

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: THE NELTA WAY

Laxman Gnawali

A Thesis

Submitted to

School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Kathmandu University

Dhulikhel, Nepal

December, 2013

## ABSTRACT

Teacher professional development (TPD) is an integral part of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching. Without continuous growth, the quality of the teaching and learning will not be effective. Only if EFL teachers make professional development efforts by creating challenges for themselves and learning from their experiences, will they be able to cope with the changing situations. They may undertake the professional development initiatives such as training, action research, and reflective and collaborative practices. In this regard, English language teacher associations are a practical way to collaborative strategies for teacher professional development.

This study explored TPD strategies that teacher associations such as NELTA employ and the process by which teachers undergo development experiences. It also looked into the contributions that the members make to these associations. The study was based on three theories - network theory, learning organization theory, social capital theory. The study followed an interpretive inquiry within the interpretive paradigm. Ten NELTA members were selected as participants using the purposive sampling technique. The data were then collected through narratives, interviews and documents which were analysed thematically and the conclusions were drawn.

The study showed that the associations formally employed several strategies, stipulating them in their official documents, for the professional development of their members. It was found that the statute of the association had its principal intent on TPD. The strategic planning was taken as a guideline for the leaders and the central committee on prioritising matters for supporting and promoting teachers. The data showed that TPD was the core of the association activities. The TPD activities

included organizing events, publishing, running blogs, maintaining mailing lists, and providing opportunities for foreign exposure and higher studies. The members benefitted from the opportunities that were made available through internal as well as external resources. The members also invested their time for the growth of the association. The comparison between the data from the documents and the participants showed that not all members benefitted from the opportunities: the benefits were proportionate to the contribution made by the members. The data also exposed grievances of the members who did not benefit significantly from the TPD opportunities.

From the findings, it was concluded that the teachers learn and grow with the association by means of reciprocity where everybody is learning from one another. They enjoy the resources available and become resources themselves. The association members add to the capacity of the association bringing in ever new ideas. It was also concluded that the EFL teacher associations are learning organizations that build their strengths through their members: the better the mechanism of the associations, the better the learning for the members and the associations. The associations and their members build social capital with the resources and create conditions for their own learning. However, the associations have limitations: they have limited resources and cannot reach out effectively to the growing number of members. Moreover, the leadership provides opportunities only to those who contribute to the organization leading to the grievances from the members who do not enjoy the benefits.

Based on the conclusions, implications for the teachers, teacher associations and policy makers were also drawn. The associations usually have thousands of members, so collecting information about them is helpful for creating opportunities for them as well as identifying the potential contributors. Likewise, more

opportunities for the members to demonstrate their capabilities would help the association to build a better social capital that eventually benefits itself and its members. It would be more productive if the associations develop a more transparent system to avail opportunities for all members. By developing a feedback mechanism regarding the professional development opportunities and experiences, the association can maximise the distribution and minimise the grievances. Given the success of the association studied under this research, a formal declaration of the partnership with the Ministry of Education will indirectly give the association social prestige, thereby, building a better social capital.

The abstract of the thesis of Laxman Gnawali for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education was presented on December 31, 2013.

Degree Candidate

Abstract Approved by

.....

.....

© Copyright by Laxman Gnawali

2013

All Rights Reserved

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted for candidacy for any other degree.

.....

Laxman Gnawali

Degree Candidate

This thesis entitled *English language teacher development through professional associations: The NELTA way* was presented by *Laxman Gnawali* on December 31, 2013

APPROVED

..... December 31, 2013  
Prof. Mana Prasad Wagley, PhD

Thesis Supervisor

..... December 31, 2013  
Prof. Basu Dev Kafle, PhD

External

..... December 31, 2013  
Assoc. Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD

Member, Research Committee

..... December 31, 2013  
Prof. Bidya Nath Koirala, PhD

Member, Research Committee

..... December 31, 2013  
Prof. Bhim Prasad Subedi, PhD

Member, Research Committee

..... December 31, 2013  
Prof. Tanka Nath Sharma, PhD

Dean, School of Education

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

.....  
Laxman Gnawali

Degree Candidate

## DEDICATION

To the NELTA Family



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible if I had not been supported by the individuals I was fortunate to work with. I take this opportunity to offer my gratitude to those who made this undertaking possible.

I first acknowledge the support from my supervisor Prof. Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley for his constant encouragement, advice and guidance during my study. Without his waking calls, I would definitely have been waylaid. I was fortunate to undertake this research under him.

I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Mahesh Nath Parajuli, Head of Department, for his guidance in fine-tuning my theoretical concepts. I would like to thank Dr. Bal Chandra Luitel for his support in exploring resources. I owe my heart-felt thanks to Prof. Dr. Tanka Nath Sharma, Dean, for his care, encouragement and support.

I am thankful to the Research Committee Members Prof. Dr. Bidya Nath Koirala and Prof. Dr. Bhim Prasad Subedi for categorical feedback on my thesis. I am indebted to the External Examiners Prof. Dr. Basu Dev Kafle and Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma for their invaluable feedback to give this thesis its final shape.

My special thanks go to my research participants and friends for supporting me by providing valuable data and information. NELTA deserves my special thanks for being my field of study. I am thankful to Rebat Kumar Dhakal, Tara Pradhan and Mabindra Regmi for helping me with language correction. Last but not least, I thank my wife Sanumaya and sons Prashant and Sushant for their support and sustained patience during the years I was busy with my research and writing.

Laxman Gnawali

Degree Candidate

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ii
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER I .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Context of the Study .....	1
English Language Teacher Associations .....	5
Issue Statement .....	8
Purpose of the Study .....	12
Research Questions .....	13
Significance of the Research .....	13
Delimitations .....	17
Structure of the Study Report .....	17
Definition of the Terms .....	18
Chapter Summary .....	18
CHAPTER II .....	19
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	19
Literature Review Process .....	19
Thematic Review .....	22

The Concept of Teacher Professional Development .....	22
How the Idea Started.....	28
Teacher Development Strategies .....	30
Teacher Associations and Teacher Professional Development .....	35
Teacher Conferences and Professional Development.....	42
Theoretical Review .....	44
Social Capital Theory .....	45
Learning Organizations Theory .....	48
Teacher Association's Learning Culture .....	50
Network Theory .....	53
Linking the Theories .....	55
Policy Review .....	56
Review of Previous Studies .....	59
Gap Analysis .....	64
Conceptual Framework of the Study .....	66
Chapter Summary .....	67
CHAPTER III .....	68
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	68
Philosophical Considerations.....	68
Ontology .....	68
Epistemology .....	69

My Research Paradigm .....	70
Methodological Consideration: Interpretive Inquiry .....	73
Participants Selection.....	74
Data Collection Techniques and Process .....	76
Document Analysis .....	76
Narratives .....	77
Interview .....	78
Data Analysis .....	78
Quality Standards.....	79
Trustworthiness.....	80
Transferability.....	80
Ethical Considerations .....	81
Informed Consent.....	81
Harm and Risk .....	82
Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity .....	82
Chapter Summary .....	83
CHAPTER IV .....	84
ASSOCIATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR TEACHER	
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	84
Formal Provisions for Teacher Professional Development .....	84
Other Organizations for Teachers and TPD Opportunities.....	96
Entry into the Association.....	99

Professional Development Experiences at the Association .....	109
Signs of Professional Development .....	120
Teacher Networks and Personality Development.....	127
Teacher Association and Social Prestige .....	132
Loss due to the Involvement in the Association .....	138
Gaps and Challenges.....	141
Noticing the Patterns.....	155
Chapter Summary .....	162
CHAPTER V .....	163
CONTRIBUTION TO THE ASSOCIATION.....	163
Resources from the Incoming Members .....	163
Contribution to the Association's Activities.....	166
Contribution to the Association Expansion .....	180
Gaps and Challenges.....	195
Members' Contributions in Other Organizations .....	200
Noticing the Patterns.....	202
Chapter Summary .....	206
CHAPTER VI.....	207
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS .....	207
Findings and Discussion .....	207

Formal Strategies Employed by NELTA for Members' Professional Development and the Perspectives of the Participants regarding them .....	208
Teachers' Experiences in Their Professional Capabilities Enhancement .....	214
Members' Contribution to NELTA in its Initiatives and Capability Enhancement .....	221
Conclusions.....	228
Implications.....	232
Chapter Summary .....	233
REFERENCES .....	235
APPENDICES .....	246

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAELTA	Addis Ababa English Language Teachers' Association
APIBA	Asociacion de Profesores de Ingles de Buenos Aires
BANA	Britain, Australia, New Zealand North America
BELTA	Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association
BETTC	Basic Education Teacher Training Centre
BrazTESOL	Brazilian Teachers of English to Speakers of Others Languages
DDC	District Development Council
EFL	English as a foreign language
EgyptTESOL	Egyptian Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
ELE	English language education
ELT	English language teaching
ELTAA	English Language Teachers' Association of Afghanistan
ELTAI	English Language Teachers' Association of India
ELTeCS	English Language Scheme Contact Scheme
ETCs	English Teachers' Clubs
ETTE	English for Teaching: Teaching for English
FORTELL	Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature
GELTA	Ghatail English Language Teachers' Association
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
INSET	In-service Training
IoE	Institute of Education
JALT	Japanese Association of Language Teaching
KELTA	Khorasan's English Language Teachers' Association

MELTA	Malaysian English Language Teachers' Association
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NATEK	National Association of Teachers of English in Kazakhstan
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NCFTE	National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education
NCTE	National Council for Teacher Education
NELTA	Nepal English Language Teachers' Association
NESP	National Education System Plan
NNTA	Nepal National Teachers' Association
NTA	Nepal Teachers' Association
PABSON	Private and Boarding Schools' Organization Nepal
PGDE	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
SEDC	Secondary Education Development Centre
SLELTA	Srilankan English Language Teachers' Association
SPELT	Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
STA	Strengthening Teacher Associations
TA	Teacher Association
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Others Languages
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPD	Teacher professional development
UzTEA	Uzbekistan Teachers of English Association
VTTN	Vietnam Teacher Training Network



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Teacher Development Process	28
Figure 2 Characteristics of Traditional and Visionary Professional Development	32
Figure 3 Conceptual Framework of the Study	66
Figure4 The Reasons for Entry into NELTA	157
Figure 5 TPD Opportunities Experienced by individual Participants at NELTA	159
Figure 6 Contributions to NELTA Made by Individual Participants	206
Figure7 NELTA in Operation as a Teacher Association	212

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the research context. It sets the scene by highlighting the professional development of English language teachers and the emergence of English language teacher associations. It is followed by further discussions on the issue statement, purpose of the study, research questions and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with the delimitations of the study.

#### **Context of the Study**

While undertaking Master's level research (Gnawali, 2001), I came to understand that in-service training with experiential learning approach, and reflective enquiry through collaborative observation, and action research would be appropriate teacher development strategies that would transform English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers into independent professionals. I established that action and reflection (Kolb, 1984) were the key elements that allow teachers not to use 'auto-pilot' (Tripp, 1985) mode and enable them to take informed actions which would lead to their professional development. However, after initiating and leading a Master's programme at Kathmandu University, I discerned a different issue related to teacher professional development which I discuss below.

I did my schooling in a Sanskrit school, so I had the privilege of studying rich adages in the language. One of such adages in Sanskrit I came across then was '*Sanghe shaktih kalau yuge*' which means *organization holds the key to strength in modern times*. It did not mean much to me until I became a member of some

professional organizations later. Lately, I have come to realize that the word *organisation* denotes collective association and network. For a professional such as a teacher, being in an association makes a crucial difference in one's career and professional attitude. With the help of an association, one not only develops and rises professionally, but also gathers strength to help others in professional development with a snowball effect. Moreover, it is the members of the association who make it as strong and learning-conducive as it can be. I professionally experienced the phenomenon during my membership of several associations such as NELTA, Hornby Alumni, ELTeCS, State Alumni, AsiaTEFL, IATEFL, and TESOL. My affiliation with these associations and networks has helped me not only to enhance my professionalism, but also to initiate formal academic programmes at the University setting. Such affiliation has been instrumental in developing leadership and innovation potentials for academic institutions where the academics and professionalism further proliferate. My own experience of working with NELTA showed that the individual and the association depend upon each other for mutual development.

My professional growth is closely linked with NELTA, whereas, NELTA has also flourished over the years. To illustrate this, I present a brief account of how I got involved in the NELTA activities.

*It was 1997, my fourth year as a Lecturer of English at Kathmandu University. One of my close friends, who was in the Central Committee of NELTA, suggested me to make a presentation at the next conference. Personally, I was shy, and professionally, I had never faced an audience except my students in the class. But I followed the advice, submitted a proposal, and travelled to Pokhara for the conference. Before I started the presentation, I observed that the room was full of participants; I felt I had chosen an interesting issue. After the session, I heard from many participants*

*that my delivery was good. I had never expected this compliment. I decided that I would do a presentation at every conference and I have kept my promise. More than that, I have attended various conferences, always as a presenter, never just a participant. I have been a life member of NELTA since then.*

*In the year 2000, NELTA recommended me for the Hornby scholarship to study Masters in ELT in the UK. I did M Ed in Teacher Training for ELT at the University of Exeter and returned to work. I started getting involved in different NELTA activities such as training, journal publication, and organizing conferences. During the Conference in 2003, I was given the responsibility of General Secretary which I continued till 2007. I was the Vice President of NELTA from 2007 to 2009, and the Senior Vice President from 2009 to 2011. During my tenure, I represented NELTA to the Ministry of Education and international missions within the country and other teacher associations outside the country. My activities paved new avenues for resource generation, network expansion and capacity building of NELTA while I received exposure and publication opportunities which entailed social prestige. It was during this time that I travelled throughout the country and my papers were published in ELT journals. Coordinating four international conferences as General Secretary was indeed a Herculean task I successfully accomplished. I also conducted English by Radio Program on behalf of NELTA for two years; made successful bidding for Wider Membership Scheme of IATEFL, UK; and played a key role in Strengthening Teacher Associations Project and Peer Support Review. I was one of the key office bearers in the formulation of NELTA's strategic planning as well. I contributed my personal time in the mornings, evenings, Saturdays and other holidays for NELTA and I did it all voluntarily. Though I have not filed candidacy for any position since 2011, I am closely associated with NELTA in its professional activities.*

While this is my personal experience, during this research, I gathered that this realization is not just mine; there is a momentum going on in the setting up and volunteering of the teacher association, particularly in the English as a foreign language (EFL) settings. English language teachers around the world have got

together at the national, regional and international levels to make collective initiatives for their own professional development. There are hundreds of associations of the English language teaching (ELT) professionals around the world (TESOL, 2011). The UK based English teachers' association IATEFL has 100 similar associations around the world associated to it (IATEFL, 2012). In India alone, there are two teacher associations: Forum for Teachers of English Language and Literature (FORTELL) and English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI, <http://www.eltai.in>), Nepal's NELTA ([www.nelta.org.np](http://www.nelta.org.np)) has 40 branches and over 2000 life members. The trend of setting up teacher networks and teacher associations is continually growing. Even in the countries like China and Vietnam where it is exceedingly difficult to have legal professional organisations...have set up teacher associations when it is illegal to start a political party. China has ChinaTEFL and IATEFL China, and Vietnam has VTTN (Vietnam Teacher Training Network). In Cambodia, where it is strictly forbidden to set up a group for whatever purpose, a private English testing company runs CamTESOL as an annual conference event. It appears that even the politicians have realised that it is easier to help teachers grow professionally when they come together and share their experiences with one another (Falcao & Szesztay, 2006). They see the benefits for the teachers and do not perceive any political risk. Even the age old saying about how people learn is undergoing change as Mike Solly rightly put at the end of his presentation in an ELTeCS meeting in Srilanka in 2004:

Tell me and I will... Forget

Show me and I will. ...Remember

Involve me and I will...Understand

*Network me and I will. ...Grow (and help others grow)*

The idea of networking and growth was the main impetus for the efforts made by the British Council towards supporting teacher networks and associations through STA (Strengthening Teacher Associations) project that ran for two years in the Central and South Asia region leaving concrete results in their strengths and the ways the associations function. I was involved in the project as a stakeholder from NELTA. I was also involved in the Peer Support Reviews conducted at the Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA) conference in Dhaka in 2007 and NELTA conference in Kathmandu in 2008. These reviews showed that with the ideas gained from the STA project, the members had learned how to manage the associations better, thereby, increasing the number of members. It was evident that international agencies have started to promote teacher associations so that the latter can grow independent regarding resource generation.

With this backdrop, I made up my mind to look into the EFL teacher associations as a means of teacher professional development. In the next section, I define and discuss the teacher associations and their relation to teacher professional development.

### **English Language Teacher Associations**

Teacher associations are formal or informal groups of teachers set up for mutual professional benefits. The teachers come forward to form associations when they realize that they can exchange their ideas and experiences and learn from one another. The associations thus formed can exist in the form of clubs, forums or associations. They can be local, regional, national or international depending upon the scope they intend to cover. There are teacher associations for different subjects and languages around the world, but my concern here has been the associations of the

teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) so I have focused my research and discussion on them.

As I mentioned above, there are a number of EFL associations around the world. Many of them have formal status and there are many others functioning informally. NELTA is a national association that has over 40 branches. Other South Asian countries have national associations as follows: ELTAI, India; FORTELL, India; SPELT, Pakistan; BELTA, Bangladesh; SLELTA, Srilanka; ALTAA, Afghanistan. In addition, AsiaTEFL is a regional association covering most Asian countries. The most influential international associations are TESOL (USA) and IATEFL (UK). Over 100 associations from around the world are affiliated to them. These two associations were established in the 1960's ([www.iatefl.org](http://www.iatefl.org); [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)) and others followed in the successive decades. Most of the EFL associations came into existence in the 1980's and 1990's.

Regarding the nature and structure of these associations, they can vary. Generally, they have a central executive committee and chapters/branches over the provinces or other political units of the nation. In case of membership, they have ordinary/annual members, life members, and institutional members. IATEFL UK and TESOL USA also have other teacher associations as their associate/affiliate members. The office bearers of these teacher associations are all voluntary.

Through voluntarism, teacher associations create opportunities for the members and non-members alike for their professional development. Their activities are aimed at facilitating the professional growth of the teachers (Odhiambo & Nganyi, 2007). They organize conferences to provide learning opportunities and networking opportunities for the professionals (Richards, 2009). The main aim of setting up these

associations was to trigger the professional development of the members mainly through sharing and exchanges.

Teacher associations are particularly significant for the teachers of English as a foreign language as “ELT moves fast and yesterday’s orthodox becomes today’s heresy” (Britten, 1988, p. 2). To accommodate such fast paced changes and learn from the best practices, teachers rely on other teachers. So, one of the most effective ways to be in touch with other teachers is to be part of associations which provides a chance for mutual exchange. But what actually works as the impetus to set up such associations? I would like to illustrate the point with the case of NELTA and how it was formed from my own excerpt from a book chapter.

NELTA was formed in 1992 as a response to the prevailing English language education situation in Nepal which required a proactive response from policy to practice level. The Ministry of Education and Sports (the MOES) did not have an independent body to advise it in matters of ELE programmes, English language professionals did not have a professional forum to share their ideas and experiences, the cross-cutting issues of the discipline were little discussed and debated due to lack of such forums, and English education had not been as responsive to international networks and developments as it could have been. .... There were teacher associations but they were just trade unions, not professional forums. The shift from traditional structure-based teaching to communicative approach to language teaching demanded massive teacher re-orientation which the government would not be able to do alone. Some kind of wider professional network was the need of the time. Thus, some kind of initiation to start a professional network had to happen and NELTA was the realisation of that phenomenon. (Gnawali, 2011, p. 185).



So, the associations are formed not only for helping the teachers but also to advise the Ministry in the policy matters. Most associations live upto this spirit.

How teacher associations help teachers to learn from one another is best expressed by Freeman (2009a) through his famous expression “egg-box profession.” He says each teacher is carefully separated from fellow teachers. They live and work in their own world. It is the teacher associations that bring them together and bind them together so they can share their ideas, experiences and apprehensions with their fellow professionals. This intricate process of teacher associations proves that they can be efficient to help teachers evolve. In the next section, I discuss the issue of the missing link between the teacher development needs and the contribution of the teacher associations.

### **Issue Statement**

Several initiatives including the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) of the Ministry of Education (2009) and the teacher professional development initiatives of the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED, 2011) have been geared towards the Nepalese teachers’ professional development. Modern teaching techniques and learner-centred teaching are often discussed and stressed in the documents and events. Teachers are required to undertake independent activities at school for their own development. The initiatives have been reported to have shown good results as the Mid-Term Evaluation of the School Sector Reform Program (MOE, 2012) states that “The SSRP has raised the qualification criteria for basic education teachers to intermediate level and the backlog in untrained teachers in primary level has been cleared.” The teacher training initiatives report that 99% teachers are trained (NCED, 2009). We can perhaps deduce that the policy of the Nepal government focuses on the teacher training and their professional development

and the outcomes have been effective. However, the effectiveness of teacher development initiatives is always in question.

Quantitatively, the data might show that Nepal is trying to meet the growing demand of quality English language education. “Quality ELE, however, remains elusive. The elusiveness of quality ELE can be attributed to the lack of quality English language teaching (ELT) resources, both human and material” (Giri, 2010). Moreover, Due to the poor quality of teachers, the teaching learning activities have largely remained traditional and teacher-dominated (Pant, 2012). Similarly, the claim of discovery approach to language teaching is not a reality of the training transfer. The following experience clearly shows the reality:

From the very beginning, I got depressed in knowing that English was taken as a very tough subject to pass in the examination. Neither the students nor the teachers thought it as a language medium of international scope. Students were asked to read like “parrots” the essays, letters, job applications, and other writings. And learning meant sheer memorization and never the learning of meanings, structures and forms. In case of a passage, the teachers just translated it into Nepali and wrote the answers of a fixed set of questions in English on the blackboard and made the students memorize them word by word. Students were not offered any chance to practise the spoken English.... most of the students failed in SLC examination, which is considered as the iron gate of academic career. (Pandey, 2008)

The above discussion depicts a sombre picture of EFL situation in Nepal; however, I have been exposed to a different scenario. I was often in touch with English teachers and had opportunities to observe their English lessons as well training sessions they delivered for their colleagues. What I saw demonstrated that

there are teachers who have practically learnt the learner-centred ways of teaching and their confidence level is high. They have published papers in the professional journals reporting their innovations.

My interactions have often led to a close association with the members of teacher associations, especially NELTA. When I talk to NELTA and other teacher association members who are actively involved in their associations, they usually express that they get new ideas from the conferences; and they read journals and use the ideas they get from them in their classroom teaching. One testimonial is such: "Because of my visible exposure to NELTA, I have been invited by the District Education Office to advise them on the new teacher training and also to deliver the training in my district" (K. Lamsal, personal communication, July 23, 2011). I, as an active member of NELTA and other associations, have many success stories to tell: how I learnt the classroom management techniques from the fellow members, how I felt the pressure on getting published and presenting at the conferences, and how I have been able to gain the confidence of the school managers on how I can make a difference in their school performance regarding English.

Few ELT professionals who are directly involved in teacher associations have started writing about the associations and networks. These professionals claim that teacher associations actually work to empower the teachers by constantly building their professional skills (Khanna, 2011). Likewise, Khan (2011) claims that English language teacher associations work in order to uphold the English teachers' identity as members of a language teaching community and to disseminate new information about language teaching. They support EFL teachers by bringing them opportunities and giving them an environment to explore such opportunities (Gnawali, 2011).

This shows that there has been a wider realization that if teachers come to professional associations, they grow professionally and make an impact on the wider professional community. The teachers who are networked in an association have a discernible positive behaviour in the classrooms, and better professional skills which can be useful at the policy level. They develop a positive attitude that self-directed professional development is better than other directed one, and they explore opportunities for their own growth. These teacher-led initiatives for their development lessen the burden on the teacher education agencies in many ways: the problems are identified by the teachers, and training/learning modalities are chosen by the teachers. Moreover, proactive participants are better motivated to learn than those who are invited.

It is evident that there is a strong need for EFL teacher development and the teacher associations are in a position to respond to that urgency. They not only have the potential to engage in teacher development initiatives, but they are also engaged in relevant activities. In this context, it is pertinent to recognise the status of the teacher associations in the government policies. What has been established about the teacher associations' contribution to the teacher support activities? How have the teacher associations been involved in the teacher training and other activities? What has the research shown about teacher association activities? What is the academic response on their capability and potential? What do the teacher association members say about the impact on their professional life due to the involvement in the associations? How do the EFL teacher associations help the teachers in their language development? Why are the policy makers and the academics not paying a good attention to the teacher associations? Is it not important for them to support the associations of the EFL teachers, particularly because they need more support for they are dealing with a

language that is foreign to the country they are working in? Why do these voluntary, cost efficient teacher associations remain aloof from the mainstream teacher development agencies? Why are they not formally recognised by the government agencies? Why are not many research studies carried out on such professional associations? Why does the Ministry of Education not treat the teacher associations as significant partners for teacher development?

One reason that addresses these questions is that there has been little effort to unearth and present what the teacher associations are upto. On one hand, there is no recognition from the stakeholders, and on the other, professional literature dealing with the teacher professional development relating to the teachers' involvement in the teacher associations is minimal. The number of research or non-research publications that establish the value of the teacher associations has remained scarce. This situation of indifference has led to the disuse of the resources that the teacher associations possess. On one hand, they are already helping teachers develop and on the other, they promise diverse ways in which they can support EFL teachers in their professional and personal development. Therefore, the important issue to address is that despite the potential and the scope of the teacher associations in many spheres of educational management, particularly in teacher professional development activities, they have not been established as valid entities. This has led to the misuse of resources on top-down teacher support used by the government and disuse of the expertise the teacher associations have and would use to voluntarily.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how teacher associations contribute to professional development of the teachers who join such associations. More

specifically, the study intended to look into how being in English language teacher associations contributes, if it does, to professional development of EFL teachers.

### **Research Questions**

My inquiry intended to answer the following questions.

- a. What strategies do English language teacher associations employ to help in teachers' professional development?
- b. How do the teachers grow and enhance their professional capabilities while in the associations?
- c. How do the members contribute to such teacher associations in their initiatives and capability enhancement?

### **Significance of the Research**

The teacher associations and their contribution to the teacher professional development has remained a less explored area in teacher education for EFL. So, the knowledge I have generated from this research has significance for such associations and the stakeholders.

The study is focused on teacher professional development that takes place when the teacher associations are active. It has also unearthed how the associations contribute to teacher professional development and how the experienced members help expand and consolidate the associations. From the findings of this study, the associations can claim that their very existence is related to teacher professional development.

The teacher associations state their intent and the objectives in their official documents and organize activities based on those objectives. They try to convince the prospective members about the benefits of getting involved in their activities. Accordingly, the teachers join the associations and become active in their activities.

There is a clear understanding developed that there is a mutual benefit for the associations and the members, but so far, there has been minimal research based evidence to substantiate such claims. Therefore, this study is expected to be a reference point for the associations, prospective members and other stakeholders to be part of, or contribute to or facilitate the activities of the teacher associations. This will, in turn, support teacher associations to strengthen themselves with increased support and trust from the EFL professionals.

Likewise, academic institutions do not expect the teacher associations to contribute to the development of academic programmes. The findings are also expected to be significant to create a space for teacher associations in the academic field and open newer avenues in the functioning and strengthening of the associations themselves. This is particularly significant as the academics look for valid research findings to see the worth of any idea and the findings will help fill the gap. On the financial ground, the academic institutions do not need to spend a big budget on designing newer programmes as their faculty brings new ideas from the associations with minimum or no cost. In today's technological world, knowledge can be imported from around the world through such teacher associations.

As a teacher educator, it becomes the responsibility of the researcher to explore situations, where participant-centred adult learning is possible. I feel that teacher empowerment through associations is perhaps a democratic model of teacher development. The proponents of this model advocate that teacher development should be based on the realised needs of the participants decided through maximum participation of the members themselves and this makes the process democratic (White, Martin, Stimson, & Hodge, 1991). In a democratic model (Meighan, Harber & Meighan, 1989), the individuals raise the issues, present their own views and listen

to others and finally reach to the agreed decisions. This kind of wider participation is possible only when teachers have a common forum to raise their voice to their situations and where “collaborative, caring and reciprocal relationships” exist (Rizvi, 1992, p. 163) and therefore, the significance of this study is also linked with how the stakeholders of teacher education will see the participant-centred teacher education for EFL can be organized.

This study has a greater significance in the policy making process for in-service teacher development for EFL. As mentioned in the issue statement above, it is apparent that the teacher associations do not fall under any policy of the state mechanism in Nepal. NELTA, which is a large EFL teachers’ professional association, is registered as an NGO and not as a professional association of teachers. This is perhaps because the Ministry of Education is reluctant to believe that such associations could be a worthy agency to partner with, collaborate or work independently in the EFL teacher development. So, based on the findings of this research, the policy makers will be better informed during policy formation on how to benefit from such associations. If they are convinced and formally recognize the TA, the associations will be ensured of their sustainability. They will also be in a better position to develop informed support mechanisms. As a result, associations, recognized by the state mechanism, will gain a wider recognition from the members and other stakeholders.

TESOL, a US-based English language teachers association, envisages that the value of the teacher associations adds to the education system as a whole. In its "Position Statement on the Role of Teachers’ Associations in Education Policy and Planning", it states that teacher associations are committed for the improvement of the quality of education (TESOL, 2007). This document justifies the role of the



associations for the teachers to have a mechanism to voice their professional knowledge and experience collectively. It expresses that the role of their professional associations is critical to create an impact on the educational language planning and policy making (TESOL, 2007).

TESOL is also aware of the fact that the teacher associations have their ability to advise in the language planning and policy making but “.... much of the educational planning and policy making is being carried out without the active participation of local English language educators” and this may have led to “ineffective language education policies” (p. 1). As a leading teacher association, TESOL feels that its voice maybe heard, so it

... strongly advocates that authorities at all levels recognize the right of teachers’ association to exist, and that teachers’ associations be accorded legal status. Since teachers’ associations play an integral role in improving the expertise and status of their members, authorities should provide support in whatever way possible to strengthen their sustainability. ... Authorities and teacher associations should actively seek and agree on the most effective ways to establish regular methods of communication, consultation, and coordination with one another in all aspects of education planning and policy. Particularly in regard to English language education, authorities should draw upon the expertise of ... (teacher) associations, such as TESOL affiliates, in developing and implementing sound language education planning and policy (TESOL, 2007, p. 1).

TESOL thus implies that the policy makers can immensely benefit from the findings of research such as this one to be informed on what policies need to be formulated in order to facilitate English teachers’ professional development. This

study, focusing on the EFL teacher associations, is expected to set a milestone for all the stakeholders of the EFL teacher associations.

### **Delimitations**

Given the wide scope of the research issue I undertook for my study, I had to delimit my explorations on the opportunities that the professional teacher associations avail for the teacher professional development. The research also looked into how the members reciprocate by helping the associations benefit from their contribution. In doing so, the study is delimited into the opportunities that NELTA creates for EFL teachers' professional development and the reciprocity that the members contribute towards the expansion and consolidation of the association.

