Comparison of Nepalese and Finnish Teachers´ Perceptions of Good Teaching

Metsämuuronen T. Maria\textsuperscript{1} & Metsämuuronen Jari\textsuperscript{1,2}  
Helsinki University, Faculty of Behavioral Sciences, Finland\textsuperscript{1}  
Helsinki University, Faculty of Behavioral Sciences, Finland\textsuperscript{1}  
&  
NASA Unit, Educational Review Office, Ministry of Education, Kathmandu, Nepal\textsuperscript{2}

ABSTRACT

The basic quality of Finnish teachers seems to be at the top of any world scale – at least when assessed on the basis of the results in the international Programme for the International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) studies. All Finnish teachers need to enroll for a minimum of 4 years of university studies to reach the qualification for being a classroom teacher and 6–7 years’ studies to reach the qualifications for being a subject teacher. In provinces in Nepal, teachers may not have longer than ten months training for the profession.

This article compares the Finnish and Nepalese teachers’ perceptions of what makes a teacher good and how teaching can or should be organized for optimum positive impact. The perceptions of the Finnish teachers are done mainly by reviewing Finnish research literature. The perceptions of the Nepalese teachers were acquired by a focus group interview of 14 English-, Nepali-, and Mathematics teachers in Kathmandu and by using the information of the teachers’ background information questionnaires collected from 1,161 teachers in National Assessment of Student Achievement 2011.

In the Finnish literature, the idea of good teaching skills can be condensed into the concepts of ‘substance knowledge’, ‘pedagogical skills’ and ‘teacher’s personality’. The Nepalese material brings up, in addition, the ‘classroom managerial skills’ as one of the main characteristics of a good teacher. The interviews showed that the teachers in Kathmandu seem to have, in general, quite the similar views of the modern constructive psychological point of view for education as in Finland. However, in Nepal, the modern thinking seemed to be more concerned with theory than practice; the teachers in Kathmandu pointed out that in order to show a good way of (modern) teaching or a sign of a good (modern) teacher, it may not be possible with the resources they have. For example, the huge class sizes (up to 160 students per class in extreme cases) rarely make it possible to use individual learning and teaching strategies in the classroom. On the basis of the questionnaires, the teachers under the age of 26 felt themselves statistically more confident than the older teachers. Also, the average learning outcomes in the schools with younger teachers (27 years or less) were statistically better than those of older teachers (< 48 years). Mathematics teachers were more confident than the Nepali- and Social study teachers.

Keyword: Teacher; Teaching; Confidence; International Comparison; Focus group interview
1. Introduction – students and teacher in different realities

1.1 Students in different realities

The realities of pupils and students in Finland and Nepal are quite different. The last estimate (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011) of the population of Nepal in 2011 was 28.6 million, 5.5-times higher in comparison with the population in Finland. Nepalese will have an average of three children, and 37% of the population is under 15 years of age – in Finland, the figures are two and 16% (Statistics Finland, 2011). However, the infant mortality rate is still high in Nepal. The life expectancy in Nepal is 67.5 years – in Finland, the life expectancy of males is 76.7 and of females 83.2. In recent years, urbanization in Nepal has been strong, but still most of the population lives in rural areas. Kathmandu Valley, it is estimated, has 1.5 million inhabitants, but the city is home to many unregistered residents, which makes accurate calculations of population impossible (Embassy of Finland, 2012; UNDP, 2010).

In Nepal, around 93% of children start school between the ages of 5 and 9 – in Finland, practically all the children, including deeply retarded children, start school at the age of 7. Approximately 78% of those starting school in Nepal, get to the fifth grade, and only a small portion graduate after 10th grade – in Finland, practically all the school starters also pass the final class (9th grade) of compulsory education. In Nepal, there is still widespread use of child labor, and it is estimated that about 30% 5 to 14 year olds have some kind of work. From the National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) 2011, it is known, on the basis of student background questionnaires of over 48,000 students, that 19.5% of the 8th graders work at least one hour per week in a paid job. In Finland, it is practically impossible to find a child of this age working on a paid basis.

