved into exploring and analyzing the secondary-level English language teachers' contexts, provisions, practices, and challenges for their professional growth based on their narratives on applying action research employing interpretive inquiry design. Additionally, existing studies revealed that teachers faced challenges such as workload, time constraints, and limited resources for producing AR, but none of the research pointed out that AR is a compliance-oriented or inquiry-based method of professional development. This inquiry minimized the discrepancy between teachers' perceptions and practice of AR.

Moreover, the use of STC, such as scaffolding, mediation, dialogue, and identifying the ZPD of teachers and students, assists them in producing quality standard AR that fills the analytical gap. Similarly, it addresses unexplored areas of policy, regulation, and plan expectations that have not yet been internalized by previous studies. In the same vein, earlier research highlighted that teachers were the sole agents for dramatic change in classroom atmosphere; however, this endeavor meets the expectations of the living education document SESP. The head teacher is considered a major internal supervisor at school, so the perception of head teachers of teachers' research is also incorporated in the area of study. Consequently, I've opted to conduct my investigation into the experiences of English language educators who engage in action research to foster their professional growth and students' learning development using an interpretive qualitative study framework.

Chapter Summary

The section explores relevant academic literature in my research domain. Initially, I introduced the concept of educators' professional growth and action research to enhance their professional development within the thematic examination. Similarly, I reviewed Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, focusing on how mediation tools and dialogic processes help teachers identify issues in the classroom and how action research scaffolds the ZPD of teachers and students in relation to those issues. I also reviewed education policies related to action research for teacher professional development, including GoN (2000), Maharjan et al. (2018), MoE (2009, 2016), MoEST (2022), CEHRD (2026), and the Teacher Professional Development Framework (2015b) report submitted to ERO related to my research issue. Finally, I reviewed available dissertations and articles related to my topic and identified the

research gap that my dissertation addresses. I also reviewed the existing literature critically to find the gap that will be filled by my study.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this area, I addressed philosophical considerations, paradigms, study design, processes, approaches, sites, tools, techniques, data analysis and interpretation process, quality standards, and ethical considerations, which I applied throughout my study.

Philosophical Considerations

Research in philosophy focuses on how reality is perceived, how information is acquired and given meaning, and how knowledge and meaning are viewed in light of a particular set of values. I explored my research based on three philosophical lenses.

Ontology

Taylor and Medina (2013) define ontology as a perspective on the fundamental essence of reality. It concerns presuppositions about the fundamental aspects of reality. It also involves exploring existence itself. The main focus is on examining the classifications of entities in a given domain. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that it is the nature of reality and the actualities that researchers take into account during their inquiries. This means ontology emphasizes subjective reality; therefore, it is essential to comprehend participants' realities. In qualitative interpretive research, the nature of reality is subjective. I adopted a constructivist belief so that my perception and feelings will be nominalist, i.e., relativist, where I aim to experience the real world through the scheme of interpretation of research produced by teachers. According to Merriam (2009), the concept of reality is not fixed; instead, there are multiple ways to interpret and perceive reality.

I believe that every teacher views the same concept differently. I consider that every teacher has various observations when producing documents, as teachers can come from different philosophical backgrounds. Therefore, the reality lies in what teachers produced from action research and in their experiences of how the action research they carried out enhanced their professional growth and learners' learning achievement. I admit that there are multiple realities, since this study has given participants equal opportunities to present their perspectives on the research issue. Participants are believed to have different perspectives regarding the production and

practice of AR in public schools. I am also guided by a relativist ontology relative to subjectivity. The beliefs and experiences of participants are relative to the professional context and purpose of their practice.

Epistemology

Epistemology concerns assumptions about knowledge. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define it as involving our understanding of how knowledge is acquired. Correspondingly, Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose that it relates to premises about the underpinning of knowledge, particularly how one can begin to understand the world and effectively transmit that understanding as knowledge to others. It is about the information that counts as acceptable knowledge and how it should be acquired and interpreted. Similarly, Dawson (2002) defines epistemology as the study of the nature of knowledge and its validation. It investigates the origins of knowledge and the methods through which our understanding is attained.

Likewise, Merriam (2009) states that qualitative research is based on a constructive framework in which individuals construct reality through interaction with the social world. She further defines context-dependent knowledge as more meaningful than generic knowledge for the interpretive study. I did not accept any universal knowledge but instead employed the participants' experiences on the study issue. In my research, knowledge is constructed through interaction with participants and leads to deep discussion and interpretation of content.

Axiology

Axiology is the theory of values. Saunders et al. (2009) assert that axiology concerns the integration of values and ethical considerations into the research process. This encompasses an exploration of how researchers manage their values and respect the values of the participants involved. I believe that teachers' reports and experiences are really important for professional development. Axiology, in this study, refers to my values in carrying out research. The role values play in research is axiological (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This is significant because values influence the process of conducting the research and affect its outcomes. As respondents differ from one another individually, culturally, ethnically, etc., the values they create also differ. The values that people have also depend upon the reality they perceive and the knowledge they rely on. It is related to personal truth. As a researcher, my axiology is value-laden. I allowed my participants opportunities to express their experiences and

beliefs in the study area. I shared my values with all the respondents involved in my study. This means my values play a significant role in carrying out the entire research.

Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

A research paradigm serves as a framework that guides research methods and project execution, facilitating understanding of theories and practices within the research endeavor. Lather (1986) explains that a research paradigm inherently mirrors the researcher's perspectives on both their existing and aspirational worlds (as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It means the paradigm is the pattern of perception, understanding, and belief within which theories and practices operate. Merriam (2009) asserts that the fundamental philosophical premise underlying various qualitative research approaches is the notion that individuals construct reality through interactions within their social environments. It highlights that researchers bring their distinct realities to investigations, intertwining with different interpretations. Interpretivism emphasizes the emergence of diverse knowledge from the dynamic interaction between speakers and listeners.

The main purpose of interpretivism is to elicit the participants' experiences through interpretation of a particular issue. For this reason, I used the interpretivist paradigm to explore secondary-level English teachers' experiences and practices to produce action research reports for their professional development and learning outcomes. This means knowledge is constructed in the community and emerges from people's social practices. In this study, knowledge and information about how action research is practiced by public school teachers were interpreted through interaction with the eight participants.

Interpretive Inquiry as Method

Interpretive inquiry engages the researcher in a process of 'world-making' based on the context, reflexivity, and positionality created through the data from the research field (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). In my research, the process is developed by connecting the experiences of teachers in their professional growth as a required practice of action research. Their contextual practices and positionality towards action research in their professional space are shared through their reflective narratives, which are interpreted.

Interpretive inquiry is the process of making meaning from what they have experienced in the field. It doesn't bring any perspectives from scientific experiments; rather, it develops perspectives according to their understanding, observing what

exists in the field. It helps the researchers to be involved in the experiences of the context in which they make meaning according to their position. The participants generate meaning from their experiences and practices in a particular context. The researcher makes meaning of any issue from the participants' subjective reality. It is the systematic inquiry of the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

Interpretive inquiry involves participants interpreting the situation and world through their own eyes and working on the interpretation by taking into account the context (Cohen et al., 2018). In my study, participants describe the teachers' and students' learning as a result of action research through their interpretation and the context in which they are practicing research. Therefore, they make meaning of producing, implementing, and disseminating AR through their own experiences and interpretation in the natural setting. This inquiry seeks participants' views to build an understanding of the issues relating to the context (Roberts, 2014). In my research, the practice of AR depends on the interpretation of participants' experiences in their professional space, where they have been designing and submitting AR reports to the respective place.

Qualitative interpretive research analyzes the research issues based on the what, how, and why questions. First, it analyzes the content of what is in the context: participants' utterances, experiences, and arguments; second, it analyzes how and why they construct their narratives and arguments (Wiesner, 2022). My study analyzes the participants' perceptions, experiences, and narratives on practicing AR at school and further describes why they narrate an inability to design quality standard AR effectively.

Study Sites and Research Participants

In qualitative interpretive research design, it is required to analyze the context in detail, which makes it easier for the researcher to learn about the reasons and interests behind the narratives (Wiesner, 2022). In the same way, Cohen et al. (2018) state that, in qualitative research, the researcher selects a small number of participants from whom he/she expects to collect sufficient information.

My study space comprised three public schools and a single municipality in the Kapilvastu district. This research has clear context: place (one municipality), the participants (senior English teachers, head-teachers, and an education officer), and the content (producing action research). Merriam further adds that the participants' contexts play a key role in shaping their experiences.

The researcher used a purposive sampling procedure before collecting the data (Merriam, 1998). First, I chose the research context, a municipality, and the content: the practice of action research by permanent English teachers in all public schools. To study the research issue, I purposively selected English teachers, their head teachers, and education officers. As it is qualitative research, my study uses purposive sampling, also known as subjective sampling. According to Miles et al. (2014), Qualitative sampling is more likely to be purposeful than random. In this sampling approach, a researcher purposively selects information-rich participants who can answer the research questions. Choosing participants who can answer the research questions is essential to get information.

The interview took place at the school tea shop, hotel room, at home, the head teacher's office, and at the education, sports, and youth section at the municipality. Where the respective participants felt comfortable sitting for the interview, and they considered themselves secure to express their ideas freely. I kept the ethical issues in mind while conducting the in-depth interview. All seven participants were given pseudonyms.

Research Participants' Profile

As far as I know, the participants' profile describes individuals who participated in the study. First, I built rapport and talked with three secondary-level English teachers at three public schools. I chose a three public school of municipality; my purpose was to explore the contextual practice of AR, so I selected the respective head teachers and Education Officer to explore the issue in depth and detail.

Narsuddhin

He is one of the young, dynamic, and energetic English teachers and has been teaching English at the secondary level since 2014. He is currently working as a vice principal at a public School. I profoundly appreciate his helpful and sociable nature and kind-heartedness. He always encouraged me, saying Brother you should be at least one MPhil scholar from our Municipality. I selected him because he is one of the permanent secondary-level English teachers in the selected Municipality.

Himlal

Himlal is a humorous and studious teacher who has been teaching in a public school since 2014 BS. He is curious and always asks me for remedies to overcome teaching issues. In the morning, he is also engaged at the Bachelor's campus, where he teaches fourth-year Bachelor's students majoring in English. I selected him through a

purposive sampling procedure, hoping to elicit in-depth insights. He is a young, energetic, and dynamic English language teacher. He has more than 15 years of teaching experience in schools and on campuses.

Bharat

He is an English language teacher. He has been teaching at the secondary level for 20 years. He is a second-class secondary-level English teacher at a public school.

Dinesh

He is a young head teacher in our municipality. He has ten years of teaching experience in public and private schools. He has been teaching science at the secondary level. I chose him because more than 70% of students are from the indigenous community study at his school.

Ramesh

He is a second-class head teacher. He has been teaching science at the secondary level since 1998. He has transformative and dynamic leadership. He has sound knowledge of the school's administrative and coordination skills with society. He has been working as a head teacher since 2013. He has a second-class rank and was appointed permanently by the Government of Nepal as a secondary-level science teacher.

Sagun

He is a second-class head teacher. He is currently working as a head teacher. He has more than 25 years of teaching and administrative experience in public schools. He teaches English at the secondary level in a community school. He is dynamic, energetic, enthusiastic, and always willing to adapt to the development of science and technology.

Bijay

He is an education officer of the municipality. He was appointed as an officer in 2019. He is a young, active, and energetic person. He has both administrative and teaching experience. He is also a trainer who facilitates teacher professional development (TPD) training, information and communication technology (ICT) training, and integrated curriculum training. Therefore, he has sound knowledge of action research. He was appointed a secondary-level English teacher at a public school. After teaching for 4 years, he changed his teaching profession and became an education officer in 2018. Therefore, he has good insight into action research, as he

produced a research report when he was a teacher on the practices of carrying out research and innovation by public school teachers.

Table 1
Profile of Participants

SN	Pseudonyms	Position	Sex	Academic Qualification	Experiences	Type
1	Narsuddhin	Teacher	Male	Master's Degree (MEd.)	+12 years	Permanent
2	Himlal	Teacher	Male	Master's Degree (MEd.)	+15 years	Permanent
3	Bharat	Teacher	Male	Master's Degree (MEd.)	+20 years	Permanent
4	Dinesh	Head Teacher	Male	Master's Degree (MEd.)	+10 years	Permanent
5	Ramesh	Head Teacher	Male	Master's Degree (MEd./MA)	+28 years	Permanent
6	Sagun	Head Teacher	Male	Master's Degree (MEd./MA)	+25 years	Permanent
7	Bijay	Education Officer	Male	Master's Degree (MEd.)	+8 years	Permanent

The participants I chose possess the capabilities to provide rich, meaningful data for the research. The primary purpose of interpretive study research is to undertake an interpretation of an issue within its context to comprehend it from the participant's point of view (Merriam, 2009). This means participants play a significant role in any research.

Data Collection Strategies and Tools

Data collection involves gathering relevant information from various sources to answer the research questions or problems. There can be no research without data

collection. There are various sources for collecting data. Primary and secondary data sources are used in this research to effectively understand the subject.

Interviews are the primary data collection tool in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). I used a semi-structured interview with the teacher participants to collect detailed information about their context, practice, and challenges of conducting action research in public schools. To make the research reliable and authentic, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with head-teachers at the schools where senior English language teachers are teaching, producing, and practicing action research. Qualitative research employed semi-structured interviews in which guidelines for questions are structured, which are already designed to extract the feelings, beliefs, and experiences on the problems (Merriam, 2009). Similarly, I also interviewed an Education Officer of a municipality where teachers submit at least one action research report every year. The interview guidelines, field notes, and documents were major sources of data collection. Though I prepared a set of questionnaires for interviews, some of them were modified during the interviews. However, I was always conscious of exploring their experiences, perceptions, and practice of AR in the classroom.

