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From Theory to Praxis: A Narrative Study of Interior Design Education in Nepal

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Abstract: The education of Interior designers in Nepal is still in rudimentary stage. The purpose of this study is to explore the process of teaching and learning of educators of Interior design in Nepal to find out how curriculum, pedagogical activities and assessment influence the process of learning by students. The research is based on social constructivism theory and consists of four interviewed educators and practitioners from Kathmandu, Nepal. The primary research method used for the study is qualitative narrative inquiry and the data was collected through in-depth interviews and observation and analyzed by means of thematic analysis. The results show that curriculum is perceived as constructed praxis rather than a carefully composed project by the educators. There are four major pedagogical activities used in the class from reflection through demonstration to dialogic learning. However, this process is hindered by some restrictions and challenges. Moreover, the process of assessment is more important than the outcome of learning, on the other hand, there are no common rubrics for students. The study identifies ongoing misconceptions of the discipline, pedagogical inconsistencies between schools, inadequately trained instructors employed, and necessity of practicing emotional pedagogy as major challenges. Finally, the study proposes a tentative model of the pedagogical approach called 6 C's and recommends the change from teacher-centered software-oriented teaching techniques to socially constructivism and learner-centered teaching techniques.

Keywords: interior design pedagogy, curriculum development, narrative inquiry, Nepal, social constructivism, assessment strategies

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1. INTRODUCTION

Interior design education is defined as the process of teaching the skills and knowledge that are needed to carry out interior design work. The interior design education process has transformed a lot from its beginnings and early development from being simple art classes to mere theory of design. In 1854 in London the first interior design school was opened and the focus was mainly on educating the specialists who were able to create beautiful and functional spaces. Over time the curriculum started to be enriched by such subjects as marketing, design thinking, graphic design, CAD and many others.

My interior design studies in Nepal in 2008 were theoretical and traditional. My course was deprived of real-life experience and practical knowledge. We did not learn about real-life problems, such as finding the perfect job, working with the clients, competing, gaining experience in various fields like finance, communication, or presenting. It became clear that education is not enough when I entered the work field. In 2023 I began teaching students at an interior design school. Unfortunately, my students know big names in design but cannot name the first interior designer in Nepal. They have problems with applying the theories on color, Vastu, and design to real life, dealing with customers, and making BOQs. Are we being practical in our teaching? This thought motivated me to conduct this research.

This application has a very promising yet challenging role in interior design as it is associated with education. Interior design pedagogy encompasses the theories, methodologies, and practices of the teaching and learning of interior design and uses creative, technical, social, and human-centered methods. In fact, it is both the art and the science of teaching interior design. Interior design pedagogy consists of different models, interdisciplinary education, experiential education, and critical discourse. Undoubtedly, the basic principle of interior design pedagogy is the provision of functionality, emotions, and flow in the design. Other principles include the combination of theory and practice, aesthetic and visual aspects, and culture and social values. In the opinion of Fowles (1992), future interior designers will be able to face the challenges of the XXI century. He believes that education in interior design should provide the educational basis for effective functioning in the field of interior design.

The author has been working as a researcher in the STEAM faculty since 2024 and has learned holistic and transforming teaching practices and approaches. Education has to include both theory and practice, real-life experience, project-based learning, and problem-solving. The author studied the aspects of the STEAM pedagogy and learning theories and got acquainted with transdisciplinary change, metacognitive thinking, critical pedagogy (Taylor, 2015), liberatory (Fenstermacher & Soltis, 2004), student-centered techniques, social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and arts-based education. The science felt the influence of the above-mentioned theories and found that the theory required by the educational field differs from the reality of teaching interior designers in Nepal.

The aim of this research is to investigate the field of interior design education and education practices in the given field. Coleman (2002) describes interior design as an interdisciplinary branch of knowledge that encompasses fine arts, decorative arts, graphic design, home economics, and human perception. He states that 'border wars' are unnecessary and advocates the necessity of transdisciplinary approach. Harwood (1989) stresses on the importance of practicing skills while learning theoretical material.

The concept of interior design has been accepted in Nepal since 1997, when the first interior design institution, Lakhotia Institute of Art and Designing (LIAD) and later other institutes were built. The educational course in interior design is based on Eurocentric and international approaches without adapting to the social and cultural context of Nepal. The country's curriculum gives preference to technical skills but ignores practical, ethical, sustainable, and socio-economic skills. Indigenous knowledge is disregarded in favor of international ideas which makes the education system of Nepal neo-colonized (Abdi, 2012). There is an urgent need to change the system of education in order to develop education suitably for Nepal.