There are several teacher associations such as those of the teachers of Mathematics, Health Education, English literature and linguistics on which studies can be conducted. Because my area is EFL teacher professional development, and Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) is the largest teacher association operating in Nepal, it has become the choice for my study.

### **Structure of the Study Report**

The full thesis of this research is presented in seven chapters. The first chapter in the present form contains the context of the study, issue statement, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study and the delimitations of the study.

The second Chapter presents the summary of the literature review. The review is divided into four sections: thematic review, theoretical review, policy review and the review of previous research studies. The third Chapter starts with the philosophical considerations that shape the research approach. This is followed by the research design and implementation. It concludes with the quality standards and ethical considerations made in conducting the research. Chapter Four, Five and Six

present the data analysis and interpretation. Finally, the discussion of the findings of the study and conclusions and implications are given in the final Chapter.

### **Definition of the Terms**

**Teacher network:** Any organised body of the teachers such as clubs, associations, organizations and online membership groups that work for the professional development of teachers.

**Teacher association:** A professional network of teachers with a formal structure, executive body and a provision of membership.

### **Chapter Summary**

I started this chapter with the background of my study outlining what made me think about the research issue. I discussed what EFL teacher development is and how the teacher associations contribute to the teacher professional development. I mainly focussed on the collaborative professional development for EFL teachers linking it to the teacher associations. I briefly highlighted how the teacher associations are now coming to fore and have started to be noticed by stakeholders. I presented the issue and framed the research questions: how the teachers associations and the members help each other in their capability enhancement. Before presenting the organization of this document, I also discussed the significance of this research has and discussed the delimitations of my study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the literature related to the teacher professional development practices with focus on EFL teacher associations. The summary of the theoretical review is also presented to depict the theoretical underpinnings and the policy guidelines that determine the professional development. In addition, I also present the review on the previous research in this field and conclude the chapter with the research gap and conceptual framework which has guided the research.

#### **Literature Review Process**

Venturing into a less trodden area is sometimes pleasantly serendipitous and sometimes adventurous. In my case, it was both. When I decided to undertake the research on the teacher professional networking for professional development, I believed this area to be a relatively new area for research. I would be uncovering the intricacies of the teacher associations and how their members grow and develop while supporting the association. So, I decided to go on with the review of the literature related to the field I had chosen: the EFL teacher development with specific focus on the teacher associations and EFL teacher professional development. As the area was new, though there were adequate references on thematic, theoretical and policy related matters, the literature on the previous research was scanty. Amidst this rarity, I came across Ana Falcao's (2004) Master's research as the sole specimen.

When I shared it with the supervisor, he advised me to present this situation but with evidence. He asked me to write to colleagues in different countries asking them about the availability of the literature I was looking for. I wrote emails to

colleagues of Vietnam Teacher Training Network Vietnam, BrazTESOL Brazil, ELTAI India, BELTA Bangladesh, MELTA Malaysia, SPELT Pakistan, IATEFL UK, TESOL USA, and APIBA Argentina. I also wrote to the Hornby Alumni mailing list which is subscribed by the Hornby Alumni who live and work in several countries in Africa, South America, South Asia, South East Asia, East Europe and China.

I did receive responses but there was only one additional relevant research report by Ethiopia's Awgichew Arega Abebe's Master's thesis (Arega, 2012) on English Language Teachers' Associations impact on the professional development of English language teachers with a special reference to Addis Ababa English Language Teachers' Association (AAELTA), Ethiopia. In fact, many colleagues referred back to Ana Falcao's work which I had already reviewed. I had also written to Ana and she wrote:

From: **Ana d'Almeida**

To: **Laxman**

Hi Laxman,

Thanks for this. Good to hear from you and that your research is gradually taking shape.

As to articles, Laxman, there are a few (very few) studies that mention Teacher networks in the references of my MA dissertation (and in George's project as well?) and perhaps you could try and find out whether those authors have written anything else on Teacher networks - I think TESOL connections could be helpful, as there are quite a few active TESOL chapters across the US and Canada.

Good luck with your study, Laxman!

Have a good day!

Ana

With these two research reports and other more generically related to the EFL teacher professional development, I felt whatever available would be enough to posit my research issue in the bigger picture.

As the search for literature went on, I looked for the justification on the relevance of literature review. I looked up books on research methodology to see if I

really had to review the literature that may not offer significance one may look for. The reading firmly convinced me that without literature review, my research would not be complete. Highlighting the need for literature review for limiting the focus of the study, Creswell (2003) expressed, "Literature reviews help researchers limit the scope of their inquiry, and they convey the importance of studying a topic to readers" (p. 27). In my case, as the focus was already clear, so the review helped me affirm what I was doing was in the right direction. The idea put forward by Nunan (1992) also claimed that literature review gives an idea on what has been done before and identifies what others have said or discovered about the question. This actually helps in formulation of the research questions.

Literature review was integral to my research because I had questions which had to be answered before I embarked upon the field research. I listed the following questions in order to make the review of the literature provide a clear direction for me: What are the proposed or already established teacher professional strategies for EFL teacher professional development? What collaborative strategies have been supported by the English language teacher development literature? Does the literature categorically mention what purposes the teacher associations that exist claim to have? What professional development opportunities made available by teacher associations are deemed accessible or desirable for the EFL teachers? How do the teacher associations enhance the teachers' professionalism? How do the teacher associations develop their capabilities in order to be able to support the teachers?

Upon retrospect, I felt that my research topic was not actually limited to the teacher associations only, but it encompassed any professional networking: teacher learning, teacher development, and leadership issues. This realisation led me to other possible areas that I could review and establish their relation to the theme that I was

working on. I took the following terms as my guiding terminologies for the exploration of the literature: professional networking, professional association, teacher learning, social capital, and learning organizations. However, as I explored the literature, several new terminologies surfaced convincing me that I was not alone in the discourse area, only the case I was pursuing was different. I read exhaustively and felt that I received comprehensive thematic and theoretical support to substantiate my study. What follows is the summary of what has been written, researched and published in the area under discussion. The discussion is divided into four sections: thematic review, theoretical review, policy review and review of previous researches.

### **Thematic Review**

The main theme under discussion in this section is the EFL teacher professional development. While reviewing the literature, I tried to look into these issues related to the theme: the concept of teacher development, strategies and opportunities for teacher development, and the role of the teacher associations for teacher professional development. The review of the available literature is discussed in the sections below.

### **The Concept of Teacher Professional Development**

The would-be EFL teachers undergo a pre-service training mainly as a pre-requisite for the teaching certification. They learn general linguistics and some language development courses, but the main focus is on the basics of the classroom teaching and learning (Barduhn & Johnson, 2009). In most contexts around the world, they are trained mainly using the awareness raising approach whereas, in some countries and under some programmes, experiential approach is also used (Ellis, 1986). Whatever the approaches, the newly qualified teachers enter the schools with

enthusiasm and hope but with some nervousness. They somehow settle in and look forward to the days when they will be able to deliver the lessons independently.

As time passes, the teachers face newer challenges- challenges of new ideas and concepts, challenges of new socio-economic and technological advancements. The greatest challenges the teachers face are the curricular change, change in the textbooks and methodological changes. In addition, there are also challenges from the learners who may have been affected by the above changes. If they do not undergo professional development, it becomes increasingly difficult for the teachers to face these challenges as they need to "keep learning, always to keep alive a sense of challenge and adventure in one's career, and to avoid getting into rut" (Underhill, 1988, p. 4).

Now the query is: what is teacher professional development as mentioned previously? The adventure that keeps teachers from getting into rut is teacher development; it is the "change and growth of teachers in terms of his/her professionalism during his/her profession" (Bhusal, 2011). It is honing of the skills that one has to be "the best kind of teacher that [they] can personally be" (Underhill, 1988, p. 1) "as language teachers once their period of formal training is over" (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 1). Teacher development is not simply to get refresher training; it is to undergo a change that enables the teacher to perform effectively in the context one is working. In the development process, a lot of things may happen. In this process, teachers can address psychology of the self, others and of groups. They manage stress, cope with changing circumstances and understand the change process, motivation of self and others, physical and psychological well-being, learning about learning itself, and how spiritual and moral well-being relate to teaching (Wright, 2000, p. 2). "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as



simple and as complex as that” (Fullan, 1991, as cited in Adey, 2004, p. 3). For this change in the teachers’ cognition and behaviour that makes changes possible in the way language teaching takes place, there are several strategies that have been in practice either self-initiated by the teachers or facilitated by others. Teachers can adopt and follow different kinds of initiatives and strategies for their professional development in language teaching. They include self- analysis of critical incidents, attending conferences and seminars, collaborative action research, critical development teams, establishing a learning community, keeping a teaching journal, mentoring, peer coaching, professional development through writing, sharing living theories to help others develop, teacher support groups, and professional exchanges (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Davidson, Dunlop, Soriano, Kennedy, & Phillips, 2012).

As the list above suggests, there are multiple ways to professional development for teachers. However, as the adult learning is voluntary, the contemporary concept of bottom up approach to teacher development realised through mutual sharing and exchanges and collaboration among teachers (MacBeath, 2012) has been acclaimed as a better strategy for teacher professional development. The contemporary undercurrents of the teacher development activities are guided by the idea of professional development not as something done ‘by’ others ‘for’ and ‘to’ teachers but done by the teachers themselves as stated by J. Johnson (2009). She summarizes that the contemporary concept of teacher development is self-directed and collaborative and it recognizes the teachers’ informal social and professional networks. Cunningham (as cited in Merriam & Brockett, 2007) states that the adult education is something beyond formal schooling where “voluntary associations, and communities are producing and disseminating knowledge as a human activity” (p. 7).

Regarding the term, teacher professional development, several definitions have been given by authors but the undercurrent of the ideas is roughly homogenous. All authors justify why the professional development is a necessity.

Glathorn (as cited in Reimers, 2003) claims that teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. He defines this development as the growth that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycles. Professional development of the teachers relates to the content of the experience, the process in which the professional development occurs and the context in which it takes place (Gausser, as cited in Reimers, 2003).

Life-long learning is a necessity in any profession, more so in the teaching profession. The initial training is not an end in itself, nor is it complete. For a teacher, the pedagogical know-how a trainee teacher gets at the training college is not sufficient for their life-long career. Underhill (1986) defines teacher development as “the process of becoming ‘the best kind of teacher you can be’” (p. 1). In order to be the best teacher that they can be, the teachers need constant change and growth.

Gnawali (2008) presents three reasons for this phenomenon:

- a. with the passing of time, there will be new kinds of challenges in this profession; new ideas and concepts will be developing which the teacher will have to keep up with;
- b. learners’ needs and wants will be changing with time and social change; the teacher will have to cater for them, and
- c. everything requires change to have life in it; this change is continuous (p. 37).

Padwad (2011) presents why teacher development is a necessity by presenting the scenario how the teachers enter and continue in the teaching profession. He

contends that the future teachers may not necessarily have to undergo training courses. They may take degrees in general education and then only decide to become teachers. He also argues that there is no induction provision in teaching as in other professions, such as, medicine and law. He establishes that if what happens before entering the profession and while entering the profession is arbitrary, the only hope is from what happens within the profession. If what happens in the profession is professional development, how should it be defined? Then what happens, when such development takes place in teachers?

There are several characteristics regarding effective professional development of EFL teachers. It is based on the constructivist rather than transmission oriented model (McLaughlin & Zarrow, 2001). It takes place over time. It is a long term process. A series of related experiences need to be organized to relate the present experience to the past ones so they make sense (Cohen, 1990). Reflective practice is the key to the professional development process. For this reflection to happen, interaction with other fellow teachers is a must (Clement & Vanderbergher, 2000). The programmers must offer intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas and materials and colleagues (Corcoran, 1995) so the collegiality can grow.

Professional development has an impact on the teachers' beliefs and practices. As Cohen and Hill (1997) express, when the teacher practices change, the level of students achievements also go high. Darling-Hammond (1999) goes on to state that "Investments in teachers' knowledge and skills net greater teacher reflection increases in students' achievement than the other uses of education dollars" (p. 32).

India's apex teacher education body NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) presents a list of aims of teacher professional development. The professional development helps teachers to:

...reflect and research their practices, prepare for other roles, update on own academic discipline, update on social and education issues, collaborate with teachers and other academicians, transform existing practice towards creation of more child friendly environments, and break out of intellectual isolation (National Council for Teacher Education, 2009).

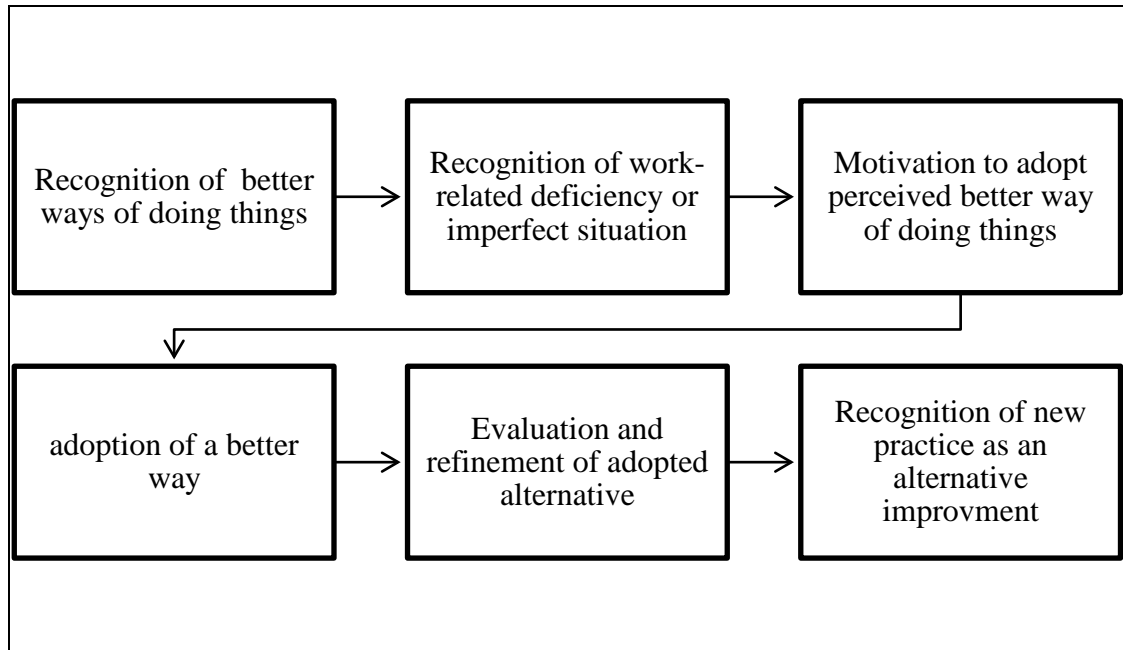
It should be noted that bringing the teachers from the intellectual isolations, collaborative professional development practices such as teacher association would be apt.

Evans (2008) asserts that teacher professional development aims at bringing about change at three levels: intellectual change, attitudinal change and functional change. She further presents the components that fall under each of these levels. At the intellectual level, teachers will undergo change at the comprehensive, epistemological and rationalistic level. At the attitudinal level, they will change the way they perceive and evaluate others and their own motivation level. Another change is related to how they function at the professional level. The teacher associations also claim their intent in a similar way as their focus is on the intellectual, attitudinal and functional change (*NELTA Statute*, 1992). It intends to help teachers in many spheres of their professional practices.

Evans (2008) goes on to outline the process of how the change actually takes place. The change phenomenon takes place at five stages (p. 5). Once the teacher recognizes the deficiency at one's teaching practice, she recognizes and identifies a better way. When she finds motivation to adopt a better way, she adopts it and evaluates the impact. She recognizes the new practice as an improvement.

Evans seems aware of the fact that not all teachers can actually realize their deficiency in their practices. They are good inside their comfort zones and feel that

what they are performing is the best that can be done. So, Evans presents a different pattern in the way the teacher development takes place.



*Figure 1.* Teacher development process (from Evans, 2008, p. 7).

In this model, the teacher sees what someone else is doing right and reflects how he or she does things. Then, they try that out in their own situation. The place where teachers can see the best practices is a teacher association where teachers from many walks of life congregate and share the experiences of their classrooms.

Though the above model looks simplistic in appearance, it should be understood that the process of teacher professional development is not as easy as it appears. As Harwell (2003) claims teacher professional development is not an event, it's a process. A constant involvement in the professional communities like NELTA would allow for the constancy to materialize.

### **How the Idea Started**

Though the practice of teacher training and education has been in existence for a considerable time, the concept of teacher development is relatively new. Wright

claims that the "developmental concept started in 1980's with the realisation that teachers want something more from INSET than just new classroom ideas or new knowledge about grammar and vocabulary" (Wright, 2000, p. 2). The early 1980s seem to be the turning point at least in the international arena.

Freeman (2009b) states that the gyre has been widening since the 1970s when the training became an essential part of English language teaching. At this early stage, teachers learnt to teach through certification training and the content was emphasized. In the training, the trainees had to learn grammar, applied linguistics and methodologies. But later during the 1980's, more attention was given to the teacher as a person and the idea of supporting teachers moved from training to the development of the person. It was in the 1980's that the Teacher Education Interest Section of the TESOL and IATEFL's Teacher Development Special Interest Group were set up. The teachers were started to be termed as teacher-learner and student-teacher: an actor in two fields. Though the terminologies like teacher development appeared very late, the formation of NELTA as an association was an indication that the idea of teacher professional support was also realized in Nepal in 1990s.

Freeman further notes that the teacher development became a prominent terminology in the EFL setting when the significant book *Second Language Teacher Education* by Richards and Nunan (1990) was published. It created a common topic for the teacher educators to talk about, which is now considered a separate discipline. This book established that the practitioner knowledge is more important than the expert knowledge. It also established that the practitioner knowledge must be made public, accessible to others, and open for inspection, verification and modification. Freeman informs that the latest trend is to acknowledge the practitioner knowledge

through reflective teaching movement and teacher research movement; legitimizing the practitioner knowledge.

K. E. Johnson (2009) explains that there has been a shift in how the teacher development was understood. The traditional concept of professional development is something done 'by' others 'for' or 'to' teachers. But now, it is a self-directed, collaborative, inquiry based learning relevant to teachers' own classrooms. The latter recognizes the teachers' informal, social, professional associations, peer coaching, narrative inquiry, and critical friends groups as the ways to sustained professional development.

The above discussion shows that the teacher professional development is relatively a recent phenomenon and the emphasis has shifted from skill focus to continuous learning focus. Next, the discussion will be on the teacher development strategies.

### **Teacher Development Strategies**

Reimers (2003) believes that many societies are now engaged in serious reforms in the educational systems. One of the key elements in the reform is the professional development of the teachers. The societies are now acknowledging that the teachers are not the only variables to be changed by the reform but the change agents with the reforms. The double roles of the teachers - being the subject and object of the change - make the field of teacher professional development a growing and challenging area. In order to influence these reforms positively, effective teacher development strategies need to be implemented.

Talking about the characteristics of teacher professional development (TPD), Mann (2005) presents an elaborate list to explain what it is. He believes TPD is a bottom-up process and as such can be contrasted with top-down staff development

programmes. Contrary to the earlier concept of teacher education, it values the insider view rather than the outsider view. It is a continuing process of becoming and can never be finished and is a process of articulating an inner world of conscious choices made in response to the outer world of the teaching context. There is more than what meets the eyes. It is wider than professional development and includes personal, moral and value dimensions. The developmental aspects can and need to be encouraged and integrated in both training and education programmes (Mann, 2005).

This list focuses on the teachers' own initiation, individually or in groups. Whatever the modality, a bottom-up approach to teacher development is effective if the autonomy that is essential for teacher professional development can be practised.

Diaz-Maggioli (2004) presents the factors that affect teaching styles and these factors need to be positively handled. The activities need to be designed keeping these factors in mind so a balanced approach to TPD can be realised. As shown by these factors, teachers' learning needs will also be different and the programmes need to be need-specific. Further, I explore within what the literature says about what the viable strategies for the teacher professional development in the EFL settings are. NELTA as an association was set up drawing attention of the stakeholders to improve the English language teaching situation in Nepal (Gnawali, 2011).

Teacher development can take place through different strategies in different contexts. Writers in the field of EFL teacher education have extensively discussed such strategies, all of which have been successfully experimented in EFL contexts. Next, I would like to discuss what I came across in the review process.

Diaz-Maggioli (2004) expresses that the times are changing. The concept of professional development which is relatively new and which has already taken a different dimension needs a visionary perspective. He further asserts that the



conventional professional development was more rigid and fixed, whereas, the current contact is more fluid and flexible. He shares his ideas with the help of the following

Characteristics of Traditional Professional Development	Characteristics of Visionary Professional Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-down decision-making</li> <li>• A “fix-it” approach</li> <li>• Lack of program ownership among teachers</li> <li>• Prescriptive ideas</li> <li>• One-size-fits-all techniques</li> <li>• Fixed and untimely delivery methods</li> <li>• Little or no follow-up</li> <li>• De-contextualized programs</li> <li>• Lack of proper evaluation</li> <li>• Pedagogical (child-centred) instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative decision-making</li> <li>• A growth-driven approach</li> <li>• Collective construction of programs</li> <li>• Inquiry-based ideas</li> <li>• Tailor-made techniques</li> <li>• Varied and timely delivery methods</li> <li>• Adequate support systems</li> <li>• Context-specific programs</li> <li>• Proactive assessment</li> <li>• Andragogical (adult-centred) instruction</li> </ul>

*Figure 2. Traditional vs. visionary professional development (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 6).*

Teacher associations these days appear to be organizing their activities with more visionary approach. They make their plans in a collaborative manner and design and deliver the support activities in a need based way (NELTA, 2011). As the teacher associations support teachers who are in service, their support is linked to life-long learning. K. E. Johnson (2009) believes that lifelong learning and continuous professional development refers to the same thing. She further states that the teachers, through their continuing professional development efforts, “... strive to push their boundaries and actively create challenges for themselves, learning from their experiences and adding to their skills and self knowledge, often in their own time” (¶ 1). She carried out a small scale study for a conference presentation via an email questionnaire to experienced teachers to find out about their professional development. Her questions mainly focused on strategies and factors that affected these teachers’ professional growth. Her study showed the following as the professional development strategies teachers followed: attending sessions by the

experts and reading their articles and books; attending face to face interactive workshops; interacting on the virtual conferences; blogs or other online forums; engaging in staffroom discussions; individual reading: reading internet materials and journals as well as actual books; starting a reading group and discussing issues the reading materials raise; engaging in the action research; delivering sessions at meetings or conferences; contributing short to long articles or books; maintaining a diary; doing a formal course; and membership of professional bodies.

The last strategy above i.e. membership of the professional bodies is a significant one for teachers in many ways. Affiliating to a professional association or other forum allows teachers to collaborate with others. When the teachers go to the teacher associations, they can benefit from experts' sessions and writing, can publish their own articles, and deliver their own sessions. So this strategy provides opportunities to realize the other strategies listed above.

J. Johnson's (2009) study also brought up a list of other ways of teacher professional development that included engaging in new professional activities, doing things for the first time; peer observation; trying out different methods/approaches in class (sort of action research); reflective and exploratory practice, though not programmed or formally monitored; being trained up as a teacher trainer; completing an online course to be an e-tutor; participating in projects in a group with fellow professionals; and forming a local group to discuss issues and take turns to lead sessions.

Though Johnson's list above was an outcome of a small study, the strategies the teachers suggested were similar to what Diaz-Maggioli (2004) discusses in his book *Teacher-Centered Professional Development*. He proposes the following strategies: establishing a learning community, mentoring, collaborative action

research, peer coaching, professional development through writing, critical development teams, attending conferences and seminars, sharing living theories to help others develop, the administrator's role, teacher associations, and professional development opportunities.

Drawing on Huberman's ideas, Diaz-Maggioli (2003) stated that the teachers move along their careers, through various crises, by confronting and solving the problems stemming from their daily lives. They progress along five distinct moments or phases in their careers.

1. Phase 1: Exploration and stabilization: At this stage, they seek balance and stability and tend to develop resources for teaching in order to confront the problems arising at the new school and classroom environment.
2. Phase 2: Commitment: Teachers now begin to focus on improving student learning. They do their best to provide quality in teaching to enhance quality in learning.
3. Phase 3: Diversification and crisis: At this stage, teachers tend to question their role and begin considering career moves. This is because they feel an identity crisis. They tend to question whether they want to keep doing what they are doing for the rest of their lives.
4. Phase 4: Serenity or distancing: If satisfied with their career choice, they will find renewed energy to pursue even better student learning. If not, a distancing may occur: they comply with school regulations, without pursuing improvement in their teaching.
5. Phase 5: Conservatism or regret: Towards retirement, teachers either become extremely conservative in their ways perpetuating a rigid model of teaching that is comfortable for them but not necessarily effective for student learning, or regret

the fact that they will have to retire. The later still feel the joy of teaching and can be a powerful motivator within the educational community.

(Diaz-Maggioli, 2003, p. 4)

Diaz-Maggioli is cautious that the strategies can be effective if they are pursued at the appropriate career stage in the teachers' lives. The development strategies relevant for the Phase 2 teachers may not satisfy the need for the stage 4 teachers. So, there needs to be relevant intervention and teacher associations can satisfy the needs of teachers at all stages as they can see colleagues at the same stage they are at. Teachers at any phase above can see the benefits when they come to the professional bodies such as NELTA.

So, the literature shows that there are multiple ways to professional development for EFL teachers. However, effective professional development is interactive and it engages teachers socially through regular opportunities to share experiences, problems, ideas, and viewpoints, and work together toward solutions (Guskey, 1995). This kind of interactions and sharing is possible only at the teacher associations such as NELTA. Foreign language teachers value opportunities to learn from and with one another (Lieberman & Pointer, 2008; Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). In this respect teacher associations serve the purpose very well. Now, the discussion moves to the EFL teacher associations and teacher professional development.

### **Teacher Associations and Teacher Professional Development**

Though teacher associations have been working to enhance teacher professional development through their varied activities, these have appeared in the literature only in the recent years. A summary of the review is presented below.

The basic reason why teacher associations exist is obviously to boost the self-esteem of their member teachers. Teacher associations are set up to improve the teaching and learning of the English language by way of supporting teachers in their professional capabilities (NELTA, 2011). Falcão (2004) believes that the teacher associations can be seen as vital stakeholders in any ELT activity and as channels for raising self-esteem among teachers. Huberman (2001, as in Diaz-Maggioli, 2003) stresses on the importance of teachers associations for teacher support. When the teachers come to associations, they can address the problem they have had at their workplace by showing them to individuals or groups.

Khanna (2011) believes that the teacher associations exist with a definite purpose that is to support the teachers. He argues that the "teacher associations as their primary goals aim to a) to empower the teachers by constantly building their proficiency skills; b) to publish newsletters, monographs, books; and c) to establish a network among professional organizations having similar goals" (p. 165). These goals are not limited to the building of the network, rather they span from curriculum design to its delivery. Whether it is to publish newsletters or to network with others associations or to help teachers to develop their proficiency, teachers have much to benefit from the teacher associations. He believes that the teacher associations are making their efforts in their respective countries by organizing seminars, conferences and other events (Khanna, 2011). However, he is worried that given the geographical and other barriers existing, teachers are not motivated towards their own professional growth. So, according to Khanna, EFL teacher associations have a challenge to motivate "teachers to participate in the activities directed towards professional growth" (p. 166). He believes that there are not many teachers who are interested in the professional development activities. So, in order to support the teachers, teacher

associations hold workshops and seminars that convince the teachers that such platforms are instrumental in helping them grow.

Talking about the Bangladesh English Language Teacher Association (BELTA) as an example, Khan (2011) presents a successful case of teacher association supporting teachers in their professional development. She starts her discussions with this straightforward statement: “Currently ELT professional associations are playing a vital role in contributing to English language Education (ELE) in their respective countries (p. 170). Then, she categorically lists the activities BELTA has been carrying out in Bangladesh. According to her, BELTA has been organizing seminars and workshops for English teacher training and development and national and international conferences. It also informs and disseminates information through its website. In order to give exposure to the member teachers, it secures scholarships that enable the teachers to participate in trainings or conferences. BELTA also has tried to internationalise the access and services for its members by establishing affiliations to international teacher associations such as TESOL and IATEFL. Members have the privilege to get a special discounted membership at IATEFL which would not have been possible without the BELTA affiliation.

Khan seems to be very enthusiastic about the potential that BELTA has for the development of ELT. She claims that BELTA exists in order to “... strengthen the English language teachers’ identity as members of a respected profession, to disseminate updated information about language teaching, and to take a lead in providing service training opportunities in the country” (p. 190). As a committee member of BELTA, she also strongly supports the idea that “BELTA believes in teacher development and is confident in its capacity to contribute to the task of

providing training to English teachers (p. 190). This indicates that BELTA has won the confidence of its members in their professional growth.

Gnawali (2011) disseminates information on the way NELTA has been working for EFL teacher development. It states that NELTA supports EFL teachers in two ways: bringing them opportunities and creating environment for teachers to explore their own opportunities. It organizes trainings, seminars, conferences and publishes a journal. It secures scholarships for its members for short term and degree programmes in BANA countries.

ELTAI India has demonstrated an example at teacher's professional development through establishment of teacher clubs. Padwad (2008) reports how the English teachers' clubs were set up in India and how they changed the way teachers viewed their professional development. According to him, an innovative experiment of English Teachers' clubs (ETCs) ran for over four years in some rural places in Indian states of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. This experiment showed that professional development is possible within a low resourced situation too. ETCs comprised of small groups of 10-20 teachers with low confidence and competence, and frustrated with their situation. One positive aspect that they had was an interest in self-development and their willingness to try and to grow.

The activities of the teacher associations, including NELTA, are aimed at facilitating the professional growth of the teachers by bringing teachers of English together; organizing refresher courses for teachers to enable them to keep abreast of standard practices in the teaching of the language; organizing joint, annual literature symposia; inducting newly employed teachers of English on acceptable professional classroom practice; network with other ELT groups; and establishing sound working atmosphere with head teachers across the district (Odhiambo & Nganyi, 2007, p. 4).

In the same spirit, a living ELT authority from New Zealand stated, “In most countries there are language teaching organizations and professional associations that organize meetings and conferences and these provide valuable learning opportunities as well as opportunities for networking with other professionals” (Richards, 2009, p. 1).

In a paper presented in Cuba in 1991, Dick Allwright supported the idea that teacher associations exist primarily for the professional development of its members saying that “The major point, of course, is indeed that teachers associations, whether micro or macro, are necessarily centrally concerned with the professional development of its members. This is the ultimate justification for their existence (Allwright, 1991, p. 2). But the paper was not research based. A similar presentation was made by Zakia Sarwar in Kathmandu in 1994. She claimed that the teacher associations can function as a platform for teachers where they can unite and advocate change and update educational process to improve the teaching and learning standards in their environment. Seen from its perspective, success in teachers’ own development is closely linked with the success and growth of the professional organisation they belong to (Sarwar, 1994).