There are nine colleges and Universities in Nepal, and around 90% of all university students are studying under Tribhuvan University colleges in Kathmandu and different part of the country. The number of study places in tertiary education is obviously very limited in comparison with the number of students. In Finland, around 97% of the students find a study place in some institution – either in vocational schools or at colleges after which 47% of the students receive a tertiary education. Schooling in the community-based schools in Nepal is free of charge as it is in Finland. In Kathmandu Valley, however, the majority – more than 60% - of the schools are institutional-based (private) schools (Embassy of Finland, 2011; UNDP 2010).

Findings from the head teacher’s reports of NASA 2011 of the classroom sizes suggest that the average Nepalese students’ classroom size is 5.5 m x 4.1 m and, after subtracting the teacher’s space (1 m) and the middle isle (0.5 m), there is practically 4.5 m x 3.6 m = 16.2 square meters of floor space for an average 40 students – though there can be 60 or even 120 students in one, bigger, classroom. Hence, in theory and the observations support this, an average of 2.5 students is sitting in each square meter of the typical classroom. In Finland, according to Palonen et al. (2009), in a median school for the pupils of grade 1–6 there are 60 m² for 25 students which equals somewhat 2.5 m² for each student to work and move in. Practically speaking, all the Finnish students have their own desk with half a meter of space all around the work area.

1.2 Teachers in different realities

Nepal has tens of thousands of schools delivering compulsory education. On the basis of the latest official records used in the sampling of the NASA 2011 study, there were more than 33,000 schools giving teaching for the grades 1 to 6 – in Finland, the corresponding figure in 2011 was 2,020 (Statistics Finland, 2012a). In 2007, there were more than 165,000 teachers and more than 6,500 000 students in Nepal (Nepal in Figures, 2008). This means that there were, on average, 39.4
students per teacher in Nepal – in Finland, the figures were (nearly) 40,000 teachers (Kumpulainen 2011, 38) and 542,000 pupils (Statistics Finland, 2012b) and hence the student/teacher ratio was, on average, 13.5 students per teacher. The large number of schools, pupils, and teachers challenge the Ministry of Education in Nepal to evolve and develop teachers’ capacity and competence.

All Finnish teachers need to enroll for a minimum of 4 years of university studies to obtain the qualification for being a classroom teacher and 6−7 years’ studies to reach the qualifications for being a subject teacher. The strength of the long education is that within five years of training it is possible to receive a wide training in the theoretical studies but also a deep practical rehearsal in the real schools. In provinces in Nepal, teachers may not have longer than ten months training for the profession. The teachers’ salaries in Nepal are low and training (minimum ten months) is short in comparison with the Finnish four- to six-year teacher training period.

A specific feature of the Finnish teacher training is that the teacher profession is highly appreciated (see Kansanen 2003) – it is possible to select the students for the teachers training from the best sequence of the applying students. The high quality of the teachers has been seen as one of the main reasons behind the good results of PISA and TIMSS studies (see Niemi, 2010; 2011; 2012; Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011; 2006; Sahlberg 2011a; 2011b; Schleicher, 2011). In Nepal, the situation may be best described in an interview by a teachers’ educator and statistician Shyam Acharya (16th December 2011): “The teaching profession may not be valued on the same scale as in Finland, but it is one of the few professions that Nepal has to offer.”

The equipment in teaching can be very rudimentary in Nepal because of lack of resources. However, the discussions in Finnish educational publications also talk about teachers’ fatigue and strain (see Section 2), in the same way as the Nepalese teachers feel powerless. From this perspective, the teachers perhaps share some general and global challenges in Nepal and Finland. The responsibility of the teachers in Nepal - as well as in Finland - is great. Teachers are responsible for the entire training and opportunities for a good life of the young people. Teachers’ professional development projects and training centers are a good opportunity for teachers to get additional resources for education.

All in all, there are substantial differences between the teachers’ realities in Nepal and Finland. However, the teachers’ profession includes similarities all over the globe and hence, it makes sense to compare them. This article focuses on the perceptions of what makes a good teaching in these two, radically deviating countries. In Section 3.1, the Finnish teachers’ perceptions are sieved through the relevant Finnish research literature of good teaching and what constitutes a good teacher. In the empirical part in Sections 3.2 – 3.6, the Nepalese teachers’ perceptions are in focus. The purpose of the empirical part is to investigate the context of the Nepalese teacher and Nepalese teacher’s perceptions about what kind of teacher is a good teacher in Nepal on the basis of what is known of the Finnish teachers. Another purpose of the study is to find out how teachers experience their work in Nepal and how education could be organized more optimally. For these purposes, several teachers and specialists were interviewed and 2011 teachers’ questionnaires were used to assess teachers’ competence in their own subject area.