Consequently, the issue is the absence of systematic, contextualized, and research-oriented knowledge of interior design education in Nepal. This study looks into the current situation by examining what interior designers do in the educational process, what problems they encounter in the implementation of the curriculum, and how they employ their teaching methods responding to different achievements in education and practice. Lawson (2005) points out that most of the way is still unknown to those who would like to draw a map, since design is happening in the mind of the designer. The fact that the projects have recognizable stages makes it possible to describe this process step by step.

The goal of the study is to analyze and understand the teaching experiences of interior design specialists; studying their methods of teaching, planning, assessment and other

aspects. Thus, the research question is: what are the experiences of the interior designers teaching in Nepal?

This research is confined to Kathmandu, Nepal, where interior design education and practice are developing with no organized research. Kathmandu is the focal point of practice, with the educational institutions and opportunities. I incorporated stories of four participants who are interior design educators. Their experiences constitute the main source of information. Other stakeholders are not part of the study. The research is qualitative, as it employs narrative and experiential accounts focused on the educational experience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, journal articles, books, and other writings discussing the past and present conditions of the information on the research topic are summed up (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The chapter offers insights on the history, theories, notions, and the existent gaps in the pedagogy of interior design.

The study area of interior design can be divided into two parts, namely the profession and the education, both of which serve as two sides of the same medal. Sully (2015) states that the education in the interior design profession does not serve the purpose of preparing students for real-life activities.

Interior design education includes planning essentials, two-dimensional and three-dimensional drawings, rendering images and videos, as well as many other significant skills such as presentation skills, management skills, etc. Basically, nowadays interior design education offers a plethora of programs starting from diplomas to bachelor's and graduate degrees. The development journey from simple crafts-stone to formalized education proves the growing popularity of the profession. It is necessary to blend competencies into education in order to create the integration of the two processes (Harwood, 1989). Nutter (2001) states that it is necessary to regard the interior design profession as an independent one. He proposed several changes and improvements in education which should be the next step for future researches in interior design.

According to Hou (2023) an appropriate plan of actions should be developed and followed in order to improve the quality and method of education in the interior design courses. The author used two educational models (traditional and contemporary) in two groups for a whole semester. The results scored upturned in the class using the modern approach. Konkel (2014) examines the impact of various pedagogies, such as build-to-learn, live projects, hands-on labs, and experiential education, on interior design instructors and students. The outcome reveals the need for transformative interior design education. The study conducted by Matarneh& Mohsen (2023) adds to the body of knowledge related to the field and calls for further studies. The author of this thesis, Afacan (2015), concludes that using real-life situations, effective use of technology, and group work might be the means of better learning results. It has been pointed out by Zarour (2013) that interior design plays an important role in spatial development aimed at fulfilling both physical and psychological needs of people living in space. According to Hou (2023), smart teaching systems are found to raise motivation and effectiveness of practices and, consequently, to contribute to a global progress of students. Sully (2015) says that traditional education does not link interior design education to real-life situations and provides proof of the non-existence of applied education systems.

Various institutes in Nepal provide Diploma courses in Interior Design; however, when I was taking my classes, there were no policies or curricula devised by the governing body

for this course in the country. Recently, the CDC and CTEVT have expressed the desire to form and implement a course in interior design in Nepal. One of the policy-related frameworks that I can mention here is CTEVT's establishment of a curriculum for a Diploma in Interior Design (2021). In the same year, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC, 2021) worked on developing a course in Interior Decoration for Secondary education (Grades 11 and 12). Although these institutions serve the purpose of education, a crucial question arises as to whether the course is based on local content or on foreign-related theories. Although this new step signifies that Nepal has launched this course, the country has to offer either shorter courses or more long-term qualified and hands-on studies for those willing to make interior design their future profession.

The literature review and gaps discovered indicate the necessity of some educational program in the future-oriented practice of interior design. The review pinpoints the interwoven relationship between education and practice in interior design. To the best of my knowledge, there are very few studies conducted in the area of interior designing in Nepal. This makes this particular field remain unaddressed and unknown in academic circles. Hence, the research gap is seen in the need for more academic and research work connected to interior design throughout Nepal, which could help interested parties with the challenges arising in educational and pedagogical practices.

3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

I have come to understand the importance of exploring the narrative research rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory that emphasizes the idea that learning occurs in a social environment. Every person's growth occurs through communicating with people, social life and culture. The growth of a person happens at two levels: the first level of development in which a person interacts with others (i.e. the inter-psychology) and the psychological development (i.e. intra-psychology). From the perspective of interior designers, the designer's works should include knowledge of the social factors and combine this knowledge with their creative ideas. As noted by Taylor (2015), learning is a social process where people create knowledge in a social environment. The students of interior design will successfully develop with the teacher's support. In this regard, I have identified the constructivist approach to learning as the most suitable theory for my research. While conducting the research, I have applied social constructivism as the main theory of my study.