Pickering (2008) reports on Strengthening Teacher Associations (STA) Project 2007-2008 carried out by the British Council. It was a regional project aimed at strengthening teacher associations of teachers of English both nationally and regionally in Central and South Asia. The project included these teacher associations: ELTAA (English Language Teachers’ Association of Afghanistan) Afghanistan, BELTA (Bangladesh English Language Teachers’ Association) Bangladesh, GELTA (Ghatail English Language Teachers’ Association), KELTA (Khorasan's English Language Teachers Association) Iran, NATEK (National Association of Teachers of



English in Kazakhstan) Kazakhstan, FORUM Kyrgyzstan, NELTA (Nepal English Language Teachers' Association) Nepal, SPELT (Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers), Pakistan, UzTEA (Uzbekistan Teachers of English Association), Uzbekistan.

Talking about the purpose of the project, Pickering states that the project aimed at helping teacher associations to expand their activities and memberships “by delivering training in leadership and management, strategic planning, marketing and communications, project and events management, and strengthening and expanding TA products and services for teacher members” (Pickering, 2008, p.3). He establishes that the teacher associations need support in their growth and enhancing the quality of their services so as to benefit the members.

When the international organizations such as the British Council launches a project targeting the ELT teacher associations, we can deduce that the issues relating to the teacher associations and their very existence for the teacher professional development has been recognized by the major stakeholders in ELT, state and non-state sectors. This rationale also indicates that the stakeholders need to and can improve their organizational capability in terms of their operation and services. The BC launched this project and also intended to leave some visible outcomes. Pickering further expects:

“The teacher associations would be more effective in improving the teaching and learning of English in their countries. Their memberships and activities would be broader and more sustainable. A strong regional network of the teacher associations would sustain the continued growth of the younger organizations (p. 5).

So there is a double purpose of this association. There is not only the intention to support individual teacher associations but also help setting a regional association so the younger teacher associations can sustain themselves. Allocating funds and involving in the teacher associations support activities such as STA project, the British Council certainly had some rationale from its own perspective. When I tried to find out what they expected from this project for themselves, the above document mentioned two of the British Council's key objectives as quoted by Pickering from the project proposal as follows: a) to increase opportunities for self-development for the people of the countries it works in; and b) to work to create sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships wherever it works. The British Council also saw that the teacher associations would be able to reciprocate the support so that it would not just be a one way support by a partner organization towards a common goal. They expected that a strong teacher association could also make an effective partnership with the British Council in on-going and future ELT regional projects.

When the STA project was launched, it was seen that the trainers for the project period were from the IATEFL (International Associations for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) community. This meant that they were not only supporting the teacher associations here in South and Central Asia, but were also utilizing the experiences of the successful teacher associations in their own activities.

The literature on teacher associations also shows that the idea of well operating teacher associations was realized when the project used ideas and checklists from the IATEFL booklet entitled "Developing an Association for Language Teachers" (Falcao & Szesztay, 2006). This booklet was developed by these authors under the aegis of the IATEFL to help set up and maintain teacher associations. From this, we can deduce that there have been concerns and efforts. This also calls for a

closer enquiry from academic sector to see how these teacher associations are relevant for the teacher professional development.

That the EFL teacher professional development has been realized by the NELTA members has been well documented by Sharma (2012) who elaborately shares his experience of having opportunities for his professional development. The training he had first had from NELTA had a lasting influence on his attitude towards what NELTA was he shares on a NELTA blog that the trainers "had a different way of sharing ideas: they inspired the participants to think about language teaching as a profession, as a life-long journey. They didn't just tell us how to teach the conversion of active to passive voice; they framed their presentation of teaching skills within larger ideas of professional development" (2012, ¶ 1). His experience of undergoing the different methodology shows that the teacher associations such as NELTA deliver their services differently from other organizations. As the entry in the blog is a very relevant literature, I cite it in my data analysis where appropriate.

The documents of the teacher associations including NELTA highlight their conferences as the major component of their activities. I tried to see what the literature says about the usefulness of attending the conferences and this is discussed below.

### **Teacher Conferences and Professional Development**

Attending conferences has been claimed as an important opportunity for professional development. Lauding its significance, Griffiee (2012) states,

If we are to survive and succeed as individuals as well as professionals, we have to attend conferences and give presentations. No matter the size of our school or the city in which we are located, we cannot be isolated; we need to

constantly be reaching out and networking. Attending conferences is one way to do that (p. 10).

Thus, the conferences are taken as an opportunity for networking with others. Networking actually seems to be the first professional interest of the teachers who attend conferences. Clark (2012) stresses on networking as the purpose of going to the conferences. She explains, “I like to think of conferences as a key place ... in which you develop and foster the important and meaningful friendships with people who share many of your professional and personal commitments” (Clark, 2012, ¶2). Only through networking, teachers can reach out to other colleagues near and far and learn and help others to learn. Clark is of the opinion that having a network is getting in touch with colleagues from different places. When we stay in touch, we can get updates of the latest events and ideas.

There are many objectives in attending conferences but networking is the most significant one. Stormy did a small survey about why people go to conferences. She wanted to find out the professional reasons that attract professionals to the professional gathering such as the conferences. Over 80% of participants said that seeing friends and meeting new people was the reason they went to conferences. 53% of people said they wanted to hang out with other participants. Some participants also said that when they met people, it renewed their energy (Stormy, 2009, p. 1).

The international conferences are one of the main highlights of NELTA activities and attendees claim that they learn a lot from participating in it. In his report of the 17th NELTA international Conference, the then General Secretary Hemanta Raj Dahal includes the following as credential of the participants' learning:

Speaking in the closing ceremony of 17th NELTA International Conference, Ms Huma Khan from Bangladesh stated that NELTA conference brought

people together under one roof. Likewise, Md. Saif Akhtar from Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers (SPELT) expressed that they learnt a lot from this conference and it was like a rainbow exhibiting different colours from around the world. Similarly, Ms Ganga Basnet, stated that attending this conference became eye opener for all of us. The conference key speaker Prof Angi Malderez stated that she came here to meet NELTA people hoping to learn more. She further expressed that she was impressed by observing NELTA activities. Likewise, another key speaker Prof. Fredricka L. Stoller expressed that this was a wonderful experience to be in the conference of NELTA (Dahal, 2012, p. 8).

So, the above statement shows that teachers can benefit from the conferences learning from each other, expanding their networks and staying in touch to get recent updates.

### **Theoretical Review**

So far I have presented the review on the concept of teacher development for ELT and the role of the EFL teacher associations. The review showed that there are many ways to teacher professional development and teacher associations offer a teacher-centred bottom-up approach to effective teacher development opportunities. It also showed that there is a growing concern about the roles of teacher associations for the EFL teacher professional development. In this section, I would like to explore which sociological theories operate in teacher learning and try to link the theories to teacher associations. I reviewed three major theories: network theory, social capital theory and learning organizations. I chose network theory because it actually binds the ideas of the social capital and learning organization theories for their attribute to have a collective impact. I saw the relevance of the social capital as the teachers

associations grow into capital with the synergised resources the members bring to them. I wanted to explore how the target teacher association has built up social capital transforming itself into the common resource for the English language teachers. On the same note, if the association has evidences that it is indeed learning from its experiences, the learning in reality takes places in its members: this is the professional development.

### **Social Capital Theory**

The members of a teacher association are involved in several professional activities. They do teaching, teacher training, lecturing, research, leadership and management and writing and publishing (Baber, 2012). All these activities do not take place with just individuals. They are all the results of the social interactions and exchanges which is possible with the environment the associations create. This environment has been described as social capital.

I tried to see how the idea of social capital has been conceptualized. The term social capital was first used by Hanifan as early as 1916 when he first defined it as “The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself... If he comes into contact with his neighbour, and they with other neighbours, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs” (Hanifan, 1916 as cited in Conrad, 2007, p. 2). Hanifan saw the importance of togetherness which he thought accumulates into social capital to help the members satisfy their social needs. He saw this idea when the society was still largely agrarian and the significance of social capital was still not very high. As an attempt to give a clear idea of what social capital actually meant, Hanifan stated,

I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in

the daily lives of people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit... If he may come into contact with his neighbour, and they with other neighbours, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbours (Hanifan, 1916, as cited in Morse & McNamara, 2013).

For Hanifan, mutual relationship, and the cooperation between all parts of the community builds the potential that fulfils the needs of the members. However, the potential is created by the relationship between, and among the members. This idea is captured by Fukuyama. He states that social capital is “an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals” (Fukuyama, 1999, as cited in Conrad, 2007). Conrad (2007) defines social capital as a resource comprised of the benefits of social connections and relationships.

Social capital helps the members of a social unit. But the amount and quality of help depends upon the community. Conrad (2007) referring to Putnam claims, “Whilst a well-connected person may use social capital to find a new job opportunity, a person with very little access to social capital can still benefit from living in a social capital-rich community...” (p. 4).

The relationship focuses on the core of social capital and the very concept is well argued by John Field in his seminal book *Social Capital*. He starts the book by stating, “Relationships matter” (Field, 2008). This is what I have argued about the

snowball effect of the membership of teacher associations including NELTA. The associations gain momentum and strength as they increase their members. Field further argues:

By making connections with one another and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty. People connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with other members of these networks; to the extent that these networks constitute a resource, they may be seen as forming a kind of capital. As well as being useful in its immediate context, this stock of capital can often be drawn on in other settings. In general, then, it follows that the more people you know, and the more you share a common outlook with them, the richer you are in social capital (Field, 2008, p.1).

The book *Social Capital* by Field) (2008) tries to bring together the ideas of three pillars of Social Capital: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. He presents the ideas of these three in a comprehensive way. He quotes, Putnam define social capital as “features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, than can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, 1993, as cited in Field, 2008.)

For Bourdieu, social capital is the sum total of the actual or potential resources of a durable network of relationships of members which are institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1986). This situation supports its members with the collectively owned capital: the social capital. The relationships among the members exist only in the practical state, with meaningful exchanges which help maintain relationships. The relationships are usually given a name such as a family, a class, a tribe, a school, a



party, or an organization. The relationships sustain and are useful to members as long as the members nurture them. For Bourdieu, social capital is something created by the synergy of the members of the networks and associations. The capital sustains as long as the members keep giving and receiving and they have mutual trust for one another.

Likewise, Coleman also takes social capital as the resource mutually shared and contributed by the members of the networks. He claims, “Social capital represents a resource because it involves the expectation of reciprocity, and goes beyond any given individual to involve wider networks whose relationships are governed by a high degree of trust and shared values” (Field, 2008, p. 23). Lin (2001) argues why the social capital is worth investing. He believes social capital pays back for the investment made. The returns are more comprehensive if the ties are strong.

The above discussion shows that the theory of social capital is on the rise. As the networks grow in size and number, the social capital becomes more significant. In my case, the idea of social capital relating to teacher networks is an apt theory as the EFL teachers and their reciprocity makes the networks progress.

### **Learning Organizations Theory**

Organizations can sustain and survive when they adapt to the changing situations. Due to the changing socio-economic and technological scenario, the organizations need to brace themselves for competition as well. The ability to adapt and readiness to compete is possible when the organizations keep learning. The organization that learns also facilitates its members to learn. In order to see what the literature has to say, I reviewed books and articles and perceived a significant amount of literature available.

Shon (1973) provides a theoretical framework that links the experience of living in and the need for learning. Stability is required for common reference, but if

the situation remains the same for a long time, it is not stability, rather it is stagnancy. So organizations need to be in the continuous process of transformation. There will be no progress if the organizations remain stable for a long time. The only way that the organizations get transformed is by developing themselves into learning organizations.

Peter Senge furthered the idea of learning organizations through seminal book *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (2004). He defines learning organizations as:

...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (Senge, 2004, p. 1)

By this definition, he goes beyond learning alone to learning together. For Senge, only those organizations that are flexible and adaptive to change can prove their worth. The organizations need to gauge the commitment of the members and capacity to learn and create the opportunities to learn. For this, he proposes five disciplines: Personal mastery, mental models, shared visions, team learning and systems thinking.

- a. By personal mastery, he refers to the learning that the individuals do because he believes that “organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs” (Senge, 1990, p. 139). For personal mastery, individuals see the current reality and work towards the vision.
- b. Likewise, mental models are, "...deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand

the world and how we take action” (p. 8). These models need to be put to scrutiny by bringing them to public. Only then the mental models that are conducive to change will facilitate learning.

- c. Shared visions are the visions that the members of the organizations have in common. A learning organization needs the “... capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create” (Senge, 1990, p. 9) so the learning is facilitated. Senge believes that if the vision is imposed in the name of sharing, it does not inspire the members to learn. It becomes counter-productive.
- d. Team learning is possible when the personal mastery and shared visions have been realised. Senge thinks team learning is demonstrated when the results of the collective actions in the organizations represent the members’ wishes.
- e. Systems thinking is the overarching idea that converges the other four. Senge (1990) argues that the visions and actions should be viewed from long term point of view.

### **Teacher Association’s Learning Culture**

I have already discussed previously that the teacher associations exist in order to help teachers in their professional development. For this purpose, the associations need to develop a culture. The culture of an organization that is conducive to learning has some salient features such as shared purpose and values; norms of continuous learning; a commitment to and sense of responsibility for the learning of all members; collaborative and collegial relationships; and opportunities for reflection, collective inquiry, and sharing personal practice (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

Barker, Kagen, Klemp, Roderick, and Takenaga-Taga (1997, as cited in Diaz-Maggioli, 2004) define a true teaching professional as “a teacher who is engaged with a career path that encourages, fosters, and rewards constant professional growth that

reflects directly and positively back on classroom practice” (p. 10). In line with Barker et al., Sachs (1999, as cited in Diaz-Maggioli, 2004) claims that such a view treats professionalism as “an exclusive rather than an inclusive ideal, and is conservative rather than radical”—thus reducing professional development to the mere acquisition of traits that allow teachers to claim membership in the profession. Sachs suggests an even more powerful view of teacher professionalism -one that sees it as “negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended power-laden enactment of those meanings in everyday situations”—and identifies five dimensions of identity:

- a. Identity *as negotiated experiences* where we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as the way we and others reify ourselves,
- b. Identity *as community membership* where we define who we are by the familiar and the unfamiliar,
- c. Identity *as learning trajectory* where we define who we are by where we have been and where are going,
- d. Identity *as nexus of multi membership* where we define who we are by the ways we reconcile various forms of our identity into one identity, and
- e. Identity *as a relation between the local and the global* where we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 12).

Teacher development becomes a feasible act when teachers form a team and work for the collective good. As their team exists to facilitate the growth and development, the development process runs with some basic principles. The principles can be summarized as follows: cooperation is a value; teams are

heterogeneous; team members are interdependent; team members are individually accountable; team members interact simultaneously; all team members should have the chance for equal participation; and team members need to learn the core cooperative skills that will help them succeed (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, pp. 24-27).

In this context, the members of the team have a reciprocal interdependence to develop and help others develop. Though teams are instrumental in making the professional development possible, development does not happen at once and automatically. According to Armstrong and Yarbrough (1996), “Most models of group development stages come from social psychology. Our experience has shown that none of the existing models fully captures the progression necessary for developing internal group environment in learning groups” (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 30).

As the teams have a logical progression and pass through the developmental stages, the member teacher who joins the team for the purpose of his or her professional development also undergoes a procedural change. If the teacher educators can help teachers to work collaboratively, the teacher’s personal change undergoes through four stages. In Stage one – emergence - they reflect on the three key roles they can play on the team, as peers, as learners and as consultants. In stage two – application - participants at this stage often feel overwhelmed as they embark on their professional development roles. In stage three – appropriation - participants become aware of their own development and the work it takes to incorporate new knowledge into their teaching repertoire. In Stage four - transformation - participants have begun to engage in learning as an activity concerned as much with improving the school as a whole as with equipping them with knowledge (pp. 40-44).

We can deduce that the learning culture of a teacher association makes it possible for the teachers to work as team and undergo a process of learning. NELTA, as a teacher association, also claims that it works with a mission to establish itself as a learning organization when it states that "the mission of the association is to establish NELTA as a forum for enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning through professional networking, support and collaboration" (NELTA, 2011).

### **Network Theory**

Borgatti and Halgin (2011) define network as an entity consisting of a set of actors along with a set of ties that link them. The ties interconnect through shared end points to form paths that indirectly link others that are not directly tied. With the newly emerging and expanding network in their present worlds, network theory also enjoys its space in the academics and among practitioners. Kallenbach, Lee, Downs-Karkos, and Taylor (2013) state that networks in the non-profit sector like teacher networks take many different forms, such as peer learning networks and innovation networks.

Network theory also offers insight into network developmental trajectories that can be applied in efforts to catalyze, strengthen, and deploy social sector networks. This has resulted in specific network building approaches, methods, and tools suited to different types of networks at different stages of development (Kallenbach, Lee, Downs-Karkos, & Taylor, 2013, p. 16).

Network theory also provides insight into conditions for developing network relationships and for engaging network members in different types of network activities such as close collaboration and peer learning at core of the network, and a broader cross-sector collaboration among a wider range of stakeholders.

Owen-Smith (2011) states that the networks have three functions. Firstly, they create resources and information for the individuals and channelize them. In addition, they also signal status of the members in the larger community. Thirdly, this 'status signalling' leads to the social influence. On the contrary, Kallenbach et al. (2013) see the functions of the network in a more linear manner. They advocate that the network connects people to allow easy flow of and access to information. It then aligns people around a common set of values, language or standards. Finally, it fosters joint actions and initiative for specialized outcomes.

Putnam (2000, as in Owen-Smith, 2011) is of the opinion that networks create social capital for individuals and communities. When the individuals come to network, they gain as well as they contribute to the network creating more capital for the members to benefit from. Podolny (1993, as in Owen-Smith, 2011) talks about social psychology aspects of the networks. He says networks create status for the members. Being on networks demonstrates the social and professional status of the individuals. The sense of higher status is coupled by the trust the networks create (Uzzi, 1997, as cited in Owen-Smith, 2011). The individuals who take the membership of a network are not only trusting the network but also winning trust from others, which in turn signifies that they can collaborate with them.

Another feature of the network is the creation of the conformity in thought and action (Mizruchi, 1992, as cited in Owen-Smith, 2011). There are principles and practices among the professionals and within the subject disciplines. The individuals who are outside the networks may tend to question the ideas but once they are inside, due to the commitment as a member, they start conforming to the existing principles and practices. This conformation adds to the strength of the network.

I chose these three theories for the theoretical connection that they have in relation to NELTA as an association. With the network theory, we can see how NELTA binds the members together in its network system. With the social capital theory, we can see how the individuals who come into the network bring knowledge and skills with them and have potential to build the social capital from which they themselves can benefit. With the social capital thus built, now NELTA as an association can learn for its own capacity building, thereby, being in position to support the members. After the discussion of these three theories above, I feel that their choice is justified.

### **Linking the Theories**

The three theories I reviewed and discussed above possess a commonality in relation to the issue I took for my research. Teacher associations bind the teachers together as members. With this binding, individual teachers get connected to fellow teachers by way of the membership. This I saw related to the network theory. Once they come together, they share their ideas and experiences. They create synergy with their own individual capabilities, thereby, build capital. This capital benefits the associations in enhancing the capabilities of both the associations and their members. This is what the social capital theory purports. I saw the relevance of the social capital because the teacher associations grow into capital with the synergised resources the members bring to them. I explored into how the target teacher association of this research has built up social capital transforming itself into the common resources for the English language teachers in Nepal. With the interactions and sharing, the teacher associations build knowledge not only for the members but also for themselves. In the course of time, the associations develop better efficiency in their products and services discernible from external perspective. In the same note, if the association has



evidences that it is indeed learning from its experiences, the learning in reality takes places among its members: this is the professional development. Network theory binds the ideas of the social capital and learning organization theories for their attributes to have a collective impact.

### **Policy Review**

The Government of Nepal has formulated policies several times for teacher education and training since the time it planned teacher education around 1950. Outlining the history of the teacher education, Awasthi (2003) gives a brief overview of what was done at different times. He states that Basic Education Teacher Training Centre (BETTC) was set up in Kathmandu in 1948 to prepare primary school teachers. When Nepal National Educational Planning Commission recommended the establishment of the College of Education in 1956, the BETTC was discontinued. The policy reform continued with the College of Education and Mobile Normal Schools producing teachers for the school level. The New Education System Planning (1971-76) made training mandatory for tenured jobs and the teachers were produced. With the new policy, College of Education, National Vocational Training Centre and Mobile Normal Schools came under Tribhuvan University's Institute of Education. The Institute of Education ran pre-service, in-service and short-term in-service education/training.

This policy was also meant for all the institutes and Colleges of Education, National Vocational Training Centre, and Primary School Teacher Training Centres which were included under a single umbrella of the Institution of Education (IoE) under Tribhuvan University. Accordingly, Remote Area Teacher Training Program and Teacher Training through Distance Learning Program were also conducted (p. 37).

After the National Education System Plan (NESP) initiative, several other policies have been implemented in Nepal. In 1993, National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) was established with a view to produce trained human resources for school education. It has nine primary teachers training centres spread throughout the country. For training secondary level teachers the Secondary Education Development Centres (SEDC) was set up.

The policy summary in the *Teacher Professional Development Implementation Guide* (NCED, 2011) states that all the working teachers would be provided 30-day training within the next five years. They would undergo the training for thirty days within five years with a maximum stretch of ten days at a time. In this training, the trainees would learn modules like classroom based action research.

A similar intent is expressed in the *School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015* (Ministry of Education, 2009). The document states that the teachers would be categorized into four classes: beginner, experienced, master and expert. To achieve promotion from one class to another, they would need to fulfill certain criteria. Teacher Professional Development training would be one such criterion. For those teachers whose qualification needs to be upgraded, opportunities would be created in coordination with the Higher Secondary Education Board and the Universities. This policy shows that the NCED is aware of the need for teacher professional development; however, there seems to be a misunderstanding about the concept of TPD because it seems more geared to be delivered in the form of trainings. NCED (2009) in its Online Offline Professional Capacity Development TPD Self-instructional Materials lists some professional development strategies where it goes beyond the training and has a wider scope of formal and informal means for improving teachers' pedagogy and practices. For the TPD, they suggest experts, F2F

workshops, online communities, talking informally, individual reading, reading groups, action research, giving sessions, writing, and membership of professional bodies.

NCED's *Teacher Development Policy Guide* (NCED, 2011) states that teachers will have access to specialized training, not one-size-fits-all type of training (p. 21). It, however, does not aim beyond the training concept in matters of teacher development. Moreover, it makes a distinction between the teachers working in public schools and private schools. As a body of the Ministry of Education, it has a responsibility towards all school teachers in Nepal, however, the private school teachers are not entitled to the services. The positive side is that the NCED promises to cover teachers from religious schools such as Madrasa, Gurukul and Gumba. Further, the teachers from inclusive sections such as schools for the blind and deaf would be provided special package to address the inclusive issues and multilingual situations.

In addition to the distinction between the public and private schools, the NCED's initiatives have a timeline which does not seem to be realistic. It states that teachers will undertake the TPD activities only for one month in the span of five years. NCED also makes provision for the monitoring and evaluation of teachers' TPD activities as well as their classroom performances. If this is implemented effectively, teachers would benefit in their professional development.

The discussion above indicates that this teacher training and development wing of the Ministry is aware of the benefits that teachers can get by being part of the teacher associations. However, there is no clear policy which professional body the teachers need to be members and how the facilities would be administered. The name

of NELTA is not clearly mentioned here. Even then, the mention has touched upon the idea of a teacher association.

The existing policies do not suffice and the implementation in the bottom-up approach seems to be the need of the time as Shrestha (2008) expresses, “The teaching behavior of trained teachers in schools indicates that the existing pre-service and in-service training system needs a thorough reform” (p. 49). Only a teacher centred bottom-up approach to teacher education would give returns in the form of quality teaching in the classroom teaching.

### **Review of Previous Studies**

I have already mentioned above regarding the relationship of teacher associations for teacher professional development, however, it has not been much discussed in the EFL teacher development literature. One could argue that it has not come much into the researchers’ purview. It must be acknowledged that the issues of teacher development have been explored by several researchers. For example, M. Rijal (2009) explored opportunities and practices of teacher professional development in the school setting and found that there are school initiated activities and teacher led activities that benefit the teachers. Others also tried to explore what the practices and strategies for teacher development in school and college level are. However, there have been limited studies on EFL teacher associations and networks.

One of such studies was carried out by Ana Falcao in 2004. As a Braz-TESOL member, she compared the association with SPELT, Pakistan and JALT, Japan in terms of their organizational strengths. Falcao mentions, “Unfortunately, studies on these associations are scarce” (Falcao, 2004). Through this study, she tried to explore answers to these questions: What commonalities and differences can be identified between the Brazilian teacher association (TA) and the Pakistani and Japanese TAs?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Pakistani and Japanese TAs in terms of policies and practices? Considering the differences in culture between the TAs in discussion, how can the Brazilian TA learn from these teacher associations?

She used case study method and collected data and discussed and analyzed them under these headings *organisational structure, resource management, membership, networking* and *development planning*. She mainly looked at the strengths of JALT and SPELT and drew implications for Braz-TESOL. Her study focused on the association as an entity from quality-management point of view.

Another study on EFL teacher associations was carried out by Deborah A. Sams. The study is entitled *An Analysis of Leadership Beliefs and Practices of 25 TESOL Leaders*. This study, carried out as a PhD requirement, looked into the TESOL leaders' beliefs and practices. Her findings showed that TESOL leaders believed that the leaders grow due to reciprocal interaction - give and receive (Sams, 2010).

The TESOL leaders believed that giving and receiving helps the members as well as leaders to grow. In their practices, they seem to have worked to create such an environment because what they practiced as TESOL leaders were the following as Sams found out in her research: collaboration, listening and employing effective communication skills, building relationships with people, encouraging others, modeling/acting as a role model, using influence to benefit others, mentoring, visioning and learning. These leaders seem to have used the facilitating roles to create conducive environment for the growth of the members in their professional development Endeavour.

Another small scale study carried out in Hungary was a direct research on why the English teachers came to the teacher associations. Margit Szesztay asked the

members of teacher association IATEFL Hungary, “What do you value most about your IATEFL Hungary membership?” Their responses indicated two benefits: practical benefits, and sense of belonging.

Regarding the practical benefits, they gave these reasons for taking the membership: a. attending the conference, b. reduced price at the conference, c. the debate training, d. melting pot, e. Forum magazines, f. finding out about ELT events and courses, g. fresh and sincere information, h. the feeling that I can find out about opportunities too even if I can’t take part. Regarding the sense of belonging, the list included the following: a. belonging to a family of language teachers, b. to get in touch with other teachers, c. team feeling, d. being in a community of colleagues, e. meeting teachers from other countries at the conference, f. networking opportunities, g. the energy I get from being with like-minded professionals. These two sets of responses show that teachers see the benefits related to their professional and psychological well-being.

Kolesnikova (2011) reports a small scale survey carried out in Kazakhstan. She writes that in Kazakhstan the National Association of Teachers of English in Kazakhstan (NATEK) uses “several tools for organizing village teacher professional development depending on the teachers’ needs and on the association resources available” (p. 123). In this regard, they organized a series of activities “to assist rural teachers in developing their skills in teaching, thus allowing them to become better educators and ultimately improve the English of their current and future students” (p. 123). They organized village project workshops, video-based professional development courses, online professional development course, and lesson plan competition.

At the end of the series, they conducted a survey which showed that the activities were just what the rural teachers did. The survey also brought to light what would have to be done in the next series. In the conclusion, she writes,

Evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the seminars and courses through the surveys allowed local associations to identify areas in which the next seminar needed to improve. Further seminars and surveys allowed to directly address rural teacher areas of concern and interests. The associations, therefore, will continue working together; building the capacity and skills of rural English teachers, as well as relationships with our regions communities (Kolesnikova, 2011, p. 127).

This incident shows that teacher associations have a direct bearing on the teacher professional development. They can perform their activities at the grassroots level.

A similar issue was taken by Elisa Alcantara from Brazil. With her study entitled, *A lonely rooster cannot bring on a new dawn: the role of a FL teachers' association in the professional development of its associates*, (Alcantara (2010) tried to identify the influence of the work of English teacher associations in developing the professional competence of their members and also to promote changes in the actions of the associations. She divided her work into two themes: the history of language teaching in Brazil, and reflective model of professional development. She found out that the teachers looked at their TA primarily “to enhance their linguistic and communicative competence, (and) to seek methodological innovations for their classes, in addition for motivation and self-esteem” (p. iii). Another key finding states that the association is not the sole provider of training and other agents influence their teaching practice.

In analyzing her research process, I felt that she deviated from the main research purpose as she sat through the teachers' lessons, from which it is not easy to see the impact of the affiliation to teacher associations. She also states that she used action research tools. This does not serve the purpose of seeing the professional development of teachers chronologically or attitudinally that could have been possible with in-depth interview and teachers' life narratives.

The latest research study on EFL teacher associations I consider in this study is by Arega (2012) on English Language Teachers' Association's impact on the professional development of English language teachers with special reference to Addis Ababa English Language Teachers' Association (AAELTA), Ethiopia. He used three questions: What are the ways in which English language teachers currently engage in professional conversation? What are the potential benefits of language teachers' association to English language teachers? How do current members of AAELTA evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the association? He collected data using questionnaires and focus group discussions.

His findings showed that teachers who are the members of the teacher association are engaged in professional conversations with other like minded professionals to share experiences, debate on different issues, and discuss new ideas with the objective of professional development. The study showed that the teachers' association had a visible impact on the teachers' professional growth.

Back in Nepal, R. Rijal (2013) carried out a study on professional development of English language teachers in Nepal. One of the statements he used in his Likert scale data collection was whether the participants wanted to be involved in the professional organizations. The responses showed that 82% of the participants expressed their desire to get involved in the professional organizations and develop their professional capacity (p. 211).



Regarding the search for relevant research study, I came across the documents that I have discussed above. The correspondence to my friends and acquaintances around the world confirmed that teacher associations and their relation to teacher development is relatively a new area to be explored.

### **Gap Analysis**

The discussion above indicates that there are different teacher development strategies available, and involvement in teacher associations is one of them. The literature shows that associations have a strong bearing on the professional development of teachers with special reference to the EFL setting. The affiliation with such associations positively influences the members to develop not only as professionals, but also empowers them to create opportunities for initiating the ventures in wider professional and academic communities. The major thrust of the impact of the teacher associations is the teachers' learning and empowerment. Teachers who come in contact with other teachers like themselves from within the country or outside, share their experiences and insights and help one another develop.

This paradigm shift of teacher development from ministries and the universities to the teacher led bodies should not only be in practice but also be established by proven theories in academics. Only when the practices are governed by established theories, they come into the mainstream process of TPD and are owned by all stakeholders of teacher education. I wanted to explore on what research reports, academic writings and publications were available and I visited libraries in Kathmandu and browsed from online databases on teacher networking. I contacted my colleagues from South and South East Asia, Europe and North and South America. However, I saw limited academic discussion and professional literature based on research on this phenomenon.