In this research, I used interviews, field notes, and AR reports to collect data. To collect data from interviews, I established rapport with participants and ensured confidentiality and informed them of the purpose, procedure, risks, and benefits of the study. At first, they were reluctant to participate in the research journey due to time constraints and personal affairs. I repeatedly telephoned them; one of the participants, Himlal, agreed to sit for the interview, and we fixed a time and venue. He felt comfortable staying in a hotel room, assuming that their conversation was personal. The first meeting was limited to informal conversation, mainly concentrated on informing him of the purpose of the meeting. Gradually, the remaining teacher participants agreed to my request. I met each participant four times; it was a one-and-a-half-hour conversation in each round of the interview. By internalizing the purpose of the interpretive study, I conducted a five-and-a-half-hour interview with each participant to explore the research issue in detail. In the same vein, I interviewed each head teacher three times and the educational officer twice. In my first meeting, I talked about classroom teaching problems and students' studies. In the second meeting, I interacted with them on the practice of AR in schools, its benefits and challenges. In the third and fourth meetings, I asked questions related to their

perception, experiences, practices, and plans for producing AR and its implementation in classroom teaching and learners' improvement.

In the same way, I asked informal questions related to the teachers' responsibility, accountability, and professionalism issues with head-teachers and education officers. The second and third rounds of interviews were confined to their perception regarding their teachers' engagement in the research activity. Each round of interviews lasted 45-60 minutes to elicit deep and crucial views from them. The interview with an education officer focused on the authenticity, originality, evaluation system, monitoring, and needed research mentoring for teachers to produce quality standard AR for their professional and academic enhancement. I recorded their voices on my mobile phone after getting their consent. I also jotted down their opinion in my field notes.

In the evening, I first translated their raw data into English by listening to their voices time and again. I also wrote a reflection note by accumulating field notes and artifacts as well. Each piece of data collected had a date, participants' names, and several aspects of the document analysis. While going through the documents, I collected data in distinct contexts, which helped me understand that different contexts or issues were present at different times. In data presentation, interpretation, analysis, and discussion, I first listened to the recorded data, transcribed it, read and reread it, and coded and categorized it as guided by Saldana (2016).

Analysis and Interpretation

After collecting the data, I analyzed the information, facts, and evidence. Data analysis is determined by the approaches and methods that are applied throughout the investigation. It is a way of making the relevant information relevant and meaningful (Merriam, 1998). She further defined data analysis as the process of deriving meaning from data, which entails consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has observed and read. As I employed a qualitative interpretive research design following Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), I analyzed the collected data from semi-structured interviews, field notes, and document analysis narratively. Data analysis and interpretation involved familiarisation, coding, theme generation, theme review, and theme definition and naming.

For data analysis, I listened to the audio data and read field notes and documents rigorously before deriving codes. I generated codes from the cycle of coding as suggested by Saldana (2016) and recorded following the structural pattern

of drawing a table for each participant and highlighting similar ideas to assemble into one code from the verbatim transcription. Then, similar codes were put together into a box, and categories were created. After that, similar categories were also assembled together to generate themes. At this stage, I again verified whether the structures of generating themes from categories and categories from codes missed the pertinent information to address the purpose of the study. After checking and validating themes, I defined and named them based on the participants' excerpts.

As suggested by Saldana, the first cycle is Open Coding: It is the process of line-by-line organization of phrases and recurring patterns. Participants perceive the AR as a tool for examining and evaluating, reflecting on their own practice. Focused Coding: It is the process of grouping codes into broader categories, and similar categories help to generate themes. The participants narrated that AR supports teachers in Reflective practice. The third cycle is the analytical Layer; it connects themes to the Theoretical Framework. It doesn't produce any theory; rather, it is the umbrella that covers all experiences of participants on the research issues. It is conceived that AR helps teachers to develop reflective professional practice. The fourth cycle is the theoretical Coding (Themes) that synthesizes findings into a coherent narrative/model. The major theme is AR Benefits for Teacher professional development.

Five major themes were generated and interpreted narratively to address English language teachers' context, provision, practices, and challenges in conducting AR for their professional growth in the fourth chapter, and three major themes were analyzed and interpreted in the fifth chapter to address the issues of learners' achievement as a result of AR. Thus, the interpretation involves listening, reading, and rereading several times, coding, categorizing, and creating, naming, and defining themes in accordance with research questions.

Quality Standards

The qualities that make research work acceptable to the community of practitioners are called quality standards. They depend on the research design and paradigm. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), each paradigm requires specific criteria to determine the quality of research (as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, quality standards serve the nature of each paradigm for judging research quality. In this research, I gathered information through interviews with the participants and by examining research documents. According to Merriam (1998),

qualitative research is built on the idea that truth is dynamic, diverse, and constantly shifting. Lincoln and Guba (1985), as cited in Stahl and King (2020), suggested the following four essential components of research quality that I have embraced throughout my study. In doing so, I established quality standards that would make research trustworthy. Therefore, I am aware of the standards in practice. The following determines the quality of my research**.**

Credibility

I maintained the credibility of my research through triangulation, member checking, and thick description. Merriam (1998) notes that triangulation is the practice of utilizing various information sources during an inquiry to achieve a deeper comprehension (as cited in Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). For my study, I triangulated interview data with data from their documents to ensure the quality standard of my study. Furthermore, I checked teachers' understanding of undertaking research documents and the implementation of the findings through classroom observation and their engagement in participatory action research. Furthermore, I implemented member checking to prevent any disparities between my interpretation of the teachers' answers and the actual significance they intended to convey with the head-teachers and educational officers.

This step involves seeking their input on whether these interpretations make sense and align with their experiences. In this way, there won't be any changes to transcriptions made by participants. My strategies for credibility are prolonged engagement, reviewing documents, member checking, and understanding teachers' responses.

Transferability

It offers a detailed and comprehensive depiction that allows individuals to form a judgment on whether the idea of transfer can be considered feasible. Holloway (1997) states that thick description pertains to a thorough narrative of experiences in the field, where the researcher clearly outlines the cultural and social relationship patterns, placing them within their relevant context (as cited in Pandey & Patnaik, 2014).

To enhance the possibility of making the findings applicable in different contexts, I incorporated an elaborate portrayal of the participants and their career backgrounds. Additionally, I integrated long interview transcripts and a critical review

of the few documents that provided a thick description of the theme that was the core of my findings.

Confirmability

It refers to the degree to which the interpretation is grounded in the data. It also means getting as close to the objective reality as possible. In this regard, I confirmed credibility using the member check tool, especially for the verbatim transcription of data sent to all participants.

Authenticity

Authenticity refers to how accurately and honestly researchers portray a variety of realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It also means whether the feeling and tone of participants' lives are conveyed as they are lived/ narrated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described five dimensions of authenticity to consider the authenticity of a study: fairness, ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical. To ensure authenticity in my study. I prolonged engagement to elicit data from more participants.

Ethical Consideration

A researcher needs to anticipate a lot of ethical considerations and dilemmas while conducting research. Cohen et al. (2018) talk about ethical research and view that "ethical research concerns what researchers ought and ought not to do in their research and research behaviors. It is concerned with activities to minimize potential physiological, psychological, and emotional harm to the participants, done by the researcher to maintain professional integrity. I am attentive to the matter of not disclosing any sensitive information that they have shared with me in the course of interviews and what they have written in the documents because trust, mutual respect, and fairness are very important in research. Regarding this issue, I strongly follow the research guidelines of my university.

Informed Consent

In my research, I obtained permission from the three secondary-level English teachers, three head teachers, and educational officers who participated. I built rapport and informed them about the purpose, procedure, risks, and benefits of their involvement. I didn’t force them to participate in the research process. Their participation was voluntary; they were free to share their experiences and practices of AR. They were allowed to put their views and opinions openly concerning the purpose of the study.

No Harm and Risk

I ensured that selected participants wouldn't take any risks or harm in their personal and professional lives. Buchanan and Warwick (2021) define harm as a condition in which participants feel stress while participating in the research. Similarly, Harm may include physical harm, potential discomfort, and stress that participants experience during the research process (Diener & Crandall, 1978, as cited in Bryman, 2012). It is the psychological and physical discomfort faced by participants because of involvement in providing data to the researcher. The issue I attempted to explore was sensitive in the sense that teachers must conduct the research based on the classroom issue, but their document showed that their report was hypothetical. They were worried that research findings might harm their professional career. I convinced them there wouldn't be any risk by explaining ethical guidelines.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

I was aware of maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of my participants by following the research guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). I never forced them to reveal their identity. I conducted interviews individually; the place of the interview was chosen so that their privacy was not compromised. In the first interview, they would not allow me to record their voices on a recording device; therefore, I noted down their opinion and experiences regarding the issue. In the following interview, I persuaded them by telling them their name, location, and school would not be disclosed. To enhance their confidentiality, I told them their information and data were stored on my laptop using a password. Confidentiality is the means of protecting participants from possible harm (Kaiser, 2009). I also used their pseudonyms to maintain privacy.

Justice

I was conscious of providing justice to every participant. My participants were given equal opportunities to express their views, insights, and experiences irrespective of their qualifications, gender, caste, religion, and class. Each participant's feelings, emotions, and voices were respected. Though they were junior and senior, they were not discriminated against based on their position at school. The research participants need to be selected not because they are easily available; rather, they should be chosen based on the research's issue (The Belmont Report, 1978). My selection of participants and school was fair because all English teachers and their head-teachers

from one municipality were selected. They were eligible to respond to the research problem.

Chapter Summary

Section three briefly presented philosophical considerations, paradigms, theoretical underpinning, the way of selecting participants, tools, and strategies for collecting data. It also presented steps for data analysis. I followed credibility, transferability, confirmability, consistency/dependability, and authenticity to ensure the quality of my research, and anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, and justice to maintain ethics in my study.

CHAPTER IV
ACTION RESEARCH AVENUE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACTION RESEARCH

This chapter explores and analyzes the participants' perceptions and interpretations of practicing action research at public schools. Here, I have interpreted the experiences of three English participants, Nasruddhin, Himlal, and Bharat; their head-teachers, Dinesh, Ramesh, and Sagun; and their educational officer, Bijay. They shared their experiences relating to action research and its implementation. They also shared their experiences on context, provision, practices, and challenges of designing, implementing, and disseminating AR in public schools. Head-teachers and educational officers also shared their experiences of engaging teachers in research. The study used a qualitative approach with an interpretive study method. To explore the participants' experiences in my research study, the information was collected based on the two major questions: (a) How do English teachers share their professional contexts, practices, and challenges while executing action research as part of their professional engagement? (b) How do headteachers explain the teachers' practices as part of professional engagement for better performance?

Through a systematic process of coding and categorization, I developed five major themes based on the participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices of AR in public schools. Here, I analyzed and interpreted the themes narratively: (i) Benefits of AR for professional development, (ii) Challenges and barriers, (iii) Authentic and ethical issues, (iv) Conceptual understanding, and (v) Policy and Teachers' support system.

Benefits of Action Research in Enhancing Professional Growth

AR is practitioners' research that facilitates workers in improving their practice in the natural setting. It provides a valuable approach to enhance teachers' competency and students' learning. AR is a valuable tool for teachers to identify barriers and limitations in their teaching and accelerate their teaching by addressing their weaknesses (Spaulding & Falco, 2013). It is a self-reflective method of improving practitioners' practices. AR combines action and reflection, so it is a continuous cycle of co-generative knowledge (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

The themes emphasized the importance of action research for developing their profession. It sought teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the value of AR personally and professionally. It centers on the perceived benefits of action research in enhancing teachers' professional growth. Teacher participants perceived AR as facilitating them in recognizing the problems and remedies to overcome them. They highlighted that action research provides new knowledge, feedback on the weaknesses of students, and techniques to improve teaching effectiveness. The findings focused on AR as being considered for teachers' learning. Narsuddhin stated that *"it offers a framework and guidelines for making teaching and learning more output-oriented."* Similarly, Himlal also viewed it the same way as Narsuddhin. According to him, "*it is the most needed research in an academic field. It helps teachers and professionals to develop their own capacity for teaching and learning*." In the same way, Bharat also supported its benefits in teaching, as he said:

> *It is research that is carried out in a classroom and is particularly related to the teaching and learning problems in the classroom. Mostly, teachers do action research in their particular subject. Action research is particularly problem-oriented research. He further focused on the importance of particular issues because when we solve particular problems in the classroom, we can enhance the teaching and learning activities, and students can perceive things in a better way*.

These experts were extracted from interviews with participants; they showed participants' perceptions and experiences rather than observing their classroom practices. They perceived that AR is prominent for educators' learning for their teaching and learning improvement. Burns (2010) states that AR encourages teachers to take a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring their own teaching contexts. Teachers critically observe classroom situations and problematize the areas they consider need improvement. As a result, teachers become researchers, investigators, and explorers in their teaching, which leads them to develop their teaching profession. In other words, action research is used in the problematic areas; improvements emerge in their practices. The teachers emphasize that action research helps them develop confidence, maturity, and concrete ways to teach English in the classroom. It is very important to solve problems, to review the problems, and to overcome the barriers that happen in the classroom related to teaching and learning activities. So, is for the people who are involved in the teaching field.

Action research assists teachers to explore the instructional issues and their weaknesses through systematic inquiry. Head teacher participants also aligned with the teachers' experiences. Dinesh highlighted the importance of action research and stated, "*Action research helps teachers identify their weaknesses and improve them through self-study and reflection. It improves teaching quality, enhances classroom performance, and helps to increase students' academic achievement."* This extract is derived from the interview in which participants' experiences show that AR is considered a tool for improving the current situation of the classroom environment and the quality of teachers. Phyak et al. (2024) also disclosed similar findings, showing that AR helped teachers to understand classroom problems and contributed to the learning of new ideas about the topics of teaching. Implementing Action research in the language classroom is a golden opportunity for teachers to learn through active engagement in classroom practices. Similarly, Ramesh viewed it the same way as Dinesh and Sagun. Interview excerpts: According to them:

> *Action research can help teachers understand the real problems in their classrooms and improve their teaching methods. It allows them to observe students' learning, try out solutions, and reflect on what works. Although most teachers do not fully implement it, if done properly, it could improve classroom performance and student outcomes. It also encourages teachers to think critically and solve problems systematically, which benefits the school as a whole.*

All three headteachers viewed a common understanding of the importance of action research; It is a powerful tool for improving teachers' practices, students' learning outcomes, and transforming the overall school environment.