4. METHODOLOGY

I have utilized a systematic research methodology process which help me describe, explain and predict different events or situations in my research (Goundar, 2012), whereby methodology can be understood as a comprehensive methodology (General principles) while methods are practical means of collecting and analyzing data (Cohen et al., 2018). As for my philosophical assumptions, I have three of them, being epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Ontologically speaking, my reality is plural and subjective, based rather more on what people say (Dwyer & Davis, 2017), which consequently means that my epistemological position is social constructivism (Ntinda, 2020). In terms of epistemology, I see that my knowledge was developed by interaction between a researcher and research participant (Andrews et al., 2008), whereas axiological dimension refers to the fact that my research is based on important values such as participants' opinion and ethics of conducting research (including confidentiality and informed consent).

By adopting an interpretivist paradigm, I seek to understand the context (Taylor et al., 2012). I also deploy a critical paradigm to uncover the voice of participants via critical

thinking (Taylor & Medina, 2011). For this purpose, I have adopted a narrative framework that highlights the stories and experiences of educators in interior design. This qualitative research method gives meaning to human perceptions and experiences through narrative methods of inquiry (Riessman, 1993). With this method, researchers collaborate with research subjects in a social environment (Clandinin& Connelly, 2000). The narrative approach gives prominence to the viewpoint of participants and the interaction between researchers and participants (Ntinda, 2019). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) divide the narrative framework into interaction, continuity, and situational components.

The research was carried out in Kathmandu, Nepal, as a location of interest. Four professionals in the field of interior design, namely Amar, Raveena, Karishma, and Prem, were purposefully recruited for the study. They had been in the profession for a period of more than 10 years (Cohen et al., 2018). Throughout this process, a combination of both informal interviews and observational method was used. Three major interviews were conducted (one to two hours each) with each of the four participants using interview guides and observation checklists (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Methodologically speaking, the research process involved data transcription, arrangement, sorting, categorization, and thematization. Coding involves labelling of the data (Saldana, 2016; Kalpokaite&Radivojevic, 2019). Quality was ensured through adherence to the principles of trustworthiness and authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Trustworthiness has credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as its main criteria (Mertova& Webstar, 2020; Taylor & Medina, 2013). Authenticity, on its part, has fairness, educative, catalytic, and tactical quality criteria (Taylor, 2014). Ethical standards were put in place with regard to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, respect, and honesty (Cohen et al., 2018; Dahal, 2023).

5. RESULTS

This chapter investigates the teaching and learning processes utilized by the participants in Nepal. The following question is posed: What are the experiences of educators in the field of interior design in Nepal? The narratives are then divided into sections: curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation methods, needs of students, and difficulties, followed by the announcement of the model of 6' C communication framework.

Dialogues, Social Interactions, and Learning in Curriculum

As for interior design education, curriculum is dependent on the contexts, teacher personal style, aims of the institution, and demands of students. The educators have to find the balance between the practical skills, imagination, preparation for the real life, and shortage of resources. The authors of the paragraph consider the role of curriculum within interior design as it is a platform for discussing the different realities of the institutions, the learning approaches, and the contexts.

Anand stated: "In my curriculum, the major focus is on design studio and then software. Later comes the technical parts of interior design. To become a designer, a student should learn how to design; learning software is not the primary purpose, as we can hire others. However, if a student's conceptual understanding of design is unclear, and they lack creativity, it is useless. I believe that each teacher should have the freedom to choose the strategies. From my experience, we are good designers but not necessarily good business people. So, I have also included business management and entrepreneurship in my course."

Bishal shared: "In my college, it is a four-year interior design course, from auniversity. Our course is mainly focused on a curriculum-based structure. Teachers have to follow the curriculum. Over the last 6-7 years, 20-30% of contextual knowledge, including local materials, themes, and cultures, has been incorporated into a few subjects, such as design studios. Recently we asked students to make models on the themes of different Nepali cultures, like: Newari, Tharu, Bahun, Kshetri, etc. We are doing Bohemian, Japandi, Scandinavian, and, why not, Nepali?"
Shruti critiqued the systemic gaps: "Outside Nepal, where I studied, we had a dedicated workshop space just for interior design students, with real tools and equipment. By contrast, students here often lack knowledge of materials, tools, and practical processes. Here, the system is very lenient; we have to beg students for submissions, and even then, management expects us to pass them all. When I started teaching, I only lasted one semester. Management forced me to make everyone pass. Later, I refused and left. Sadly, here in Nepal, we are just producing degrees, not competent designers."