2. Methods

The Finnish teachers’ perceptions of good teaching are mapped through a literature review comprising a relevant literature of teachers’ educators of the Universities in Finland. Mainly, the literature is Finnish. The empirical datasets of Nepalese teachers’ perceptions are collected in two layers. The qualitative dataset was collected 2011 by interviewing 14 Nepalese teachers by using a
focus group interview. The quantitative dataset was collected by 1,161 teachers’ background questionnaire in National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) 2011. The latter data was collected the year 2012.

2.1 Focus group interviews
The main method for data collection was the focus group interview (see Metsämuuronen, 2013, 283). Focus group interviews are a form of research interviews where a number of people are interviewed at the same time. The purpose of the interview is to activate a group discussion about the subject, in this case, the concept of good teaching and what constitutes a good teacher.

The teachers’ interview took place in Kathmandu, on the 23rd of December 2011. Before December, teachers in an item writers’ seminar for NASA 2012 for grades 3 and 5 were asked about their interest in participating in research about good teacher professionalism. Of the list of interested teachers, a total of 14 teachers were contacted, and they all took part in both the interview and the questionnaires – of these, six were mathematics teachers and eight language teachers, of which five were Nepali language teachers and three were English language teachers. Some of the participants taught both at the lower and higher grades. It is good to note that (1) all the teachers came from the Kathmandu Valley area, (2) all teachers volunteered in the interview, (3) they were not randomly selected, (4) they were mainly teachers teaching for lower grades, and (5) hence, they most probably represent the most advanced segment of the teachers in Nepal.

Two focus groups were set: one for mathematics teachers and another for Nepalese language teachers. In addition, English language teachers were placed in the groups so that the answers were easier to mediate in English. By doing so, in order to gather the answers as naturally as possible, all the focus group members had the opportunity to respond by using their mother tongue and the English language teachers interpreted the contents to the interviewer. Hence, in what follows with the cited references, an English teacher may seem to use a lot of words instead of mathematics- or Nepalese language teachers. The interview proceeded so that initially the interviewer presented the research topic. After this, the interviewees discussed the following topics: what makes a good teacher and what constitutes good teaching. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to facilitate the analysis of interviews. A simple content analysis was administered to the data to find out the central themes of the teachers.

In the Results section, the interviewees’ answers are used as direct quotations (in English). These quotes are marked with a code to maintain anonymity. The first letter indicates which group the person in question has been (M / N / E), the second letter tells the sex of the interviewee (M / F), and the last number indicates the number of that person's serial number (1−14).

2.2 National survey of teachers
Another material used in this article was the teachers’ questionnaires completed during the final testing of NASA 2011 at the beginning of March 2012. The sample of grade 8 teachers in NASA 2011 was a two-phased stratified sample comprising 1201 schools representing such strata as Ecological zone (Mountain, Hill, Tarai, that is, the low land), Developmental zones (Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western, and Far-Western), school’s location (rural / urban), and school’s type (community school / private school). Kathmandu Valley was taken as a single geographical stratum as it is the most densely populated area in the country with more opportunities than other areas. It also has the unique features of the mixed ethnicities, weather conditions, economic activities, aggressive development, as well as the dense human capacity. Hence, there were 16 basic geographical areas in the sampling (3 x 5 + 1). Such type of information as School Size, Ethnic
group and School Language were also used in selection, too, however, not as strata. Out of 75 districts, 25 districts were randomly selected to represent each of 16 geographical strata. At the second phase, the schools were selected randomly on the basis of the lists of schools sent by the District Education Offices (DEO). At this phase, the schools’ location and type were used to select the schools to represent the districts.

Altogether 1,161 teachers from 1,201 schools (97%) answered the questions to assess their own perceptions of their competence in selected substance areas related to the curriculum. The set of questions for this – borrowed from the TIMSS 2003 teachers’ background questionnaire (TIMSS 2006) and modified to fit the Nepalese context – naturally differed between different subjects because of different content areas; 17 areas were covered in Mathematics, 21 areas in Nepali language, and 4 in Social Studies. The basic question was, however, the same in all subjects: “Considering your training and experience in both Mathematics/Nepali/Social Studies content and instruction, how ready do you feel you are to teach these topics at the eighth grade?” and the scales were identical: simple (1), somewhat simple (2), not simple (3), not at all simple (4). After the inversion of the scale, shifting the scale to start from zero, and rationed by the maximum score, the percentage of maximum score was calculated for each teacher in all subjects. Hence, the self-assessment is made comparable over the different subjects. 100(%) would mean that the teacher felt all the subject areas ‘simple’ to teach, and 0(%) would mean that the teacher felt all the subject areas ‘not at all simple’ to teach.