Falcao (2004) studied some selected teacher associations focusing on theory of strengths, functioning and suitability. In her problem statement she states,

Unfortunately, studies on these associations are scarce. Although a few writers relate teacher networks to ongoing professional development and lifelong learning, (Edlfelt, 1989; Ur, 2002; Baily, 2002; Pettis, 2002; Cambridge, 2004) research, be it theoretical and empirical, is needed to deepen the understanding of these associations ..... Therefore, studies on these associations could help energise them to reflect on present practise and potential improvements (Falcao, 2004, p. 1).

The purpose of her study was to explore the best practices of other teacher associations in order to help develop Brazilian teacher association where Falcao comes from. So, the study did not look into how the associations impact upon its members who can make further impact in the formal education settings. Nor did it not cover teacher learning for professional development.

Arega (2012) studied English Language Teachers' Associations' impact on the professional development of English language teachers with special reference to Addis Ababa English Language Teachers' Association (AAELTA), Ethiopia. It was carried out on a limited number of participants using a set of questions and focus group discussions. The impact theme covered only the professional conversations as the professional development strategy. The study did not cover many additional contributions the teacher associations could have made. Similarly, the study by Alcântara (2010) was limited to the history of ELT in Brazil and the reflection opportunities in the teacher associations of Brazil. Likewise, the study by R. Rijal, (2013) was a generic one with very little focus on the teacher associations.

This shows that the issue of teacher associations in relation to teacher professional development has not come into the mainstream academic discussions.

There have been very few researches and established theories and it is, therefore, pertinent to undertake academic initiatives in this area. Through this PhD research work, an attempt has been made to fill the gap.

### Conceptual Framework of the Study

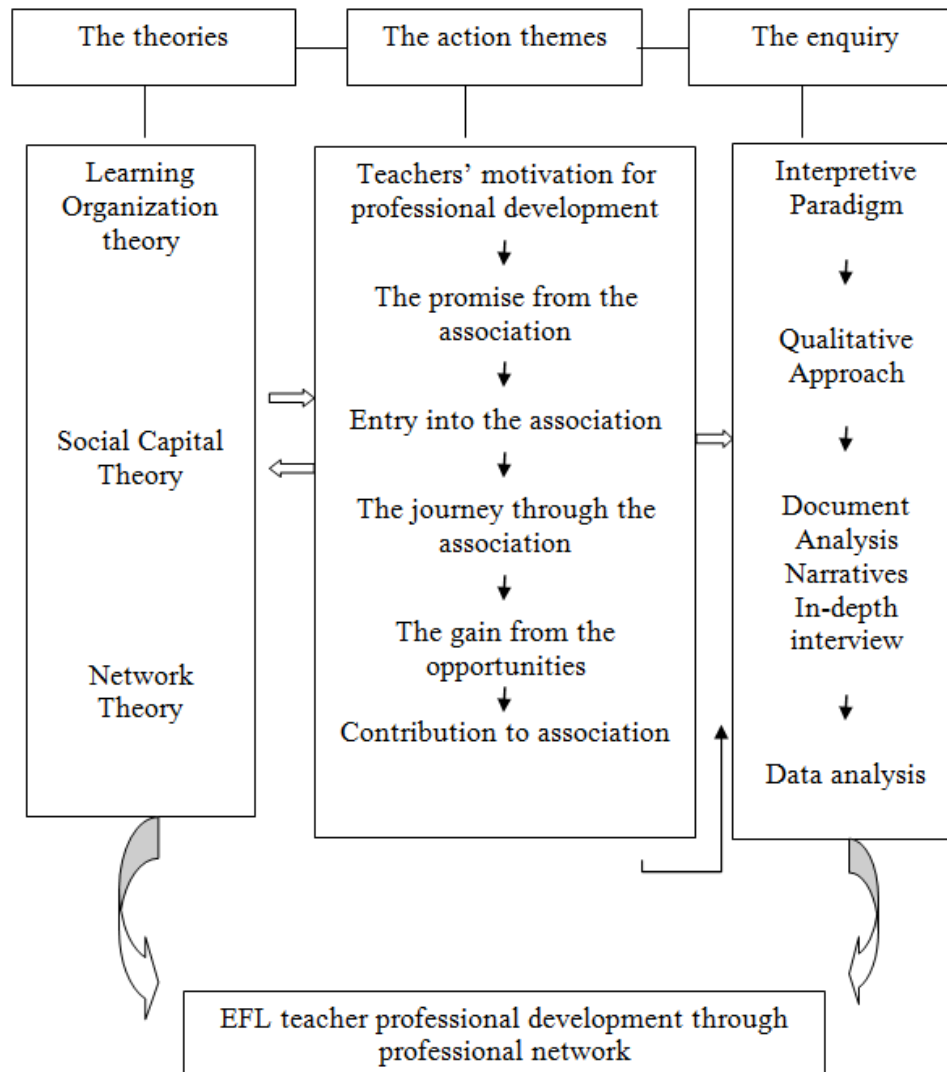


Figure3. Conceptual framework of the study

This conceptual framework is derived from discussions on the thematic and theoretical reviews combining with research methodology I followed. The links between the theories, themes and enquiry approach are shown. This framework gives a bird's-eye-view of the total research endeavour reported in this document.

### **Chapter Summary**

I began this chapter describing how I went about exploring the literature. I first discussed the teacher development concept in general and moved on with TPD in relation to the EFL teacher associations. The discussion showed that the idea of bottom up approach to teacher professional development was now getting supported by the emergence of teacher associations and their collaborative activities. This was followed by the theoretical review under which I discussed the three theories: network theory, social capital theory and the learning organization theory. After a brief review of the teacher development policies in Nepal mainly with the help of the MOE and NCED documents, the chapter highlighted previous research studies related to my study. The review of the studies carried out so far showed that not much has been done in this area and showed a red gap for the research. Finally, the chapter ended with a conceptual framework of this entire study.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with the philosophical considerations that guided my research ideas. Then I discuss the research paradigm and approach which determined my research design. The design includes selection of the participants and data collection techniques. The chapter concludes with the quality standards of and ethical considerations for my research.

#### **Philosophical Considerations**

Our actions are guided by the world views that we hold. The world views are dependent on the philosophy of life that we live with. In the research undertakings, these guiding philosophies influence our ways of research design and undertaking. So before we put our hands on the research design, we need to outline the philosophical considerations we would like to make. This is because such philosophical considerations help us better understand what constitutes knowledge claims. They provide a thoughtful grounding to scrutinize the interconnection between the philosophy we hold and the research we conduct. In the following sections I would like to discuss my philosophical considerations: ontology, epistemology, axiology and view of science in my research.

#### **Ontology**

Rene Descartes said, “Cogito ergo sum” or “I think, therefore I am”. Humans have pondered upon the idea of existence and reality throughout their history. This kind of study of existence is termed as ontology in philosophy. Ontology is concerned with the nature of being and existence. Ontology is considered to be a central branch

of metaphysics. It has something to do with our assumptions about how the world is made up and the nature of things. It seeks to look into the categories of being and how they are related to each other. According to Richards (2003), “Ontology, literally the science or study of being, is concerned with the nature of reality and their stances” (p. 34). It is concerned with social reality as it exists based on what we believe. Social reality as it exists and as we believe it exists may differ. So the reality is how we see the phenomenon; our perception creates a reality based on our perspective. As each individual is uniquely different, the realities created by each human being will be multiple. Apart from the human perception, truths may change according to the context.

Keeping this idea of multiple realities in mind, I dealt with each individual as a different entity and recorded their opinions and experiences as different, so the existing multiplicity could be explored. Through the narratives and interviews, the participants shared about their affiliation with the teacher association and how it impacted upon their personal and professional lives. As I mentioned earlier, the reality that surfaced also related to the context the teachers worked in. As the context differed from teacher to teacher, this contextuality made the reality relative. So, when I processed the data, I tried to see the uniqueness of the individual participants and their experiences in the TA as a community by discussing the data separately. Hence, in my research process and data analysis, I maintained the ontology that there are multiple realities in the world.

### **Epistemology**

Humans have always strived to add something to the already existing knowledge. To create and add to the knowledge body, one needs to understand the nature of knowledge and how it gets created. This notion of knowing is epistemology,

which comes from the Greek word 'episteme'. Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge: How do we come to know what we know? What are the limits and scope of knowledge? Epistemology has something to do with our beliefs about how we might discover knowledge about the world.

There is an appreciation of the plasticity and constant change of reality and knowledge, a stress on the priority of concrete experience over fixed abstract principles, and a conviction that no single a priori thought system should govern belief and investigation. It is recognized that human knowledge is subjectively determined by a multitude of factors; that objective essences, or things-in-themselves, are neither accessible nor positable; and that the value of all truths and assumptions must be continually subjected to direct testing. The critical search for truth is constrained to be tolerant of ambiguity and pluralism, and its outcome will necessarily be knowledge that is relative and fallible rather than absolute or certain (Tarnas, 1991, p. 395-396).

So, I drew my epistemological stance from the Coral Reef metaphor. Coral reefs are a community in the sea and they support the organisms there. What is special about them is the reefs are made from the exoskeletons of the corals when they die. The young ones grow on the same. I believe that the knowledge that I generated is not completely new. It is built on the existing one. The participants in the research also based their knowledge on the existing knowledge base. So, the interactions in my research added on to the knowledge passed on by the predecessors.

### **My Research Paradigm**

As I intended to explore the lived experiences of the networked teachers and interpret those experiences to inductively derive working theories, I opted for the

interpretive paradigm of research. The mention of paradigm calls for a brief explanation on what it is and why I chose the interpretive paradigm.

The word paradigm comes from the Greek word “paradeigma” which means model that forms the basis of something or relationship of ideas to one another. So, in research, a paradigm is a broad framework that restructures perceptions and understanding of humans and interprets social reality as it exists. The paradigm a researcher takes up influences their conceptualization of the reality and shapes their understanding of how things are interconnected (Lincoln, Lynham, & Denzin, 2011; Creswell, 2007). Choosing a paradigm for one’s research is instrumental to make it worth the efforts as Guba and Lincoln (1994) say that

... it represents a world view that defines for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do. The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness (Guba & Lincoln 1994, as cited in Richards, 2003, p. 33).

My initial understanding was that I needed to use a large sample for my data collection which meant that I was going to follow the calculations. It meant that I was going to adopt the quantitative approach to research. When I presented my concept paper, I was given the feedback that exploring the experiences of the participants would not accommodate calculations; experiences can only be described and interpreted, not calculated. So, I decided to adopt the qualitative approach to research. My decision was also supported by the ideas of the methodologists such as Hoepfl who says that qualitative research “probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features” (Hoepfl, 1997, ¶ 2). My research was to explore personal



experiences of the members of the association in professional setting and such personal experiences cannot be quantified and calculated. I am well aware that there will be some patterns in the experiences of the members of a community as they share the same environment. The experiences based on the same environment definitely exhibit the same patterns. In this connection, Jung divides the human psyche as social and individual (Jung, 2003, p. 67). The individuals exhibit traits that are unique but if we look at the demonstrated behaviors of the individuals of the same community, we see that they have a pattern which is distinct from other communities.

So here, the uniqueness of the individuals as distinct humans gives a pattern if observed from the bird's eye view. The individuals maintain their uniqueness while conforming to the mores of the surrounding. In my case, the TA members are individuals who bring with them their unique experiences of teaching and learning English as a foreign language but because they work with the same TA that operates in the same country, they will share the same environment which will shape the way they behave. This situatedness of the individuality and collectiveness and the environment that allows such situatedness calls for an informed point of view. This point of view sees the situatedness as seen from that stand. The seer sees the situatedness as appears from that point of view. It means that the seen appears as interpreted by the seer. So, my research paradigm was interpretive. I used my own experiences as a TA member coupled with the theories of teacher professional development. In this endeavour of qualitative data collection and interpretive paradigm of data analysis, I found in-depth interview as an appropriate approach for me because it allows the human experiences to be voiced. I also asked the participants to write their narratives for gathering richer data. In order to capture the organizational

perspective of the teacher associations which also have some institutional arrangements, I analyzed the formal documents which were also qualitative in nature.

### **Methodological Consideration: Interpretive Inquiry**

I was aware that methodology is something that has to do with the tools and techniques of the research. As I decided to embark upon my research endeavour, I was also aware that it would involve individuals as participants sharing their experiences of their professional development. As discussed above, the participants would bring a diverse array of their experiences each one needing specific dealing while doing the data analysis. So, I considered the established research approaches to see which one would fit my purpose. Their responses would represent multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and would not be easily quantified. As I was going to deal with the professional development of individuals in the network setting at the association level, the research would require in-depth study of the individuals and the settings they were in. This led me to decide that qualitative inquiry was suitable for my research as it could, according to Richards (2003), “explore the complexities and conundrums of the immensely complicated worlds” (p. 8) that the EFL teachers inhabit and work in. “Most of what we study is truly complex, relating to people, events, and situations characterised by more variables than anyone can manage to identify, see relations, or operationalize (Richards, 2003, p. 9). These justifications aptly fitted my situation as I was making my inquiry on EFL teachers and the network spread across Nepal representing diverse experiences and lives. So in my case, qualitative approach research best served my purpose as it employed methods that established different perspectives on relevant issues. As the qualitative research strives to collect, integrate and present the data from a variety of sources of evidence (Yin, 2011), I designed my research accordingly. Using personal narratives,

interviews, and document analysis, it allowed me as a researcher to derive in-depth information.

### **Participants Selection**

For a qualitative research, the number of research participants can be limited to as few as one. The data collection approach and the depth of data can determine how many participants are to be selected. In my case, I was studying the professional development experiences of the EFL teachers who were members of teacher associations. I delimited my study to Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA). It was not easy to decide whom to select from over 2000 members of NELTA which I was taking as a base. So, I decided to use purposive sampling technique. I set the criteria that the participants I would work with would have been affiliated to NELTA for a minimum of ten years and had undergone visible professional development demonstrated by their contribution to the ELT community. I would approach a NELTA member and ask in person if he or she would agree to participate in my research. Once they agreed, I would get them to write a narrative and interview them as well. Following this process when I reached the eighth participant, the data started repeating and I felt that the data I would collect from these participants would be enough for my study. Apart from the eight participants, I also interviewed two Central Committee Executive members. These two were the ones who were first available for the purpose. The following were my research participants.

- a. Amar has a Masters in English. He has teaching experience of over ten years from primary level to postgraduate level. He has been a member of NELTA since 2004. He has also served a NELTA branch as its founder and leader.
- b. Daan has a Masters in English. He has taught English at the school level for a decade and at college level for over three years. He took the membership of

NELTA in 2004 and since then he has been active at this forum. He is a leader in one of the NELTA branches.

- c. Gaurabh has two Masters, one in English Language Education and another in TESOL. He has teaching experience of over 20 years. He is one of the founding members of NELTA and has served NELTA in different offices including that of the President.
- d. Himal also has two Masters, one in English and the other in TESOL. He has taught from school to postgraduate level for over 20 years. He has been on the central committee for many years and has served as the President once.
- e. Kanak has two masters as well, one in English and another in Linguistics. He has been teaching English for the last 15 years. He also has served in the NELTA central committee in different offices including General Secretary.
- f. Muskan has Masters in English. She started her ELT career from 2003. Now she is on the Central Committee.
- g. Saru has Masters in English. Her teaching career in ELT went side by side with her college education. That way she taught English for the last 12 years. Now, she is on the Central Committee.
- h. Ritika has a BA in English and PGDE and is doing her Masters. She has been teaching as well as pursuing her higher studies alongside. She has been in the class for the last 25 years. She has worked at different portfolios in the NELTA Central Committee.
- i. Kendra is a Central Committee Executive member who has been associated with NELTA over eight years. She has Masters in English and is a university faculty.

- j. Milan is a Central Committee Executive member who has been associated with NELTA since its inception. She has Masters in English and is a university faculty.

As the research progressed, brief interviews were also taken with Central Committee members of Nepal National Teachers' Association, Nepal Teachers' Association and Private and Boarding Schools' Organization Nepal. The data from these participants are brief, hence not proportionate to the data from NELTA members.

### **Data Collection Techniques and Process**

My intent of exploring how teachers develop when they come in touch with the teacher associations required data collection from two ends: what provisions the teacher networks have and how the members actually view and experience them. So, I devised my data collection approaches and implemented them as follows.

#### **Document Analysis**

Teacher associations include their goals and objectives and the activities to be undertaken in their documents either in their statutes or in the brochures. Some teacher networks may also have their strategic planning that includes what services to provide to the members. So, I visited the NELTA office and found that they had all three: the statute, the profile and the strategic plan. I collected them and analysed with the main focus on how the teacher associations try to help their members in their professional growth. In doing so, my main focus was on what opportunities the Teacher networks create.

For this, I collected the information on what promises NELTA makes in its basic documents, that is, from the statute and the brochure. They have mission, vision, goals and activities in them. To realise them, they develop and review their

strategic planning every two years. I reviewed the planning that was the latest available.

## **Narratives**

Members of the teacher association collect diverse experiences in their professional life which carry meaning that make sense to the researcher. One of the ways of collecting the experiences is to have the participants share their narratives. Two modes were available with me: oral and written. As I was going to conduct the interview, which is oral, I thought the narratives should be in the written form. They would respond impromptu in the interview but in the written narrative, they would think and write in an explicit and linear way. Creswell (2003) states that using the narrative as a technique of enquiry, one can study the lived experiences of the participants. According to Flick (2006), these lived experiences can be well-captured if we can listen to their narratives as they tell. Following Hermanns (1995), I also asked the participants to describe in their narratives, a. 'how everything started' b. 'how things developed'), and c. 'what became'.(Hermanns,1995, as cited in Flick, 2006, p. 172) for the reasons he puts thus:

First the narrative takes on some independence during its recounting. Second, 'people know' and are able to present a lot more of their lives than they have integrated in their theories of themselves and their lives. Finally, an analogous relationship between the narrative presentation and the narrated experience is assumed (Hermanns, 1995, as cited in Flick, 2006, p.175).

Actually, I got ideas what to ask in the interview after I went through their narratives to unearth their experiences. I discuss and interpret their narratives in the analysis part later.

## **Interview**

To explore how the participants came to and clung to the teacher association, I chose interview as a systematic form of questioning (Kvale, 1996). Interview as a research technique is a conversation initiated by the interviewer for obtaining relevant information for the research and focused on content specified by research objectives (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008). This allowed me to explore the reality of their affiliation to the network and how it impacted their professional development as teachers.

Because I wanted to capture the diverse experiences, I just prepared the probing questions in my interview protocol (Yin, 2011). I piloted them on two potential participants. Largely the questions fetched the responses that related to the research questions I was trying to answer. Based on the relevance of the responses, I modified the questions when I went to the second. After the data collection from the NELTA members and Central Executive members, I also interviewed one Central Committee member from Nepal National Teachers' Association, Nepal Teachers' Association and Private and Boarding School Organization Nepal to find out the strategies and opportunities they create for teaching professionals. All the questions I asked in all these interviews have been put together in the *Appendix*.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is not mechanistic. "[It] is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques, it is imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive. It should also be methodical, scholarly, and intellectually rigorous" (Coffey & Atkins 1996, as cited in Richards, 2003). So the data analysis in qualitative research is challenging because the raw data will have no visible pattern. Moreover, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) project the qualitative data

may not capture the reality if looked at from one single perspective. Another aspect of data analysis is that analysis does not happen all of a sudden after everything has been in place. It is happening, in one way or the other, in the whole research process (Richards, 2003).

In the data analysis process, I had to make sense of the text that I generated as data and each time I pondered upon them, I went deeper and deeper seeing more of it in the bigger picture of the theories I was working around. The going deeper process allowed me to identify the interrelationships between the different aspects, people and events. So, I felt that data analysis was a complete tour within the world we have created during the research process.

I followed the process drawing partially from Cohen et al. (2005, p. 148). As I transcribed the data, I could actually see how they looked. Then, I sorted them and tried to see the patterns. I saw that participants' responses were different in many ways but within the diversity, there were patterns, a kind of homogeneity. So, the responses of the same pattern and similar in meaning were put together. Once this grouping was done, I thematized them based on the literature review and my research questions. Some themes also emerged as the interpretation went on. When the themes and the data made sense, I interpreted them. During the interpretation and analysis, I made sure that the meaning making was the main focus.

### **Quality Standards**

I am aware that the research I carried out and the data I gathered should maintain quality such that they make sense on actual grounds. If I was able to maintain quality, my report would be an asset to the community I belong. For this, I had to maintain certain quality standards. The way of judging the quality of the research work is known as the standards for quality. In fact, quality standards may not



be the same in all types of research. They differ according to the nature of research, its approach and the paradigm. They are instrumental to authenticate any research work, however. Keeping this in mind, I tried to see my role as a researcher and the process and tools I used followed certain standards such that the professional community I belong see as valid. More particularly, I used the following as my quality standards.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in research refers to the extent to which different constructions and their underlying value structures are solicited and honoured (Guba & Lincoln, 1989): how the study has represented participants' values. The values of the participants need to be represented in the report through the data and the interpretation. Any misrepresentation and non-re-representation will lead to no trustworthiness. I did not alter any value the participants had mainly towards the professional development and the teacher associations. Likewise, the number of participants also adds to the trustworthiness of the research. As I conducted my research following the qualitative approach, any number between two to ten would suffice. I worked with the right number of participants until the data looked adequate. So the standard number of participants also added to trustworthiness. From the perspective of the research techniques also, I used three techniques that complemented the data gathered. The narratives, interviews and the document analysis all added to the reality of the situation. The data collected from other teacher organizations gave a comparative view to see what the NELTA way is in matters of teacher professional development.

### **Transferability**

The findings of the research are expected to be applicable at least in the same context where the research has been carried out. In my case, the findings had to have

applicability in the teacher development in the EFL settings and the roles of the teacher networks. I followed the idea of Bryman (2004) who says transferability is how the research findings are applicable and similar to others across educational setting. So, to maintain transferability in my study, I made an extensive review of the literature available. I also reviewed the research studies whatever were available. I made every possible effort to see my research in the bigger picture. Extensive data is another criterion for the transferability of the findings. Using the three techniques, I generated extensive data such that they represented the reality there. The description with thick data showed the real picture of the teacher networks in relation to the teacher professional development. Repeated interviews allowed me to confirm and reconfirm the information that was gathered from the field visits. I made the interpretation based on the data thus collected, maintaining the quality of interpretive paradigm. The readers can see the applicability of the findings as they go through them. I feel that the interpretation I have made give a clear picture of the teacher networks as the teacher development strategies, such that the colleagues in this field can carry forward the research based upon my findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In research with humans, their consent is required ethically and in some cases, legally. I adhered to the following basic research ethics in my research.

#### **Informed Consent**

I informed my participants time and again what I was doing during my informal meetings before the data collection actually started. To make my participants feel comfortable, I explained to them that the data were just for the purpose of my research and I would not use them anywhere else without their consent. Much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and cooperation of subjects who are to

assist in investigations and of significance to others in the institutions or organizations providing the research facilities (Cohen et al., 2000). In my research, I have included TA members who are professional teachers and trainers. I clearly explained to them in a professional manner about my research. When I met them with an appointment for data collection, I further explained to them about the nature and the purpose of the study because of which they had full comprehension and confidence to decide freely and voluntarily to participate in the study.

### **Harm and Risk**

I was cautious about not harming my participants, not putting them to risk. From the research literature, I came to know that a social researcher should be aware of harm and risk that one may cause in the process, whether the activities they are going to conduct will create or provide harm and risk to their participants or not. In regard to the issue of consequence (Cohen et al., 2000), I ensured not to harm my participants and I involved them in my research for their benefit. I used the best polite language, did not mention to others who I was working with by name. I made appointment at a time and place where they felt comfortable and not at my convenience.

### **Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity**

I have protected privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity in my research by using the pseudonyms in place of their real names and identity. Specially while analyzing, interpreting, reporting, and publishing the data that I have collected, I have respected all the things mentioned above. I have deleted name of my participants in my written and final form of research. As I was aware that there should not be any instance of being at risk; anything which was related to their identity was deleted as well. It was more important for me to inform them about the main objective of my

research. Thus, I informed them of the research purpose and clearly communicated to them the possible risks and benefits of participating in the research.

I have introduced the participants that I used while doing my research beforehand. I tried to be honest and avoid over exposure of myself and my cultural values and more importantly I made sure that I do not put my country at any risk of ridicule.

### **Chapter Summary**

I began this chapter with the philosophical considerations - ontology, epistemology and axiology- that guided my research. I used the coral reef metaphor to discuss how the research adds to the knowledge that already exists. This was followed by the discussion on interpretive research paradigm and qualitative inquiry approach. Then I presented my research design. I described hoe I selected the 10 participants using purposive sampling. The data collection techniques included document analysis, interview and narratives. The data analysis section presented how the data were analysed following the guideline presented by Cohen et al. The chapter ended with the quality standards - trustworthiness and transferability - I maintained and ethical considerations I made.

## CHAPTER IV

### ASSOCIATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter presents the teacher development policies and strategies of the teacher associations as perceived by the members. Then, I describe and discuss the professional development experiences of the participants as they moved on in their life. Their changing professionalism, attitude and status are discussed linking them with the opportunities the teacher association facilitated. The signs of professional as well as personal development are also discussed.

#### **Formal Provisions for Teacher Professional Development**

To explore the teacher professional development opportunities that NELTA formally offers, I went through two documents of NELTA that outline NELTA's policy and activities: NELTA's Statute and Strategic Plan 2011-13. These documents showed that NELTA formally states its strategies for the professional development of its members. It has vision, mission and goals, and to realise them it plans and implements activities for its members. To systematically carry out the activities, it develops strategic planning every two years. The planning is thematic, and time bound. Each theme is worked out in different activities and the date of accomplishment is determined. The themes include leadership development, resource generation for member services, development of teacher resource materials, setting up and equipping resource centres, teacher training, supporting the ELT activities of the Ministry of Education, maintaining the website and blogzine, publishing the Journal,

and organizing conferences. I include more of the formal strategies as stated in the documents in the *Appendix*.

From the document analysis, I saw that NELTA directly and indirectly offers several opportunities for the teacher professional development. As the documents were official ones, I wanted to see what the members, the direct stakeholders, perceive about the TPD opportunities made available by NELTA. So, I asked the participant members regarding the teacher development opportunities NELTA offers. I would like to discuss their responses in this section.

The participants saw that NELTA was a platform where they can exchange theory ideas, issues and experiences. Amar sees it as a platform where the members can bring in their own proposals for activities. They write articles and get feedback from their own peers. “NELTA provides priority to the members. The members can enhance themselves when they come up with new vision to meet our mission or objectives<sup>1</sup>.” Amar's response shows that there is reciprocity in the development. The association provides the forum but they develop because they bring in ideas and vision. Daan shared a similar opinion about what NELTA does. There are opportunities for those who serve it as he says.

If the members serve NELTA and work honestly, then they get various opportunities. They also get opportunities for their higher education like MA TESOL or other degrees. In the same way, they get opportunities to participate in various types of workshops and seminars. The most important thing is the exposure that NELTA provides in different countries for example USA, UK, Srilanka or Bangladesh or in different parts of the country. That helps people to travel and at the same time learn.

---

<sup>1</sup> All the responses from the participants quoted directly or indirectly from here onwards are from the interviews and the narratives collected between August 2012 and December 2013.

Daan is of the opinion that NELTA creates many opportunities but it is reciprocal. “If you don’t contribute voluntarily when they need, there is no opportunity for you and if you contribute and show the interest to learn and then there are lots of opportunities.” He means that those who offer services are also benefitted from the opportunities NELTA offers but for those who only expect, there may not be anything. He recalls an exposure that established him as a trainer. Three years earlier, he was nominated as a NELTA candidate to attend the secondary level English language trainers’ training in India’s English and Foreign Language University. He takes it as a reward from NELTA for the service he rendered. “NELTA has recognized my service that is why I was given opportunity.” He also refers to other colleagues who got opportunities for serving NELTA voluntarily. Contrarily, if somebody is a member but is not contributing to NELTA activities, they might not get the opportunities. So he is of the opinion that it depends on how one contributes to NELTA. He says,

That’s why what we can say is if you do something for NELTA, you will get from it too but if you just get the membership and wait for the opportunities, it then might be like you are not getting anything from it. Membership is not only enough, we need to contribute to the organization for its growth and when organization grows you automatically grow.

Daan saw his experience of being groomed linked to the responsibility that was given to him. Once he was given a responsibility of managing an event and some key people which he took as a test and he proved his worth. At a time when he was questioning his own leadership capability, NELTA Centre asked him to lead his branch to organize a pre-conference event and the major part of the International conference. He narrates,

I think it was in the year 2006 when the International conference was conducted in a school in Kathmandu and before that, there were pre-conference workshops. The then NELTA President was Y. At that time, he proposed to me to organize this pre-conference activity in my branch. The conference was also conducted at the same branch and the key speaker and trainer was Kate Miller from UK. That was a very big responsibility given to me for the first time by the President. So I had the fear whether I could do that activity or not. So at that time, managing everything was a huge task because that was the first time I was actually doing the activities for the central committee of NELTA. Before that I had done for the district committee but not for the Central Committee. It was a huge activity. I was able to manage help from all the friends and even from the central committee and that helped me to realize how an event can be organized in a systematic way. That event helped me to get ideas on how an event can be organized. That's why I can say that was the particular event that I remember.

Daan's story clearly shows that entrusting a member with responsibility gives them two opportunities: they feel recognized and they can show what they can do. Once they accomplish, they change in many ways, mainly attitudinally.

As he says, there are opportunities and the members avail them best. Once they benefit from the training, seminar, conferences or MA TESOL and other opportunities, ultimately it is the association that gets the benefits. They come back to volunteer in its activities. Gaurabh gave a summary idea of how NELTA creates a platform for the members' professional growth. He perceives that through a variety of the activities, NELTA enables the members to realize their potentials. As the longest



serving participant among the others I worked with, he gave categorical details of the professional development opportunities.

If English teachers want to develop their professional expertise, they can come and join NELTA. If they want to disseminate their success stories, NELTA is the platform. They can come and present in the NELTA events.. If they have frustrations, NELTA is the platform where they can share. And also it offers them opportunities to reflect on their experiences by listening to the people who are in similar position outside Nepal. If they have problems they can share those problems with teachers from other parts of the world. If they hear similar stories they can console themselves that they are not the only people having such problems. Apart from these, there are so many other opportunities for the NELTA members. Like, if they want to be read by a wider audience, NELTA publication gives them opportunities to get their articles published. And also most importantly there are scholarship opportunities to go to UK, USA and to other countries. They are also given opportunities to attend the professional development programs. So these are some of the examples.

Gaurabh sees that NELTA is a platform where teachers come to learn, to share and disseminate and for other purposes. When they have success stories, this platform offers an opportunity to share with others and similarly, when there are not so pleasant experiences, again they can steam off with colleagues from around the world. Getting published is a common opportunity for the members. They can write opinions, articles, research report, book reviews, etc.