Jeena added: "When I was studying, there was not much practical exposure. Site visits were very rare. If I had to point out what was missing from our curriculum, I would definitely say hands-on, on-site construction exposure. Another gap was in rendering software. Another thing I believe is necessary is specialization. Even if colleges do not have course time to teach everything, at least introducing the concept of specialization would help. Another lack what I felt was to teach students about business ethics and performance standards, so they would be prepared for the real market after studies."

Anand adopts an innovative pedagogy characterized by flexibility, learning through experience, student empowerment, and portrays teachers as facilitators(Fenstermacher & Soltis, 2004). Bishal operates in a structured academic setting but integrates local context through culture-based interventions and reflects key characteristics of constructivism through his practice(Taylor, 2015). He makes sure to relate academic tasks to social experiences in the Nepali context(Freire, 1970). The narratives of both educators pointed out the existing inadequacies of curricula, namely the absence of soft skills, entrepreneurship, and cultural integration. Shruti mentions the reliance on practical education and hands-on experience, criticizing the absence of practical experience and cultural integration in Nepalese education(Lave & Wenger, 1991). Jeena supported Shruti's arguments and pointed out missed opportunities for field trip experiences(Bergsteiner et al., 2010). Both found curricula prioritized technical control over transformation, with heavily loaded content lacking critical reflection or empowerment (Grundy, 1987).

The narratives showed that teachers view the gap between the curriculum and readiness for professionalism. These narratives indicate a necessity for contextual and praxis-oriented education. According to the views of the teachers, the curriculum should provide for applied knowledge to facilitate social interaction(Vygotsky, 1978).

Pedagogical Activities
In interior design education, pedagogy extends far beyond classroom instruction; it is a lived, embodied practice that connects ideas, spaces, and tools to learners' evolving design identities. This section highlights how their strategies utilize and diverge from various educational theories, including social constructivism, experiential learning, transformative learning, and critical pedagogy.

Jeena reflected on her education: "In college, when we worked on studio projects, we were given complete creative freedom, unaware of the real-world constraints. We never thought about market availability of materials, time limitations, or budget constraints. I

used to believe that whatever I designed on paper or computer could easily be created in real life, but I now realize that was a misconception. Looking back, I feel that we should have been taught important reference books, such as Time-Saver Standards and anthropometry, in much greater depth."

Bishal described his classroom: "Our field is already heavily technology-driven. In the classroom, we regularly use design software. I usually give lectures using slide presentations on a projector. I realized later that [studio] was not enough. Once I entered the market, I gained a greater deal of practical knowledge. We now send our fourth-year students to actual sites for supervision and internships. During these visits, we guide them through real-world challenges, like understanding size tolerances, margins, live wall levels, and common on-site errors. In the classroom, questioning is very important. Some are curious, others quiet. If we scold them for asking, they will hesitate next time. Emotional safety matters. Today, we must treat students with sympathy and kindness. I believe that this personal care requires time and effort, but it has to be done in today's era. In one batch, I had to spend two weeks teaching students how to use a measuring tape. That is the gap. You cannot teach AutoCAD if they do not know how to measure a room. One semester, I took my students to a tile factory, a lighting store, and a carpentry workshop. One student said, 'Sir, I never knew how many types of hinges there were."

Anand shared his teaching philosophy: "Almost 70-80 percent of our diploma course is practical. We have small classes, accommodating approximately 10-12 students. In most sessions, we have what can best be described as design dialogues rather than lectures. One challenge is that, without being exposed to face-to-face classroom interactions, students have not utilized many of the possibilities. In my teaching, I first try to understand each student's level, like you mentioned, their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). After analyzing their capability, I tailor my strategies. I focus on SketchUp, V-Ray, Enscape. However, I also tell students that software is secondary. Anyone can learn it on YouTube. If you cannot design, the tool is useless. During a case study, a client wanted a prefab cafe. I told my students: Let us take this as a live case. When the cafe was completed, I took the batch there. One student told me, 'Sir, I cannot believe this is real. I do not usually use group work because the students are required to create individual designs. However, I try to balance the group, mixing capable and less capable students. There were cases where students who were initially not very interested began to perform well due to the group's influence."

Shruti critiqued institutional practices: "At first institute where I taught, for instance, the whole system feels business-driven, with little space for student creativity. Some colleges hire teachers; graduates are often invited to teach immediately after graduating. At another institute, where I currently teach, we are trying to change that. We have changed how we hire teachers; we want those with a real understanding, not just recent graduates. We also ensure that our students secure internships under our guidance. We had a four-hour workshop slot every week. I recall a project where we had to construct a chandelier using only scrap materials. When I teach now, I ask students to build small-scale furniture or lighting models, even if it is just with cardboard or thermocol, because theory means nothing until you touch and build. I do not assign group work. From my experience, in group settings, only one or two students typically end up doing all the work, while the rest simply chat and take credit without contributing. But in professional practice, group work is necessary. There, nothing is truly individual."