The SCT focuses on teachers as learners in their teaching and learning community, which promotes their practices through involvement in professional development discourse (Dogan & Kirkgoz, 2022). Teachers can join their professional development network, where they get opportunities to share and care for their knowledge. Involvement in collaborative action research helps teachers learn from one another. Action research is teacher research in which teachers investigate the real problems and issues in the classroom.

The context (classroom/school) improves their professional growth, which leads to improvement of the students' learning outcomes. Vygotsky's (1978) theory emphasizes the importance of providing appropriate scaffolding and support to

facilitate learning. In the context of teacher professional development, action research can be seen as a scaffold that supports teachers' reflective practice and inquiry (Shabani, 2016). They viewed action research as a necessary tool for teachers to enhance their capacity for teaching and learning. They also perceived it as enhancing professional growth by providing new knowledge and feedback to teachers and learners.

Challenges and Barriers to Conducting Action Research

It focused on the challenges and barriers teachers face when conducting action research. Burns (1999) argued that researchers encounter various obstacles and difficulties when undertaking action research, which involves systematically investigating and improving their own practice. These challenges can include limited time and resources, a discouraging environment, and navigating ethical considerations. The challenges/ demotivating factors to do action research: time limitations; low support and empowerment; lack of knowledge and capacity to do so; lack of awareness of its importance; negligence of the instructors; paucity of resources; overloaded teaching hours; attitudinal and commitment problems; lack of clear policies and guidelines; and diminishing hope for change and improvement (Aga, 2017; Rainey, 2000).

Participants reported AR as being prepared for procedural requirements for promotion rather than inquiry into educational issues. They emphasized that institutional support was necessary to accomplish the task effectively. Narsuddhin shared that teaching English in an overcrowded class was challenging in his document, so he decided to research the topic of ‘Teaching English in a large noisy classroom '. He frequently intended to discuss with colleagues and the headteacher for support and guidance to overcome these problems. He claimed that *“nobody was ready to listen to academic issues and share their experiences to overcome overcrowded classrooms.”* Likewise*,* Himlal had similar experiences with Narsuddhin; he also endeavored to research the topic of enhancing students’ speaking skills. He emotionally said that he had been facing the students’ speaking skills problem since his recruitment into the teaching profession. He had planned to research and submitted it with the work performance evaluation form. Unfortunately, he shared his experiences in the interview:

> *Enhancing students' speaking skills is a really challenging job. I needed instruments like a sound system, internet connectivity, a smartphone,*

projectors, a smart board, and administrative support, but I couldn't get these devices or encouragement for investigation. So, I produced an action research paper for the sake of submission to the municipality, without exploring classroom issues.

Teacher participants experienced three levels of barriers: teacher-level factors such as research writing and inadequate knowledge; school/ administrative factors such as workload, a demotivating environment, crisis of resources, and inadequate administrative support; and policy-level factors such as training, mentoring, and evaluation that hinder production of AR. They highlighted that despite the benefits of action research; various contextual factors hinder its successful execution. Phyak et al. (2024) noted that teaching workload, lack of regular support, and feedback were the major challenges hindering teachers from conducting action research. They couldn't produce research effectively due to the lack of mentoring, training, time, and institutional support.

Burns (2010) noted that teachers are not motivated to research because they have a full teaching load, do not get support and acknowledgment from colleagues and head-teachers for books, resources, and facilitation needed in their research process. He further says that teachers believe research is a scary thing to do because teachers need to invest time and come out of their comfort zone. Phyak et al. (2024) found that teachers considered research to be a *haauguji* (difficult) task. Teachers believed AR was an extra burden; they needed to spend time, effort, and resources. Therefore, they were terrified when they heard the words research and teaching go together. Though some of the teachers considered action research as a helpful strategy for professional development, they couldn't identify the classroom issues, plan and implement interventions effectively, observe students' development, and reflect and share their findings publicly because of the absence of supervision, mentoring, resources, and feedback.

Participants' statements evoked serious issues, including whether AR being mandatory was done for the sake of submission or was prepared when problems occur in the workplace. AR should be carried out in a working context, and its findings should be effectively implemented to facilitate learning. The findings revealed that head-teachers believed that a positive attitude toward professionalism is needed to execute AR meaningfully in the academic situation. Head-teachers admitted that workload, lack of supervision/monitoring, and insufficient resources played a

pertinent role in performing tasks; however, teachers themselves are innovators, creators, and dynamic; they could utilize low-cost and no-cost materials if they were intrinsically motivated and external factors had not influenced them. Dinesh had a contradictory opinion about teachers' activities of practicing research and innovation at public schools. He affirmed that

> *Due to workload and lack of monitoring, principals and teachers are unable to implement the policy effectively. Many permanent teachers feel secure in their jobs, so they think research is unnecessary. No official record has been kept so far, but some teachers may have repeated the same topic for several years. I have realized that we should start maintaining records extracted from the field notes.*

By the same token, head-teacher Ramesh had a corresponding view with Dinesh; he had unethical answers to the questions regarding teachers' passion for research. He articulated that *"teachers tried to solve classroom problems verbally throughout the year, but they did not keep proper records or documentation. Schools should keep proper records to avoid repetition."* Sagun's experiences were completely similar to Dinesh's and focused on the major question: Why did all teachers get equal marks in work performance? He replied that *"Most teachers struggled with action research due to time constraints and a lack of clear guidance and mentoring."* Teachers' research mentoring is essential to facilitate teachers to investigate issues arising from their professional practice that involves listening, respecting, framing goals, and the content of the reflection (Smith, 2022). The interview with Dinesh stated that,

> *Further emphasized his dissatisfaction with his teachers' activities and mentioned that he sometimes observed their classroom teaching and gave feedback to them. Though he advised them, as far as I know, they don't hear about it. If he minimizes their number, then s/he will be angry with me, and s/he will not do their duty in a better way. All the teachers form a kind of circle, and they pressure them.*

The headteachers' excerpt revealed completely different psychological and structural barriers: Sagun pointed to a lack of motivation rooted in employment status, arguing that permanent teachers succumb to complacency because their jobs are secure. Ramesh identified a documentation barrier, observing that teachers actually do try to resolve issues *"verbally"* or informally but fail to write anything down. Sagun

exposed a toxic workplace dynamic as the ultimate barrier. He highlighted defensive staff circles that pressure the administration, noting that trying to enforce research standards causes teachers to ignore his advice or actively neglect their duties out of anger. From my field notes and discussion with the head teacher, I found that there was no coordination between teachers and administration /headteachers to implement AR effectively for quality education.

According to Vygotsky (1978) and other sociocultural theorists (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990), individuals in any social setting are at different stages of proximal development. That is, they have different needs for activities that will challenge them to grow and develop, and they also have different support needs (as cited in Whipp et.al., 2005). Teachers need support, motivation, encouragement, resources, and training while they are facing problems at ZPD, accelerating their capacity to be autonomous researchers in ZAD. The findings confirmed Schön's (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner while also situating teacher research within Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, which suggests multi-level environmental systems influence behavior.

Similarly, Vygotsky's SCT suggests that the institutional environment, such as teachers' support, time constraints, resources, and workload, affects teachers ' ability to perform the task. Therefore, the practice of AR should be understood according to the context of the institution (Haddaoui, 2025). In this study, English language teachers raised schools' administrative issues such as heavy workload (teaching seven periods in a day due to insufficient teachers), internet connectivity, encouragement, an innovative environment, and monitoring and rewarding as major system/ policy level barriers to carrying out research.

Lack of Authenticity and Ethical Issues in Action Research

It addresses the lack of authenticity and ethical issues surrounding action research. This theme centers around whether teachers produced the action research based on the real classroom context or they just duplicated the tendency to copy-paste and submit to the respective offices. It highlighted the teachers' professionalism issues and professional ethics. Copying the materials from others' work, modifying data to address researcher and public needs, duplicating the research findings, and publishing information without participants' consent are regarded as ethical issues in conducting research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Before interviewing the teacher participant, Himlal, I reviewed his research report entitled Enhancing speaking skills through group work ', submitted to the local level in 2024. I found similarities in his definition of group work and speaking skills with the document on the internet. In the interview session, I raised the similarities issue; he admitted to copying parts of their research from the internet and books, even without acknowledging the sources. He revealed, *"I also had taken definitions from other books without acknowledging them. My action research is mixed up. Some of the parts are copied from friends' research and some from books."* He believed that copying from other teachers' subject matter and simply translating from other languages are factors that make action research an unethical practice.

Phyak et al. (2024) mentioned that many primary teachers didn't have adequate writing skills to write the action research report. Therefore, they copied a report from the internet, pasted it, and made their own report. They reported that there was a copy-and-paste tendency throughout the country. They duplicated the same report and submitted it to the local Government Unit. Teachers' excerpts and research articles have shown that teachers didn't explore classroom issues because they have not taken up the teaching profession seriously. They submitted the report just for the formal requirement of annual performance evaluations.

Bharat answered the question, Practices of action research during the interview; he blamed others, as if he had produced the research based on the classroom issues. He perceived:

> *Most teachers were inactive and reluctant to do new things in the class because nothing brings newness, even if they work hard. They were neither rewarded nor punished. It was only for submission. Most of the teachers don't want to do anything. Another reason is that some teachers lack knowledge of how to conduct action research.*

He also agreed that some teachers copied others' work due to a lack of knowledge. They thought that it was a boring task. He suggested that if officers from the municipality or other offices conducted and facilitated training, some of the teachers would benefit.

Though they understood that plagiarism and lack of originality in action research reports were common unethical practices, they didn't want to produce unique research documents because they perceived rigorous engagement in research didn't differentiate between authentic and inauthentic research. Teachers experienced

unethical practices in action research, such as copying from the internet or other sources without proper acknowledgment. They mentioned that some teachers submitted questionable types of action research without exploring real issues or applying the findings. They realized that a lack of monitoring, support, understanding, sufficient time, encouragement, motivation, and rewards are the major barriers to effective implementation of AR in school. Moreover, they highlighted the need for mentoring and strict policies to encourage authentic research practices.

Dinesh shared in the second round of the interview that teachers produced AR to fulfil procedural requirements. He reported that,

> *Most action research is not based on real classroom problems. Often, it is done as a formality to fulfill the requirement for promotion, not to genuinely solve classroom issues. Teachers select topics from the Internet and prepare reports by copying and pasting.*

Ramesh's experiences were completely associated with Dinesh. He perceived:

> *Some teachers copy from the internet because their language is weak, but others do their own work; teachers have repeated the same research topic over the years. This often happens because they are not aware of new classroom issues or because they focus on completing the report for promotion.*

Head teachers regarded almost all teachers as having conducted similar research in terms of topic, method, and analysis because they didn't do it themselves.

Burns (2010) defines action research as a critical, systematic process of reflecting on their practices. Teachers should identify the problematic area and ask themselves how to explore the problems in their teaching context through self-reflective practice. The head teacher's excerpt shows that teachers bring up any issues without exploring their classroom teaching practices and prepare a report instantly.

Phyak et al. (2024) documented in their research article that most teachers (n = 84) linearly presented their reports. They prepared their action research as problem-solving tools without critical self-reflection on what they planned and implemented, and what they reflected on at each stage of the research. It indicates that they were not conscious of what they were required to do in conducting the research. They prepared the report without visualizing the classroom scenario to fulfil the requirement of submission to the local government unit. In the same vein, Sagun shared his perspectives in the third round of the interview.

> *They produce a kind of research that looks like research, but it is not based on the real thing. Most teachers imagine themselves, and they do a kind of research in their minds and write in their own way, a little bit like the veteran type of teachers or the older teachers; they don't bother to write it. So, they just try to copy from anywhere, or they try to write just like an essay.*

They viewed the source and style of this inauthenticity through different lenses: Dinesh analyzed plagiarism via *"academic subject matter"*, pointing out that English teachers copy-paste extensively because of internet accessibility; Ramesh offered a more sympathetic diagnosis for plagiarism, suggesting that teachers resort to the internet because *"their language is weak."* Sagun offered the harshest ethical critique. He categorized the output as outright *"less authentic research",* spun entirely from imagination. Furthermore, he viewed the problem as occurring through a *"generational lens"*, specifically targeting veterans and older teachers as the main culprits who refused to follow guidelines and instead wrote generic essays.

Participants' interview excerpts and documents indicated that questions of plagiarism and inauthenticity in research were major problems in an academic context due to teachers' negligence, the absence of fair evaluation, monitoring, supervision, and scoring marks in teachers' action performance forms without assessing their reports properly. In this regard, Sharma and Khan (2026) stated that plagiarism arises due to a lack of research methodology awareness, academic time management pressure, poor research practices, unawareness of citation styles and writing skills, misuse of technology, and gaps in institutional systems towards plagiarism.

Vygotskian perspective, teachers' learning is a mediated process that is affected by tools and signs. Tools in the form of expert guidance and assistance as an external source of mediation and signs as an internal source of mediation help the teacher extend his performance. Research mentoring and supporting tools such as training, organizing research writing workshops, encouragement, motivation, incentives, and restructuring the education policy can eliminate the nature of breaching ethical considerations.

Inadequate Understanding and Knowledge of Action Research

This theme explored how teachers' knowledge and understanding affected the effectiveness of AR. It consists of inadequate knowledge of the AR cycle, ethical considerations, data collection procedures, data analysis and interpretation skills, writing research reports skills, citation and references, which become a barrier to

practicing AR in the workplace. Teachers require knowledge of AR for reflecting on their practices in the AR cycle, which has a tremendous effect on improving their existing situation (Burns, 2010).