It is worth noting that the teachers in the interview and teachers in NASA 2011 dataset are not fully comparable because of the former being mainly classroom teachers and the latter subject teachers. Nevertheless, by using two types of teachers may enrich the data and give the more wholly picture of the teachers’ perception of the good teaching.

2.3 Statistical methods

The study combines the qualitative information from the interviews and quantitative information from the background questionnaires and the achievement tests of teachers. In the statistical part, the basic statistical method, Analysis of Variance, is used. Additionally, the Decision Tree Analysis (DTA) is used to find the best cut-offs for the independent variables for explaining the differences in self-experienced competence. All statistical analysis was done by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 (SPSS20) software. Because the DTA may be less known for the reader a simple example is given.

DTA, or Tree analysis, is one of the methods used in data mining in SPSS software – it is very effective when it comes to finding statistically the best groupings of the independent variables. DTA produces a chart such as the one below:
Figure 1. An example of a DTA modeling

The chart shows that the Node 0 (so called “mother node”), where the student average student achievement (variable $P_{Eqd\_Total}$) is 42.8% of the maximum score, can be divided into five categories on the basis of Mother’s education, which all differ from each other in a statistically significant manner. In node 1 (here “Mother’s education <=1”, that is, the lowest class of mother’s education, that is, “illiterate”), the student achievement level is 39.6, and in the highest group (node 5, here “Mother’s education >4”, that is, “Mothers who passed the School Leave Certificate”), the average student achievement level is 49.9. This division of the mother’s education – and exact this – is statistically the best division; one cannot find better in the given data. However, the division is not necessarily the best from the content-wise.

In the boxes, there is also information on Standard Deviation (Std. Dev.), sample size (n), the percentage of cases that are in this node (%), and what would be the predicted mean in the node (Predicted) which appear to be the same as the mean. Just below the node 0 there are indicators for the statistical test: the p-values are adjusted by using Bonferroni adjustment (Adj. P-value) and the test used was the F-test with the degrees of freedom of 4 (which is the number of groups minus 1) and 15940 (which is N minus the number of groups).

3 Results

3.1 Finnish point of view to the good teaching and a good teacher

Finnish teachers’ basic quality seems to be at the top of any world scale – at least when assessed on the basis of the students’ results in the international comparisons of Progress in Student Achievement (PISA, 2001; 2003; 2007; 2009) and Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS, 1999; 2011). In Finland, in particular, the differences between schools are among the lowest in the world scale (Schleicher, 2006). It can therefore be argued that, in Finland, educators have no great deviations when it comes to teaching skills. Instead, in countries where the
differences between schools are large, for example, in Nepal, the differences between the qualifications and competencies of teachers may be one reason for the divergent results.

In Finland, pedagogy and teaching have been studied widely – including teaching and learning as well as other areas of the discipline. Finland has done well in the PISA survey, and the teachers’ long and theoretical-practical training may play a remarkable role in this (see Kansanen, 2003; Niemi, 2011; 2010; Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2011; 2006; Sahlberg 2011a, 2011b; Schleicher, 2011). Learning to be a teacher begins in the first few grades of school and continues throughout the study period of up to workplace socialization (Lauriala, 2000, 88–90.) Teacher’s role is twofold - on the one hand a good teacher must be a reformer but on the other a guardian of traditions. In addition, teacher's work requires a wide range of content information, substance knowledge, and ethical maturity in a demanding profession. The modern teacher in the 2000s is a reflective, respectful and ethical individual as well as a professional whose aim is to expand and support the people, whose identity is still taking shape. (Heikkinen, 2000, 16–17.)