Together, these accounts deny a techno-dominant paradigm. Knowing has to be dialogic, rooted in doing, and socially constructed. Knowledge of sound design is not acquired through passive reception but through active negotiation between students and

materials, peers, teachers, and sites.Jeena demonstrated the disconnection between education and practice signifies the absence of real-world learning (Guyotte et al., 2015), where learning occurs through practice and various approaches, rather than solely based on theoretical tasks. Anand's philosophy aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, differentiating guidance according to individual ability. The critique of commercialized education presented by Shruti shows a failure in student-centered pedagogies. The emphasis on emotional safety made by Bishal is consistent with humanistic approach as described by Rogers (1962) and caring pedagogy initiated by Noddings (2012). The use of group work by Anand is in line with social constructivism by which peer scaffolding aids the development of learners with low self-confidence (Wertsch, 1991). Shruti's approach is based on the principles of equity and personal responsibility, which reveals the contradiction between the preparation of students for professional work and the possibilities for equitable education.

Assessment Strategies

Assessment in interior design education cannot be based solely on final grades, rubrics, or standardized testing. It should include engagement with creative expression, iterative thinking, technical competence, and personal growth.

Anand explained: "When it comes to assessing students' work. I examine the concept, evaluating how strong its main idea is and how original it is. Assessment begins with the layout phase and continues through concept development. We do not simply ask students to submit a final assignment and then grade it. Instead, we assess what they are doing throughout the class sessions."

Shruti stated: "In my college days, our evaluation was continuous. Every assignment, every sheet was marked. Unlike here in Nepal, where marks are mostly based on the final project submission. I have created my own marking sheet, as I do not use the one provided by the college. If a student does not attend regularly or contribute throughout the process, I assign them a minimum of zero marks in the early phases."

Bishal added: "In our college, we have three exams per semester: class tests, mid-terms, and pre-boards. The internal and external assessment has a weightage of 30:70. For practical subjects, the assessment is completely internal, 100 percent. Checking in regularly allows us to see if they're truly learning or just memorizing information."

The strategy implemented by Anand conforms to that of monitoring the learning process, providing reactions, and gauging progress to ascertain what is happening (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This is comparable to Vygotsky's (1978) assumption that knowledge is shaped through communication, assistance, and reflection. Shruti shares Sadler's (1989) stance that assessment facilitates learning rather than just evaluation of performance and that grades are formed through real learning during the course. Bishal implements a strategy of assessment that integrates quick checks with semester and final exams in order to enable learners to learn constantly. Prompting students to raise their grades is in keeping with the idea that feedback and practice are crucial (Black & Wiliam, 2009). For practical subjects, to use presentations and reports, not just exams, for evaluation purposes is an example of real-life assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). It appears that the participants apply formative assessment but at the end it seems that the resulting approach to assessment is the same old traditional one.

Challenges and Critical Reflection

It is hard to study interior design in Nepal because the schools and the job market are in their building stages. What schools teach, what people think, the tools they have, and

how they are taught can clash. Participants write about the teachers' difficulties, including a lack of tools, unclear standards, schools' resistance to change, obsolete networking, and burnout.

Participants highlighted persistent misconceptions about the field. I shared my own experience: "There was this one time when a student came to me and asked. 'Ma'am, after two months, will I be able to design just like you?' I was shocked and could not reply." Anand reflected: "Out of around 10-12 teachers during my three-year course, maybe only two or three emphasized [concept and theme]. All our teachers were architects; there were no interior designers. In Nepal, people often assume you do not need a design school education to be a designer. They tend to simply copy what they see without considering whether it fits the site, the situation, or even the size it needs to be.In the case of some courses, I believe there is room for improvement, as their syllabus is quite outdated. But, on the other hand, some courses follow an international curriculum. If we force everyone to teach the same thing, there will be no room to adapt or change. I intentionally excluded history as a standalone subject and instead incorporated it into other topics. No, history is important, and I did not argue its relevance, students can explore in greater depth while conducting their research. "

Jeena shared her shocking entry into teaching: "I completed my interior design course at from a college. Then, unexpectedly, I was offered a teaching position directly by the same college itself. Honestly, I was shocked. I was still unsure of myself. It made me question what kind of standard of education was being maintained."