My teacher participant believed that they didn't have acquaintance with the AR cycle, methods of collecting data, and meaning-making in the interpretation to conduct systematic AR. Teacher participant Himlal shared in the interview session, *"Most of the teachers, including me, are not well familiar with the components and process of conducting action research. They attributed this to insufficient training and a lack of awareness about the purpose and features of action research."* He required training and an AR writing workshop in school from MKO experts, as SCT theory recommended. Burns (2010) pointed out that Teachers feel frustrated in finding the focus area needed to overcome due to insufficient knowledge of the characteristics and features of AR.

The teachers emphasized the need for teachers to be well-acquainted with the Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) plan, action, observation, and reflection to maintain quality and transform their practices. In the planning phase, teachers identify issues or problems and develop a systematic plan of action to improve the focus area in the classroom context. Likewise, teachers use suitable interventions in the action phase. The third phase is observation, in which teachers observe the effect of the action to overcome the issues. In the reflection, teachers describe, reflect, and evaluate the effect of the action on the focus area.

AR is a cyclical process, so if the intervention has not brought change in the respective area, teachers go back to the first phase. Besides conceptual understanding, Incentives and motivation drive people to do better. Yuliyanti et al. (2020) mentioned that incentives directly impact teachers' performance. This leads teachers to perform their duties according to expected outcomes. "The greater the incentives given, the higher the motivation of the teachers' work" (p. 267). Institutional support and incentives are necessary for teachers to use AR for educational transformation. Providing ethical, interview, and data interpretation guidelines and creating opportunities to share findings at the school or local level enhanced knowledge of AR.

Bharat had a different opinion from Himlal, extracted from the field notes; according to him, *"most teachers, including me, are inactive and reluctant to try new things in class because nothing feels new, even when they work hard."* They are neither rewarded nor punished. It is only for submission. Most of the teachers don't

want to do anything. Another reason is that some teachers don't know how to do action research. Likewise, Narsuddhin's experiences are related to Bharat regarding the necessity of punishment and reward to perform the task effectively and also raised the issue of professionalism. He reported in the interview.

> *Teachers should know action research, its main components, purposes, strategies to implement the output of action research, and how action research reflects the teachers. He further said that if I knew research procedures, I would follow the cyclical process such as Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection (PAOR) because nobody examined my research documents, nor was I being awarded or punished in terms of my research. He viewed that internalizing the AR cycle is the first and foremost step in igniting AR.*

Phyak et al. (2024) found that the government's compulsory policy of submitting a written report without research skills and professionalism in their work performance evaluation for promotion has been a major challenge for the teachers. Therefore, they hurriedly prepared AR reports by copying from their friends and the internet because head-teachers, along with government authorities, see the report marks as full marks, but they don't read, observe, or provide feedback for further improvement. This practice and perception have been rooted in the teachers' minds. Therefore, they advised the government to change policy in the work performance evaluation system. However, the TPD framework considered the head teacher a supervisor and guide of teachers. He should observe teachers' lessons and provide feedback for improvement. Head teachers stated that there was no training or workshop related to research and innovation (CEHRD, 2023).

ETC provided training on a small scale; many permanent teachers have not been selected yet. However, there was no culture of transforming culture into the classroom. Head teachers have similar observations regarding teachers' research knowledge. Teachers couldn't create AR as qualitative research because they had less exposure to report writing, such as the format of research citations and references. They stated in the third round of interviews:

> *Many teachers do not have a clear understanding of what action research is and how it is conducted. Lack of training and guidance is also a major reason. No, they have never received such a request from any teacher. None of the teachers has ever approached me asking for help, guidance, or supervision. Many teachers do not plan or follow the proper steps of action research. Some*

may share ideas or try small actions, but most teachers do it informally, without systematic observation or reflection. Nobody asked me how to conduct action research, or have they asked for help and assistance?

All three headteachers report identical experiences of professional isolation: not a single teacher across any of their schools has ever approached them to ask for guidance, mentorship, or help with action research. They completely agreed that teachers lack foundational knowledge of research skills from the introduction phase to deriving findings. Phyak et al. (2024) brought to light that the government asked teachers to follow the four steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection to carry out research in a linear manner without fully explaining what they need to do in each step of research. Therefore, they didn't discuss classroom issues based on data/evidence and analyse them to draw the findings from their research.

While Dinesh and Sagun focus heavily on the teachers' lack of methodology and structural execution, Ramesh expands this critique to school leadership itself. He notes that the headteachers themselves are unequipped to solve this problem because the government has never trained the principals to objectively assess good versus bad research. Aligning with Vygotsky's perspectives, head teachers, stakeholders, and concerned authorities used dialogic processes and mediation tools to identify real problems and injected a boost of practical research skills through workshops, incentives, training, and engaging professional development networks.

Need for Policy Changes and Support for Action Research

It underscores the need for policy changes and support for action research. It concerns the need to modify existing policies and establish supportive measures to promote and facilitate action research. Burns (1999) advocated for policies that prioritize and encourage action research in educational settings, allocating resources for training and professional development, and fostering a supportive environment that values practitioner-led inquiry and reflective practice. Here, I incorporated who should be responsible for the implementation of AR in public schools: teachers, schools, local government, training centers, and the federal government. As teachers, their main purpose is to teach effectively and improve their students ' subject learning achievement. They need to explore classroom issues and follow the AR cycle to overcome them. Narsuddhin stressed the professionalism issue during the interview and accepted teachers' duty and responsibility and advised that *"teachers should be responsible and dedicated to their profession, but school administrators and*

education-related authorities must also establish strict mechanisms to promote teacher responsibility." Schools and local government can introduce a program and an agreement between teachers and head teachers, and between head teachers and local government, for producing at least two AR reports. The local level commenced TPSS to facilitate, monitor, and mentor them. In contrast, Himlal mentioned in the interview that power determined the activities of people.

> *Most of the teachers are neglecting the importance of action research. They felt that action research was nothing. They don't want to change in the field of teaching and learning because they are permanent teachers, engage in politics, and enter the school with political power. Teachers who conduct action research should get priority for promotion to the next level, but in reality, real researchers are in the shadows. There are many factors that are responsible for not being serious about conducting action research, such as economic problems, laziness, carelessness, and thinking that I am saved here by political leaders and local people. No one can transfer me from this place. I am not motivated to explore the real issues that exist in the classroom because the real researcher is not rewarded and promoted to the next level. Therefore, I prepared the action research within a day by copying from others' work and submitting it. It is just a formality.*

These excerpts portray that the criteria for promotion are not based on power and politics; they should be based on the quality of research and presentation. The responsibility of the federal government to make policies, acts, regulations, and directives to address the issues of AR is a procedural task for promotion, but it should be inquiry-based research. Teacher participants perceived that AR requires AR cycle skills, adapting patterns of writing research reports. To overcome these factors, the local level and training center run training, data analysis workshops, and formatting research using APA/Modern Language Association (MLA). Phyak et al. (2024) reflected on teachers' professional support system (TPSS); a transparent promotion system, supervision, and mentoring are missing in policy. The municipal education section supervises and monitors teachers' activities; the federal government prepares the promotion criteria, and the training center prepares mentors to facilitate teachers' mentees. Gnawali et al. (2021) found that Exploratory Action Research (EAR) promotes teachers' profession by executing a systematic action plan in the classroom. Smith (2020) highlights that EAR projects from the Global South (e.g., Chile,

Mexico, Peru, and Nepal) found that regular mentoring is necessary for teachers to carry out action research (as cited in Phyak et al., 2024). Bharat had a similar perception to the other teachers and admitted that

> *Some teachers tried to copy what they found online. But it is of no value because nobody supervised them. Whether they copied or wrote their own, there was no difference between these two types of teachers. They just copy, paste, and send it to the relevant field. There is no good supervision or evaluation in our sector or offices. If you do well, they don't praise you, and if you do badly, they don't punish you.*

To summarize teachers' opinions, it was found that teachers didn't want to do such extra activities in their field. They didn't bother to do such kinds of research in their field. Promotion, rewards, and praise accelerated their performance. Therefore, the federal government should revise the indicators of teacher promotion, and the examination, monitoring, and scoring numbers based on action research should rely on the performance of the action research report and on whether the report's findings could change the existing classroom situation.

Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of monitoring, evaluation, and recognition for genuine action research. They feel that the current system does not differentiate between authentic researchers and those who engage in unethical practices. They call for stricter mechanisms to promote responsibility, as well as rewards and punishments based on the quality of research.

The policies and their practice should be rational and reasonable to get effective results. It is said that 'we are the best planners but worst implementers. Head-teacher Dinesh was close to the given statement, and he reported:

> *The policy itself is good because it encourages teachers to engage in research activities. However, its implementation is weak. I have given full marks based on the title or topic of the research, without a detailed study. The main reason is to ensure that teachers are not deprived of promotion opportunities.*

He showed sympathy and loyalty in the evaluation of the research report. Lethargic people sometimes benefit from liberal leadership. Ramesh was seen as partially supportive of Dinesh and stated that the main reason for teachers' negligence in engaging in research is policy. According to him, *"if the policy of linking research to promotion is removed, very few teachers will conduct action research. Therefore, the government should make a new policy that encourages teachers to conduct action-*

oriented research regularly, not just for promotion." The policy actors prepared criteria for examining the research document. In contrast to the two headteachers' opinions, Head-teacher Sagun shares during the interview that *"when I send it to the municipality or the unit office, they just return it, and they say, 'Why did you give the lower number to the teachers?' Why didn't you give the full marks?"*

The headteachers fundamentally disagreed with the existing policies of government, in which only submitting documents for the sake of promotion never changed the classroom environment. They believe the baseline policy of mandating research for promotion is inherently good; it simply suffers from poor engagement of teachers and weak monitoring from the concerned authorities. Teachers and head-teachers had similar experiences, and they believe that a revolution in research is necessary at public schools and should be initiated through policies. It draws the demarcation line and identifies good and bad researchers. They advocate for *"bridging the policies and practices"*, shifting to a policy that rewards continuous, regular, action-oriented work.

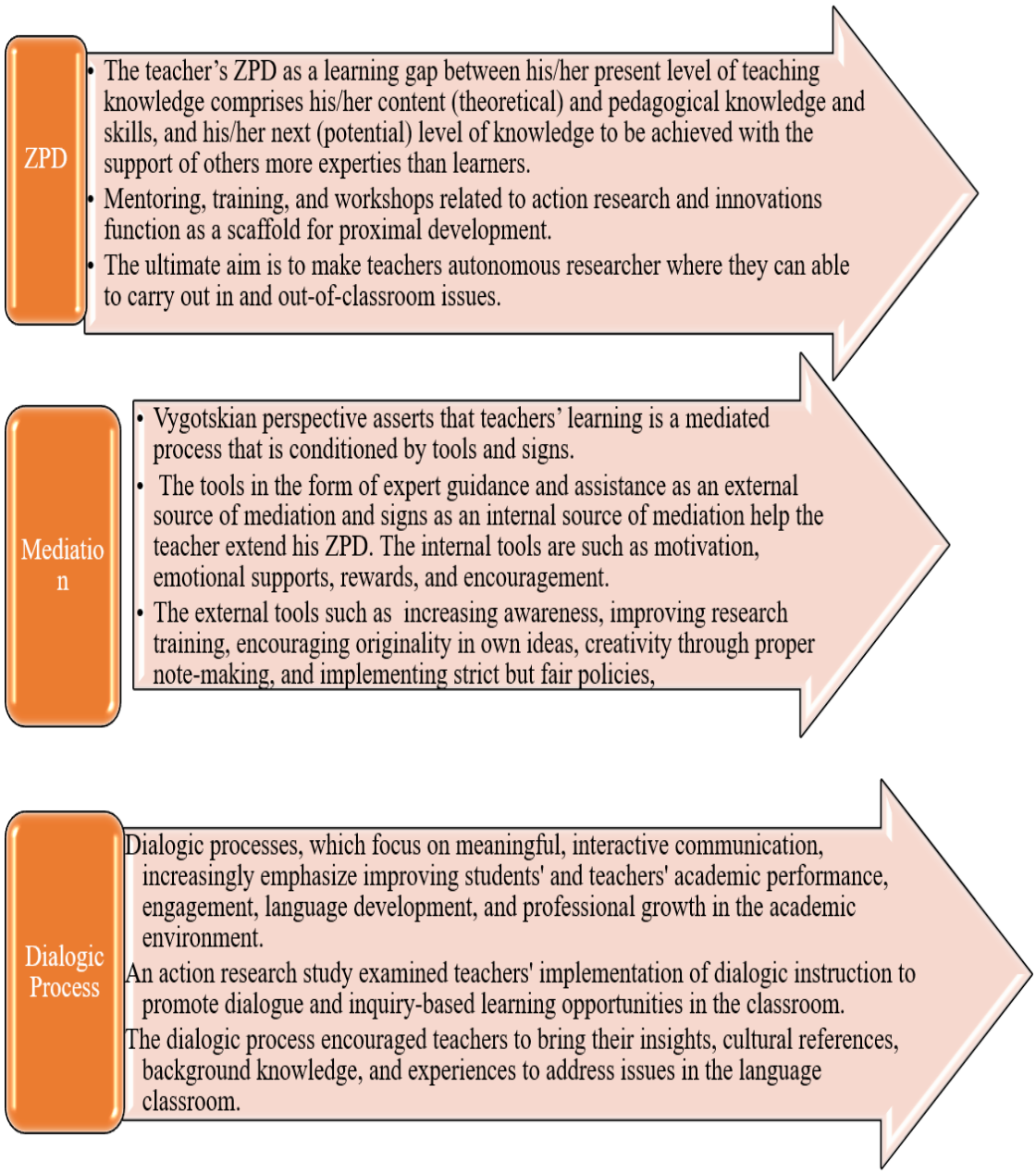
They advised the government to prepare rubrics/criteria for the evaluation of research reports. Head-teachers were unaware of the marking slips, so they gave full marks without turning the pages of reports. Teachers complained, *"Why did you give the lower number to the teachers? They didn't have an answer to satisfy them because of the unavailability of specific criteria."* To make teachers accountable: make action research the top metric by which a teacher's entire day-to-day career is evaluated, which would naturally force an authentic shift in behavior. Vygotsky highlighted that social interaction in the preparation of policy with stakeholders is important to find the lapses, overcome them, and make practical policy for effective implementation.