A contemporary teacher requires broad-based dual qualifications: education needs both theoretical expertise of teaching and learning and in-depth knowledge about the subject (Patrikainen, 2000, 27−29). According to the current constructivist view of learning, learning takes place not only at school but for life in all those environments where a person works (e.g. Bruner, 1996). In constructivist learning philosophy, learning takes place like a spiral form, and learning is the learner's active thinking activity where the learner builds knowledge upon knowledge. (Bruner, 1996; Heikkinen, 2000, 8; Tynjälä, 2002, 21–22, 37–39; Patrikainen, 2000, 21–23; Hakkarainen, Lonka & Lipponen, 2001). The learner has to learn to apply, integrate and deliver information rather than to adopt it and the teacher is the director of this learning process. The teacher's role is to consider, what the appropriate methods of knowledge construction of learners are (Heikkinen, 2000, 9).

In Finland, the teachers are taken to be high-level experts of the teaching profession; according to a great consensus in Finland, the teachers are thought to be reflective and independent professionals in their own field. This kind of teaching needs expertise, which goes beyond the traditional teacher professionalism. Central to this new professionalism are various forms of cooperation. The teaching profession is no longer just about creativity combined with a technical skill; the modern Finnish teacher works through the personality. The neo-professionalism is said to depend on how well teachers are able to structure themselves, their world, and the value of human knowledge and conception of learning (Patrikainen, 2000, 27–29). Hence, according to Partikainen, it is not possible to build a one absolute and objective truth of a model teacher or one proper way to teach. According to him (2000, 27–29; also Heikkinen, 2000, 10–11), the teacher and teacher's personality are shaped by how each teacher observes and constructs the environment and information. Although the teacher would be at the crest of a wave of the neo-professionalism and an expert in his/her subject area, (s)he must also pay attention to the social and emotional side of education (Lauriala, 2000, 88–90).

In a contemporary Western reality, the teacher must be present in environments that are more problematic, restless, and complicated than before. Teaching in a modern world is an interactive process and the starting point for the development of needed skills is the teacher's own value base and the concept of man (Patrikainen, 2000, 21–23). The skills of a teacher are developed specifically in those situations which (s)he faces in her/his work; each teacher's decisions are based on either the conscious- or unconscious values. Also, the teacher must act in such a way what is the best for a student. Lauriala (2000, 88–90) notes that only learnt and developed teachers can guarantee that in today's rapidly changing world students will grow motivated and capable of continuous learning. For these reasons, teachers’ qualifications in the neo-professionalism include an ethical approach on the top of reflective theoretical knowledge, practical information, and wide-
ranging competence (Lauriala, 2000, 88–90; Syrjäläinen, Jyrhämä & Haverinen, 2009). Heikkinen (2000, 16–17) and Patrikainen (2000, 27–29) note that to be a good teacher in a modern world, the crucial characteristics of the teacher’s personality includes professionalism, reflectivity, introspectiveness, and appreciation of individuality.

The pedagogical thinking of the teacher can be reflected in the solutions made in everyday life. The pedagogical thinking manifests itself not only in actions but also in what the teachers tell about their work and how they justify their solutions (Jyrhämä, 2002, 18–19; Syrjäläinen, Jyrhämä & Haverinen, 2009; Kansanen, 1995a, 14–16; 1995b, 33). Theoretically, teachers' pedagogical thinking should focus on the teaching-studying-learning process as a whole and it should be highlighted as the aim and interactivity of the learning actions. However, though a teacher should be able to reflect on classroom activities from the theoretical viewpoint, the actual work is still more or less practical in nature through activities. Syrjäläinen, Jyrhämä and Haverinen (2009) remind us that the basis for the teachers' didactic skills lies in the discipline in the contents and the standards set by the teaching profession. Studying the learning- and teaching theories helps students to develop the aims of teaching, learning situations, interaction design, and the evaluation of learning.

To summarize the Finnish literature of good teaching, the emphasis seems to be on substance knowledge, pedagogical skills, and the teacher's personality (see Figure 1). Each of these areas includes its own detailed contents.