Shruti stated: "I personally do not deal with emotional matters in class. I prefer to remain professionally detached, free from emotional entanglement with the student's problems." Bishal countered: "Teaching today is not easy. I practice teaching with care, love, and empathy. Initially, I was stricter, but over time, I learned that providing motivation is far more effective than using harsh discipline. One incident that I will never forget is that of a student who joined the struggle. He cried, and I told him that 'nothing will work unless you will. Stop crying and start working hard.' That conversation changed him."

Anand's narrative highlights two significant concerns in interior design education in Nepal: the lack of uniform curriculum criteria and the unreliability of teaching staff. Anand's rationale for dropping history as a subject suggests some level of emancipated learner stance. This aligns with Gosen's (2004) argument for exploratory learning without predetermined goals as a fundamental guiding principle. On the other hand, posing questions about whether learners have the motivation and the capability to determine the course content is challenging. Jeena's account embodies a critical pedagogic approach based on the convenience of filling teaching faculty vacancies rather than faculty competence. In the absence of skilled guides who practice their professions, students are likely to struggle with conceiving design thinking as anything beyond a sequence of steps. Schon (1983) and Kolb (1984) propose that design disciplines depend on having a reflective practitioner and an apprentice, roles that novice educators are often unable to fulfill.

The stories of Shruti and Bishal effectively highlight two distinct approaches to emotional care in interior design education. Shruti, for instance, takes a more reserved and professional approach. She maintains her emotional distance in the classroom, primarily to respect student privacy and establish clear boundaries. Sure, she's there for private support, when necessary, but it feels like she sees emotional care as something outside her teaching role. This aligns with the traditional teacher-centered model, where, if there's an emotional issue, it is often passed off to administrative systems instead of being

addressed in the classroom (Noddings, 2005). Bishal really leans into an emotionally responsive and empathetic style. It's all about care pedagogy for him, where empathy, trust, and building supportive relationships take center stage (Noddings, 2012). His journey from being strict to more understanding shows a shift towards social constructivist ideals. Learning becomes a shared experience, built through dialogue and creating a sense of emotional safety (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Bishal's story aligns well with ethics of care, emphasizing that caring relationships are crucial to effective teaching and learning.

6. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the rich narrative and pedagogical insights in this chapter, this section proposes a 6'C: A Pedagogical Model for Interior Design Education. This model can be viewed as a tentative framework developed from participants' voices and my reflections, which aims to foster more effective educational strategies in Nepal. This model builds upon Vygotsky's foundational theory of social constructivism (1978), but extends its framework to include six interconnected components: Cognition, Contextualization, Crafting Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Conduct. Together, these six Cs represent an approach to design education to foster holistic, ethical, and context-sensitive learning. This integrated approach to interior design education can enhance the development and understanding of students at various levels, including cognitive, personal, social, inquiry-based, and critical levels (Taylor, 2015). This model, if applied, can also foster the ethical conduct and experiential dimensions in interior design education.

Cognition

The first component, cognition, serves as the foundational component for this model. It focuses on how students acquire and process basic knowledge through structured and mental development. Here, Anand's accentuation of dialogic teaching and his selective mentoring about each student's capability underscored this idea the most strongly. His teaching shows that learners actively participate in the self-construction of knowledge through interaction and problem-solving informs education (Bruner, 1996). Bishal's approach of granting greater independence alongside differentiated levels of support represents Vygotsky's concept of scaffolded learning, where the teacher provides greater assistance to facilitate learning rather than controlling the process. As described by Piaget, a student's mind is actively constructing, which, in interior design, can be experienced through studio-based activities such as preparing models and working on real projects. The tactile experiences build basic intelligence and technical understanding (Taylor, 2015). These suggest that in design, the cognitive level of learning means mastering fundamentals through scaffolded problem-solving approaches. It involves theorizing design principles and elements by connecting abstract ideas (imagination) with tangible experiences (renders, field visits, model making). It leads to other levels of learning, such as creativity, conduct, and contextual learning, which are discussed in further detail.

Creativity

Creativity as a form of self-expression and action is dynamic in nature, iterating upon physical expression, the imagination in motion (Dwyer & Davis, 2017). Talented designers are not always able to use software creatively, and the primary misunderstanding within interior design education stems from equating creativity to raw, manifest talent as an outcome of utilizing computer programs. In this particular research case, Shruti recounts the availability of workshop, Anand's real-life based projects, aligns with contextual and experiential learning, where knowledge is deeply rooted in authentic activity. These descriptions highlight acts of creativity as an intertwined engagement of emotions and senses, transcending the intellectual plane.