The synopsis of the analysis is that the local government conducts customized training, one/two days' work shop, and monitors and supervises by expert teachers available in the local context. It prepares TPSS working guidelines to support teachers for professional development. It collaborates with head-teachers, teachers, and Study Monitoring Committee (SMC) members for effective implementation of AR. In the same vein, federal and provincial policy actors focus on reviewing existing policy, plans, and regulations and provide a concrete framework for the position of AR at public schools. It frames the index for detecting authentic research to others. Modification of the work performance appraisal form is possible at the federal level.

Theoretical Discussion

Figure 1

Action Research through the Lens of Sociocultural Theory for Teacher Professional Development



Vygotsky's sociocultural theory claims that knowledge is constructed through interaction with people through a dialogic process. It provides opportunities for students and teachers to discuss and identify pertinent classroom issues that hinder students' learning. Here, AR facilitates teachers in initiating dialogue with students to address the problems using interventions effectively. Therefore, teachers need to

search for intervention strategies for undertaking AR to improve their teaching and learning activities.

According to Vygotsky's SCT, Teacher development is a mediated process that involves tools and signs; AR serves as a mediated tool that helps teachers identify classroom issues and use a research approach, and cultural tools assist mentors and experts in changing existing practices. Teachers engage in the process of undertaking research and ultimately develop their insights.

AR can serve as a source of scaffolding that shifts teachers' current ZPD to a more advanced ZPD (Shabani et al., 2010). It is a collaborative and self-reflective practice in which teachers can tackle learning issues and develop their knowledge and skills with support from more knowledgeable scholars. My participants considered AR as a scaffolder that supports their research skills and promotes their ZPD through mentoring and teachers' support system.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted the experiences and practices of my seven participants regarding action research. I presented how they perceived AR for their professional development. I synthesized their practical experiences into five major themes. My purpose was to find out the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding AR. I found that there was a discrepancy between their perception and real classroom practice in the use of AR for their professional development.

The findings of the research addressed questions related to English language teachers' experience and practice of conducting AR in their professional context and their head-teachers' perceptions of their engagement in AR. The successful completion of AR did not depend on teachers but on institutional context and policy, which contributed equally. SCT played a prominent role in teachers' learning, providing mediation tools and scaffolds to help them overcome barriers faced in the production of quality standard research.

CHAPTER V
PERCEIVED CHANGES OF ACTION RESEARCH ON STUDENTS' LEARNING OUTCOMES

This chapter presents an action research study that contributes to students' learning outcomes. As a researcher, I have explored the real-life experiences of participants regarding how action research helps to change learners' learning achievement based on participants' narratives. In this chapter, qualitative data collection tools- interviews, field notes, and documents are used to explore how the teachers explain their perceived narratives on the changes in the students' learning achievement as a result of AR.

In this chapter, I have mentioned participants' perceived narratives of how action research helps to change students' learning outcomes. Here, I also explain in detail participants' narratives based on their perceptions and experiences of how action research is being catalyzed in the academic field to change students' learning. Here, I have presented three themes: AR for identifying and solving learners' learning problems, improving teaching strategies, and classroom practice and academic achievement.

Action Research as a Tool for Identifying Teaching-Learning Problems

A major theme that emerged from the experiences of the three secondary-level English teachers, three headteachers, and the Education Officer was that action research improves students' learning outcomes by identifying classroom problems and developing practical solutions. The participants viewed action research as a problem-solving process that enables teachers to investigate the difficulties students face during learning and take appropriate actions to improve the situation. Mertler (2019) viewed action research as being carried out by practitioners to solve their practical problems. Teachers and administrators can practice AR to address problems that have persisted in schools for a long time.

Himlal explained the essence of action research during the interview by stating, *"It is mainly conducted to find out the problems during the teaching-learning activities. When there is a problem, action research starts."* Similarly, Bharat's view was compatible with what Himlal described action research as: *"research that is carried out in a classroom and is particularly related to the teaching and learning*

problems in the classroom. Action research is particularly problem-oriented research." These statements indicated that teacher participants perceived action research positively as a practical strategy for understanding and addressing classroom challenges rather than as a purely theoretical exercise.

Shrestha et al. (2023) found that exploratory action research helped Nepalese EFL teachers understand classroom problems and design context-sensitive strategies to address them and improve their classroom teaching. In other words, they recommended the usefulness of AR in resource-limited contexts like Nepal; it can be operationalized in the classroom without requiring considerable resources.

Himlal shared his experiences of carrying out AR in 2024 in the interview session, and how AR helped him to address the issue. Following the AR cycle, he explored initial problems with speaking skills and made an action framework using WH questions: What, How, and When. He used group work/ role play as an intervention and engaged students in speaking activities, giving them a role in the group. Students practiced speaking in the given situation for 30 minutes in the English period. It lasted for one month; students' speaking skills were assessed based on the situation from the textbook. The teacher shared his findings with the colleagues and head teachers; they were able to create single sentences; however, students' fluency still needs to be improved, so he decided to repeat the cycle using more practical intervention. In this way, he experienced that AR facilitated the development of students' speaking skills. He reflected on his experience of researching students' speaking skills and expressed it in the interview, but his document followed some of the AR cycle.

> *Last year, I carried out action research on 'How to improve students' speaking skills. Action research helped to find out the reasons why students are not able to produce even a single sentence. Because of mother-tongue interference, I used group work and role-play to make them speak in English.*

From their sharing, it can be interpreted that action research enabled the teacher to identify the root cause of students' difficulties and take steps to eradicate barriers that hinder students' learning. The findings were derived from rigorous work with students, which helped them create opportunities for students to practice speaking and improve their language skills. Tripathi (2022) mentioned that classroom action research helps to identify and solve problems. He addressed the problems of

noisy classrooms, class bunking, and decreasing the quality of education following the four steps of undertaking research: planning, acting, evaluating, and reflecting. His findings revealed that using appropriate materials and engaging students in activities reduced the problem of noisy classrooms and improved daily attendance over different periods. They also informed parents, minimizing the problem of bunking in the classroom, and the use of information and communication technology in classroom teaching was perceived to support educational quality. This portrays how action research enables teachers to detect issues and challenges and handle them easily to improve learning.

Along similar lines, the headteachers highlighted the role of action research in addressing students' learning problems. Dinesh reported that *"Action research is a process of identifying real problems in schools or classrooms and finding practical solutions to issues. It is executed by teachers to improve their teaching skills, solve students' learning difficulties, and make teaching more effective."* Supporting the excerpts, Shrestha et al. (2023) underscored that Nepalese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers used EAR to explore issues related to homework, inhibition of speaking skills, learner participation in classroom activities, building confidence, reading comprehension, writing skills, and a range of problems in teaching, and used new intervention methods to overcome them.

Consistent with this finding, Ramesh shared his experiences extracted from the field note: *"There are many teaching and learning problems that exist in the classroom, like students not doing homework, irregularity, and inhibition in speaking skills. Action research helps to develop practical solutions."* These views show that school head-teachers observe action research as an important tool for addressing challenges that directly affect students' academic progress.

Following similar lines of thought, Headteacher Sagun emphasized that action research assists teachers in understanding classroom realities by engaging in the investigative process of AR. He stated that*, in the interview,* "*Action research helps teachers to understand the real problems in their classrooms and improve their teaching methods."* His observation revealed the belief that meaningful improvement in student learning begins with a clear understanding of the issues students experience in their daily classroom activities. The statements of participants reflected that AR is inevitable in teaching and learning activities for improving existing practices.

While exploring perceptions of teachers on their roles as researchers and how it helped their professional development, Vula and Saqipi (2015) pointed out that AR positively supported not only teachers' improvement but also worked as a catalyst for increasing students' learning achievement. The Education Officer also supported this perspective. He explained that *"when teachers face any problem in the classroom to improve their teaching, they carry out action research. Therefore, it is particularly for improvement."* Furthermore, he emphasized that teachers need to conduct action research *"to improve teaching skills and the achievement of students."* His view claims that action research is expected to function as a systematic process through which teachers identify classroom challenges and implement evidence-based solutions.

Action research assists professional development by enabling educators, students, and administrators to explore and solve school issues through systematic data collection and analysis, implementing solutions, evaluating their effectiveness, and revisiting the planning stage to address new variables. Mill (2011) states that Action research provides education practitioners with current knowledge, skills, and understanding of how to enhance educational practices or solve significant challenges and problems in schools and classrooms (as cited in Oranga & Gisore, 2023). It is the systematic process of exploring issues existing in the classroom to overcome problems and solve them. Consequently, it helps to solve students' problems and facilitates learners' learning outcomes.

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory was rooted in how social interaction influenced cognitive development. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a major concept in which Vygotsky defined the difference between what a learner could do without help and what they could achieve with guidance and assistance from someone more knowledgeable. Action research identifies the learners' ZPD, i.e., the variation between what a learner can do without proper guidance and what they can attain with support and assistance. Teachers detect students' learning problems in which they are struggling while teaching them in the classroom. Action research works as scaffolding to reach the target level from the existing position.

By observing these experiences, it is said that action research contributes as a tool of reinforcement for the improvement of learners' learning outcomes by enabling teachers to identify students' difficulties, understand their causes, and design interventions to address them. When teachers systematically investigate classroom

problems and implement appropriate strategies, students receive more targeted support, which increases their opportunities for learning and academic success.

Action Research Supports Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices

The second theme generated from the participants' experiences is that action research improves students' learning outcomes by helping teachers develop more efficient teaching strategies and classroom practices. The participants declared that action research encourages teachers to reflect on instructional strategies critically, evaluate their effectiveness, and make necessary improvements based on classroom observation. AR helps educators improve their teaching strategies through an iterative cycle: planning, implementing intervention, action, observing students' progress, and reflecting on their improvement and obstacles encountered during the study (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

A teacher participant, Narsuddhin, reflected on the professional value of action research by stating, *"It gives new knowledge on how to make my teaching more effective, steps for overcoming obstacles, and tackling the issues that arise in the course in my teaching and learning."* He further explains the process in which he was involved as:

> *Managing a large class is really very difficult, but the action research that I carried out, entitled 'management of the large class,' gave me the points that if we manage technically by involving them in group work and action-oriented activities, it helped me to manage the classroom easily in the following days as well.*

His excerpts claimed that AR helped teachers to understand classroom issues and provided processes to do research. Burns (1999) writes that AR provides a stepwise framework for conducting research: exploring, identifying, planning, collecting information, analysing and reflecting, hypothesising and speculating, intervening, observing, reporting, writing, and presenting. He claimed that Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) model- plan, action, observation, and reflection is the best framework; he illustrated how a teacher undertakes AR in different situations.

Narsuddhin further explained that action research helps to make the teaching and learning more output-oriented:

> *I wanted to improve students' speaking skills because students couldn't speak. To overcome the problem, I conducted action research to improve students' speaking skills through speech competitions. At first, I downloaded speech-*

related videos at home on my mobile phone and bought a recording device. Every day, before beginning class, I played a motivational speech in Nepali and its English translation. It did this activity for one months, after that I showed how to speak on the topic, our school, one day our village in another day. Then, they were given the same speech topic that I showed in the classroom. I asked the students who got the first position in class nine. I repeated this process for a month, and gradually they attempted to deliver the speech in the assembly. I learned that students are eager to speak if we create a friendly environment in the classroom. However, I couldn't document it in the report due to inadequate knowledge.

From their experiences, it can be summarized that teachers sometimes carry out action research to improve the existing situation, but they were unable to do so regularly due to challenges such as lack of knowledge and support. Rauteda's study examined how ELTs perceived the effectiveness of AR for professional development. He found that teachers considered AR an important tool for problem-solving, developing professional confidence to defend issues, and career development (Rauteda, 2025).

Echoing this argument, Himlal interpreted:

It helps teachers, educators, and professionals develop their own capacity for teaching and learning. I found that students couldn't write simple sentences in English. For this, I made a plan including time, resources, and activities. In the action plan, I used reflection writing after the lesson. At first, I asked them to write about the daily activities of a day. This process continued for a week, but they were not able to write in sentences. I gave them a structural pattern and cue sentences and asked them to write based on them. I intervened with reflection writing to improve their writing skills. Every day, students were required to write a one-paragraph reflection based on the lesson. I gave them reflection writing notes, including the introduction, body, and conclusion. I asked them to write as a model: it took three weeks to learn how and what to write in a reflection. They endeavored to write reflections, though they committed grammatical errors. When I listened to their reflections from the previous lesson, I knew that I needed to change my strategy.

Action research is interpreted not only as benefiting students but also as strengthening teachers' ability to address classroom challenges effectively.

Stories of EAR findings showed that large and overcrowded classes were managed by giving responsibilities and tasks to problematic students in group work and sometimes assigning the group leader role. Moreover, building rapport with them also helped manage the problem of a noisy class (Negi, 2019). These practical results illustrated how action research can generate practical strategies that make classroom teaching more effective and responsive to students' needs.

The headteachers also acknowledged that action research played a paramount role in improving teaching quality. Headteacher Dinesh noted that *"AR supports teachers in identifying their weaknesses and improving them through self-study and reflection. It improves teaching quality, supports classroom performance, and helps to increase students' academic achievement."* Analyzing his statement, it can be said that participants had the perception that the reflective nature of action research helps teachers continuously examine and improve their own practices. Nunan (1992) defines "AR as a mode of self-reflective inquiry carried out by practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practices, and developing understanding" (p. 229).