Gaurabh talked more from networking perspective. He sees that the members are networked. As a member of this well recognized association, it gives him a sense of pride and the sense of belonging. So for him, to belong is itself a professional

development opportunity. Secondly, he sees NELTA as a platform where if one has some expertise that s/he would like to share it gives a space. “NELTA gives you that space if you want to, create that space by offering something, by contributing to its professional development activities.” In his response, there is this focus on the professional development opportunity. He also mentions specific factors that the members can utilize to develop themselves: the scholarship for further study and exposure trips to different places. He believes that these are extrinsic motivational factors which motivate people towards NELTA. According to Gaurabh, individuals with unlimited horizon for their growth can grow as much as they can if they enter this organization.

Himal took a different stand compared to Gaurabh but similar to that of Daan. He believes that there is always give and take. He saw that the members sometimes have several expectations but they need to know what to expect and what not to.

When you really start taking responsibility, then you understand the challenges. So as a member, my understanding is, which I also keep telling to my colleagues, what to expect and what not to expect. I don't think there are other institutions like NELTA. People of NELTA could give me advice for my problem because this is family and they support me. I mean being a NELTA member if someone considers. NELTA tries to understand their aspirations and tries to address them. NELTA creates opportunities to participate in different levels, forms, format locally, internationally, regionally to strengthen their capacity or to share the knowledge. When NELTA branch colleagues at the branches start communicating with NELTA at the centre, some of them have said that they have started to develop their communication skill.

Likewise, many NELTA members rely on NELTA centre for information

through NELTA yahoo, websites, and telephone. NELTA is always engaged in thinking about how to create more opportunities.

Himal's experiences show that though there are many expectations that NELTA may not directly serve, the members can achieve with the opportunities that are made available. It is the opportunities and learning environment NELTA can give to its members. A simple thing is that the members need to understand what works for them. Coming to the central office and talking to other members informally helps to improve communication skills. They also learn when they volunteer in the conference events. They contribute and that contribution teaches them many lessons.

Getting an opportunity for a further degree is something most members look for and NELTA members value at best. For Himal, it made all the difference to be a part of ELT community. He cherishes the moments when he got the information that he was selected for the MA TESOL in the UK under the Hornby Scholarship scheme. He says,

I was working as a member and I got the scholarship to pursue my MA TESOL in UK. That was very striking because I come from very rural area and it made a difference in my life. I have more commitment to NELTA as I can never forget what NELTA gave me. If NELTA had not given me this opportunity or if I was not the member of NELTA, I would not have been able to apply for the competition.

The documents also stressed teacher training and related activities, and for Kanak training seems to be the most important service that NELTA could offer. He thinks that is the most required service the members expect.

Primarily I will say "training opportunities" because there are people in the rural areas who have never heard about training. When I go to these places and

talk to people there, they are excited when they hear about different issues. We have obtained certain kinds of opportunities by participating in different kinds of conferences. When we go to the branches and share these things with the branch people, they give a lot of importance to them and directly to the classrooms. In addition to the training opportunities, members are encouraged to publish our articles in NELTA journal, NELTA Chautari and we have NELTA Newsletter also and sometimes we organize talk series talk program. So these are the things that NELTA has created for its members.

NELTA creates opportunities and the members multiply those opportunities by creating further opportunities for other members. Kanak saw this happening. He explained that those members who studied overseas know the established ELT experts. They may be their own teachers and those who they knew while they were there. When they return to Nepal, they remain in touch with these people. Sometimes these tutors may travel to Nepal. As a former student, the members request them to run a workshop at NELTA. It does not cost money. The expert visiting Nepal can spare a day for professional sharing.

For Muskan, the very existence of the teacher association is a possibility for teachers to learn. When it is there, they get something out of this. The absence of an association is the absence of such possibilities. She says,

Sharing ideas and making presentation are some of the things I can learn by being together on a platform. I learn from others' sharing. This is a platform used for publishing articles and for writing. Three days back I was in Ramechhap. Two people were running a program, it takes time to learn to do better but if that organization was not there, they would not be able to do that. Indirectly they are helped by the organization.

Her idea is that when the teachers come in touch with others, they either share their own ideas and experiences or learn from others' sharing. NELTA as an association creates that condition whereby there is sharing between teachers. The question is how NELTA does so: What is its mechanism of creating opportunities? To this question, Muskan gave a list of things NELTA does as the mechanism for creating opportunities. For her, the organization's structure and the events are the main opportunities of involving as many members as possible. "Setting up different branches, system of organizing programmes, publishing journals, organizing reading clubs and talk programmes allow members to participate this way or the other. The position a member holds, creates necessity and makes you more responsible. Many things happen because of the position. NELTA itself is not something concrete, if a teacher grows professionally, there is promotion of professionalism. If any teachers develop, that is promotion of NELTA." In this response again, Muskan stresses the contribution each member for incoming member makes, which is the coral reef idea I take as a metaphor for knowledge building.

The contribution to NELTA also includes creating resources for it. How do the members do so? Muskan reiterates the same ripple effect the members have. They share the information through Yahoo groups mailing list. When they share information, it brings resources in the long run. For her, the initiatives the members make in organizing programmes and disseminating the information is implicitly creating resources. She gave a concrete example of such resource generation. One of the NELTA executives knew Ann Falcao of BrazTESOL, Brazil, who was sharing a useful link every week on Hornby Yahoo groups mailing list. This NELTA member requested her to send the same to the NELTA mailing list. It has been several years that she has been sending the link every Wednesday with the subject line *For you*

*always on Wednesday* and NELTA members are making use of the information they get by following the links.

Saru sees that NELTA supports its members in two ways. It directly organizes the activities on its own and it also creates opportunities. She says NELTA has a social responsibility to serve the society by doing professional activities such as publication of journals, conducting different trainings, workshops and so on. “It creates opportunities for the trainers to develop their skills and also for the trainees to learn something from the trainings. Because people get a chance to be involved, they learn from that.”

Since Saru’s main focus was on the training opportunities similar to that of Kanak's, I asked her what other things the members get from NELTA, apart from the training opportunities. She talked about the NELTA Journal and how members get exposure from visiting different countries. She also said that NELTA gives opportunities to expand the network as well. She further added, “They can read others' articles and publish their own as well. Moreover, they can share their experiences through NELTACHoutraï. This is also a part of NELTA. In addition, they are getting opportunities to groom themselves as a trainer, as a writer, as a program coordinator. So I think there are different opportunities that NELTA creates.” She has a point of view that the opportunities also lead the members to enhance their positions such that they can move up as trainers, writers and programme coordinators.

Ritika responded to the question about the opportunities emphasizing the fact that NELTA is a voluntary organization. There are opportunities and members can choose what to do. “Members are not forced to do this and that. I mean they are just given the information that such activities are going on. So those who are interested, they just apply and take part in activity. Last week there was a creative writing

workshop from one lady from the UK. Lots of people took part. So like that it is open to everyone, it is sent through mail, Yahoogroups they will get. Sometimes we personally invite teachers as well those who are not in NELTA group. We also have personal contact with teachers and we inform them and invite them.”

Ritika also related the opportunities to her own experience. She said that she became a writer because of NELTA. She participated in a creative writing workshop conducted by a visiting British facilitator which encouraged her to do creative writing. In a subtle way, she also indicated the induction given by the senior members. “For aspiring members, they are given opportunities to go to activities with other senior members so that they can learn. Though they do not take part actively, they just watch and learn from senior members and so that they can get confidence and that next time when they go they can prepare and present themselves.”

Ritika echoed Daan when she said that getting responsibilities is an opportunity for development. She said that when she entered NELTA, it gave her the responsibilities to perform wherein she got a chance to work with the experts in NELTA. She had to run trainings and she learnt a lot more than what she already she did. She stated, "Initially I didn't know how to do training but looking at like people like X and Y, I learnt many things. I read a lot because I felt that reading is a most important for the teachers to develop themselves.”

Ritika did not end there, she also narrated, “I have written a couple of articles in NELTA journals and in Newspaper as well. One of my stories is published in a book. These are the things which I did due to NELTA. Actually that was the environment I got, not exactly to do this and that. I really enjoyed the environment and I felt I should also do something of my own.”

When I asked what that environment actually meant she said: the friendliness. She indicated to the 'hierarchy-free' environment that NELTA has. "We don't feel that somebody is the President, somebody is the secretary and I'm the member because we work together when anything comes we sit together, we try to find out the solution, we try to modify the things, we try to correct the errors we commit." The environment she got there is helping her grow as a female teacher, gaining more and more confidence. She felt that being a female actually worked positively contrary to the common Nepali condition. She actually learnt a lesson, "We should not wait for anybody to tell somebody to do this and that. So, that is the confidence that I got being a NELTA member."

From her experience, Ritika also understood that voluntary undertakings actually develop a person which happens at NELTA. She says she was not told or directed by any certain person what to do and how to do it. She took inspirations from certain people who she thought were doing better than her and she took the responsibilities. When we see Ritika's responses and her feelings therein, working with people who are experienced, taking up responsibilities to perform things not done before, reading so the tasks can be done better, writing to share the ideas and experiences wherever the opportunities NELTA provided, and above all the environment where one can be proactive more as a female teacher were the professional development opportunities.

The discussion about what NELTA promised and what the members perceived it delivers shows that the NELTA members do have several professional development opportunities. The members take advantage of the opportunities available. There are ways that they learn: by receiving training, attending workshops, going on for a



further degree and getting exposure; and by giving training, contributing articles, volunteering, networking etc.

In the analysis process, I saw that the promises of NELTA were partly realised and experienced by the NELTA members. Moreover, some participants implicitly indicated that NELTA's plans and promises cannot be fully realized by the members. So, I was curious why the plans the association made had partly been limited to the plan and the promises only. I went back to the participants asking why. I discuss the responses in the next section.

### **Other Organizations for Teachers and TPD Opportunities**

In order to find out what other organizations for teachers do for the teacher professional development, I interviewed one office bearer each from Nepal National Teachers' Association (NNTA), Nepal Teachers' Association (NTA) and Private and Boarding Schools' Organizations Nepal (PABSON). Here I discuss in brief their responses.

The NNTA participant started his responses from the trade union point of view. He said that NNTA tries to "motivate teachers through security of their jobs, and giving incentives". He focused on perks and financial benefits. He said, "There are varieties of salaries and others benefits as well. There are private teachers and community teachers and there is discrimination at both levels. We are trying to mitigate these sorts of discriminations. We make different demands and nowadays the government is a little positive towards our demands." His responses were geared towards the job security, facilities and the rights of the teachers. He also cited the ILO Convention 1987. There did not seem to be any focus on the professional development and classroom performance issues. So I asked him a question on this.

His response indicated that NNTA has plans and policies for supporting teachers professionally. He said,

Whenever there is a gathering of NNTA members it does two activities. It focuses on the rights. There are different sorts of discriminations. We make them conscious about the rights. In another way we counsel our members to be responsible inside the classroom too. We also teach them to make classroom activities effective. We are making our members aware about the effective teaching learning methods.

Because the responses were mainly highlighting on the rights and less on professionalism, I asked him a categorical questions: How much focus on rights and how much on professorial issues? He claimed that it would be fifty- fifty. He further explained that the NNTA has trainers. When asked who these trainers were and how they were prepared, he described the process of trainer development. It was interesting to note that some members were trained by the Canadian Teacher Association members between 1987 and 1995 and still the same trained trainers continue to train NNTA members. This shows that NNTA's teacher development practices are less focused and whatever is done is stagnant and is not up-to-date.

To the questions similar to NNTA participants, NTA participant also had a clear focus on trade union interest to support its members. He said that NTA mainly worked to enable community teachers to use trade union rights. "NTA tries best to establish itself as a guardian for teachers". When I asked him if NTA had agenda for classroom related issues apart for the Unions issues, he gave a list of the things that NTA tried to facilitate. He said that NTA works "to develop teaching standards and thus to gain respect from parents, students and the society as a whole". His responses seemed to indicate that the professionalism was less stressed in the real field. So, I

made a categorical query: What does the association do in order to raise the professionalism and performance of a teacher? He said that NTA holds regional level seminars and trainings and programs. In response to my question what the members do to support NTA, he indicated that most members present their own political ideologies and agenda.

The discussion on the data from NNTA and NTA showed that these organizations worked for teachers but on a different plane. They support teachers for their rights and job security and for collective bargains. They organise training for the teachers but that does not seem to be a major engagement of the office bearers.

PABSON is an organization mainly for the founders of the private and boarding schools but they also claim that they support teachers. So, I wanted to see how teachers benefit from the PABSON activities. For this, I interviewed an office bearer and asked the questions I asked the NNTA and NTA leaders.

Responding to the question what the PABSON mainly aims at, he said that the organization's main aim is to protect the investments of the founders. He also added that it aims to protect the rights of the teachers and to meet the expectants of the guardians and students by providing quality education. As he was describing the activities of PABSON, he mentioned teacher training. So, I asked him to elaborate on this. He stated that the training was mainly for the principals for leadership development. They also hold training for teachers which he explained thus: they focused more on lower level teachers. He said,

Currently, we are trying to develop the new Montessori type of teaching in Pre-Primary level. Our focus is on Pre-Primary level teachers about child Psychology. We want to replace the old type of teaching with the new ones.

We also train different teaching methods to lower secondary and secondary level teachers.

So, his responses show that the school leadership seems to be the main agenda of training though teachers also get training. I was curious who the trainers were. He said the textbook writers, educationists and bureaucrats. It seemed that the training was more on events for the PABSON and less for the actual classroom teaching purpose. Textbooks writers give orientation to teachers but this is limited to the teachers who are using those commercial textbooks.

### **Entry into the Association**

NELTA's statute states that anyone who is interested in ELT qualifies to be a member. This implies that there is no basic qualification for this association's membership apart from an individual's interest. Even then, individuals who have some practical professional reasons potentially benefitting them would be interested to be a part of teacher professional associations like NELTA. So, I first wanted to find out at what stage in their life and career, the participating teachers had taken membership of NELTA.

The participants largely got affiliated to NELTA during their university education. They took the affiliation only after they saw some personal professional benefits or when they were convinced by a situation such as the conference or by a person they looked up to.

The narrative Amar wrote gave a detailed description of his career in teaching: how he started teaching English and how he explored the opportunities. I read through the narrative to see the point where he started making a reference to NELTA. He earlier worked at a school in the western Nepal. He learnt about NELTA and joined it only when he was in Kathmandu and was doing his Masters in English language

education. He somehow attended one of the conferences and that made all the difference. He put his entry thus: “I was highly impressed by the international conference of NELTA I attended first in Jawalakhel around 2003/4. I met many English teachers, ELT practitioners, writers whose names I used to see on the cover pages of books, speakers and professors from home and abroad (whom we used to study in the courses of Master’s and Bachelor’s in ELT and other courses of linguistics).” So, Amar’s mind changed for good to take NELTA membership due to his positive experience at the conference. The conference was not only to learn about the teaching learning ideas but also to come face to face with people he had read or heard about. Once he got the impression that it was an association where he would get professional development opportunities, he took the membership and stayed with it. Responding to my interview question, he reiterated his response and added about when he took the NELTA membership. Amar said,

One of my teachers in the Masters programme in Tahachal was always using the word NELTA, NELTA. When I was a student Master 2nd year student, I understood NELTA is a teachers’ organization in Nepal. But I was particularly impressed by NELTA in the 9<sup>th</sup> International conference at Jawalakhel. I saw lots of presenters, hundreds of participants. I saw the organizational power there. I first took annual membership paying Rs. 250. I didn't have enough money for life membership. After one year I joined as a life member paying Rs. 2000.

Amar’s response indicates that would-be members actually need some convincing ideas for getting them to decide to part with the money they have.

When I went through the narrative Daan wrote, he also put in the conference as a deciding factor for him to take membership of the teacher network. He says that

the conference he attended first impressed him in many different ways. “I started the journey of NELTA in 2005 attending the international conference in Staff College first time. I was surprised by the number of participants present in the conference.” Daan’s experience of this conference indicated that he would grow professionally if he stayed with this organization. The big names and the themes they talked about were some of the highlights he had as a first time attendee. “I still remember Adrian Underhill spoke on reflection, but at that time I had no idea on teacher development and reflective practice. So, I understood very little of his speech and I realized that I should join the same forum to develop myself in my professional career.” He paid the membership fee right after the conference and started looking for opportunities for his professional growth. From his side, he kept in touch and attended whatever event was organized.

The opportunities became a reality when in 2007 NELTA branch was formed in his district. It started organizing various activities related to ELT teacher development. “I regularly attended the various events of ELT and got exposure to the need of this organization for the teacher of English like me for their professional development.” Though his narrative shows that he was highly impressed by the performance of NELTA, he somehow kept taking annual membership until 2009. In this year, he not only became a life member of NELTA but also took an office in the branch committee. “In 2009 I took the life membership of NELTA (before I took annual membership) and started working in the local branch executive committee. At present, I have been serving to NELTA branch as Secretary and NELTA Lalitpur is going to organize a two- day conference in near future in my own leadership as I have been given the responsibility of Coordinator to organize the program.” His words indicate an enthusiasm that he not only looked for some gains but also opportunities

to contribute. So, he not only availed himself to the exposure opportunities but undertook the responsible tasks that came by.

Daan's interview response corroborated what he wrote in his narrative.

“Actually I was interested in NELTA activities already and from that conference I knew a little more about NELTA. So I thought it would help me to grow my teaching career, and I thought that can be a good platform for me to develop myself in teaching career that’s why I took membership of NELTA. When I joined NELTA I could see lot of things, lot of people and I found that those people and NELTA can be the source to grow in terms of knowledge.” Daan was impressed by NELTA in 2004 but he took the membership in 2008. Even after the psychological influence of the usefulness of NELTA had worked on Daan, he practically decided to take the allegiance after four years. So, there seems to be a lot of thinking for making decisions in formalizing the relationship.

Gaurabh’s narrative showed a different storyline. Amar and Daan joined NELTA when it was there, functioning as a network. But for Gaurabh, it was a different track. He became a founding member along with others who set it up in 1992. He was in his early period of the MEd in ELE when the idea for the formation of a new association was floated. Interestingly he was approached by his teachers to be in the committee. So, he notes that he was being offered a position of a leader when he did not know what he was capable of regarding the association.

I felt that I got a big reward and this association with NELTA was my real professional accomplishment. I was now a leader of an association that would work for English teachers. Without knowing much of my strengths, I gradually progressed towards training from teaching and teaching and training were the kind of jobs that I enjoyed most as my professional activities.

He says that all these happened at the time of entry and not long after. As he entered, he showed that he could take responsibilities given to him and hence he became the future right from the beginning.

In his interview, Gaurabh recounts how the group that founded NELTA took him as a founding member while he was a mere student and quite young,

I was active in my class and the reason why I was active is I had attended English language course run by American language institute. Though I was majoring in English, my English proficiency was not that good because of my schooling from public school system. I was taught English sometimes by Sanskrit graduate, later in grade 9 and 10 there was a B Ed graduate who taught me English, so my English language proficiency was obviously weak. I was looking for an opportunity to improve my English language proficiency. When I came to Kathmandu for my B Ed and M Ed, I heard about American Language Institute. Because of the input I received, I was able to develop my spoken English. Due to this, I started being active in class. Because I could ask questions to the teachers in English, so that gave me a kind of an opportunity to establish a good rapport not only with the friends but also with the teachers.

So, in his case, establishing the worth of oneself among the ELT stakeholders was a step forward. He worked hard to improve his spoken English and that brought him an opportunity to be a founding member.

Unlike other participants, Himel had known about NELTA for quite some time before he joined it. As he claimed, he had a hunger for English, so he joined Tribhuvan University for his MA in English. He was keeping an ear on what NELTA had been doing and was convinced that it was established as a professional platform. As soon as he completed his MA, he joined NELTA as a general member. He then



started participating in its activities chiefly in the conferences in Kathmandu. As he already knew what was happening at NELTA, he indicates that he was in position to benefit from the opportunities NELTA offered. “Once with NELTA, I started communicating and meeting many English language teaching professionals. After I joined NELTA, the feeling came into me was that I was uniquely different from many of my English language teaching colleagues.” So the entry into NELTA gave a feeling that he was going to be different in the long run.

Kanak had already taken his Master’s degree in English literature when he started looking for a job at college level. “I was prepared to teach higher level students so I joined a college.” He spent one year learning how to teach by actually doing the teaching. The experience that he collected during his first year of teaching repeated when he started working part time at different colleges. Though he was teaching at different colleges, he knew his limitations as a teacher. He put his limitation thus, “To be honest, to the date, I was totally a type of raw teacher, as I had never undergone any type of teacher training course.” Then came a time when he came to know about NELTA and joined it. It was in the late nineties when he heard about NELTA through his own father. He insisted on him joining the organization which Kanak did. Kanak was the only participant I met who was encouraged to join the network by a family member.

In his interview, Kanak narrates his cathartic aspect of being in NELTA. Relating to what happened to him once he attended the NELTA conference he says, I was always a little nervous when I entered into the class and when I came out of the class there was some frustration that I was not able to deliver the intended message to the students. I think it was the same year that I attended the NELTA conference in Budhanilkantha. And it was a kind of epiphany, I

would like to use this word, it was sudden realization and I was so much amazed and positively shocked that English could be taught in such a simple way. So that was the stage when I joined NELTA and there was still as lot more to do and I had a lot more to do and to know more about NELTA.

While the participants I have so far discussed were already in their Masters or later stage when they came in touch with NELTA, Muskan's case was slightly different. She came to know about NELTA when she was doing her Bachelors first year in 1998 that too when she was outside Kathmandu. It was through her colleague that she came to know about the organization. The main attraction her colleague told her was that, at the conferences one could talk to English speaking foreigners. The attraction of meeting the native English speakers was the pull factor for her to go to NELTA conference. But the other deciding factor was the cost. As a college student supporting herself by working at a school in the day time, the costs were crucial. To her surprise, one of her colleagues told her,

The only things the participants needed to do was conference registration and they conference organizer would provide food as well as accommodation.

Since I was teaching in a school, I myself was in the position to bear the cost of the attending conference without talking to my family. When I met the NELTA person in Butwal who was registering the participants for the next conference, he showed the name of other people who were going to take part in the conference. I was even more excited to see the names, all known people, so I registered my name.

One cautionary situation for her as a female was that the participants from Butwal included no female. In her narrative account, she explains how she managed to convince one of her colleagues also, so that she would not be alone. A female

travelling in a male company would not look normal in the then context. “There was no female participant. So I convinced another friend Karma who I used to teach together to join the conference.” Her account stands in sharp contrast to the accounts of her male counterparts who when they felt like doing joined the network but Muskan had to deal with extra issues because she was a female.

Muskan decided to join NELTA because she was impressed by the conference; she gave a good space to her description of the first conference she attended. The following excerpt from her narrative presents how it made her decide the membership.

The day came and we left for Kathmandu in a night bus. Since we reached Kathmandu in the morning, we went straight to the conference venue with the hope that both food and accommodation would be provided there. But unfortunately from that year NELTA was providing only food not the accommodation. We took bags and stationery and went in search for a hotel. We booked a hotel rooms in a nearby hotel and kept our belongings there and went to conference venue. I don’t remember any other presentation of that day rather than running from one room to other. There were so many presentations and I was surprised to know that some of them were at the same time. It was beyond my ken. I wanted to attend all of them and did not know why I should not be able to do so. Later on we made an agreement; if we went to different rooms we could share the materials.

This account opens up many things that the new comer to NELTA has faced. The expectations about the accommodation were not met. But that did not matter to her because she saw that the presentations were so interesting for her that other facilities were not significant. She said she took the membership of NELTA right after

the conference thinking that she was starting a journey of her professional development.

Like many other participants Saru was in her Masters when she joined NELTA. She had started teaching in Chitwan few years before and had gathered experiences in the classroom teaching. When she came to Kathmandu for her Master's studies, she decided to support herself and started working in a school. She felt she was doing fine with the teaching but when she attended the international conference as advised by one of her tutors, she was bound to change her mind. Her story goes,

My passion took me back to teaching profession at a school in Kathmandu when I was in my Master's degree in ELT in 2002. I was somehow familiar with some teaching methods and techniques that time. I had learned some from my own experiences and some from my course books. Next year, I got information about NELTA and one of my university teachers encouraged me to be a member and join international conference. I participated in the international conference, a mega event and a professional gathering. The conference taught me a lot about teaching methods and techniques. I was very much impressed by the activities done there which made me more curious to learn more about NELTA.

Thus she joined NELTA to learn more of teaching and learning of English and to learn more about NELTA. Her account shows that she learnt about her limitation about her teaching learning know-how once she saw what others were doing at the conference.

In her interview, Saru shared her experience of her conference participation, "I learnt a lot. I was highly impressed by the presentations there. So I became a life

member of the NELTA. The impression I got from the conference was that I also needed to take participation in such programs for my professional development. Now I feel that I had made the right decision.”

Ritika’s account gave a very different perspective. She was associated with NELTA from the time NELTA was formed but was not exploring what it did for its members and English teachers until she came across it due to an event. She actually had some benefit before she became active in its activities.

If I go to the flashback, I remember how naive I was to use grammar translation in the class with which I was taught by my teachers, though some of them were native speakers. During my teaching (I call it blind-folded), I used methodologies that I had learned from my teachers which I felt unique and some I developed myself. Looking at my enthusiasm I got different trainings from my schools, to mention; from publishing houses, some trainers hired by the school management. The turning point was when I went to Oxford for a short training for teachers sponsored by the British council. I got an opportunity to meet teachers of different countries, understand the culture of England personally. It was a kind of eye opening for me to improve my teaching learning. This training made me come closer to NELTA, though I was associated with it since its inception period.

Her account shows that she was a teacher who used teacher centred methodology such as grammar translation method until she attended a training programme in the UK and it was during this period she became familiar with NELTA and its activities.

Ritika learnt closely about NELTA until the then President took her to the conference in 1996. But it took about eight years before she took the life membership.

She may be one of those teachers who feel sceptic about the benefits of activities that cost some money. However, the late joining did not prevent her from the volunteerism. She recounts her initial days when she acted proactively by offering her volunteer service at the NELTA conference.

Voluntarily I took the initiation working for the participation for registration and helping some people in the committee. That was voluntary I mean nobody told me to do but I myself initiated. Yes, as I told you, I had no hope at all. But after I joined there were so many things coming up. There were people who were intellectual and they were doing lot of things in ELT and then I felt that I should also have some knowledge and then I started. The hope I was I should develop my professionalism that was the only thing I had nothing more than that just I wanted to develop my professionalism.

From the above discussion, we can see that these participants felt the benefits of joining the association just before they were embarking on to their career life when they were leaving the university education. This indicates that the decision to part with money to take membership of an association that has not impacted them so far, teachers need some impetus to convince them about the benefits of such professional affiliation. There seems to be an unclear anxiety for the professional journey they are going to start.

### **Professional Development Experiences at the Association**

The participants described their professional development opportunities after the time they joined NELTA. In their elaborated accounts they mainly underscored the contribution NELTA made to their professional growth. They highlighted the conferences, training and further study opportunities.

To highlight his impression about NELTA and his relation to it, Amar started by describing how impressed he was about the first conference he attended. It was not the learning from the sessions he attended but the very participation and the little things that he was given were significant for him. “The participation in the conference energized me professionally; I felt proud being an English teacher. I had collected a good bag, a nametag, a certificate and many photographs of the conference to show and talk to my colleagues back at school.” The emotional aspect of the conference participation was that he had something to tell his colleagues. This was enough for him to take the membership. He had learnt the value of professional development in ELT.

Interactions with many friends, English teachers, presentations on various themes and publications in the conference made me realize the value of continuous professional development. After this, I regularly participated in the programs of NELTA in Kathmandu such as training events, AGM and international conference. I found myself more interested to the way NELTA functions for professional development of its members. NELTA provided me the opportunity to attend the workshop on Mentoring by Angi Malderez which was really the very important session.

So, the interest and involvement went side by side. The more he was involved, the more interested he became. His account shows that he had found a path to his professional development.

Daan feels that he got exposure and career enhancing opportunities through NELTA. He was able to see and know widely in the field of ELT. NELTA brought him opportunities to be in touch with governmental and non-governmental organizations. His status changed from teacher to trainer. “Since I joined NELTA, I

have got a wide exposure and various opportunities to develop my professional teaching career. NELTA helped me in enhancing my career not only as a teacher but also as a trainer. The various workshops and trainings which I attended have been very fruitful to shape my teaching career.” He has a proof that he developed ELT pedagogy at NELTA. He says there is no record of failure in English at the level where he teaches. He also ascribes to NELTA the satisfaction that his college level students show to his teaching style. Though he has teaching degrees, specialised trainings for specific level and programmes have helped him to learn how to teach English in the real world situations.

Gaurabh seems very articulate in outlining the events, incidents and his initiatives. In his tenures he rendered his selfless service to his organization. He says that his only mission was to consolidate the image that he had as a founding member. “With this mission, I worked in NELTA selflessly and honestly with my other senior colleagues. I felt my contribution to the growth of NELTA and reciprocal professional growth in me in terms of my visibility in the professional network and the ELT community in Nepal.” In his narrative, he presents a reciprocal relationship that has developed between him and NELTA. When he gets an opportunity, he brings in more opportunities for NELTA. When NELTA benefits from his initiatives, he gets to enjoy more benefits. Because he worked hard for NELTA, he got an opportunity for overseas study. Upon his return, NELTA got a reliable General Secretary who was well informed about what happened elsewhere regarding the teacher association.

I was selected for a Hornby scholarship to do an M.A. in ELT in a UK university. During my study in the UK, I also learned how professional organizations in other parts of the world were functioning and how we could help these associations grow professionally. Upon my return to Nepal, I



rejoined NELTA as its General Secretary and continued my professional activities. NELTA was able to bring the ELT celebrities to its conferences and my role in it was instrumental because of my role at NELTA. Getting to know the high level scholars and interacting with them during their visits to Nepal was an additional dimension in my professional development as a teacher and teacher educator.

So, Gaurabh promoted NELTA and at the same time he was also getting promoted to teacher to teacher educator to a national level teacher leader in its own right.

The participants above described their professional development benefits they got from NELTA. Himal highlighted the positions he held in NELTA. He had started the journey as a general member and made his way up to the President when he wrote his narrative. He listed his positions thus: “Gradually I was climbing the ladder in the central committee of the organization that I was a Member, Secretary, General Secretary for four years in each position and President for two years.” In this description, he implicitly expresses his pride in being the President of a large organization. So, apart from his positional up-gradation, he also developed a sense of satisfaction and pride due to the same achievement.

Regarding his achievements, Himal, realised that due to the association with NELTA, his networks, professional skills and confidence also boosted up.

These opportunities not only developed my network, but also range of my skills, such as communication, presentation, networking, IT, teacher training, proposal writing, report writing skills and many more. I significantly developed my confidence too. Moreover, I got a great deal of insight to observe and evaluate how other people within, and beyond the organization

perform professionally and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

Consequently, I am able to adapt the positive insights from others.