Accompanying these thoughts, we can affirm the need for domain and field to constructively evaluate the work in relation to primary inputs at the intersection of personal innovation, thereby forming his systems theory of creativity. The providing and receiving of relevant critique becomes part of creative teaching and requires intuitive adaptations. My participants echo this by emphasizing that while design software has its own usefulness, no computer program can replace the absent development of a creative, critical, and deeply spatial sensibility. This suggestion pushes design educators to center their focus, not on a refined end product, but rather on process exploration.

Crafting

The third component, Crafting, emphasizes the experiential, embodied, and hands-on learning that is basic to interior design education. This "C" binds the model to Gosen (2004) and Kolb (1984), who contended that understanding arises from a combination of doing, feeling, observing, and reflecting. Deconstructing the term 'Crafting' literally means to make; in the context of teaching interior design, it involves building scale models, working with materials, sketching design ideas, and creating spatial mock-ups. But it also represents deeper engagement: shaping ideas through experience. Crafting as a pedagogical approach is embodied in Shruti's recollection of workshop, Bishal's site visits, and Anand's live projects. Unlike pure abstraction, theoretical reasoning, or work done exclusively on a computer, crafting situates the learner within the materiality of design, the embodied experience of space, and the emergent quality of creation.

Crafting holds major pedagogical significance from the moment students begin to learn through tactile experiences, visual observation, assembly, and interaction with the environment. It aids in spatial reasoning because of the physical and visual elements available, bridging the gap between ideas and construction. Kolb's learning cycle, including concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, is fully realized through craft-based pedagogy. Moreover, crafting fosters patience, problem-solving, and confidence in students who have limited exposure to professional design environments. It is through crafting that students develop a lived understanding of material behavior, scale, ergonomics, and environmental responsiveness that cannot be developed through software or theoretical lectures alone.

Contextualization

The other part, Contextualization, extends the boundaries of social constructivist theory by situating a learning process within a particular culture, environment, and society. As a spatial and cultural practice, interior design cannot exist in isolation from its context (Barrs & Richmond, 2024). Freire's (1970) notion of education as "praxis," the fusion of critical reflection and action, is aligned here. In his fieldwork, Bishal's incorporation of indigenous Newari or Tharu styles into student projects shows the infusion of local cultural identity into design learning. Anand's incorporation of entrepreneurship and business modules, specifically tailored to the Nepalese market, also illustrates the concept of relearning because the modules respond to local economies and practices. Each of these approaches also aligns with Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experiential learning, which posits that knowledge is formed through the interaction between the learner and the environment. Jeena and Shruti, who expressed concern about the curriculum being far removed from the realities of professional settings, add to the proposal that the curriculum needs to be more closely tied to socio-cultural realities and constraints. This model, therefore, calls for an education system that merges universal standards with local specificity, a glocalized pedagogical approach.

Critical Thinking

The fifth dimension of the model is Critical Thinking, which fills a design gap in contemporary design pedagogy. Critical and creative skills are important; however, the ability to reflect, inquire, and critique is essential to transformative learning (Luitel et al., 2022; Mezirow, 1991). In this context, Jeena's reflections on her education, which lacks preparation for learners regarding feasibility, cost, and material constraints, highlight an urgent necessity for critical thinking and engagement. Bishal's strong advocacy for a questioning culture within his classrooms is equally an expression of commitment to dialogical learning. He stated that students must be motivated, rather than reprimanded, for attempting to explain because safety and curiosity is the beginning of a deeper understanding. These examples illustrate Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (2018), which calls for disorienting dilemmas and reflective discourse as catalysts for change in one's perspective. Dewey's (1938) understanding of reflective thinking as a disciplined form of inquiry comes into play here, too. In brief, education for interior design addresses the challenge of educating students not only to design but also to think critically about design, to interrogate aesthetic choices, cultural assumptions, and agency as a means of spatial transformation.

Conduct

The final and perhaps most transformative element is Conduct. This incorporates empathy, ethics, sustainability, and empowerment into the learning process. Constructivist theory focuses on cognitive development, whereas this model also encompasses the moral and affective aspects of education, drawing on Noddings' (2005) work, which advocates for care and empathy as essential pedagogical virtues. This research highlights Jeena's argument about the lack of ethics training damaging the professional credibility of interior design in Nepal. Her story about untrained professionals performing substandard work highlights the ethical shortcomings in design education. Bishal, on the other hand, practices emotionally responsive pedagogy, counselling students individually, which promotes psychological safety by allowing them to express emotions freely. He works from the ethics-of-care model, where developing attentiveness and trust is considered less emotional work, but rather a professional responsibility. Emphasis on emotional well-being supports Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. While Shruti displays professional aspects, her concern for academic integrity and discipline also reveals her ethical commitment. An interior design education is required to be competent and context-aware, but the conduct component places additional requirements, such as ethical sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and social mindfulness. It expects students to work while considering concepts like sustainability, empathy, and empowerment, not as afterthoughts, but as integral elements in their professional process.