A consistent trend can be detected through the interaction with Headteacher Sagun, who experienced that *"AR allows them to observe students' learning, find out solutions, and reflect on what works."* This excerpt shows that action research encourages teachers to become reflective practitioners who make teaching and learning effective based on exploration rather than assumptions. Bijay also indicated that teachers use action research to improve their professional practice. According to him, *"they inquire into and then try to improve their teaching and learning activities, strategies, and so on."* This perspective noted in the field diary that AR contributes to students' learning outcomes by fostering the quality of classroom pedagogy.

According to Bijay, action research facilitates practitioners in studying different aspects of teaching methods and provides innovative ideas for assessing and reflecting on the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices for the improvement of existing practice. Johnson (2012) defines action research as the process of studying a classroom situation with the goal of understanding and optimizing the quality of learning and all educative processes. Teachers interact with the students in the classroom to find out their social, academic, and cultural context to investigate the barriers and hindrances to their learning. The classroom can be the place where cognition is co-created through exchanging their experiences. The concepts of scaffolding and the ZPD from Vygotsky's work were key to understanding how

dialogic interactions could facilitate learning. Through dialogue, teachers identified a student's ZPD and provided support personalized to their immediate developmental level while also challenging them to advance toward more complex understanding and skills.

Synopsis of the discussion suggests that teachers had experiences that action research promotes reflective teaching, encourages experimentation with innovative strategies, and helps teachers become more effective in addressing students' diverse learning needs. When teaching and learning activities improve, students benefit from more engaging, supportive, and productive learning environments.

Action Research Promotes Student Engagement and Academic Achievement

The third major theme revealed from the participants' experiences is that action research promotes improved student engagement, participation, and learning achievement. The participants perceived that when teachers researched learning problems and implemented appropriate interventions, students became more actively involved in classroom activities and achieved better learning outcomes. Strambler and McKown's (2013) findings also suggested that AR intervention led the facilitators to upgrade their practices and increase learners' engagement; as a result, it improved the learning achievement of low-achieving students.

Narsuddhin perceived the positive experiences of action research on students by stating that,

> *I used the role-play techniques and assigned roles to each student, such as shopkeeper and customer. At first, I demonstrated how to interact between them, assigned roles to the students, and engaged them in such activities for three weeks. During the process, they gradually showed progress, such as reduced hesitation, active participation, and improved vocabulary during speaking activities.*

This showed improvement in the students' achievement, but they haven't documented in the AR. His experiences positively reflect the belief that research-based teaching practices create worthwhile learning experiences for students and increase their engagement and motivation to learn. Seniuk Cicek et al. (2019) concluded that action research is a catalyst for transformative learning essential for teachers to engage students in the twenty-first-century classroom. It helped teachers shift their paradigm of how to teach and how students learn.

In the same vein, Bharat noted,

When I carried out AR, I taught reading improvement through vocabulary. At first, I asked them to list the difficult words and verify the meaning with peers and finally asked them to verify the meaning with a dictionary. It showed that students' reading engagement gradually changed as a result; I also changed my teaching strategy by teaching vocabulary before teaching the reading text. In this process, students were more involved in reading and comprehension, and my lecture time was reduced. I haven't documented it in the action research report because nobody read the AR report.

This statement advocated that overcoming reading problems through action research helps students understand lessons more effectively and participate more actively in learning activities. He further shared his findings on the issue:

I found that a low level of vocabulary was the major barrier to speaking skills. To overcome the issue, I used a new method, 'word-meaning contest' activities in the classroom. At first, I asked them to discuss all the words which are given in the text in group. After discussing in the group, each individual student was required to participate in the context. Students gradually improved their vocabulary. When they were asked to communicate in the given situation, they attempted to interact with peers.

The findings showed that classroom-based intervention through vocabulary contest activities would be an actionable roadmap for developing students' speaking skills (Tiley & Rentler, 2022).

The headteachers also perceived a positive relationship between action research and student academic growth. Dinesh explained that

Very few teachers conducted AR; I found that one teacher carried out AR about the importance of the communicative method for teaching-learning activities. He used the strip story teaching strategy to improve their students' writing skills. At first, he broke down the whole story into six pieces. Each member of the group was assigned to write about each piece of the story, and finally, they were asked to sit in the group and write the whole story. This process helped the teachers to reflect on their teaching and apply this intervention to teach story writing, and this technique helped students to write stories based on the clues.

These excerpts reported gradual changes in students' guided writing through the new intervention of strip story. As Elliott (1991) states, action research is a way

for teachers to improve the educational quality of students' learning experiences by reflecting on their practices based on the essence of curriculum. AR helps teachers reflect on their teaching activities and intervene with methods to resolve classroom problems to improve academic achievement.

In an interview with the head teacher, he narrated about the action research of his teacher, Himlal, on improving grammar teaching and learning. He explained that

> *Himlal started teaching grammar through an inductive approach during and after the action research. In the past, he had been teaching grammar deductively, writing grammatical rules and asking students to memorize and form sentences based on the structure. I know that the technique made students know only the structure, but they remained unable to write sentences according to the situation. When Himlal used an inductive approach- giving situations, illustrations, context, examples, and asking them to find the uses of grammar- it improved his teaching approach and students' learning of grammar. I found that students gradually began to use grammar in context during assembly and other communication in school.*

According to him, AR perceived important tool, which helps teacher' modify their teaching strategy also contribute to students' learning competence. AR empowered teachers professionally, academically, and practically and helped students to secure outstanding grades (Ferencová et al., 2024). Summarizing his excerpts, participants reported perceived changes in learners' learning as a result of AR.

AR is a participatory, collaborative, and self-reflective process of examining phenomena following planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. It enables teachers to evaluate their teaching strategies and modify and adapt eclectic methods in accordance with the needs and levels of students and the context of teaching to improve student efficiency. It also facilitates teachers and students to work collaboratively to identify problems, intervene with new strategies, evaluate them, and improve classroom practices. Classroom teaching and learning are affected by Internal mediating factors such as motivation, collaboration, encouragement, technology, research, and innovation. External sources of mediation and signs, as well as internal sources of mediation, help the teacher extend his/her ZPD. Teacher professional development is highly influenced by external mediators such as teaching materials, textbooks, and classroom equipment, and internal mediators like

professional journals, newsletters, and online forums can significantly affect the teachers' ZPD progression (Eun, 2008).

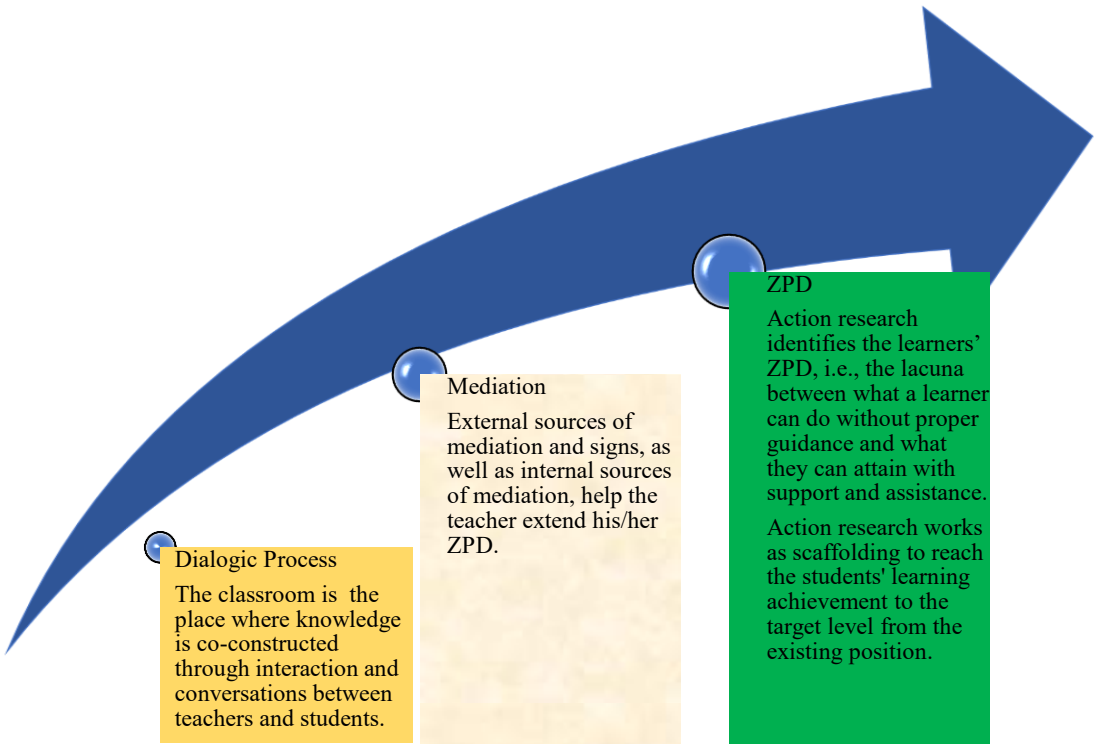
Although the participants' experiences reflected that action research could positively contribute to student engagement and academic achievement by helping teachers to identify learning barriers, implement effective interventions, and continuously improve their instructional practices, they haven't been able to design, implement, and disseminate it effectively due to the workload, additional burden, unfair examination system, unfavorable institutional support, and lack of mentoring and monitoring system.

Theoretical Discussion

Socio-cultural theory accounts for the dialogic process that helps in the cognitive development of the learners, which contributes to teachers and students working together to find the issues in the classroom. AR is perceived as an external mediation tool that helps students to minimize the gap between what they have been learning independently and what they can achieve with the guidance and supports from teachers who undertook research.

Figure 2

Action Research through the Lens of Sociocultural Theory for Students' Learning



Vygotsky's SCT claims that learning takes place when learners interact with objects, people, and the environment. The learners face varied challenges in their learning; AR is a collaborative research approach in which teachers undertake it to identify learners' difficulties through a dialogic process with students and address the challenges for the advancement of students' learning. The STC supported teachers to address the issues through interaction with those with more knowledge than others (MKO), which supported their professional learning and learners' learning. Participants could overcome their teaching problems using their prior knowledge and previous studies.

Interviews and document reports indicate that interaction mediation and the MKO contribute to teachers' and students' engagement in teaching and learning; however, they could not prove the absence of SCT; AR cannot be implemented. Students can perform higher-ability tasks by receiving support through interaction during teaching-learning activities (Dixon-Krauss, 1995). Teachers reported that AR supports teachers in determining students' learning deficiencies. Teachers engage students in different activities such as group work, project work, and role play to improve their learning.

Action research is not only an effective strategy for the professional development of practitioners but also an important mediation tool and scaffold to improve students' learning. These tools help to examine students' present level of learning and also provide guidelines on how to accelerate their learning level to reach the Zone of Proximal Development.

Vygotsky's concept of ZPD regarding students' improvement is crucial because the essence of ZPD is to identify the space where students perform tasks independently and what they can achieve with guidance from more capable colleagues and mentors. In ZPD, students are aware that they need one another's support to perform higher skills (Wennergren & Rönnerman, 2006). According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1982), teachers are committed to completing the spiral process of AR to elevate students' level of control over their own development work (as cited in Wennergren & Rönnerman, 2006).

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined how three teachers, head-teachers and education officers, perceived the role of AR in changing students' learning. Their perceptions, experiences, and practices were categorized into three major themes. The common

consensus of the participants' perceptions was that AR serves as a new avenue for facilitating students' learning. This section also presents AR through the Lens of Sociocultural Theory for students' learning development.

CHAPTER VI
KEY INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION, REFLECTION AND IMPLICATIONS

The major findings and outputs of the study are briefly presented in this chapter. I have presented its key insights, conclusion, reflection, and implications in this chapter. The main takeaways from the study, my assessment of the overall research process, its educational implications, and my personal reflections bring this chapter and the study to a close.

Key Insights

This research is carried out based on three major research questions: How do English teachers' professional context and practices demonstrate their experiences in conducting action research? How do their practices bring change in the students' learning achievement, and how do head teachers perceive such teachers' research-based engagements? The main purposes of my study were to explore and analyze the contexts, provisions, and practices of the teachers and how the action research they carried out enhanced their professional growth and changed students' learning outcomes. I used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the seven participants. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using a thematic approach following Saldana (2016). In data presentation, interpretation, analysis, and discussion, I first listened to the recorded data, transcribed it, read and reread it, and coded and categorized it, as guided by Saldana (2016).

This study was aligned with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, where mediation, dialogic process, and ZPD played a major role in enhancing teachers' professional growth and learning outcomes. Participants perceived that action research is a popular and applicable research approach in the field of education, especially in the language classroom, where teachers and students are fighting against a bundle of problems. To overcome the existing problems and set a new transformative journey of English language teaching strategies, action research functioned as a catalyst to solve teaching-learning problems. This investigation was possible through the qualitative interpretive study method because it studies issues by interacting with the practitioners to find the root cause of research issues.

Schwartz and Yanow's (2012) interpretive study is the process of meaning-making based on the context and position. This research has clear context: place (a municipality), the participants (senior English teachers, head-teachers, and an education officer), and the issue (producing and practicing action research). It is a contextual study of a municipality because there are fourteen secondary schools, of which only three have government-approved permanent secondary-level English teachers. The rest of them are contract (*Rahat*), federal-funded teachers, locally funded teachers, and school-internal source-funded teachers. The participants were selected purposively: three English language teachers and three head-teachers (government-approved permanent secondary-level English teachers who have been teaching for more than ten years). There is only one post of Education Officer in a municipality, so the Education Officer was also chosen as a research participant in this study.