The list of achievements actually looks like the achievements made by many members put together. It appears that, due to the demands of different positions, he had to perform diverse types of tasks which led to the development of diverse skills. The publicly held activities and partnerships relations had spread the news far and wide. The Government noticed NELTA as an organization as well as its members. In his case, the noticing took place in a combined way. He recounts,

When the Ministry of Education in 2012, with recognition to my contribution, decided to decorate me with a national award, I realised that people are certainly watching my performance. However, I have not collected this award yet, with a feeling, whether I deserve such a national award. Moreover, I have also received some offers for the international jobs, which must be the recognition of NELTA that I head now. One of his greatest satisfactions is that thousands of NELTA members have trusted me, and they believe that I work with my full integrity.

Here, I can see that Himel is focussing on the personal benefits he had due to his professional contribution. The intertwining here is that all his achievements are both personal and professional. The international jobs he has been offered are also ELT related, so he, if he accepts, will be utilizing the knowledge and skills he has gained from his long standing affiliation to this ELT organization.

For Kanak, coming in touch with NELTA was a life changing event. The first thing that he noticed when he came in touch with any other teachers at the NELTA conference was that there were multiple ways of language teaching. He says he came from the non-education background, so he had the content and his methodological

know-how was not as demanded by the classroom realities. The conference participation not only gave a new idea but also helped him to reflect how he was teaching. He felt that he used to run a teacher-centred lesson. He described this experience in an emotional way.

Joining the international conference of NELTA in 1996 was a turning point. I was surprised that there could be so many varied and interesting ways of teaching. Instantly, I realized that I had enough content, but from the point of view of methodology, I was at the bottom point. I had never realized that literature or grammar or any other language skill could be taught in a communicative way involving almost all the students in the class. I was able to meet the people from different parts of the world. I found our teaching pattern was only one way traffic. The insights that I received from the conference presenters encouraged me to buy the ELT related books and especially the ones that could tell me how to make the classes more effective. I did not hesitate to ask my peer to observe my classes and give some constructive feedback.

So, he changed the way he was and behaved. He started spending money on books and not on his usual habit. He also started trying out new ideas. He became more open to his colleagues and started asking for feedback. In fact, he started the fundamental initiatives required for professional development in ELT: reading, experimenting and collaborating.

Kanak also developed an attitude that the professional need to have: being positive towards taking challenging tasks. At the conference sessions, he saw that there was something he could take home, the teaching ideas. He also saw that he was in the audience not in the presenters' side. He knew that being a presenter was

definitely a challenging task but it was worth taking. He somehow saw the end of the tunnel that he could be a trainer. “I was intrinsically motivated to enter the field of training and establish myself as a trainer.” This idea came to his mind due to his changing status in NELTA. His interactions with the professionals were developing knowledge skills and attitude at the same time.

Being one of the key post holders, I was attending meetings with the experts from various agencies. This was a demanding task on me that I should maintain the dignity of the post. Thus, in some cases, I pushed myself forcefully into the field of training and in some ways I was successful as well. But training teachers is always a trying experience, as there are new trends and patterns almost every year. The exposure that I received through NELTA whether at home or abroad was the key factor that pushed me further.

So, his position not only made a demand but also gave him opportunities through exposure and interactions. He moved on because he was at a platform set up for teachers just like him. He is now a trainer and when he wrote this narrative, he had become an international teacher educator running an international certification course in Kathmandu. He notes that without the platform he was on, these opportunities would not have knocked at his door. After all these changes and signs of the professional development in him as a teacher and teacher educator, he now feels that there is much more to learn. So the fundamental change that took place in him was the sense of life-long learning.

As with the other participants, the conference made a telling impact on Muskan. As discussed elsewhere, it was not the professional learning in the technical sense but the very participation, the people there, the environment, the fact of seeing the native speaker speak were the elements that brought the change in her. While

writing her narrative about the first conference participation, she gives minute details as the children do when they narrate what happened during the day.

It was a bit late when we reached the conference venue. The plenary session (I understood the meaning of plenary later on only) had already started and the speaker was Sue Leather. The conference hall was full of people and we were at the back. She was speaking at the front I did not know what about. Neither could I understand her language nor the subject matter. I was at complete loss. For the first time in my life I felt what it feels like to be in a class and not to understand anything. I remembered my friends who used to say “I don’t understand anything in English class”. I didn’t believe them. But now I did. Other sessions of the foreigners were almost similar and the situation was a bit different with the Nepali presenters.

It was a shocking situation for her. She had come to the conference because she was an English teacher: she was literally teaching English but here at the conference she understood nothing. This made her empathetic towards her college colleagues who used to say that they understood nothing in English. She used to think that listening to the English lectures was easy as she understood them. It appears that she had a feeling that she was much better at English than her colleagues. But this conference was an eye opener.

Her satisfaction from the conference was higher when she found some materials that were useful for her as a student in her B Ed course. She saw that she had stumbled upon the materials that she could use in the study. “In the evening I went through the materials that we had collected. Among them was a book titled *Fellow Teacher* as well. To add to my satisfaction I found the materials presented in the conference and presented in this book related to the subject matter that we had to

study for major English course and realized this conference was a useful thing for students like me. The materials gave me a sense of confidence because there I found the things which I did not find in my books (we used to have very few books!). I was in a better position than my friends.” So, here was something that she could tell her colleagues that she had brought along from the conference. She was returning home with something to share proudly; her expensive adventure had finally paid up.

Muskan described herself as a naive person in the narrative above but the way she worked out what she achieved from the conference shows that she knew what she was doing. When she was home, she sat down to list the advantages of the conference participation. The list has worked well. Muskan has never missed a conference since then. She came from Butwal for two subsequent conferences. Once she completed her BEd, she moved to Kathmandu for her Masters and has been working there. So, she attends each conference that is held. As a female and working mother, she is worried, “I don’t know what would have I done if the conference were in different location than I am living. It might have been somehow difficult but I don’t think I would miss any.” She is so determined that despite all the difficulties she might face, she will not miss any conference.

Her narrative shows that as a woman, she overcame the hurdles and made her way upto the events and later to the committee office. She feels different professionally and personally. Her words express more affective aspect than technical in the initial phases. This emotional part is very important for the motivation one needs to be involved in the network activities. In the later stage, she feels good that she is visible socially among her relatives and colleagues. Conference presentations and paper publications are something that Muskan is proud about. NELTA is in position to help her in her professional development due to the fact that it is not

politically indoctrinated but professionally guided. She notes that NELTA is of “apolitical nature”. Everyone is committed to the professional discourses and not political discourses.

Because Saru was involved in the events and activities of NELTA, she was advised to stand for the Central Committee member. When she had to perform and she did not find herself ready, she felt that the position was not an easy place to be; she even felt guilty. But she says she took it as an opportunity and she had to take risks. She notes,

I got opportunity to work as a central committee member which was really a very tough position for me. I was quite unfamiliar about teacher trainings, ELT workshops, journal publication etc. I would sometimes feel bad in the committee as I would find myself as the most junior person in the committee. I would not feel good to go to the branches to facilitate teacher training.

So the gravity of the problem was bigger when she had to represent the Centre to the branches. It appears that it was too much for her. “However, I started to take risk to go to the branches as a facilitator of the trainings. I started to learn training skills including the design of the training materials. I think branch visit with my senior colleagues at NELTA Centre was the most productive part for me as I learned a lot from them.” Branch visits for the training was not the only opportunity that she got, she had to be involved in the Central activities. “I got opportunity to be involved in different activities of NELTA Centre like newsletter publication, training manual design, ELT survey etc. which taught me a lot about research activities, training skills, NELTA policies etc.” So, the responsibilities she had to undertake were actually teaching her skills she needed to perform better. She was performing better as the time passed by.

As discussed above, Ritika became involved in NELTA activities only after getting some opportunity from outside NELTA but the same brought her to NELTA closer. She saw that if she came to NELTA, there would be more such opportunities. She does not directly admit that phenomenon but share in a round-about way, “The turning point was when I went to Oxford for a short training for teachers sponsored by the British council. I got an opportunity to meet teachers of different countries, understand the culture of England personally. It was a kind of eye opening for me to improve my teaching learning. This training made me come closer to NELTA, though I was associated with it since its inception period.”

As with others, seeing in person and working together with the intellectuals like Dr. X, Dr. Y, Dr. Z and Prof. A made Ritika feel that she was at the right place; she was with the individual who she looked upto. She also knew that she had to give more time in order to receive more. So she came closer to NELTA by involving herself in its regular activities. After seeing others perform well, she felt she needed a teaching degree (though she had been a teacher for years) and joined Kathmandu University for her PGDE. This degree did not come easy as she had to teach in the day and be a student in the evening. A working mother certainly had many hurdles in her personal life to succeed in her professional life.

Her accounts show that she is satisfied with her achievement. Her expressions show that she feels proud when she mentions the accomplishments from the NELTA front, “I have presented papers nationally and internationally. It was due to my hard work that I got an opportunity to attend IATEFL in Glasgow in 2012.” She got this opportunity but, she believes, it did not come out of the blue. She worked hard to be a deserving person for the opportunities of this kind.



Ritika feels that there has been a big change in her life as shown by her choice of words. She does not say only change she uses the words such as *transformation, metamorphism, reason, vision, empowerment, turning point*. “The transformation or the metamorphism I have now is due to the idea of professionalism, now I can teach with reason, vision and according to the need of the students not according to my choice. I can give my insight to the deserving teachers; I can talk about empowerment of teachers. Had I not realized the turning point to change myself, I would have been at the crossroad doing old things monotonously.” So, she feels she made a right choice by joining NELTA which brought all the possibilities.

### **Signs of Professional Development**

The discussion above shows that the respondents felt they received as well as gave to NELTA. All unanimously agreed that they developed professionally. What signs do they see in themselves that they developed? I put these questions to my participants who revealed multiplicity in their responses.

Amar started with some concrete examples of his professional development. In fact, the examples he gave are those factors that actually push professionals up visibly. He said,

I never expected that I could write an article of the international standard, peer-reviewed article there because there is a kind of support. I never imagined I could be nominated for the IVLP program. What I learnt or studied at the Master’s level was completely theoretical. When I regularly attended its programmes there, I could see that a kind of change was happening in my classroom every day. So, that is NELTA. I have never attended the any government level training program like the TOT run by NELTA.

So, Amar has seen obvious changes in him, his career, in his professional attitude. He thinks that without NELTA, he would not have achieved as much as he has. He also makes a distinction between the theoretical and practical learning. NELTA gave him practical experiences. He adds that he can now do much better at trainings, in writings and while communicating with other teachers. So much so, he feels confident in inspiring his colleagues to do better. Amar's expressions also showed that he was more open to students' feedback which is less practised in the Nepalese schools. He said getting ideas from the students what they are feeling about teaching is also helping him to learn.

Daan has found NELTA as a platform where he has been growing. He has developed his ELT skills as well as training skills. Training teachers at the branches has further sharpened his skills as a teacher. He says, "I can claim that NELTA has provided me a sort of ground not only to be a good teacher but also to be a trainer and that has helped me to grow and disseminate my ideas." He also feels good in being recognized through NELTA. For him NELTA membership is a tag that helps him to be known to others.

Networking is another benefit for Daan. He is linked to many organizations through NELTA, for example, IATFEL. "I can say that NELTA has even provided me a platform to network with other people and organization." He feels proud that NELTA has paved his way to the international networks.

Gaurabh sees the signs of the professional development at two levels - professional and personal. He defines the professional development equating to the exposure and networking. He also values the networks that he has developed with the people working in the similar areas nationally, regionally and internationally. At the personal level, he sees his sense of satisfaction as the best achievement.

I think the sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, meaning to my life, in the personal level I was happy what I have done. And then I see my life meaningful. If I had not been at NELTA I would have been working only for my own survival, now I see that NELTA gave me a platform where I could contribute for the wider professional community. So I think in short in personal level it gave me a true meaning of my life, my existence. So, that made me different from those who have not been contributing to the community and at the professional level as I said networking growth, professional engagement.

Gaurabh's affective reflections here do not actually make a true distinction between professional growth and personal growth. The opportunities to represent the organization in regional and international forums brought him both without which as he says he would not have been able to develop his professional potentials. "Because of those professional development opportunities I was able to grow myself."

NELTA events gave him two way opportunities. NELTA organized events which he participated in, so he learned. When he took the offices at different levels, he organized and managed the events. This responsible act gave him another opportunity to learn to lead. In the course of his service to NELTA, he felt that a space was created which he only could fill. This was a true sign of development: having one's own space. There came a time when the key positions required potential candidates to fill and Gaurabh did not expect them for himself. But the colleagues at that time took him as the candidate so he had to file his nomination. This is what he thinks is the space that he created. He says,

I wanted someone to come to that position but I came like you know I was projected as the normal candidate for that position. when I was elected for the

first general secretary then I realized that I have created some space and that made me both, little happy and also little sad because the organization should not have just a few people to hold the leadership position, so my expectation was, so many people would come as a potential candidates for the different position and I would see the organization with which I was associated for a long time has so many individuals, aspiring individuals who could lead this association in the future. That was... that's how I created space.

In a professional association and network to be offered significant positions is a true sign of professional development.

Himal categorically lists the many ways that he has developed. He believes that NELTA provided him with a platform and that made all the difference. “When there is a platform, there are opportunities. The platform helps you to strengthen the capacity; it actually allows you to give your expertise, and once you give the expertise you develop yourself. On this platform, I got opportunities for my higher studies, number of exposure training, meeting people, to understand most better of dynamics of teaching of English and ELT policies etc.” So, the platform, the strengthening of his capacity, the exposure which he claims he got from his affiliation to NELTA, it appears that his course of career has taken shape with this network. Exposures like further studies shaped his professional course and in Himal’s case this is what happened.

An important skill that Himal got is the training skill. In teacher associations training is an integral part of activities. Most members consider the opportunities to be trained as their professional development. When Himal gained confidence due to the academic qualifications either from Nepal or from overseas, he felt like sharing his skills among the colleagues. Though he felt confident, he still wanted to test them in

the real situation. So NELTA gave him a lot of opportunities to test his skills and ideas. He got involved in the training activities. This brought more learning opportunities.

Himal shared one psychological change he has developed: the sense of not being satisfied. He ascribed this change to the NELTA affiliation. "I would be satisfied with my academic degrees and my experiences but now I am never satisfied. This has led me to for self-study; to read the books, to compare the books, to analyze, to browse the internet and to see other people where they stand, where I stand and I have very clear vision that we should keep reading writing reviewing the materials and we should keep us updated. I would most probably just go to the school, teach my classes and most probably I would not keep myself not updating. I would not have a kind of let's say boarder horizon of expectation."

From what he says, we can see that the initial professional development activities were other directed. He learnt due to others. But slowly as his non-satisfaction increased, he started exploring by himself. Because of the exposure and everything else, he slowly became a self- directed learner for his own professional development.

Kanak too found NELTA to be a forum where one goes to learn and share, a forum to work at. But the condition that he saw fulfilled was of the elements of the networking. He said he met many like-minded people who wanted to develop themselves as good teachers and as trainers. In addition, he had opportunities to share his ideas with them and learn from them. He seems to have learnt his training skills from the NELTA colleagues because he says,

I used to go to X's sessions and used to copy his patterns for several years.

Although they are not large in number, there were and are some exemplary

names like X, Y, Z..... These people were a kind of inspiration to me and that encouraged me to transform my classes into that kind of pattern that I felt myself.

His inspirational experience shows that the NELTA members inspire one another and learn from each other. They observe training sessions of one another and copy the styles. They aspire to be like another. This kind of positivity in the attitude towards the colleagues enhances their knowledge and skills, more than that they develop confidence that they are also comparable with their colleagues.

That NELTA give diverse opportunities to him is exemplified by the experience of Kanak. In the last 15 years time, he worked as an editor, as a teacher and as a teacher-trainer. He went to different places to deliver the training and he came back to share his experience with his NELTA colleagues. "If I had not joined NELTA, my questions would have been left unanswered and I would have remained the same. Therefore, I would say that this association has helped me quite a lot." While Kanak has many experiences to recollect, some of them stand out as turning points. For him, his presentation in one of the NELTA conferences made him think so much that the ideas came from within.

It helped me to develop my personality and my confidence. Because I remember that, I presented my first paper in the NELTA conference and I had a kind of aura and three or four hours in advance, and I was always thinking that about my paper. Finally, I presented the paper and I wasn't very satisfied but I was able to answer the questions and I was able to face the mass and that gave a kind of confidence that I could do something. So that was a kind of turning point to me 1996 or 97.

Kanak does not remember to have had clear expectations initially. He said “Yes and No.” When he entered NELTA, he wanted to become a successful teacher in the real language classroom but after joining NELTA, because he was expected to be encyclopaedic as he said, he was involved in editing and training. Here the expectation was not just limited from his side, but also from the network side. He fulfilled them from either side.

Saru compares the two situations - now and the time when she took the NELTA membership. She finds that she has learnt so much during this period. Before that, she did not know anything about professionalism of teachers, she did not know about anything about the publications made by the key speakers for the professional development for trainings, workshops at that time. Now she is familiar with many of such things. She ascribes her accomplishment to NELTA.

Like other participants, she also has a list of the professional development symptoms that she proudly shared. She said that she attended the trainings, workshops and international conferences. These opportunities did not stop there. They further encouraged her to share the experiences through writing. Writing in professional journals is a higher order professional development for teachers. This allows the teachers to write, to disseminate and to be known. Saru found all of these beneficial. She recalls one training opportunity. It was a regional training in Hyderabad, India. She knew that attending such training empowered her, so applied for it and was selected. Opportunities made her look for more opportunities.

Saru believes that learning takes place not only in receiving knowledge and skills but also in imparting them. She felt that she learnt more when she went for teacher training. She said, “When we go for training, we need to prepare ourselves. So this made me read many books. I designed training sessions and I conducted training.

When teachers shared their experiences, I learned from them.” Dilthey’s (1976, as cited in Edge, 1992, p. 62) idea of learning through expression is something Saru could not notice but she saw the other two ways of teachers’ learning: understanding and experience. Affectively she felt confident when she travelled to different parts of the country. This sense of confidence made her want to learn further.

### **Teacher Networks and Personality Development**

All factors of success boil down to who I am and how I behave with myself and with others: how we react to the immediate situation. It all depends upon my personality. It is personality that leaders succeed with. Those who have wider network also depend upon their personality: the ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally.

My participants stressed on the learning they had from their affiliation to NELTA. They indicated that they had an impact upon their personality. This led me to think in what way they had a positive impact upon their personality. So, first I wanted to confirm I had understood them right and found that each one of them replied positively. Then I inquired how their personality had changed due to the NELTA involvement. I discuss their experiences.

Amar’s response reflected the true sense of networking: readiness to working in teams. He developed the skill of team working while working with other members. “We developed the skills to collaborate with many people there. When we are assigned a responsibility, we joined our hands together to achieve that single goal. That way we developed team-working skill.”

I saw two sides here. On one hand, he developed the skills to work as a team member. On the other, he used the word “we” which indicates that he really had the we-feeling, a basic principle for an association. So, he not only learnt the team



working skills, but also changed his attitude for being positive. If we have a tendency to work with others, we can join a network. And, once we join the network, we hone the skill of working with others. So they are reciprocal.

Amar added another skill that he learnt: being punctual. Coming from the Nepali society, he had learnt to be lenient with time. For the common Nepalese, deadlines are not important. These culturally embedded habits are difficult to mend but Amar says he did. “We have to start our session at sharp 9 o’clock. So I need to be there by then. As a participant, I must be there at 9 o’clock. As a trainer, I must be there before 9 o’clock to get ready.” He has different attitude now. He must maintain punctuality.

Communication skill is the most important aspect of the personality. Whenever we have any events, formal or informal, we communicate with the people around us. Amar feels that his communication skills have got a lot better. He can initiate to react in much better way than he used to. Likewise, he also feels that he is more confident in using English, about his knowledge and skills for ELT. The confidence seems to have developed from the fact that he is on the network of the people just like him. “Before I joined NELTA, I never knew how to deal or how to speak to different people. So NELTA helped me to think something critically and professionally.”

For Daan, NELTA helped him in developing his personality. Before he got attached to NELTA, he was limited to classroom teaching but now his professional work has diversified. “Now I’m not only limited with teaching only in terms of my profession. This is why I said NELTA has provided me a short of platform to grow myself and so that I’m now working with different organizations also. And that is how NELTA helped me in my personality development.” His response has an

interesting point here. He equates the personality development to the professional growth. Whatever he said in his response is all professional part. It maybe that the professional and the personal actually go together. When we become well delivering professional, we also enhance our personality and also vice versa.

When I asked the same question that I asked others about the personality development, Gaurabh started with his proactive engagement in professional development activities.

I think I developed that quality, that trait because of my engagement with NELTA. And my confidence in leading different activities, so I would say that leadership is a part of the personality development, so the leadership trait that I have got. And also because of my position is NELTA, I am given a special status by different organizations, whether it's Ministry of Education, or organizations working in the field of education. So because of my contribution or my participation in NELTA activities, there is a special recognition for me, which is a very big asset for me. So in that sense, I think my personality was developed.

Again, Gaurabh resorted to the professional positions and activities. Rather he tried to make a conclusion that he was able to deliver as a leader because he had a developed personality.

Himal had a similar experience to that of Daan. He moved from a mere classroom teacher to a diversified professional. In the earlier conversation he said that the native English speaker students in the Thai college felt they were privileged that NELTA President was their tutor. He meant that they saw him more as NELTA President than as a person. This shows that being on the NELTA leadership meant that the personality automatically gets enhanced. He narrates thus.

This difference again because of responsibility the people don't come to ask me as an individual but people come to ask me as president of NELTA. But again they have some kind of trust that this person has taken the key responsibility of NELTA and he must have the good qualities and character or let's say performance. I think they have that kind of feeling and they put me lots of responsibilities so if I see like my personality before joining NELTA and after I join NELTA, there is big difference in the perceptions of people.

Himal's response goes a little further. For him, personality development is indicated by the enhancement in the status. The more influential one becomes, the better the personality. Kanak rather stuck to the idea of personality matter. He recalled his early days in the teaching profession when he did not have confidence.

In the beginning I was less confident and now I am more confident. There may be some more space to grow myself. Now I am able to talk to the foreign agencies and establish some kind of relationship between our institution and other institutions. Since I have been in the position of NELTA General Secretary now and I have to be in contact with different kind of people with similar post and that enables me, that forces me, that encouraged me to develop the organization, to develop myself and to be more confident.

Kanak's view here shows that the development in the individual's personality boosts confidence and that confidence enables the individual to work more. At NELTA the interactions with people who already are familiar and with new acquaintances help the members to affirm what they already know and at the same time help them learn new things. This gives them a feeling that they know at par with others and also can express the same to people from inside and outside the country. There seems to be an idea that certain roles are demanded by the position. The

members are bound to be in touch, bound to deliver and bound to publicly demonstrate which require confidence.

Muskan also said that she had developed confidence due to the professional activities she is involved at the NELTA front. “Sense of confidence that I have while talking and in presentation. May be part of professional development. I gained confidence by doing. I learnt to present by presenting. So my confidence came through learning by doing.” As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, the participation in the activities boosts confidence and the confidence helps in delivering more. Saru’s experience was not different. She stated, “I think the main thing is that it made me more confident. It provided me with the opportunity to participate in different programs, to facilitate different trainings and different workshops. When I did those activities, I got experience from that which means I developed those skills. I think, indirectly it has helped to develop personally.”

Saru mentioned that she has become more skilful in writing and facilitating training. She considers the skills so advantageous that she can continue using even after NELTA, outside NELTA and in her other spheres of life as personal development. She compares herself between earlier and now and sees that there is a vast difference in the way she delivers. But again she did what others said. She linked the personal skills with the professional skills. “That means I have developed some skills which are related to ELT and which are very necessary for my professional development. Therefore, I have learnt some skills in that sense.”

Ritika uses the lenses of her relatives and colleagues. She says that they think being a part of NELTA, she has achieved a lot. Interestingly the perception of them towards her achievement is again professional. They see her meeting foreign people, travelling and sometimes getting published. These are all professional activities. She

actually agrees with them and says that as a result of the achievement, she developed confidence.

Professionally I have received lots of things from NELTA and I have developed the confidence and I met so many people: Key speakers and paper presenters from different countries. That is a kind of exposure for me to develop myself.

When she saw the presentations of people from other countries, she felt that she was not less than others. Participants learn first by affirmation of what they already know before they learn new things. What they presented was the same thing that she was doing.

I found that whatever I was doing they were doing the same thing in their own country. So it helped me that I mean teaching is same everywhere because the teacher face similar kind of problems dealing with the classroom management to students behaviour, their attitude and other challenges like psychological problems with the students. So there are almost same in everywhere, so that is the thing I have learnt from other teachers. This has helped me to build up my confidence.

However, this confidence seems to have worked a miracle because after that she started writing for the professional journals. That reminds of this aspect that most teachers do not write particularly for the professional journals. But once they come to NELTA and see others getting published and find that their English is not as bad as they think, they also get encouraged to write.

### **Teacher Association and Social Prestige**

In explaining their professional and personal growth, the participants implicitly indicated that they were known socially for the professional achievement. It

so appeared that they were looked upto by the family, community and wider society for their affiliation and contributions. I thought why not explore this theme explicitly because the higher the social status, the more professional development opportunities. I framed a straight question which I asked all participants. In dealing with the explicit questions, they responded that their social status was enhanced by the NELTA affiliation.

Amar had a feeling that he was known to very few people earlier. He did not have many acquaintances apart from relatives and closely known classmates and colleagues. Joining NELTA made all the difference. This affiliation brought him close to many people out of the professional forum as well. He feels that if he had not joined the association, he would have been limited.

Of course, NELTA has enhanced my social prestige, I think so. As I said before, in a sense when I go and work in different places, and I also say that I serve NELTA in this portfolio, people take it differently. They say, 'Oh you belong to NELTA?' Then NELTA has been doing all these things?' They start asking different questions and they even put the curiosity that How can I join NELTA?'

People look up to him because he is with NELTA gives him a sense of being recognized. This feeling actually represents the common human attributes that each human wants to be known, recognised. Amar sees that people not only feel proud of being with him, they also want to share the value that he has got.

Amar feels valued when he gets call from the people who go to his district for professional activities. They never miss to call him. Why? Amar feels that they want to involve him because he is a member of a prestigious professional organization. They want to use the value that he has got. His presence will add value to their

programme. Likewise the District Education Office has also a place for the NELTA leaders whenever there is a programme. Other way round, when his branch organizes any programme in the district, he invites the Vice Chancellor of the University and he always comes. He is a busy person. Even then, he makes time to come and attend. This is all because of the social image NELTA has got. Though the VC does not know him, he entertains his calls. Amar thinks that it is all because of NELTA.

Daan is taken as a role model in his community and his friends' circle. Because he has earned a good image, his friends want to join and contribute to NELTA. One of his nephews has a dream that he would like to be like his *Mama* (maternal uncle) one day. Daan believes that the social prestige comes attached when one is affiliated to NELTA. "Obviously social prestige is always there and it is always attached", he comments.

Gaurabh states in a straightforward manner that people look upto him not only as a university professor, but also as someone who has the capacity to lead bigger organizations. They see his leadership quality which was enhanced by the fact that he was on the front line of NELTA. He takes this tag of NELTA on him as a value addition. Belonging to NELTA gives a value to the social image.

Once you lead an association, which is always a kind of value added thing that adds something to your position. When they have conversation with their friends, they talk about knowing someone who holds that particular position. My relatives feel proud that I am in such a position. One of my nephews enhanced social prestige. In my branch there, the district education office, people from Department of Education, people from TU though they are on their way to do something, I never get missed from their activities.

There goes a similar story with him that his relatives identify themselves with his identity, his being recognized. They love talking about him. They even take advantage when they can. Gaurabh also sees that the social prestige he has gained also has given a different recognition. In his district when educational events happen and people with government positions attend this, he is also invited. He does not have that bureaucratic power but the social prestige worked to gain that extra power.

Himal in this respect also went elaborate and straight. He also gave a more intellectual answer. He said, "Social prestige and personality, they are so much inextricably intertwined because if society looks your down upon you, you don't have any personality." He was referring to the image that is not related to teacher training or teaching but seen at home or outside or wherever. He saw it from a different angle.

If I were not in the position of NELTA and I were simply a teacher of English, the way I would deal with the people would be much different than being on a NELTA position. So it is not only a kind of teacher training or teaching or it is not only influencing the policy it is also visioning when you start thinking about society, or when you start thinking about politics but when you starts thinking about other organizations and how do they function to what extent you observe peoples performance in their individual level and their institutional level those kinds of skills and knowledge and insight I have got myself so the quality I have achieved through NELTA and I have internalized as a person and again it has very good link with the society.

For Himal, being on NELTA is a sensitive job. What one says will make a lot of difference in the image of the self and NELTA and this influences how one behaves and speaks. This way of behaving forms an image in the society. The image



determines the social prestige of the organization and of the individual as well. When one performs well, it is the value to one's social image.

Kanak used to think that the position does not matter. But now he believes that being on an important position really matters. This understanding came to his mind after the position he was in made all the difference in the way people took him. He believes that when one is in the key position, one is expected to deliver. In order to prove it, one works hard.

You are supposed to carry out certain works and you have to take helps from others. And when you are in the key post then there is an expectation from the people that you can do this. Because of peoples' expectations, you should develop your skills that you should do and you can do. That's why the social prestige when you are expected by people definitely that's kind of expansion of social prestige. You are able to do something for the institution, for the people, for the professional development. Sometimes you visit these people and you talk to them. These are the things you have to do so you are in some kind of position that you start teaching others although the work teaching shouldn't be taken as patronizing and negative way but this helps you to gain certain position in the society and you have to maintain certain decency and you have to learn to maintain those decencies.

Kanak has a belief that when common people expect you to deliver, that is an indication that the person has earned social prestige. People do not expect anything from those who have never delivered. So, he was in the position, and he had to deliver, and when he delivered once, he was expected to deliver more adding value to his status.

Muskan takes the affiliation to NELTA as a matter of pride: she belonged to a prestigious organization. This sense of pride has brought her sense of satisfaction. “NELTA is growing and many people know NELTA. When people know that I'm associated with NELTA or I am a member of NELTA, they have a different perception of me.” When I asked her what that different perception was, she said, “Difficult to explain, a sense of respect.” She understands that her relatives’ and friends’ perception of hers is a mark of respect. She also thinks that they do not know whether being in NELTA has a prospect for an upward mobility as NELTA is a voluntary organization. “Within that circle people who know NELTA know me and they have a sense of regard I think so, I feel in that way.”

Saru feels that when she travels to different parts of the country and delivers training, people know her and they respect her. She has understood this respect as the social prestige which NELTA has given her. If she had delivered the same training outside NELTA, she would have been judged just for the quality of her training and no further respect. “I think that is a kind of social prestige that I have gained from the society. Saru links this professional expertise to the social prestige she received. She has added value to the social prestige also by writing. When people see her writing in the NELTA publications, they take it very positively.