![Figure 2. A Good teacher based on the Finnish literature](image)

3.2 Nepalese point of view to the good teaching and a good teacher

3.2.1 General perceptions of good teaching and its challenges in Nepal
The interviewees' answers about teaching and learning were generally in accordance with the modern constructivist view. However, what the teachers said to be a good way of teaching, or a sign
of a good teacher, may not have been practically possible with the resources that were available to (average) teachers. The teachers generally thought that they did not have the time or resources to develop their own teaching materials. Also, the training was said to be too short. Teachers say that it would be good to have teachers’ joint meetings, where they could share ideas and teaching materials. One related fact raised up by the teachers is that the final year of the general education, grade 10, is used, in practice, almost entirely to make sure that the students would learn by heart as much content as possible in order to be a success in the School Leave Certificate Examination (SLC). The SLC exam, as the main gateway examination, practically determines the student's further education.¹

In contemporary Finnish schools, both students and teachers are self-reflecting. The interviewed teachers recognize that it is important for the teachers to reflect on their own teaching in order to assess afterwards whether it had the desired result or not. One needs to think about what has been done, and how it should be changed – if needed. However, the interviewees continued, that the number of students in the private schools (A-grade boarding schools) and governmental public schools are different. In the public schools, the resources for planning and teaching were considered being less than in the private schools, and teachers’ general endurance is a test because of the large class sizes, and long days of non-stop teaching. Teachers raised the question whether a teacher can develop their full potential when during the school day there are several hours of lessons without a break.²

... So that they [teachers in the private schools] can teach in a proper way. But in ours [public school] it’s not. Another thing is the allocation of teacher, like the teacher is given six or seven periods of a day. That means she has to go in the class regularly. She does not have breaks in the middle. She cannot be mentally prepared there. Is not it? Because she just teach the first period and there is no second period leisure or rest then what she can think of matter or subject matter, she cannot construct teaching materials. She has to take the whole classes of the day. That is, how a teacher can prepare? So I want to say that here is no proper ratio of teacher and student. EF3

3.2.2 Mathematic teachers' perceptions of a good teacher
When asked what makes a good Mathematics teacher, the teachers agreed that it is important that the teacher is hard-working, that the teacher should possess a sharp mathematical mind and intelligence, and he should be innovative and practical.

Yes, that’s why I have said math teacher must have mathematical intelligence with him or her. So that he should know the different kinds of techniques, different ideas of techniques and methods. EF3

In addition, a good mathematics teacher should know about teaching methods, as the interviewees agreed that mathematics is not an easy subject for students.

I my job, mathematical teaching is very difficult. All students don’t have interest to learn the math. Some students want to learn English language, Nepali language, Social Studies like that and other subjects but, average students don’t want to learn math, are not interested to learn math and science also. So I feel difficult to teach. MM1

¹ Outside of the interviews, it seems evident that in many cases the SLC examination has got far too an important role in children's lives in Nepal. One sad example of this is the set of 12 girl suicides in the spring 2012 reported to be connected to poor success in the SLC examination.
² The interviews are not modified. Hence also all the grammatical mistakes are genuine.
In Finland, variety of games and helpful methods for mathematical thinking, such as the Varga-Neményi method (Tikkanen, 2008; Lampinen & Korhonen, 2010; Varga-Neményi Association, 2012), are considered good for learning mathematics; these kinds of tools aim to enhance understanding about the abstract matters by using practical examples, such as everyday life objects and color rods. However, the interviewees did not identify these kinds of new methods, with traditional classroom teaching expressed to be the predominant form of teaching. As noted above, teachers at the community schools do not have time or money to use a variety of methods, such as applied mathematics games in their teaching, even though it would probably be desired.

Yes, we can use mathematics games and other ideas of mathematics also. But in Nepal, teachers we have no time. We cannot give such time, more time to collect the materials because in the context of Nepal, teachers have little salary. We cannot be based on that salary. We have to do other works in our house and field/farm. So we cannot provide sufficient time to collect such things. MM1

It seems that ideas of good teaching do not meet the reality at the general nor subject-wise level. The way teaching should be organized was known by the teachers, but they were not empowered enough to cope with the large amounts of students and small resources. As a solution to keep the teaching meaningful, the interviewees in the mathematics focus group proposed teacher meetings to be a good way to share teaching materials and new ideas in a collegial forum.

3.2.3 Nepali- and English language teachers’ perceptions of a good teacher

Teachers in the focus group of languages pointed out that the qualities of a good language teacher include, among others, linguistic skills, good grammar skills in the Nepalese language, clear pronunciation, the skill to tell stories, and a clear voice. Additionally, on teaching it is important to be student-centered, and the teacher should be able to control the class and to keep order in the class; the teacher should also keep focus on the curriculum and act in such a way that the students can participate in lessons.