This study found that English teachers have struggled to transform their teaching strategies for their professional promotion and students' achievement. The Teachers' Professional Development Framework (2023) outlines ten methods for educators' professional development; among them, carrying out action research is a time- and cost-effective approach in which teachers conduct research while teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, the Teachers' Service Commission Regulation (2000) states that every permanent teacher must compulsorily produce at least one action research per year based on teaching-learning issues and submit a report to the Municipality, attached to the teachers' action performance evaluation form.

I came to discuss the major insights based on the data analysis, critically and by accumulating participants' experiences of practicing action research in an academic context. The major insights are as follows: (a) AR: Empower teachers, solve learning problems, transform teaching; (b)AR: The journey from advocacy to action is a real challenge; (c) AR: Beyond Compliance-Reward authenticity, Reform Policy, and Transform Practice; (d) Support teachers, strengthen research, transform learning.

AR: Empower Teachers, Solve Learning Problems, Transform Teaching

Relevant theme: Teachers' experiences, perceived changes, and teachers' learning. Research questions: Did students' and teachers' learning change as a result of AR? All the participants perceived that action research is teacher research that enables teachers to intervene with new methods and strategies in their teaching

process. As a result, they improved their classroom teaching environment and ultimately supported learners' learning outcomes. The teachers emphasized that action research helps them develop confidence, maturity, and concrete ways to teach English in the classroom. It is research carried out in the classroom and is particularly related to the teaching and learning problems in the classroom. The findings of the study showed that it helped teachers explore the issues and prioritize the major issues that needed to be addressed, following research steps: plan, action, observation, and reflection.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and ZPD highlight the gap between learners' present level of understanding independently and the potential level that learners attain with the support of an MKO. From the participants' experiences, Action research played the role of a bridge that connected teachers' initial level, where they were struggling to reach their target. Action research recognized the teachers' ZPD, i.e., the difference between what a learner can do without proper guidance and what they can attain with support and assistance. Action research served as scaffolding to reach the potential level of professional and learning achievement of the learners.

AR: The Journey from Advocacy to Action is a Real Challenge

Major theme: Discrepancy between theory and practice. Research questions: teachers' experiences and practices in producing AR. This research disclosed the lacuna between theoretical perception and real classroom practice in producing action research. Respondents said that action research was found to bring revolutionary change in the field of education. It transformed the educational environment of the school through positive attitudes of stakeholders. One of my participants, Sagun, said that *"action research helps teachers to find out real problems in classroom teaching and carry out research to overcome the issues."* Even though all participants agreed on the importance of action research, the process and format of research, they could not explore the most prevailing issues that hindered their students' academic excellence.

The head-teachers and educational officers stated that teachers should not prepare action research for promotional purposes, but also for enhancing their professional and learning outcomes. On the other hand, English teacher participants informed that it was difficult to conduct research in overcrowded classrooms, no-resource classrooms, heavy workloads, and a biased evaluation system. They claimed that course completion was the main target in the classroom. They further blamed the

school administration for not motivating them for innovation and research. They never discussed the classroom problems in staff meetings because headteachers had no agenda on how to overcome teaching-learning problems, though they had an agenda regarding the exam, physical infrastructure, students' attendance, and sanitation. However, headteachers claimed that no one asked about action research; though they had not brought a research agenda to the staff meeting, they could have asked personally about classroom issues.

Teachers' research reports lacked authenticity because they prepared research without discovering the actual problems; they just copied and pasted from previous research and the internet as well. One of the teacher participants confidently said that *"preparing action research is a formality because the promotion was not based on the teachers' dedication, innovation, and devotion in teaching."* Supporting this, Salleh et al. (2013) revealed in their research that when workers feel that their performance appraisal is fair, they are more committed and dedicated to their organization. As a result, their satisfaction played a transformative role in flourishing.

English teachers perceived that they had many reasons for not doing quality standard action research. Some had the problem due to a lack of knowledge, and a few participants advocated that, due to a heavy workload, they did not have time to research because they had to teach seven periods in a day; low resources were major barriers to producing authentic research. Some teachers lack proper training, workshops, an innovative culture, encouragement, motivation, supervision from municipal/local government, and proper evaluation; positive attitudes towards the teaching profession, rewards, and punishment were major barriers to generating quality standard research.

Maharjan et al. (2018) submitted a report to ERO that revealed that most of the teachers didn't do research because they felt bored with the extra burden. The main essence of Vygotsky's socio-cultural to reach the potential level of the ZPD, mediation tools such as motivation, innovative culture, training, and dialogic interactions among teachers, teachers, and education officers needed to be established in every school. It was found that some teachers were doing it as a formality, and they were not satisfied with their tasks.

According to self-determination theory, people are more likely to change their behaviour when they are motivated either internally or by external factors. However, the findings of this study suggested that the participants lacked both forms of

motivation. Their involvement in action research appeared to be largely driven by the requirement to submit a report rather than by a genuine interest in improving their teaching. As a result, many participants seemed reluctant to invest time and effort in the research process or to use their findings to improve their classroom practices. This finding indicated that simply making action research a requirement may not lead to meaningful professional development. Teachers also need appropriate support, encouragement, recognition, and opportunities to see how action research can make a real difference in their teaching and students' learning.

AR: Beyond Compliance- Reward Authenticity, Reform Policy, and Transform Practice

Major theme: procedural requirement versus inquiry-based research. Research questions: Do established guidelines facilitate teachers' career development? The findings of this study suggested that action research should go beyond compliance to be authentic and meet the purpose of the research. It also indicated that action research lost its purpose when teachers undertook it only to meet formal requirements. According to Herrera (2018), action research is accomplished by teachers to advance insight and develop reflective practices that positively influence their students' outcomes and contribute to the development of their own educational practices.

It is teacher research that can be experimented with in the language classroom, where teachers acquire practical knowledge through learning by doing and self-reflective modes. The findings of research fostered learners' 'learning achievement and sharpened the educators' knowledge and skills. However, my participants had not taken it as a self-reflective practice that should be done in the workplace. Teachers' thinking was limited because it was prepared for promotional purposes only. One of the participants, Ramesh, felt free to share that *"if it was not connected with promotional purposes, very few teachers carried out action research."* He further suggested that policy related to teachers' promotion should be reformed.

Teacher Service Commission Regulation (2000) specified that if teachers attached action research to their teachers' action performance form, it would be awarded five marks out of 100. The regulation should be reviewed and include attached rubrics/ marking criteria for scoring. The supervisor of teachers' reports is the head-teacher; they demanded that marking criteria for judging teachers' action research be attached in the regulation appendix section. Salleh et al. (2013) stated that the government's effort should make transparent and acceptable criteria for

performance evaluation more effective. Fair performance appraisal practices affect satisfaction, commitment, and involvement in the organization. One of the head teachers said that *"If we had been given a reliable policy for examining the teachers' performance report, we would justify our responsibility. Teachers would get satisfaction even if they obtained lower marks."*

The government should change policy for teachers' promotion; they should be rewarded and punished on the basis of their performance. The criteria that are given in the teachers' professional framework (2023) should be implemented strictly. Observation, monitoring, mentoring, supervision, and providing constructive feedback are the scaffolds, as suggested by Vygotsky, that should be given to teachers to change their attitudes towards research and innovation.

Support Teachers, Strengthen Research, Transform Learning

Major theme: institutional and policy support for teachers. Research questions: professional context and practice demonstrate their experiences of conducting AR. Sociocultural theory suggests that knowledge is co-constructed through interaction, support, and discussion. The study disclosed that teachers required mentoring, institutional support, guidance, and motivation to successfully carry out AR at school. Some teachers could not change their attitudes over time; the teaching profession is dynamic and requires them to update themselves with innovation, technology, and teaching methods. Teachers complained that they didn't have a curriculum or a teacher's guide, internet connectivity, a projector, a smart board, or an interactive board.

A few teachers shared that the municipality has given them a laptop; they don't know how to use a computer or laptop for teaching, learning, and innovation. Chinese proverb says, *"If a teacher flies, students run; if a teacher runs, students walk; if a teacher walks, students sit; if a teacher sits, students sleep."* A teacher is a change agent who can transform usual classroom teaching into innovative and creative teaching using new methods and techniques that meet the needs and demands of the curriculum. To achieve the objective of education, teachers should play a pivotal role and actively engage their students in learning activities.

Teachers need help and support from mentors, senior teachers, trainers, head-teachers, officers, and colleagues, as per Vygotsky's MKO, to investigate and conduct research. Nevertheless, English teachers complained that they didn't receive support from any experts on how to break the iceberg of traditional classroom situations

through research and innovation. One participant said they were not invited to any training or workshop by the school administration and the local education unit. Head-teachers agreed that they were unable to conduct workshops on how to conduct research, especially action research, due to limited resources at school. The education officer also admitted that the municipality has been running training such as ICT, integrated curriculum, and curriculum dissemination, but action research training was in the shadows. He further added that he had realized the importance of action research in teaching and learning activities, thinking that experienced and respected teachers were aware that their professional development could be accomplished through research.

Educational agencies such as schools, municipalities, Education training centers, Education development and coordination units, head-teachers, trainers, and mentors should provide practical support, supervise their practices, and provide feedback to them to eradicate classroom issues and facilitate students' learning performance.

Conclusion

Teachers carry out action research through an AR cycle that involves recognizing a problem, learning more about it, developing a solution, and applying it to transform the learning environment. The findings of the previous literature and reports show the importance of action research for teachers' professional growth. The purpose of the study is to explore and analyze the secondary-level English language teachers' contexts, provisions, practices, and challenges for their professional growth based on their narratives on applying action research. Although participants perceive AR as a catalyzing tool for teachers' professional development and the transformation of educational practices, and a new avenue for supporting students' learning outcomes, they have not been able to conduct it effectively due to inadequate knowledge, insufficient resources, a demotivating school environment, no institutional support, and a biased evaluation system. The findings show the disparity between teachers' perceptions and practice of AR.

Teachers need institutional support to design, implement, and disseminate AR to change their practices and students' learning; they don't get adequate institutional support to implement AR effectively because they face challenges at their institutions: workload, time constraints, a less supportive and cooperative environment, and resource crises. It shows that teachers' single commitment is not sufficient in

designing, implementing, and disseminating AR because mentoring teachers' research, institutional support, contextual support, supervision, and a fair appraisal policy system are very weak in our context.

Teachers perceive it as compliance-oriented rather than inquiry-oriented because they are required to submit the AR report for procedural and promotion purposes. Teachers perceived that they haven't designed an AR report if they aren't mandated to submit it for work performance appraisal and promotion purposes. It also raises the issue of the purpose of teacher professional development, as a result of effectively employing AR and the practice of AR becoming a formality in the local context. Participants interpret that teachers' promotion based on the work performance appraisal criteria needs to be revised, specifying the position of AR at school.

Although some participants have theoretical knowledge of action research, they understand the importance of AR for educational excellence; they don't design it effectively to overcome classroom issues because they always have reasons: it requires resources, an innovative environment, motivation, and incentives. The findings also show the issue of professionalism; teachers need to be enthusiastic and self- motivated to apply it meaningfully to improve their practices and students' learning. Self-motivation theory states that the doer must be motivated to transform the existing situation. Teachers require motivation to bring change to themselves and in the teaching environment.

The purpose of AR is to find a solution to problems in one's field. It is a systematic, rigorous, self-reflective inquiry aimed at solving problems, improving professional practices, and enhancing students' learning. Participants are not able to undertake AR to improve their practices and students' learning because they have less professional support. Teachers' professional support is an emerging issue in education because teachers face instructional, behavioral, contextual, financial, and technological problems. Head teachers and educational officer participants interpret that they provide support in accordance with the institutional budget and resources to minimize the challenges and barriers to carry out AR effectively.

In our context, teacher training, workshops, sharing, and dissemination of new techniques have almost disappeared since the government introduced the concept of eliminating a resource center. In the past, the resource center bridged the school and the education office; a resource person is appointed with technical requirements such

as teaching experience, qualifications, and mentoring skills. They organize programs such as workshops and training and provide opportunities to disseminate their findings. Nowadays, a single education officer has to perform administrative responsibilities, so they don't have time to support teachers by organizing programs such as training, conferences, research writing workshops, refreshment, etc. Furthermore, teacher participants narrate that they do not have practical knowledge of conducting classroom problem-based research. Additionally, the local level can establish a teachers' support mechanism in which mentor researchers help teachers identify classroom challenges and implement AR procedures for the resolution of problems.

Moreover, additional issues arise concerning research writing skills, supervision, monitoring, evaluation, policy, discrimination, negative attitudes toward innovation and research, unethical practices such as plagiarism and the submission of questionable research, and a disregard for ethical considerations such as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. The study reveals teachers' attitudes toward professionalism, a blaming culture, inadequate resources, lack of mentoring for teachers' research, and limited teacher support systems in schools, all of which influence the perceived importance of action research at the secondary level and further exacerbate the difficulties teachers face in conducting meaningful research.

Participants narrate that they use different teaching strategies: group work, strip story, reflection writing, role play, discussion, debate, and word-meaning race to change their students' learning achievement. They interpret that they sometimes conduct AR based on classroom issues to overcome them and improve students' learning, they have not prepared AR report due to inadequate knowledge, lack of fair evaluation on AR report, unfavorable institutional environment.

Despite these prevailing situations, concerned authorities: the three-layer government, school management committee, and head teachers can design a strategic plan for teachers' support systems, mentoring, training, a transparent work appraisal system, and incentive, reward, and punishment systems, and disseminate research findings to minimize barriers and encourage teachers to be creative in carrying out AR.

Reflections

"Learning starts from the womb to the tomb" - Arabic proverb.

Education is a lifelong process through which individuals acquire knowledge, develop skills, and gradually shape their understanding through learning and experience. A teacher is also a lifelong learner who continuously expands their knowledge and develops their professional skills throughout their teaching career. After completing a master's degree from ELE, I became a permanent secondary-level English teacher. I was devoted to teaching at school, on campus, and at a tuition center. Besides teaching English to students, I also taught a teacher service preparation course. I never thought of adding a new hat to my academic degree from Kathmandu University.