Ritika believes that social prestige has perhaps been more significant than the professional gain she has made. Her family and her relatives have realized that apart for being wife or sister or sister in law, she has established herself professionally. She feels satisfied that the people around her do not see her only as a housewife and a simple school teacher but as someone who has an enviable position in an organization of international repute. She proudly states, “Now they have feeling that I have something inside me and I have that ability to get exposure outside and I have the

confidence. So this is the thing that I have received from NELTA socially.” She feels she is known and is more respected by social members because of NELTA.

If she had not been a member, she would just have been a simple teacher: teaching in a school and doing her regular job. She says, “That’s all. I had never thought that I would grow like this. So this is the wildest dream I had. NELTA has been the platform for me. So being a NELTA member I got chance to take part in creative writing group also. So I’m involved in creative writing also.” Though she was trying to explain how she was known in her social circles for her professional achievements, she came back to the professional opportunities as other participants did. Inspired by the creative writing group where she learnt how to write, she also has contributed a short-story to an anthology which is in the pipeline.

### **Loss due to the Involvement in the Association**

The participants have stressed on the giving to and getting from NELTA. They claim that they have given time and energy and commitment. Their giving has made an impact on the way NELTA functions. They have gained much for their professional and personal development. Whether giving or gaining, they are heavily involved in the NELTA activities. So, I felt that they might be paying a price in a different way: that is by suffering a loss. So, I asked them if they had lost something due to their involvement in NELTA. They had a sense of fulfilment except that they would be away from the family mainly on Saturdays. Amar started with his children. But he also mentioned the income that he had missed to make.

I’m not getting time to enjoy with my children. On Saturdays, I have to attend meeting, training, presentation organized by NELTA and I really feel bad for my children. Sometimes there is a wedding ceremony in family or relatives, I miss it. I miss the friends of other sectors because I developed the habit of

making friends who are from ELT background I don't know how it acts I don't know I enjoyed their company but I miss the other sectors. All these losses are compensated as I have got opportunities from other side too due to NELTA.

Amar's sees that there is a loss of family quality time and some income as well. However, the professional as well as financial opportunities that he got compensated the loss he had. Himel too focused on the family issue as the biggest loss he suffered. "NELTA people don't have time for the family" he says. He recalls his time in the key positions. When he was holding the keys offices, he could not give time to the family. He was rarely in communication with his relatives. "If I pick up the phone on Saturdays, my relatives and friends are quite surprised because they expect me to away to NELTA. Some people believe that this man is no point to contact because he has no time, he has only time for NELTA he is not available." So, he sees his social relationship missing.

Apart from his involvement with NELTA, Himel also works voluntarily for human rights and that leaves him virtually with no private time. He cannot pursue his personal interests such as going for a morning walk. Greater than that was the loss he had of not being able to achieve his doctoral degree. Because of his NELTA responsibility, he was not able to manage time and had to give up. Though he was paid a good salary for teaching 21 hours a week, he resigned from his job and the reason behind it was the commitment to NELTA.

Himel's case indicates that there is no free lunch while working with NELTA. Its members receive opportunities but they also sacrifice in return. They are ready to give up something that is essential for them. They do so happily; no regret. He saw that the value that he gave to his network in NELTA was greater than the income.

Kanak, who has been with NELTA for 15 years, is also happy to be at NELTA on Saturdays. However, he has the same complaint like others: missing his family.

“The most important thing that you miss when you join NELTA is your family.

Fortunately, my wife is also a NELTA member so that is not a problem. However, children are the big things now that I miss, in the Saturday mornings.”

So, his family misses him. He is not home on Saturdays; he is always travelling here and there, and sometimes spending his money for NELTA. Ritika’s family did not have very positive attitude but with Kanak it is a mixed response.

“When I visit places, they also go with me so they are happy to meet the NELTA people. When we are together, we are happy, but when they are on their own they say that you always say NELTA. Where is the time for us? This is the genuine question from them because they are also busy on other days when they go to school.” Their responses have clear message: they want to be with him. Still, Kanak keeps working for NELTA no matter how the family reacts.

Muskan’s response also repeats what Himat said. She has social relationship, too. “I don’t have time to visit my relatives. We have a cooperative from our place, so they have established that where we save five hundred per month. We do have meeting on Saturdays, so it's once of month, so we have meeting on NELTA and I can't go there, I prioritize NELTA.” Muskan’s response summarizes what everybody else has said before. Above all comes NELTA, whatever the losses.

She has more loss to share. She was writing a book which she could have finished last year. But she was too busy with NELTA activities. She was involved in the ELT survey for NELTA during the winter vacation which she had actually put aside for her writing. The fifteen days of her vacation, she spent working for NELTA. “If I was concentrated on the work, I would have published that at this time. I don’t

have any regret because I couldn't complete that book. But I would have completed that if I was not giving time to NELTA, but I'm satisfied with my giving time to NELTA.”

Saru gave the details of her family status. “I am a mother of 2 children. My daughter is just two years old now. When I joined this committee, she was six months old. And I have not given as much time as she would like. So she is not getting good care from her mother. My son is also not getting as much support as he expected from me. In that aspect, I have lost something. But if I look at my professionalism, I have gained more than I lost.”

Mothers put motherhood above everything. They compromise everything else but the children. But if we see what Saru says, the professional attachment is such that she says she has gained more than what she has lost. Ritika is proud that she is with NELTA and the only thing that she feels she has lost is that she cannot be with the family. “I have gained a lot. I must say I gained more than I lost.”

### **Gaps and Challenges**

The document analysis showed that the statute and the strategic planning have a big scope for supporting teachers in their professional development. They aim at a range of activities from institutional development to supporting teachers through training, support materials and books. They also aim at working in the professional research, doing consultancy services, providing advisory support to the government, and also developing the ELT materials. Going through the documents gives an impression that the association has been an ideal organization for its own development and the development of the members. The interview data analysis showed that the targets are realized but there are obvious gaps. The gaps were seen when the constant comparison was made between the data from the documents

analysis and relevant data from the interviews. The interview data showed that the members mainly benefited from the conferences, trainings, workshops, foreign visits and further studies. The documents appeared to cover all the members but the limited opportunities that the participants enjoyed were limited to chosen few. Though the documents did not make any distinction between those who contribute and who do not, the treatment with the members showed this distinction. In order to find out the reasons, I conducted a third round of interview and I asked the participants to explain why this may have happened. In order to find a different perspective, I discuss what the participants said.

Amar agreed with the point that there were gaps and gave reasons why. He said the volume of the work NELTA handles is not adequate to cover all members. He gave an example of the Journal articles. The Editorial board had received several articles but many were not published. It was not due to the quality just because they could not accommodate all in one volume. “One of the editors informed me that they had to reject some articles because of high number of submissions; they were unable to provide an opportunity to its members to review and resubmit the articles again.” So, the members who were adding resource to NELTA publication were not able to do so. One of the reasons why the gaps are created in the promises and the delivery is due to the lack of research on what is happening. Amar also related to the non-recognition of NELTA by the government. The scope of delivery would be wider if the association were recognized. This would make it possible for the association to accomplish its promises in the strategic planning. The main issue relating to this was, as he said, “There is significant expansion of NELTA in terms of its members and branches throughout the country but it is not able to generate more opportunities in this line of expansion and expectation. Neither NELTA has full time human resources

at branch levels.” So, the association develops plans for which it is not equipped with the necessary resources: human and material.

Daan brought in different perspective. He thinks that most plans are developed depending on the international donor organizations and being guided according to the interest of these organizations. So, the anticipated support does not come, the plans are not materialized. He also relates to the size of the membership: the executive body cannot now keep in view interests of the members, so it works with its own interest.

Gaurabh gave straightforward reasons for this. He also stressed on the ambitious nature of the plan and the inadequate resources as the main reason for under-materialization of the plans. He said, “Some of the programs and activities in the plan are too ambitious and NELTA should reflect and be practical in terms of bringing a balance to what it should do and what it can do. As a volunteer organization, it is not possible to implement all the programs due to resource crunch and the time constraints of the members who are involved in it.” There seems to be an undercurrent of the opinion that the plans require collective efforts. However, given the size of the association, it seems difficult to bring together all the members. So, plans are made but not fully realized and the members see them as unfulfilled promises. He comments “Some of the programs and activities in the strategic plan require collaborative efforts and NELTA has to partner with various government and non-government organizations. This requires a good team work in NELTA and the responsibilities should be distributed to all the committee members. Unless every member is involved on an equal footing, this is not possible.” Overall, Gaurabh’s arguments are that the plans are rather ambitious and there are limited resources. There also seems a need for creating an environment for all the members to be able to come to the collective efforts the leadership makes.



Himal argued that the promises in the documents are formulated as per the needs of the association and the members without considering the resources. “The resources are expected to be generated in line with the promises not that the resources are in place first and the objectives are created.” So, he believes that the resources are one of the reasons why the plans are not realized as stipulated. He further argued that the level of awareness in the members is a full realization of the intent of NELTA. So, “It’s necessary to go for one-on-one benchmarking. The rapport and the network of the organization help create opportunities and fulfill the promises in very many indirect ways.” Talking about the strategic planning, he argued that the branches try to include “maximum agenda and activities without considering available financial as well as human resources and time and energy, so the outcome, therefore, is seen very little.

Kanak saw the promises to be naturally ambitious and their financial constraints limit the delivery. He also saw it from another perspective. The gaps are perceived gaps because the new members expect magic to happen and it does not. “Many people believe that just joining such organisations and listening to their others’ success stories will bring a magic change in their lives, which is never true. They need their own determination primarily.” So for Kanak, the gaps are more perception of the members who are not in the central body. Kanak also indicated that gaps are created due to the interest and priority of the executive body. When one plan gets higher priority, certainly there will be gaps in the other plans.

Muskan echoed the same, ambition as one of the reasons for the gaps. The executive committee has realized and it has revised the plan and made it more realistic. In a nutshell, she covered the issues. She said, “This year is more realistic compared to the ones prepared earlier. The gaps in the earlier plans, in my opinion,

were because of high ambition of NELTA for the betterment of ELT in Nepal (so many proposed activities without clear action plan and resources to make them happen), voluntary nature of the organization itself with the members being busy with their obligatory duties.”

Saru ascribed the gaps to the voluntary nature of the organization. She shares her experience that members try to take office in the leadership but fail to deliver as they are busy with their own personal activities. Resultantly, the organization has to suffer in its image.

Ritika took a different stand. She said that with the existing resources and the nature of the voluntary organization, whatever NELTA has done is a good accomplishment. She refused to see the gaps in the delivery. “In my opinion, despite being a voluntary organization it has done what it can.”

From the discussion above, we can see that the participants share a few reasons for the gaps between the promises of NELTA and their realizations. They say that the plans are rather ambitious, laid down without considering the resources. The organization does not have adequate human and material resources. Due to the size of the organization, that is, number of members and the branches, the organization cannot easily address the issues of all members.

In order to get the officer bearers’ perspective on why there are gaps between what the documents promise and what the members experience from those promises, I requested two office bearers to be interviewed. I asked them categorically why the professional development opportunities that NELTA promises in its statute and strategic planning are not fully realized, why there are gaps between the promises in the documents and members' experiences as expressed by participants. I requested them to explain what maybe the reasons.

Kendra started her response by actually disagreeing with what other participants had said. She claimed that those members who are devoted and committed to NELTA have got the professional development opportunities. She justified why those who got the opportunities “How much time, energy and labor (more than a decade) we have contributed to NELTA, one cannot imagine. However, observing from outside without knowing its dynamics people will not understand what kind of pressure and work are there to achieve NELTA's goal and objectives.” She justified her opinion that the dynamics of NELTA is that those who can bear the pressure of the NELTA activities also deserve to enjoy the opportunities NELTA creates.

She was not at all convinced that there are gaps between what was promised and what the participants got. She felt that the gaps were perhaps seen because of lack of communication. Perhaps NELTA was not well understood. “If some people said there are gaps, the reasons must be that these people are not fully aware of NELTA's true sense of voluntarism and have not understood the challenge of future. And there is lack of communication.”

Kendra went on defending that NELTA is doing its best materializing its objectives. The one problem she saw was that people do not know how NELTA is functioning and make comments about it from their personal judgment. However, she somehow indicated the limitations of NELTA. She said,

NELTA is growing day by day, it has 41 branches today. Today's NELTA cannot function in a traditional way of the past. People have high aspiration with the increasing number of members and the Committee does not have access to reach every individual across the country. NELTA is a voluntary organization it will not invite or call the people individually and request them

to share their needs and grievances, they have to come to NELTA Office or meet the Committee members in the Center and at the branches. If they have to get benefit from NELTA, they have to tell and share things with the Committee members, otherwise how can the Committee know about the problems and gaps.

Her responses indicated that there is a communication gap between the Centre and the ordinary members that do not make themselves visible. Though she did not say that categorically, she made an indication, “What kind of gaps were or are there expressed in the Statute and members' experiences, people have to explain that clearly with the authority and have to visit NELTA to share their experiences and provide suggestions what should be done or not to be done. So that NELTA will have opportunity to learn about the said gaps and will improve in future.”

Kendra generalized that not all plans and the statements in the statutes are perfectly realized. Perfection cannot be expected. She commented, “There is no 100% perfection in the implementation of any kind of plan.” Overall, there were three major points in her responses: First, due to the voluntary nature of the organization and the size it has, there is no possibility to connect to each and every member and the members themselves needed to be proactive. Secondly there may have been misunderstanding due to not communicating with the central committee. Finally, 100% perfection should not be expected. One implied meaning was that the central committee expects the members to come and cooperate and not complain. It also implies that the central committee is too busy with its activities and not aware of what may have gone short in its delivery.

Milan was not defensive and was rather straight in her responses. As she was one of the founding members of NELTA, she tried to relate her responses to the

earlier position of NELTA. She stated that when the association was formed, the goals and the vision were written in a very broad perspective, covering everything that appeared suitable for an organization at that time. She said, “I think it was ambitious, if that is the right word. First of all, for a small voluntary organization everything cannot be achieved in a short time. There will be gaps.” So, she agreed that it is normal to have gaps. As the time went by, the situation changed and the way an association would be able to act and respond to the changing demands also changed. So she believes that NELTA should now reconsider the statute and other promises and choose the ones that are viable. “We should revise the statute. We are not the government; we are not a big body. We should not be. That’s what I think. In my personal opinion, aims should not be too big. We should be more down to earth and focus just on a few points.” So, she felt that the main reason for having gaps between the promises and the materialization of the promises is the ambition the promises have. The documents should be realistic, not ambitious.

So, Milan made her position clear. She agreed that there are gaps and she implied that the document revision was one way to minimise the gaps. Unlike Kendra’s, Milan’s responses implied that the gaps and low fulfilment of the promises were natural and it would be wiser to limit the scope and be realistic. She suggested that NELTA should now stop expanding and focus on improving the quality of its services for the members.

Looking at the responses of the executive committee members and from the way they interpreted the situation, the meaning that can be derived here is that for whatever reasons, there are gaps between what NELTA promises and what it delivers. One of the gaps is that not all the NELTA members are covered: those who come and

voluntarily start devoting their time and energy enjoy the benefits. Just taking membership is not going to bring any benefits to anyone.

The discussion in this chapter is mainly focused on how the members grow and develop with the opportunities at NELTA. The discussion showed that the members definitely develop under the aegis of NELTA but the development does not happen to all members. The opportunities the participants mentioned were limited ones and these participants were mainly from the capital except one. It was obvious that all NELTA members were not fortunate to enjoy the benefits and their level of professional benefits was also varying. The question thus arose was this: Why do not all members benefit from the professional development opportunities at NELTA and why does the level of development also vary when the organization does not make a distinction? In another round of interview, I asked the participants this question. What follows is the discussion of their responses.

Amar responded saying that the members near headquarters, in urban area and inside the Kathmandu valley seem to be more benefitted. Many members in remote areas even do not get the information about the activities of NELTA. For this discrepancy, he took the diversity as the main reason. He said that the members are highly dispersed across the country. They also vary in terms of access of information, resources and networks.

Amar also saw the other side of the coin. He blamed it on the low sense of accountability and responsibility of leadership to all members. He recalled that at some point, the leadership was not able to maintain impartiality when it came to the opportunities. Likewise he saw that NELTA does not have any mechanism to support new members. They do not know how to explore the opportunities once they join it; they feel lost and left out. He said, “Not all the members do attempt to exploit the

opportunities created by this platform.” He wound up his explanation saying that a lot depends of the members who need to be proactive.

Daan brought up the issue of the individual capacity because many of the opportunities are competitive. He said the members do not feel anything in this kind of selection. “But when for some programmes the top governing body nominates the candidates according to their preference, it brings frustration in members working in different branches as they have been working continuously but their task is never valued. Favoritism is sometimes been felt in giving opportunities which ultimately gives frustration to devoted, dedicated members.” So Daan raised a serious issue which was slightly hinted at by Amar.

Gaurabh put this argument more cautiously and mildly. He said that there are no transparent criteria to make selection for the professional development opportunities. “It’s more of personal contact and some visibility in the NELTA activities.” This way of selection for the professional development will not allow each member to benefit. Moreover, he also indicated the weak communication between the members and the central office. “Not all members know what is happening in the organization and flow of information is limited.” He also saw that there are many members but limited opportunities, so obviously all will not be benefited at the same level. He brought one issue that is not the purpose of the association. As he claims some members join the association just to be proud of being its member, not really to develop themselves. If this is the case the association does not need to be worried about this issue.

Himal’s response resonated with what Gaurabh said above because he also mentioned the limitation caused by the expectations of the growing number of members and the limited opportunities. In justifying why some members are given

opportunities and not to others, he said “All members are not equally motivated to invest their time and energy for their professional development. With the limited opportunities, NELTA prioritizes to those who are meritorious, and contribute NELTA in different forms. Those get the opportunities, who come to the forefront and professionally work closely with the organization.” From his response, we can draw two things here. First, there is an obvious practice that opportunities are given to selected members. Some other participants criticized the Central body of NELTA for practicing favoritism but others justified that the opportunities are given to those who support NELTA: there is give and take. Second, the size of NELTA has grown big and the available opportunities are not enough for the growing expectations.

Kanak took it as a natural thing that all members might not be able to benefit from the professional development and definitely the levels also vary. As with Dann, he also saw the individual differences of the members and the policy and strategy of the organisation. While he was satisfied with the choice of the candidates based on the merits, he echoed the opinion of Daan that “only intended people get the opportunities in the name of working hard for the expansion of the organisation.” He questioned the transparency status in justifying the professional development opportunities made available to selected members only.

Muskan was of the opinion that it all “depends on the quest that a person has”. She considers the member to be responsible “for change and development, he or she would be conscious for the opportunities available and manage time to participate in them and will, in turn, get more as well as better opportunities for the development.” So, she feels that where there is a will, there is a way. She played with the words combinations how the members can make a difference by choosing between “the opportunity is “no where”” and “the opportunity is “now here””. She only hinted that



the information availability makes a lot of difference for the members. She did not specify whether the information was available or not.

Saru became categorical and said there the members and the NELTA both are responsible for the situation. She said, “NELTA has not been able to reach to its individual members and provide them support; and I guess there are also some people who are unable to utilize the opportunity.” So, she implied that the members also need to be proactive in utilizing the opportunities that come by.

Rita gave a list of reasons on the issue which most of them were similar to what other respondents said, such as members being unaware of what is happening, their qualifications required for some benefits, their IT issues, not knowing how to apply and geographical constraints for the information. The new issue raised was the social and economic constraints for female teachers who are not as free as their male counterpart for traveling and mobility.

The above discussion shows that the participants also agree that the discrepancy exists in the ways the members benefit from the professional development opportunities but the reasons are many. If the reasons are categorized, they fall into two categories: the issues related to the association and the issues related to the members. Some considered members to be more responsible and others thought that the leadership is more responsible. Other reasons are beyond the control of both such as the geography.

The interview data indicated that not all members in NELTA benefit from the professional development opportunities at NELTA and the level of development also varies. This was clearly expressed by the participants that not all members benefit in the same way. I was curious to know why that happened. I asked this question to the office bearers and both responded in their own ways.

Kendra was more supportive of the position of NELTA and expressed that the members were responsible for making use of the opportunities available. Kendra claimed that the association creates opportunities for every member equally. She said, “However, getting benefit equally is not guaranteed because it also depends on them: what level they belong to, how frequently they communicate with the committee members, whether they have regular access to the information from branch or centre, whether they have contribute to the institution, whether they utilize their expertise and knowledge for the professional development or not, whether they have internet access, etc.” She was of the opinion that if the members are active, they will be in touch with NELTA and they will benefit from the opportunities available. But she also saw the responsibility of the leadership. If the leadership actively involves members in the main stream and keeps them in loop, there are chances that the opportunities will be meaningful for them. Briefly commenting on the level of the development the members undergo, she ascribed the same factors for the variation.

Milan was of the opinion that this perception was not well grounded. There has been no research and there is no adequate evidence to claim that the members at the branch level have not undergone development.

We think and we hear only about the middle or the top level members, those who have developed; those who are in prominent places. They have moved up the ladder or whatever. But benefits I believe have also taken place at the lower level. Lower means teachers, school teachers, college teachers, who have not had opportunities to go abroad. But they have participated in workshops in Kathmandu and in other places in Nepal. And they have done teacher training programs themselves, or trained teachers. But it’s just that we haven’t heard more about them.

So, Milan thinks that the development takes place in its own right and it does not become visible if it is not shared at the central level. As she was explaining the issue, she somehow agreed that the development may not be equal for everyone. She believed that the members come to NELTA only at the conference. “The conference is not the only thing that we do. They should be more active themselves. This is more difficult for women to be active. So, the blame goes to the organization, the executive committee and the members themselves.” So, she finally felt that the position holders also need to act in a way that all members can be reached. She recalled what she said earlier while responding to the question why there are gaps between the promises and the materialisation of the promises. She saw that it is perhaps the number of the members and the branches that their numbers have grown bigger. “This is why one of the reasons I felt that one of the things we should do is not focusing on having more members and more branches all the time. We should focus on consolidating our members. And do things that they want to do, where ever they want to do it.” She became more open as she talked and finally she said, “It’s just that we haven’t been able to talk to them, reach them; they don’t come out more often. The blame is on both parties. The organization it has to have to reach out more. We have to be more down to earth and remain more focused here and rather than just sending one or two. And sometimes it so happens that one or two who have benefitted, they have been lost in the crowd.” So, Milan’s main concern was that the members should be active to benefit but at the same time the Committee should also create a situation that all members come in purview of the opportunities. Instead of giving a big opportunity to one member, the opportunity should be made available to many, may be in a small size.

### **Noticing the Patterns**

The discussion above gives a picture of the professional development opportunities that the members benefit from NELTA. In the course of discussion, I noticed some patterns which I would like to briefly outline.

The literature review established that the very existence of teacher association is for the professional development of its members (Allwright, 1991; Sarwar, 1994). The data analysis showed that NELTA worked in line with the spirit of such teacher associations. For the purpose they make formal provisions through their documents. The analysis of the NELTA Statute and its strategic planning gave a scenario of what the association intends to offer to its members. As per the documents, NELTA intends to enhance the quality of English language teaching and learning in Nepal and the professionalism among the ELT professionals. In order for these to happen, NELTA works as a forum through professional networking, supporting and collaboration as a major stakeholder for teacher professionalism (Falcão, 2004). It aims to create opportunities such as training, workshops and conferences, to provide a forum for exchanges of ideas and experiences by networking in the country with the government agencies and in non-government sector. It also aims to carry out research and consultancy services for the promotion of ELT, develop English language teaching and learning materials relevant to local and international contexts, provide advisory support for policy formulation and implementation. The strategic planning includes short term and long term plans which are thematically categorized. The plan includes leadership development, resource generation, developing teacher resource materials, publishing local stories representing different languages, cultures, geography, setting up and enriching resource centres, training for public and private school English teachers, carry out research, continue the website NELTA Journals, Newsletters,

conferences, NELTA Choutari, publishing teacher stories and an anthology on ELT. All these intents and plans are intended to help in professional development of its members. These provisions of NELTA resonate with the idea of Khanna (2011) and Huberman (2001) who claim that teacher association's major role is to support teachers and NELTA formally lives up to this intent. Upon analysis, the data showed that NELTA created opportunities for teachers' professional development similar to the strategies shown by the study of J. Johnson (2009) such as attending face to face and virtual sessions, blogs or other online forums, reading and writing for journals, delivering sessions at a conference, doing a formal course and membership of professional bodies. As Guskey (1995) puts it, such opportunities allow teachers to come together and share their experiences. And the data showed that these opportunities were made available by NELTA.

The data also showed that the participants enter the association for different reasons. As Sharma (2012) puts it, the sessions become an impetus for teachers to join the community, many participants found sessions at the conferences reason enough for taking the membership of NELTA. Amar, Daan, and Saru attended the conference and were impressed by what they saw there. The presentations at the conference made sense to their classroom issues, so they were convinced that joining NELTA would make a difference. Meeting ELT professionals from different countries and getting an opportunity to talk with the native English speakers were the immediate benefits they saw at the NELTA conferences. As the chart below shows, Muskan was impressed by the conference but she had to be convinced by one of her colleagues. The colleague had told her that NELTA would be useful for her in professional development. The same was the case with Amar.

	Attending a conference	Informed by a teacher /colleague	Inspired by family member	Opted in the founding body	Watched the NELTA activities from outside, then being convinced
Amar	√	√			
Daan	√				
Gaurabh				√	
Himal					√
Kanak			√		
Muskan	√	√			
Saru	√				
Ritika					√

Figure 4. The reasons for entry into NELTA (Source: Field data).

Some members watch the association for a reasonable time and then only decide to join it a member. Himal and Ritika knew about NELTA for long before they took the membership. Kanak was lucky that his own father encouraged him to be a part of NELTA.

The analysis of the members' views on what NELTA offers showed that they find NELTA as forum where they can learn from training, workshops, conferences, journals, etc. In the interviews and the narratives, the most referred event was the conference which they believed was an opportunity to network and learn from others (Griffiee, 2012). As Clark (2012) puts it, networking is the purpose of going to the conferences and these participants have found it to be true from their experience. Renewed energy was one of the immediate benefits of attending the conferences (Stormy, 2009). They also enrich their knowledge through exposure visits and formal degrees overseas, getting published, giving sessions, etc.

There is space and opportunity—and also need—for many, many more NELTA members to start new initiatives, to join existing forums of professional conversation, and to share news ideas and challenge our conventions (Sharma, 2012).

All of these work towards raising confidence in teachers (Falcão, 2004). They take the opportunities to serve or to help other members as their own learning opportunities. Members also show an understanding that NELTA can offer as much as it can receive: the development is reciprocal. Participants also valued the responsibilities which led to gaining confidence. They found the forum an opportunity to expand their own network. Himal's and Gaurabh's position was that the members sometimes expect more than is possible as the association also has limitation with its resources. There was a unanimous response that NELTA creates an environment where opportunities are possible. However, when the NELTA's promises and the members' views were compared, it was seen that the promises were partly realised. Many promises remained as promises. When asked why, the respondents gave their own reasons such as the size of the associations in terms of the members and branches and the limited opportunities, ambitious plans, etc. They said the association develops plans for which it is not equipped with the necessary resources: human and material and there is a dependency on external donors. There were some divided responses regarding the role of the leadership. The respondents who had been on the leadership position tried to argue that most members have one-way expectations while those who had not been on not so high positions complained about the leadership being selective while providing opportunities for professional development. When the same question was asked to the sitting executive members of the Central Committee, they were divided. One agreed with the ambitiousness of the plan and size of NELTA but the other claimed that members do not understand the true nature of the volunteer organization.

The participants made an entry to NELTA during their university degree courses and they had an impetus such as recommendation by their favourite teacher or the fruitful conference. The entry itself gave them a sign for professional

development, the first sign being attitudinal: they were not doing right and they could if they came here to learn. The most referred professional development opportunities were the training and the conferences. They also found the opportunities to be published, to deliver sessions as the opportunities to grow. The respondents who held important positions saw the responsibility as way to realize their potential which also helps in development. For some participants, the overseas exposure and degree course brought a telling change in their life. The female participants did not find any difference in the way NELTA treated them but their family arrangement had to be adjusted.

In order to draw a clear picture of the opportunities participants benefitted from, I developed the following chart. It shows the individual participant's responses on what opportunities they had available due to their affiliation in NELTA.

	Amar	Daan	Gaurabh	Himal	Kanak	Muskan	Saru	Ritika
Attending training / workshops	√	√			√	√	√	√
Further studies			√	√				
Attending conferences	√	√			√	√	√	√
Taking on responsibility			√	√	√		√	
Getting to know other professionals	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Opportunities to talk to native speakers						√		
Foreign exposure	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Awards				√				
Delivering training					√		√	
Further networking		√		√	√			
Access to teaching materials					√	√		
Getting published						√	√	

*Figure 5.* TPD opportunities experienced by individual participants at NELTA

(Source: Field Data).



The opportunity that each participant enjoyed was getting to know each other which resonates the theory of networking. When they came to the association, they knew fellow teachers and this led to sharing and learning as suggested by Sarwar (1994). The other opportunities they had were the conferences and training sessions. They came to know about new ideas and tips for teaching. These are similar to the experiences shared by Stormy (2009). The opportunities that were enjoyed by two to three participants included: further studies, taking on responsibility, getting to know other professionals, foreign exposure, delivering training, further networking, access to teaching materials and getting published. One participant claimed that he had an opportunity to be given a national award and the

When I first went for ELT training, I felt a stark difference between the “training” that one of my cousins, who was a public school teacher, went to and the training that I went to as a private school teacher. For my cousin, the training was a source of income and a matter of some pride/ego when he returned to the village. My incentives were very different: I was excited by the skills that I learned and used in my classroom and by the difference that using those new skills made in my teaching and my students’ learning. Over the course of the next ten years, NELTA’s ELT trainings helped me become an effective teacher as I moved up the ladder of my career. Even when I left teaching in high school and started teaching at the university—a place where teaching methods had almost no place in the discussions, programs, or incentives for teachers—I continued to implement new pedagogical skills and ideas that I brought back from NELTA trainings, conferences, and publications (Sharma, 20012).

other felt talking to native speakers was an achievement.

Parallel to the professional development, the respondents reported about the personality development. The biggest change they felt was the confidence building. Another personal benefit was that they were now personalities. They started developing the habit of reading, experimenting and collaborating. Their communication and sense of team building also was enhanced: the *we*-feeling. Personally they also benefited by earning social prestige: the recognition.

The benefits of association did not come without some price. All respondents complained about the time they had to be away from the family particularly on weekends. They even had to give up their professional work that brought them money for the sake of voluntary work for NELTA. Females had to adjust their time for the family especially with children.

The professional development opportunities these participants enjoyed were not available to all NELTA members. When asked, most respondents said that their association was now big and the opportunities were not adequate. The geographical distances were also one of the reasons why the members outside Kathmandu could not enjoy the facilities in Kathmandu.