Teaching English was said to be different to teaching Nepali and Mathematics. Mathematics was kept as practical and place-oriented whereas English language teaching could be also fun.

Math is little bit practical subject than English. But in English we can teach in a funny way, in a play way method. But, in math, we have to sit in a particular area, they have to do many more steps, they have to remember it and write it. BUT IN OUR ENGLISH, what we can do, either teach in class, or go in the garden and just teach. And if we are teaching the vocabulary and action words, we can just teach students by showing the acting, by giving them play a game, play way method, role play method, I can use different student centered method. So that they can learn easily. EF1

Language teachers noted the same as the mathematics teachers that the amount of teachers and students varies remarkably in schools and so the activities at schools and in the classroom differ. One of the interviewees stated that in other schools in one class there can be 65 students and just one teacher, whereas in other schools there might be five students and ten teachers.

Another great impact is that the ratio of the teacher of teacher and students in not matching. Not kept in the proper way. Somewhere there are more than 65 students in a class, single teacher, she has to do everything in 45 minutes. It’s very hard to manage there. In some schools, there are 5 students and 10 teachers. So the ratio of students and teachers is not properly managed. EF3
It is understandable that in these situations there are not the same possibilities for all students to learn. It is also a challenge for the teacher to be able to teach in these circumstances where there might be over 50 students in one classroom. It is important that the teachers themselves are aware of their limits and that they are ready to find answers to the challenges they are facing in their profession.

3.3 Combining the views – A Good teacher is a Competent Teacher with managerial skills

The interviews revealed the general issues described above, as well as specific characteristics of good teaching, such as a good design of lessons, the preparation of a work plan, punctuality, and working according to the curriculum. Both mathematics- and language teachers saw the pedagogical skills as well as the substance knowledge important when it comes to the characteristics of a good teacher. A good teacher is a competent teacher. One of the interviewees described a good teacher as follows:

A teacher is a good actor. He has to have good character, good personality, dutiful, punctual, politeness, social, helpful, must use teaching techniques. (EF3)

From the educational policy perspective, the quality of the teaching-learning process is essential. If the learner learns, the education can be seen as high-quality. As Joint Secretary Dr. Lava Awasthi (interview 23rd December 2011) pointed out, each school day should be meaningful to the student and the teachers have the key role to assure that that the students will learn. This is the reason why school reforms have a strong focus on teachers’ professional development. However, interviewees strongly suggested that if classroom management does not work, it is difficult to teach students and the teacher's own resources are overloaded.

In conclusion, good teaching seems not to work in Nepal as presented on the basis of the Finnish literature in Figure 1. In Nepal, the classroom managerial skills seem to be more important than the personal factors on the side of substance knowledge and pedagogical skills. According to the interviews, although the teacher would have good personality, substance knowledge, and pedagogical skills, it is impossible to achieve good learning results, when the class sizes are very large and if the classroom management skills remain incomplete. Hence, a better model for a good teacher in Nepal can be re-formed as a combination of four elements instead of three (Figure 3).
3.4 A Competent Teacher on the basis of the survey material

Because competence seems to be an important characteristic of a good teacher, some characteristics of competent teachers are studied deeper on the basis of the teachers’ background questionnaire collected from the Mathematics-, Nepali language-, and Social Studies teachers.

The mathematics teachers felt themselves more confident (mean 73% of the maximum score, Std. Dev. 17.8) than the Nepali language- (70%, 14.2) and Social Studies teachers (70%, 18.9). The difference is statistically significant ($F_{(2,1158)} = 5.42$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta^2 = 0.009$, see Table 1) but the effect size is small ($f = 0.10$). This means that the difference is real but it is small in comparison with the variance in the datasets. The Decision Tree Analysis (DTA) with CHAID algorithm (Kass, 1980) reveals that a more important factor in discriminating the teachers than the subject is the age of the teachers. The most confident teachers are those who are 25 years old or younger (75.7% confidence), and the least confident are those who are over 35 years of age (67.5%) (Figure 4). This may show some kind of wisdom of the older and experienced teachers not to be over confident of their skills as a teacher.