Though I was interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree at Kathmandu University (KU), as far as I knew, there were no bachelor's colleges affiliated with KU in my local area. I didn't even imagine joining the MPhil in ELE because a master's degree would be enough to teach at the school level. When I heard and read in the news that the government is planning to recruit head-teachers through competition, the qualification required for the secondary-level head-teacher exam will be an MPhil. I scanned many universities in Nepal and India, and I chose KU, thinking that it is one of the best universities for its quality. I enrolled in Kathmandu University's MPhil in ELE program after twelve years of completing my master's degree. Sometimes, time and circumstances become guidelines for accomplishing the task. I joined KU as a research scholar for my M.Phil. Fall batch 2022. I couldn't pursue this course without a blended mode of teaching. Sometimes, I missed the virtual class that usually began between 5 and 8 pm because I had to attend meetings at school and the municipality.

During the MPhil journey, I became chair of the Confederation of Nepalese Teachers (CNT). I joined and led the teachers' movement in Kathmandu for twenty-nine days. As a vice principal of a model school in Kapilvastu, I have infinite responsibilities and duties to perform at school. Besides these jobs, I am dedicated to my studies. I enrolled, along with 25 other colleagues, in the course in August 2022. I realized the popularity of KU in the first semester because I found qualified, dynamic professors who taught us from simple to complex forms.

Therefore, I enjoyed and acquired knowledge and skills in contemporary English language scenarios and research. I understood that it is the level of

actualization and the expansion of the repertoire of knowledge in research. Therefore, my whole effort was to get familiar with the various aspects of research. I felt that I had been away from regular reading for a long time, so the research terminologies introduced by my professors seemed completely new and difficult for me to understand. Teaching adults like children by explaining in detail was appreciable and praiseworthy. Professors make us read a bundle of books and articles, intensively expanding our knowledge and skills in ELT.

The session plan was designed intensively by accumulating activities that can be presented in the classroom. Conceptual clarity, student-oriented teaching, asking questions, sharing, concluding, reflection, and feedback were common features of teaching that helped us to explain the presented issues critically. Course modules of three semesters offered me expertise and skills to see the issues critically and develop research skills to explore, investigate problems, prepare papers, review them, and share them to get feedback from scholars.

In the first semester, I was totally unaware of searching for issues on Google Scholar, seeking authentic research articles, and downloading them. Gradually, I became familiar with doing such tasks with the help of professors' guidance. Activities like peer work, group work, and individual work on the given assignment boosted our capacity by learning from each other and developing collaborative skills to explore hidden research issues by reviewing the literature.

In the first semester, our professors asked us to choose a research agenda; I couldn't write research issues in the given format because choosing a problem was a complex task without having deep insight into the content, resources, and skills. I was thinking day and night about which area could be suitable according to my knowledge and skills. My previous experiences, professors' guidance, and reviewing literature facilitated my choice of the research issue. The research topic, English language teachers' experiences in carrying out research, was finalized by getting feedback from professors. As a result, I prepared the dissertation proposal draft in the second semester and defended it in the third semester.

Why I chose the topic: English language teachers' experience in research because the teaching profession is becoming challenging in the present scenario with the advancement of science and technology. Teachers should update their profession by carrying out research, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, the internet, and academic applications. Just as a sickle becomes blunt when it is not sharpened

regularly, teachers can become outdated if they do not engage in research, explore new ideas, and continually develop their knowledge and professional skills. Action research is carried out to solve problems in classroom teaching and learning. As a vice-principal of the school, I closely observed whether teachers actually undertook action research by exploring issues in their teaching contexts and following the procedural steps of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

I also observed whether they prepared their research reports in haste and submitted them merely as a formality. I found that most of the teachers did not genuinely conduct action research. I came to a similar finding while exploring the only piece of literature submitted to the ERO, which led me to conclude that this was one of the burning issues in the academic field. If teachers are reluctant to engage in research and innovation, they can hardly bring meaningful changes in students' achievement. As a result, our educational products may not contribute effectively to the development of the nation and may remain unable to compete on the international academic platform.

I searched Google Scholar using some keywords on the practice of action research and went through some literature. I found that numerous studies carried out action research for teachers' professional development. However, I confirmed that no research was carried out on permanent teachers' practices of carrying out action research, which is compulsion to do by them in my context. I ensured that my research would contribute something new to this phenomenon, providing some implications for the teachers, researchers, policymakers, and school stakeholders. It is a serious educational issue, so the government should research it.

As a Nepal Government public servant, I feel proud to uncover the issues that are still in a coma. It is necessary to research and explore teachers' contextual practices and challenges while undertaking AR for their learning. I chose the interpretive qualitative design. The interpretive study allowed me to explore the phenomenon narratively through the participants' experiences and perspectives. I chose participants with more than ten years' experience of the phenomenon. Their real-life experience and actual practice at their schools guided me in concluding the study.

I faced difficulties in making my research mature and authentic because purposively selected participants were not ready to sit for the interview. All participants were seniors to me, so I couldn't force them to get ready for the

interview. I prepared a consent form and asked them to sign; no one was ready to give answers to my questions. I was in the state of quitting the topic and explored a new issue. I was waiting for participants, so it took longer than scheduled. By the grace of God, one participant allowed me to sit in on the interview. I convinced them that I could maintain ethical considerations and privacy. Finally, I found that they communicated the purpose of sitting in on the interview to each other, and ultimately, all were ready to be research participants.

I found and learned that research is a systematic, rigorous process of investigating issues; it cannot be prepared in haste. Action research is a systematic inquiry undertaken by practitioners to identify problems in their practice, examine them critically, and take appropriate actions to improve their professional practice and the learning achievement from the interaction with participants. I also learned that teachers have not taken action research seriously. They were not interested in research for many reasons, such as workload, lack of resources, and hardly getting rewards or punishment. Moreover, teachers' support system should be established at the local level to sharpen teachers' skills. I learned that action research is designed for teachers because I still face many problems inside and outside of the classroom in the school periphery, so it would help me to overcome these problems to increase learning outcomes in my subject.

To sum up this section, as a secondary-level teacher and vice-principal, my concern was how AR facilitates educators' and learners' development. Before conducting research, I assumed teachers produced AR for submission in the work performance appraisal form rather than exploring the issues for their betterment. During the data collection, my positionality facilitated participants to share their experiences freely, and I found that, for several reasons, such as policy deficiencies, inadequate institutional support, and an unfair appraisal system, they deliberately prepared AR and submitted it. Thus, they experienced that systematic exploration of issues through AR was determined by teachers' commitment, effective policy, and TPSS. This study was carried out on a small scale of participants and in a limited context; the findings may not be universally applicable.

Implications

The findings of the research have a tremendous effect on the educational field. I found that practicing research and innovation in the context of the implications influenced other fields. Teacher professional development has been a burning issue in

the education field. Relevant literature findings suggested that teachers face challenges in adapting their teaching strategies to the rapid evolution of science and technology. The government has recommended teachers' development in its education plan and policies. Proactive, dynamic, techno-friendly researchers and creators can exist in the teaching field. All participants agreed that action research in the field of education brought multiple remedies to overcome challenges. However, they faced many obstacles to conducting the research in their school. Though research is a challenging task, there are some implications for the people concerned with the education field. The following scholars and stakeholders connected to education are supposed to benefit from the findings of my study.

Implication for Teachers

Action research is practitioner research; teachers implement the curriculum to achieve the national goal of education. The concern of quality assurance is a cross-cutting issue in the education forum. Many schools are almost closed and merging due to the lower number of students. The dropout rate is increasing in public schools because students don't see future security in acquiring education. There are many problems found in the classroom that teachers have been facing in their teaching. Teachers are aware of the importance of action research, which facilitates teachers in solving problems and improving quality education. The center of the discussion is the willpower and dedication of the teachers towards exploring classroom issues and conducting research.

Implication for the Researcher

This research study sheds light on my understanding of the practice of action research in schools and prompted me to take a critical look at how action research is actually practiced in school settings. Many researchers have claimed that action research has brought significant changes and transformation in academia. Although action research has considerable importance in education, practitioners have found it time-consuming and have perceived it as an additional workload. Overall, my participants' experiences of teaching were largely shaped by traditional approaches to teaching.

This research was grounded in sociocultural theory, which views knowledge as being co-constructed through discussion, interaction, and conversation. The study found that action research functioned as a mediating tool through a dialogic process, helping teachers move toward their potential level within the Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD) and gradually work more independently. The ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, along with the quality standards and ethical considerations adopted in this study, can provide researchers with a roadmap for investigating similar phenomena. Future researchers who are interested in working in this area may find this research helpful in developing a vision for further inquiry. They can also identify and address methodological, contextual, and theoretical gaps while conducting research in similar areas.

Implications for the Stakeholders of the School

This study will be beneficial to the headteachers, education officers, and school management committee. It provides a roadmap for the existing situation of research practice at school. The school management committee has allocated a budget for training and workshops. Similarly, the head-teacher is considered the supervisor who supervises and monitors teachers' academic activities and the conditions for producing action research, like manufacturing goods in a factory. He could regulate unethical practices of generating action research without visualizing the classroom conditions.

The educational officers will change the attitudes of teachers toward research and innovation. The municipality organized research findings dissemination programs to share best practices in other schools. The concept of satellite was resumed by the municipality to facilitate feeder school teachers from host schools. The provision of regulation up to the secondary level is given by the constitution, so the municipality supervises, monitors, promotes, and scores the marks for their promotional purpose based on the teachers' action research reports.

ETC also benefits from this study by changing training modules to emphasize school research. They shouldn't certify the trainees unless and until they actually reform the teaching environment. ETC should reconsider its current practice of providing training completion certificates immediately after participants submit the required documents.

Implication for Policy Makers

Policymakers can use applicable ideas and insights from the research findings to reform and revise the teacher professional development policy. This research is based on the ground reality of teachers' research practices in schools, so policymakers can use these findings to reform the education policy.

The government policy has considered action research to be inevitable for teachers to carry out. To provide incentives for teachers' promotion, action research reports became mandatory; it has been allocated 5 marks out of 100 points for five years. This study found that teachers didn't conduct action research by exploring issues encountered in teaching activities. They submitted documents for promotional purposes, not for improving students' achievement.

The research found gaps in policy and practice due to various reasons, such as lack of training, monitoring, resources, workload, unprofessionalism, etc. My research bridges the gap by suggesting that policymakers clarify the criteria for evaluating action research reports. In addition, the teachers' promotion criteria should be rewritten to include that the submission of research documents won't be sufficient; they should present their findings at the local level. Second, Policymakers should monitor the real conditions of students and their classrooms and enhance the quality of education at the school level through teachers' development.

They can take feedback from teachers, students, parents, and concerned people to develop practical strategies for teachers' professional development. They incorporate rewards and punishments for teachers based on the learning outcomes in their subject. The criteria for promotion should be changed by including action research findings, lesson study, self-reflection reports, learning achievement reports, and classroom observation reports. Teachers' professional development is automatically reflected when they fulfill the criteria for promotion. Therefore, policymakers bridge the gap between theory and practice by accumulating these findings to contribute to learning outcomes and teachers' development.

Overall, the study's findings help English language teachers to minimize the challenges and barriers of implementing AR effectively for their professional development through action research. Moreover, this study contributes to head teachers by helping them examine their teachers' action research reports and create a supportive and cooperative school environment. In the same way, this research equally contributes to educational officers who are observing the real scenario of conducting action research in their municipality. This study suggests revising the training curriculum for teacher professional development. Similarly, the study equally contributes to policymakers in revising the policy on teachers' professional development tools, promotion criteria, and AR positionality at school. Accordingly, this study provides practitioners with information about the research strategies/

techniques they employ while conducting seminars, workshops, and training. In addition, the study provides valuable insights to English language teachers to design, implement, and disseminate AR effectively to change their practices and students' learning.

Limitations and Future Research

My study on English teachers' experiences of conducting AR through the interpretive study was carried out in specific public schools in a municipality in Lumbini Province, selecting participants through purposive sampling procedures. This study explored the participants' perceptions of practicing AR in school by three English teachers for their professional development and students' academic competencies. However, the experiences of selected participants in the actualization of AR did not capture all public teachers' voices. The evidence and information were collected using three major tools: interviews, documents, and field notes, which were not sufficient to claim that AR enhanced teachers' and students' learning. My research didn't use an observation tool to determine whether the school created a supportive environment to facilitate the classroom context of teaching subjects to students to promote their outcomes. The research findings can be implemented in a specific context and can't be transferred or generalized to other contexts.

Future studies will compare policy requirements and classroom practice through direct observation of teachers' activities, whether teachers' prepared reports followed the AR cycle: planning, action, observation and reflection, and replanning if the intervention does not produce satisfactory results. Similarly, future researchers will study students' learning progress as a result of AR through direct observation, examination, interaction, focus group discussions, and interview tools as well. My research is confined to the experiences of three teachers of the same geography and gender in a restricted context; future research will include respondents from varied geographies and genders and may use other qualitative research designs. The cross-cutting issue is whether public schools prepare AR for compliance or self-reflective inquiry for their advancement; applying heterogeneous data collection tools and a selected large number of participants will be an area of future research. In the same vein, future research can address professionalism issues and the role of policy and institutional support in articulating authentic AR.

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APPENDIX

CONSENT FORM

Kathmandu University School of Education

M.Phil. in English Language Education

Consent to Take Part in Research

Research Title - English Language Teachers' Experiences of Conducting Action Research: An interpretive study

1. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
2. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
3. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
4. I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
5. I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
6. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
7. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous in any report on the results of this research. I will change my name and disguise any details of my interview that may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
8. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in dissertations, conference presentations, published papers, etc.
9. I understand that if I inform the researcher that I or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities. They will discuss this with me first but may be required to report it with or without my permission.
10. I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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Name of the participant **Signature of participant** **Date**

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

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Name of the researcher **Signature of researcher** **Date**