Analyzing the participants' narratives, as informed by the 6C model in light of social constructivism, reveals both similarities and differences. This perspective focuses on the social co-construction of knowledge, the mentor, and authentic activities. This framework includes additional elements such as creativity as an essential process, critical reflection as an act of transformation, and ethics and empathy as keys to deeper learning. In traditional interior design education, the focus is on how knowledge is acquired through social interaction, whereas in this framework, the focus is on why. And where? Emphasis is also placed on the acquisition of meaningful knowledge, the formation of a value system, and the learning environment, considering actual spaces, tools, and tasks.

Although this model appears to be effective, its implementation may be challenging. The most important impediment is the existing institutional capacity. Participants mention that many design colleges in Nepal lack required facilities, skilled personnel, and

operational autonomy. Furthermore, emotional pedagogy is not an area most teachers are prepared or willing to address. This model clearly captures, through the narratives of my participants, that effective design education aims to be relational, contextually anchored, ethically grounded, creatively robust, critically reflective, and deeply embedded in relationships. In sketching these purposes, the 6C Pedagogical Model of Interior Design Education embodies a vision to rethink interior design education with a social constructionist approach. It retains the socio-cultural dialogic nature of learning advocated by Vygotsky (1978) and broadens the horizon to incorporate the culture focus of Bergsteiner et al. (2010), the ethical concerns of Freire (1970) and Noddings (2005), the creativity focus, and the critical reflexivity of Mezirow (2018). Although the implementation may be problematic, the model serves as both a compass and a critique toward a distinctly humane, holistic, and transformative approach to interior design education in Nepal and beyond.

7. CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to investigate the experiences of imitating interior designing among educational practitioners emanating from Nepal. The subject was focused on areas including curriculum, educational strategies, techniques, learner-focused approaches, and some of the challenges experienced. The analysis of the narratives collection shows that teaching interior design in a Nepalese context, is a changing and discussed process influenced by several reasons including limitations of institutions, personal preferences, and changing views in education.

The results of the research reveal the evident shift from traditional learning practices of rote learning to more modern types of learning characterized by active collaboration within the learning process. Students are involved in working with different materials and people in order to develop knowledge on their own which can be associated with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1978), Kolb's experiential learning (1984), and Mezirow's transformative pedagogy (2000). However, participants pointed out that there were still some problems. The participants spoke about the difficulties connected with educational establishments such as a large number of requirements provided by institutions, absence of equipment, unevenness in access to products and existence of unqualified teachers.

The proposed 6C Pedagogical Model; Cognition, Creativity, Crafting, Contextualization, Critical Thinking, and Conduct, is to serve as a tentative framework for the future. It supports a holistic, culturally-embedded, and ethically responsive pedagogy, which respects both individual learning experiences and collective practice.

Future Directions

Firstly, it is necessary that interior design education programs undergo both decolonization and contextualization. It is essential that the curricula incorporate knowledge of Nepali context: traditional materials, climate-conscious designs, Newari carpentry, and native spatial practices, rather than only treating such knowledge as decoration.

Secondly, making sure of the qualification and standardization of the faculty must be a priority. The practice of recruiting newcomers without any experience or training leads to a compromising quality of education. It is essential that educational establishments set minimum requirements for faculty members, motivate them to continuously grow professionally, and have the interior design program run by qualified interior designers, not just architects or engineers.

Thirdly, changes in assessments are necessary. The assessment based on the process (which was applied by Anand and Shruti) needs to gain official acknowledgment in terms of the rubrics of institutions. The contradiction between the institutional requirement for students to be passed and the necessity to have integrity in the education process has to be resolved via carrying out transparent assessment models which were created independently.
Fourth, it is necessary to incorporate emotional and care pedagogy into teacher education programs. The experience of Bishal illustrates the effectiveness of the care pedagogy. Teacher training should offer courses on emotional literacy, student support, and trauma-based teaching practices.

Ultimately, the present research suggests new studies for verifying the relevance of the introduced 6'C Model in different Nepali institutions, longitudinal studies on graduates' successes, and research on the importance of technology integration in low-resourced conditions. Interior design education development processes in Nepal are progressing really fast. Teachers have to find a good balance between tradition and innovation, rigidity and flexibility, and theory and practice.

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Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate
The Research Committee at Kathmandu University School of Education approved the human studies on June 15, 2025. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Participants provided written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Data Availability Statement
The author will make the raw data supporting the conclusions of this article available without undue reservation.

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No Generative AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript. In a few sections, we used Grammarly during revision, including for language and vocabulary editing.
Supplementary Information
None

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