Table 1. ANOVA table of difference between the confidences within three subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
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Figure 4. DTA of Confidence explained by the age of the teacher

The DTA is sensitive to the variables selected in the modeling. During the analysis, different relevant sets of variables were selected in the analysis. When adding variables to the model, an interesting specific group of young teachers with very high confidence are found (Figure 5). Namely, if there has been active interaction with School Management Committee (SMC) of improving teaching-learning processes in the school and the (young) teacher of age lower than 26 years has experienced strong help in his/her work, the self-expressed competence is very high (83% confidence). If taking the confidence in the substance matter as a good thing, it seems that the positive interaction with SMCS seems to especially help young teachers to find their confidence.
It may be noteworthy that the teachers’ education, school type (community/institutional), school location (rural/urban), Ecological zone (Mountain, Hill, Terrai, Valley), Developmental region (Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western, Far-Western), or working experience (in years) do not explain differences in confidence levels. However, it seems that the teachers’ age is not only related to confidence, it seems to be related with the better learning achievements in the schools in Nepal; the DTA reveals also that, in the best performing schools, the teachers’ age was 27 years or lower (with the minimum of 3 years of experience) and in the lowest performing schools the teachers’ age was 48 or higher.

### 4 Conclusions

#### 4.1 Classroom management as Nepalese characteristics of Teacher
In the Finnish literature, the teacher qualification consists of three elements: personality, substance knowledge and pedagogical skills. It is noteworthy that the Finnish literature does not specifically raise the issue of classroom management as one of the basic skills of the teacher. In Nepal, however, it seems to be one of the main characteristics of a good teacher. Though the Finnish literature does not emphasize classroom management, in the international literature it has been
addressed quite often. Here, some ideas brought by Muijs and Reynolds (2005, 75–84) and Landau (2009, 739–755) are brought up.

Muijs and Reynolds (2005, 75–84) note that because teaching time is limited, it is important to invest in the quality of both teaching and behavior management. The concept of ‘classroom management’ is connected with the common rules and principles and compliance with them (Landau, 2009, 743). This makes teaching more meaningful, and the class is more meaningful to work with. Landau (2009, 747–751) points out that the purpose of the classroom governing practices is to create a meaningful learning environment for students focusing on successful studies and to emphasize fairness toward others and public tranquility. Class management practices are meant to increase students’ sense of responsibility. Muijs and Reynolds (2009, 75) argue that it is classroom management which distinguishes the effective and ineffective teacher from each other.

According to Muijs and Reynolds (2005, 76–83), the effective means of control for the class include the following:

1) the start of lessons must take place on time and the work instructions should be given before starting to do an assignment,
2) the seating arrangements must be thought out in advance so that children's temperaments are taken into account,
3) interruptions (external disturbing factor) during a lesson should be avoided,
4) transitions between classes will be smooth - thus avoiding the delays,
5) homework should be administered immediately after making the task, as the students’ attention is still in the task, and
6) ending of lessons should be done in such a way that the students have the opportunity to collect their belongings and leave the classroom.

4.2 Essentials perceptions of Nepalese data

Even though the realities in Finland and Nepal deviate radically, the Finnish and Nepalese teachers find their working ideals quite the same. In the Finnish literature, the attention is given to the teacher personality, substance knowledge and pedagogical skills – the same topics were raised in the interviews in Nepal, too. In Finland, however, the teachers seem to have greater opportunities to carry through these teaching ideals and instruction compared with the Nepalese teachers. In Nepal, the class sizes in compulsory education are easily double (average 40 students) of those in Finnish classes (maximum 24 students). Hence, in the reality of the Nepalese teachers, there is also a strong need for classroom management.

The interviews revealed that teachers in Nepal think in much the same way as teachers in Finland. However, the feasibility of teaching methods is limited by the resources of schools and teachers’ large workload. Classroom management skills are needed because of the high quantity of students and hence, a need to be able to control the masses.

In Nepal, there is just one text book that is used, which contains most of the content of the curriculum, and teachers will use much of this while teaching. The interviewees stated on a number of occasions that the use of different materials is meaningful but the resources were seen as an obstacle to their own production of material.

The quantitative analysis of the self-assessment of 1161 teachers showed that mathematic teachers were statistically significantly more confident than the Nepali language- and Social Studies teachers. Most confident teachers are the young ones – below 26 years – especially if they have had good experiences of School Management Committees visits with helpful comments to improve their teaching-learning processes.
Resonating quite well with the reality of teachers Nepal, Donald D. Quinn (Rhem, 2010) has summarized, ironically, teaching and class management as follows:

*If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn’t want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher’s job.*

References