In matters of the accountability of the Executive Committee, the respondents were divided. The office bearer respondent saw the problem with the members who expected benefits without contributing and not communicating with the Centre. The other respondents saw that the leadership was not dealing with the members on an equal footing. They said that there are no transparent criteria to make selection for the professional development opportunities.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this Chapter, I analysed the participants' views on the TPD opportunities NELTA offered as they understood and experienced. The participants' views partly matched with the provisions indicating the gaps and the challenges. Then, I discussed the participants' journey through NELTA as a teacher association. I first looked into the entry stage: how they came to NELTA and how they moved on in their activities. Their professional development journey upto the current stage was explored. The issues about the unequal distribution of the professional development opportunities and the losses that the members suffered were also highlighted. The discussion showed that the participants had variegated experiences in matters of teacher professional development.

## CHAPTER V

### CONTRIBUTION TO THE ASSOCIATION

This chapter presents the discussion mainly focusing on the contribution of the association members to the expansion of the association, its capability enhancement, and other contributions to NELTA. It also analyses how the members bring resources to NELTA, and how they connect NELTA to other individuals and organizations.

#### **Resources from the Incoming Members**

As expressed in the responses discussed in the earlier chapter, the participants were encouraged by the conference activities or by the people they looked up to, so they joined NELTA when they were young graduating students. They had hopes and expectations that they would work towards fulfilling their objectives. They were hoping to develop themselves professionally because they saw NELTA had the potential to assist them in their progress. However, in an association like this, there is not only taking, but also giving. The participants indicated this idea in their responses. If giving is part of being on a network like NELTA, what did these new members bring with them when they entered? When I asked them this question, the responses turned more abstract and emotional.

Amar and Daan claimed that they entered NELTA ready to serve voluntarily. They said that they brought with them knowledge and ideas that they wanted to disseminate to other people- the ideas from their classroom experiences. Gaurabh ascribes his strength as a new member to that fact that he was active in the university classroom.

I thought I could contribute my time, my professional competence, because NELTA was projected as a professional development organization so obviously running teacher training programme, workshops, seminars, and conferences were the activities at that time. I had some experience at some in some of the activities. Most importantly I brought my commitment and dedication to the NELTA.

Kanak was not sure what he brought, as he was encouraged by the fact that his father had a friend on the committee. Perhaps he did not have an initial understanding of what he brought to NELTA. He rather mentioned his expectations which he expressed like this, “Sometimes expectations are so scattered and you do not know actually what your expectations are.” Even then as an educated person, he started thinking what he wanted to receive. He framed his expectation thus, “By joining NELTA, I should be able to exactly know what the teaching in the real classroom is. I took myself into two ways: firstly addressing the problems in the real language classroom situation as a teacher, and secondly, addressing the problems of the teachers in the field of teacher training.” So, he realised that he would be a good teacher and also would be ready to help other teachers in the field of ELT.

Saru was rather blunt in her response. NELTA would be a platform for projecting herself. This is what she expected. She also elaborated her expectation, “At that time, I was a student of Master’s level, so I was hoping to find good jobs in the market and I thought NELTA would provide me a very good type of beginning at work and that would be helpful for me to find job in the market. It also would help me for my professional development.”

The members bring with them knowledge and experiences from the backgrounds they come from. Sometimes, these experiences influence the ways they

promote NELTA. In the case of Himal, his background of dealing with several organizations helped him to put the organization above all. He shares how he did so.

I came from diverse backgrounds because apart from teaching English language, I also worked in the human rights sector. While I worked in this sector, I had to collaborate with the Ministry, the UMN and many human rights organizations. I also had to work with the conflict victims. Very indirectly I got some kind of insightful lessons. I have learnt how you could mentally balance and address the very difficult circumstances and situations. I had learnt how to protect the institutions and prevent them from the possible vulnerability. So, my first priority is the institution so looking from the institution's perspective is the components of institution.

If he had not dealt with the institutional issues, perhaps he would not have had this attitude. Referring to the resources that he was able to share, Gaurabh shared how he enhanced NELTA's strength. His university position allowed him to travel outside Kathmandu. When he travelled, he used his time to sensitize the people at the district level. ELT colleagues learnt what NELTA was all about. This led to the formation of branches leading to the expansion of NELTA, "This is what I substantially contributed." Gaurabh put his contribution modestly. He was taken as a role model by his juniors, seniors and colleagues who saw his activities at NELTA and were inspired to join it. He put it thus:

For most of them I was the role model in NELTA. Because I could overhear people talking about that at the conference, and I heard the feedback given by the participants, many of them, some of them are my friends, some of them are my students, some of them are my senior colleagues, who joined NELTA after

I joined, and most of them, who came to NELTA through my connection, they said that they saw me grow that's why they joined NELTA.

This illustrates the snowball effect of the effective members of NELTA. When one member does well, prospective candidates start thinking positively and they join the associations.

### **Contribution to the Association's Activities**

The responses of my participants included different aspects of their interactions with NELTA in terms of what they have given to and taken from the network association. In this respect, they also outlined, apart from what they received, what they contributed to the association. When asked what NELTA received from them, the participants mostly pointed to their voluntary time and energy. They also mentioned their connections to bring resources and also in setting up new branches.

Amar quickly responded, "I have given my energy and time. To be specific, I made NELTA expand by setting up a branch. I have developed leadership for the branch." Advising and supporting new teachers is one important phenomenon in the teacher association. This may not be through direct intervention in the classroom, but through sessions at the conferences and classroom tips in the published articles. Amar did so using technology. Colleagues would call him on the telephone when they needed assistance. Again, the same kind of support came back to him during his professional development.

Another important part of my professional development is the support to junior teachers. I often received a lot of calls, mainly from primary and secondary level teachers, they made queries on course related contents and methodology. Consequently, I had to be prepared to support them personally and in groups in training sessions. We had regular conversations with some of

the NELTA colleagues on our experiences and pedagogical aspects. This type of interaction helped us learn from each other.

Highlighting the contribution he made to NELTA, Daan advocates volunteerism. He values it as he has been working for NELTA as volunteer. “Since the time I was nominated as an office bearer of a branch of NELTA, I have been devoting to the organizations in many ways. The first thing is devoting my sense of volunteerism and time.” This supports what the NELTA Constitution maintains that it is a voluntary organization. Daan recalls the time when he served NELTA and he finds that there were several occasions when he had to work very hard. He went emotional about this and got carried away with the detailed description. The choice of words also indicates the pain he had had in performing certain tasks.

The other thing is that there were lots of struggles we had to cope in organizing any program in NELTA. Since I was considered a training coordinator of this branch, I had to take a major lead in organizing any ELT event. I remember it was in 2009, I was given the responsibility to manage the pre-conference training in our branch by the Centre where we had to coordinate with other branches and manage the venue, snacks, stationery and other requirements to conduct the training. The collective efforts of all the members from district and the support from the centre helped me organize the program successfully. I especially have been organizing the various ELT events in cooperation with various educational organisations like PABSON. We plan together and manage the ownership of the event for all the participating organizations, as result it will be successful.

The above account begins with the feeling that he had to struggle in organizing the activities but slowly it comes to the point where the task was



accomplished more easily. So the hurdles were more of psychological nature than physical. He got cooperation from people around him and the task was accomplished. In the beginning, he seems to have some fear but the task was not as difficult as he thought.

Daan also shares the event related travel. He frequently travelled to branches and other places to engage in the activities of the association. The travel was necessary as he was making upward mobility as a trainer. As a trainer, he travelled and ran training sessions for the NELTA members and non-members. He recounted,

I started training professionally in 2009 working as the ETTE trainer in Makanwanpur. Then, I trained the primary level English teachers. Similarly, NELTA Lalitpur has also given me the responsibility of a training coordinator. My job is to coordinate and organize trainings in different parts the district. Recently, I designed the course and a team of my friends of NELTA Lalitpur trained more than 100 primary teachers in support with DDC, Lalitpur. At this moment, I have been pursuing ETTE plus trainer training course to run ETTE plus training of British Council through NELTA. There are many other similar opportunities in NELTA if one is ready to serve it with the motive of volunteerism.

His account shows that Daan has been instrumental in the success of the NELTA activities in different spheres. The essence of his contribution lies in that he has volunteered an extra mile. In return, he has gained more than other members who have contributed less voluntary time.

The question of what the members contribute to NELTA needs to be seen from their personal points of view. The members enjoy benefits and opportunities but they come at a cost. While a member is busy carrying out the professional activities,

he is missed by his family. The pain is greater on the holidays. Actually he is less available for his family on holidays than on working days. In regard to this Daan said,

My family life is sometimes imbalanced due to my excessive involvement in NELTA activities. The most irritating thing to my family members is that sometime I have no time to them even in holiday. But mostly they are glad in my involvement in NELTA and support me in carrying out various NELTA activities.

The silver line that his family sees is that he is growing professionally due to his involvement in NELTA. He makes his final remarks thus: “Networking and sense of volunteerism can be well developed if one involves in NELTA Activities.”

Responding to the question of his contribution, Gaurabh responded in a way that he put the association above the individual. He gave a categorical list of his own contributions. His contributed by inviting international key ELT figures to speak during the conferences. They would have come anyway but because of his personal and professional contacts, the names which were often praised in the field of English language teaching were invited. He went modest again, “It was not me alone, it was a team work, but because of my connection with the different forums we were able to call very renowned speakers in the conference.”

Another contribution he claims to have made was the strategic planning that now takes place every two years. NELTA activities were running sporadically and spontaneously. There were no plans as such. Anything that was achieved was achieved without a plan. Gaurabh recalled,

I was one of those people who wanted NELTA to run in a planned manner, therefore, we started this strategic planning meeting right after a new

committee was formed every two years. I was very active to make that happen. Because of the growth, we had to change our working modality.

Kanak related his contributions to getting opportunities. When he started going to NELTA more often, he started getting tasks through which he was able show what he meant to NELTA.

Getting the opportunity of serving NETLA as an editor for its journal was another important event in my career. I had to read more and equip myself with the required explanations why the given article was acceptable or not. Thus, I was spending a lot of time with the people who had already established themselves in the field of teaching and were working as experts for the universities and government agencies. The network with these type of people helped me to grow myself further. For the development of teachers, network plays a crucial role: I started gathering the meaning of this sentence.

Kanak's account is humble in the sense that he spent his time on editing the journal but he felt he was gaining from it. This was because in order to make his contribution worthy, he worked hard and ultimately his own skills were honed.

Kanak further mentioned that he was trying to contribute to the quality assurance of the conference papers at the NELTA conference. This was his responsibility by position. He intended to see that the papers were selected for their quality and variety. As the responsible person, he wanted quality but that did not happen. He expressed his frustration in this manner:

In some cases, I felt frustrated as I was not able to have my expectations met with training sessions and conference papers. The quality of the papers that were selected for the presentations were not up to the mark, and they hardly delivered any new message. But I consider now that this is common for an

organization when it expands rapidly. The organizers may not be able to scrutinize and screen the papers all the time, as they are working voluntarily for the organization. I was one of the key post holders, and it was becoming more and more challenging to me.

So, Kanak was meaning to contribute by assuring the quality of the papers, but he changed his mind. Big organizations like NELTA cannot control the quality when it has to allow a big number of presenters present the papers. That is what he felt.

There were many ways that Kanak wanted to support NELTA: training teachers, delivering sessions, and visiting the branches to name a few. All these efforts actually resulted in reciprocation as his own capacity was enhanced. But this happened at a price. In his account, he recounts an experience when he was working for NELTA, but was worried about his own skills as a trainer. Kanak recollects his past when sharing about his apprehension during his first training session as a trainer:

Once, I was scheduled to visit a number of branches to conduct sessions for the local teachers accompanying a NELTA expert. This was my maiden visit to the branches. I was little worried whether I would be accepted, although I was prepared with the required homework for the session. The other fellow was quite senior to me in this field and was a big name in this field. I requested him to allow me to do my session first, as I had a fear that my session would be too light immediately after the heavy weight session, and he agreed. I finished my session with some satisfaction, and as soon as the second session by the expert was over, I realized that I was too light in my presentation. The level of anxiety in me went too high.

Kanak's case shows that his interaction with NELTA is one of give and take. His intention to support NELTA ended up with an opportunity for him to be aware of

his own shortcomings. He stood up as a trainer and learnt the facilitation skills from his co-presenter. In fact, his involvement in the NELTA activities turned into a series of further involvements. He found each succeeding event more rewarding and more fulfilling. So, he started looking for opportunities so that he could get more exposure, more learning opportunities, and thereby, growing as a professional.

In addition to attending the conferences, now I was actively participating in the short term training sessions conducted by NELTA experts and British Council experts. These were more rewarding. I was always excited to participate in the sessions delivered by the ELT experts from the UK and USA, whose books I was well acquainted with. I could raise questions that I had collected in the course of teaching. Along with these experiences, I started teaching students at University as well, and this demanded my involvement in NELTA further, so that I could get more opportunities to learn about developing myself as a better teacher.

His account also shows that his seeking of the opportunities was not only because he liked them, but also because it was becoming a need due to his new found job at the university. So, it indicates that the necessity and joy of learning became the factors making him look for learning opportunities.

Looking at the contributions made by the participants, I saw that each one worked in their own way. Some openly claimed that they made a difference and others went modest. Kanak found it difficult even to respond as he did not want to claim anything he had done.

I think this is a difficult question for the person who has contributed because what I claim may not be up to the real standard that NELTA may expect.

However, we can claim that we have been able to strengthen NELTA as an association by giving time and resources.

He also resonated with most of the other participants. He said that he gave time and himself as human resource. There did not seem an obvious reason but Kanak got carried away by the idea of expectations and opportunities.

For professional development, we sometimes have expectation to have exposure which has ultimately benefited for the professional and personal. I have been able to go to different places, visit different types of people and that was possible because of NELTA. In some places people have congratulated us for the good presentation and finally that will be the reflection of NELTA itself, now NELTA has produced good presenters.

When he did not touch upon specific contribution, I categorically asked him, “If Kanak were not there, what would NELTA have missed?” To this, he shared one of his conference paper presentations in a European country. He claimed that he explored the opportunity and funded himself to attend the conference. But when he presented the paper, he presented as a NELTA representative.

I went to Europe on my own. But when I presented, I said I represented NELTA. After I presented the paper, participants wanted to have more information about NELTA. They said that they would like to meet NELTA. Because of me as a person, I was able to connect NELTA to them, it was a good thing for NELTA to have members like us.

He tried to prove that he had a sense of belonging to NELTA and felt pride in identifying himself with the association where he had spent several years. As discussed elsewhere, the affirmation of the skills and knowledge is crucial for the professionals to enhance their professional attitude. Kanak experienced the same.

When he gave a presentation at one of the NELTA conferences, the participants liked it and that became an impetus for him to do more presentations.

I remember one incident that took place in Pokhara. When we were registering our names, one teacher said, “Oh, Nepali trainer, please remove my name.” I just overheard. He did not know me. In addition, I had other trainers with me. He did not show up at the Nepali trainer’s presentation but he showed up at the Rebecca Oxford’s paper. Then he must have heard about me because he turned up at my paper too. That was a winning situation for me. I was able to attract people’s attention. In addition, Rebecca Oxford came up to me and said that she was really impressed by my paper. In addition, when she came to Kathmandu, she talked about me to many different people. I was not there but I heard about it from those people. Therefore, I really cherish this achievement.

Regarding the context where the native speakers of English are better valued, Kanak delivered a session and was praised. Rebecca's affirmation had more value as an ELT authority. The former president of TESOL had complimented him and shared her feedback with others. That helped Kanak to be established among his colleagues.

Muskan started her account with a conscious note. “I think whatever I have done by being involved in NELTA is not only for me, it is for NELTA as well.” She was aware that there had been a two-way interaction between her and the association. She has transformed as a professional due to NELTA and has also reciprocated in whatever ways she can. “I have changed through NELTA and it has helped NELTA to be successful in its mission. Besides I have helped NELTA in mini scale by helping it to realize its mission though writing, making presentations and providing trainings.”

Like other participants, she listed the ways she has supported NELTA. She also linked the progress NELTA has made to the contribution members make.

In my eyes, NELTA then and NELTA now is certainly different. It has made progress in different sectors. The main progress is in the publication of NELTA Journal (now it is peer reviewed and of higher standard), publication of the conference proceedings (we did not have it before), involvement of the rapporteurs in the conference (we did not have that system earlier), TOT session organized before and after the conference, conference in two phases (one in Kathmandu and one outside Kathmandu), opportunity to foreign exposure to its members through different scholarship and seminars, membership of IATEFL to its life members through wider membership scheme, and the blog NELTAChoutari as well as NELTA yahoo mailing list for disseminating information to its members.

Muskan actually listed what NELTA received from its members but did not mention which changes she supported in particular. It appears that she was indicating the collective contribution the members made here.

She also saw the organization from another perspective: what it should do in order to further consolidate its own strength. In the course of attending the events, she saw that other associations in the South Asian regions were not delivering as well as NELTA did. Even then, there was a lot of room to improve its delivery. Her response here shows that the members contribute with the objective of the growth of the association. Her response shows how concerned she was for NELTA's growth.

While participating in a Hornby Regional School Seminar in Dhaka, Bangladesh, I realized that NELTA is better in comparison to the ELT organizations in the region. It has worked in collaboration with different



stakeholders and collaborators for changing the plight of English language teaching in Nepal. However, it has still many things to learn.

At this point, Muskan wants NELTA to undertake some measures so it can be more productive. Muskan's concluding remarks at the end of her narrative show how passionate she has been working with NELTA. She exudes satisfaction on what she has received and hopes that the potentials of the member contribution will be further realised. "NELTA has been a institutional synonym for the professional development of English Language Teachers in Nepal. Coming together is the beginning and working together is the success. Together we can make a difference." Thus, she stated her passionate support to NELTA.

Muskan gave sole credit to the position that she was in for all the contribution that she has made. She felt that the position brought her opportunity as well responsibility to accomplish something and to prove her worth as an executive member. What she has given to NELTA was because NELTA had an environment where there was a possibility to give and take. She was of the opinion that ordinary members also contribute but without a position in the organisation, their contribution is not significantly visible.

Ordinary members are also contributing. How accessible is NELTA to them, that matters. But in my case, I was not active in NELTA because I was not in the position. But in the days to come even if I'm not in the position I will contribute. I certainly make contribution to the NELTA, it's not because of the position but I came to know so it made me feel sense of responsibility.

Because I was in the position I get opportunity to know the NELTA and because I know the NELTA I work for it. So in other member's case even if they are not in position they are closer to NELTA so they are contributing.

She feels that the position provides members the sense of belonging. Then they feel the sense of responsibility, but they also expect to get exposure when they are in position. So, for Muskan, the position provides you visibility. Once you have become visible, there is no need to be in position.

Saru gave details of what she did but again her details are part of her job description in the position she was. She said:

I have taken lead roles in different activities. I have developed news and have helped to publish newsletters. I have also conducted different trainings. I have also helped NELTA to design some training manuals. I have also helped NELTA to conduct different programs. And I also have helped NELTA to carry out a survey. And I have participated to review some documents for ELT survey.

Here is a rhetoric of *I have helped NELTA* which indicates that she was there to help NELTA not work for NELTA. Her words do not show the same feeling of Muskan who phrased her language in a way that the contribution to NELTA is indirectly to contribute to oneself.

As with other participants, I asked Saru if there was some contribution that she can claim to be her own, and not done by others. She said,

I have helped NELTA in different activities but I don't think I have a main role in there. Of course I have been participating in different activities, but I don't think that there is a certain program that was coordinated just by me.

So, she was part of the process but did not make a distinct contribution which was exclusively her own. She actually turned to the same explanation that she had worked for NELTA even without the position.

Between 2009 and 2011, I was not in the committee but that time also *I helped NELTA*. So now, I feel that it is not necessary to be in position. So we can help NELTA even if we are not in the position.”

She repeated the same rhetoric: *I helped NELTA*. I wanted to be specific so I asked, “If you divide what you are doing because of position and not because of position, what is the percentage? Like 50-50?”

Then she responded, “I think it is 60-40. 60 to position, because when you are in the committee, you have responsibilities. That time we are also compelled to do something. When we are not in position, we may help but it is not a compulsion. But when we are in a position, it is compulsory to do something.”

What others said about the position and the contribution to NELTA in a mild way is strongly expressed by Saru: the position makes a difference. Ritika repeated what Saru said, “Personally I have given my time, sometimes as I told you I have given my money in many cases and then I have given my effort and my intellectuality.” Ritika was trying to respond to my question but she got carried away with many other issues. She touched upon the bond the members have with NELTA.

I can say that I have been helping NELTA if not directly but indirectly by supporting to become a strong association, to build a strong bond between ourselves because individual relation is very important for being strong.

Ritika indicated something that had not been raised before by other participants: the personal grudge. My participants have been sharing their experiences, opinions and ideas about NELTA and their relation to it and so far “grudge” had not come up. It indicated that there may be a competition that goes on between members for getting opportunities for professional development.

Sometimes I feel some kind of personal grudge may be on there but forgetting all these things, I feel that I'm part of NELTA. So, I have to forget and forgive all those things and think ahead because it'll give you only negative feelings. So I always think positively. So whatever or whenever such kind of things happen I try to console myself I should not be like that and I try to talk with my friends and trying to find the solution how to solve these things not being nasty and being rude to each other. So in a friendly manner, in a healthy manner.

I wanted to know if she had counselled others when they expressed their personal dissatisfaction. Only then she revealed that the grudges were her own. When she had one, she consoled herself. She said, "All these things I have learnt after joining NELTA because I was not like this before. I used to lose temper whenever I had such kind of situation. Even at home I try to be calm." So for her, NELTA became a counsellor and attitude changer.

Ritika understands that the reality of the voluntary organization is that nobody gets paid for the time and contribution they make. As volunteers, whatever time they spend for NELTA is already a contribution. She feels that the members are not just members, they have a full time work somewhere in a school or a college or they may be self-employed. She says "In my view, giving time is one of the contributions." She also saw that time alone is not enough as fund and other materials are needed for running activities. When I was collecting data, NELTA was collecting donations for procuring an office building and the campaign was named *The NELTA Mission*. The members were contributing monetarily for the purpose. She acknowledged the contribution, "Since this year, we have The NELTA Mission that is creating a building for NELTA. So all the members are individually contributing whatever they

can. I mean there is no hard and fast rule that you have to give that much amount.”

Ritika’s understanding is that the members have a choice how they want to support NELTA. One of the visible and substantial supports is to be involved in the conference activities. “Our main job is to make the NELTA yearly conference a success. Since this is a voluntary organization every member takes responsibility of different jobs; for example advertisement, collecting money and all those things. So each and every member takes part so that is a great contribution.”

Though Ritika feels that the members readily avail themselves for contributing to NELTA, not everyone is capable of doing that. She ascribes this capability to the interpersonal skills required for working public. She does not see the task of being involved in the public organization like NELTA as an easy task. “Actually it is not the cake for every one because you need to be extrovert in order to go to the market and motivate people for collecting those things. You have to have those interpersonal skills. There are many people who give their name when there is a task. Not everyone makes it.” She has seen that the task finally comes to the person who is actively working. She sees the need for grooming, so they will learn to work.

### **Contribution to the Association Expansion**

Apart from the contributions the participants made to the activities of NELTA, their roles in expanding the network of NELTA were also significant. Because of their disseminating the information about NELTA, motivating teachers to become a member or taking initiatives in setting up new branches, NELTA underwent its network expansion. Participants shared what they did.

Amar described elaborately how he became instrumental in exploring the classroom realities in a district where NELTA was not heard of. He was teaching at B.Ed. level in the district. He also attended teacher training events organized by the

District Education Office, and was also involved in collecting the training demands from local teachers. These activities made him familiar with the local realities and that familiarity worked as an impetus to initiate local NELTA branch. To give the participants a taste of what happens if the branch is set up, he gave a presentation on the branch launching day on grammar using PowerPoint slides. For him, this was his first presentation with the technology. He stated that without his personal initiative, this branch would not have been established at the time it was. He set up the branch, became its Chair and worked for one term. This shows that Amar not only enjoyed the opportunities, but also contributed to the association.

His involvement in the association was beneficial to him in different ways. The affective part was perhaps what he cherishes most. “It was so much inspirational when teachers made change in their perceptions and practices after attending training. In every gathering of NELTA, I used to interact with teachers about the challenges they are facing in their day-to-day teaching. This led me to expand my own professional horizon on the actual situation of English language teaching at rural setting.” Here, he exhibits the common human tendency of being happy when success takes place. The same happened to him.

Amar saw his network expand when he joined other groups but he joined them via NELTA. So, NELTA was a bridge between him and other ELT groups. Once he was connected to those groups, he saw that his professionalism was growing.

Joining different virtual groups and networks also helped me to grow professionally. I joined the group of British Council teaching website in 2008, I sometimes add blog entries, post the content for discussions and share my own local realities to other colleagues from different EFL setting in the world. In a nutshell, attending various training events, seminars and conferences,

writing for journal publication, presentations, and interactions with colleagues, classroom research, and training teachers, supporting novice teachers and being the member of wider ELT networks have quite assisted me to develop at this level of professionalism.

Amar also has a significant story about the inter-network sharing of his experiences. NELTA recommended him for the US Government sponsored US visit program. When he was in the US, he gave several presentations on what NELTA was doing. This made the association known in the international arena. Though this was not the first and only sharing, this informed some new people about NELTA.

As a NELTA executive, I gave a brief presentation about the collaboration of US Embassy Nepal and NELTA at the office of US Department of State and TESOL. I attended the 45<sup>th</sup> TESOL convention in New Orleans that was an exciting part of my trip and a great experience for me. I attended in many TESOL highlighted programs, which gave me an opportunity to meet the president and other TESOL leaders from around the globe. To the best of my knowledge, I shared a lot about our ELT practices in Nepal and global networking of NELTA in the area of similar interests in different forums and meetings during the period.

Network expansion is actually reaching out to the members of the ones community. Amar's involvement in the association activities seems to have materialised this idea. He travelled to the branches whenever there were events.

When members benefit, they also help the association benefit. So, to explore on what the members who experienced substantial professional development through their contribution to the association, I asked them what contributions NELTA receives from its members for its growth. Amar started confidently:

Members also help NELTA group institutionally. They join their hands for more energy and time and they feel proud when they become the part of events of NELTA activities. And I feel very happy to say that some members are so enthusiastic, they just became the part of the event or the activities. They invest more efforts there.

As he says the members feel proud that they are part of NELTA and would like to reciprocate to it the best they can. They enthusiastically contribute to the activities they organize. This is how they pay back. Amar believes that each member does it this way:

Every member helps NELTA. They are spreading all over the country and across the country. Most members assist NELTA, and we leaders must be very careful that the members feel ownership there. If we can make them feel that they are really an important part of the event then they will heartily join the event. Some members may be disappointed sometimes.

Daan seemed to know the idea of networking well. So, he started saying that NELTA is spread across the country via its branches. He went on, “NELTA organizes various programmes to which people from different branches can come together, and this is the one way NELTA helps to enhance networking.” Daan also was aware that NELTA networking extended outside the country and that brought networking opportunities for the members. So, he saw that members would be linked to teachers like themselves inside and outside the country.

NELTA is also linked with different international organizations, so it provides opportunities for people to go and meet and participate in various programs. It helps a person to make international relations too. Thus, we can get opportunities to network



and make relation with different people working in different areas in the sector of ELT.

Daan sees that every member, perhaps, does not need to be working for NELTA as there are so many of them. He believes that they show their commitment by coming to the significant events and that is already a kind of support. Gaurabh began by supporting this idea. He said that when they participate in those events, participating in the events itself is a contribution to the association. Because when they participate in the events organized by NELTA, they make those events successful.

He also saw two way gains regarding the study opportunities the members receive. NELTA brings opportunities for the members to go for further study: the members benefit. But later after the completion of the study, they return and serve the association by being on the committee and also participating in and organizing activities: the association benefits. He says, “There are also people who would like to take advantage and project themselves for their development and for the organizations development. So when NLETA contributes to them, they contribute to NELTA in return.”

He, however, believes that not every member contributes to the association. He sees that there are various types of members who do not contribute. He outlined thus:

There are exceptions, generally. You, me, and several colleagues that gave benefit to NELTA. But there are also exceptions like some colleagues we know, where they have not been able to contribute as they should have. And there are also people who took the opportunities and just disappeared. They went to other countries. And also those who are here in Nepal, who have

participated in NELTA activities, they have remained very passive and they have never contributed to NELTA.

In his response, there is a clear indication that some members actually use NELTA as a platform for their professional development and for social connection but when the time comes to give in return, they just stay away. Some even leave the country in search of their own possibilities elsewhere. His undertone indicated his dissatisfaction with those who took advantage but did not pay back in return.

Unlike Daan's generic response, Gaurabh talked about his own story. He explained that NELTA forum was the starting point from where he reached to many people he now collaborates with.

The first thing that NELTA did for me was that it gave me a platform through which I could meet people from different parts of Nepal and also from around the world. This process of meeting with people through the NELTA platform helped me continue my professional relationship with the colleagues in Nepal and from outside. Particularly if I talk about the network outside of Nepal, the professional network that I expanded was due to the fact that I helped run the international conventions in Nepal, either in the capacity of the member or as a person in the leadership, and those contacts that I established through NELTA for the NELTA conference, I am still in touch with them. I have been able to contribute to different organizations in Nepal and outside Nepal. So that is how I expanded my network.

His response shows that the responsibility and the network go together. To deliver the activities of NELTA, he had to reach colleagues inside and outside the country. As he delivered, the network that developed now belonged to not only

NELTA but also to himself. Now he has his professional connection through which he helps as well as gets help. The give and take idea applies here.

Gaurabh focussed on the network expansion as his contribution. He notes that the network that was built and expanded was instrumental in facilitating the NELTA members to get foreign exposure. Gaurabh carefully gives credit to the support he received from the colleagues. “I continued my involvement in NELTA and with the support of the colleagues on board, I also contributed towards internationalizing NELTA by linking it to the IATEFL and TESOL networks. By connecting ourselves with these networks many NELTA members have attended the international conferences and training events in different parts of the world.” To link a network to other networks is crucial for the members to get synergised benefit. It appears that Gaurabh’s initiatives made a lasting impact on what the members received from NELTA. Not all members can make connection to the associations like IATEFL and TESOL but he achieved it. But if we see what he received from NELTA, it appears that there was a cyclical give and take. He received international exposure and he gave NELTA international connection.

As usual, Himel spoke from the leaders’ perspective. Be it the Central Committee or the branch committee, the members come and take part in the activities, plan and execute them the way they expect it should be done and set up mechanisms.

Sometimes people have very much outstanding calibre, ability to consider, support and NELTA central committee and other branches request on individual level and those people basically contribute. So the point is that there should be a kind of mechanism for mobilizing and maintaining the relationship with the members, giving them the impression that NELTA is always there for them. So there is not a gap in terms of communication in this

kind of mechanism so that they are motivated and during conference or any kind of event, they come and help voluntarily but sometimes they would like to double check if branches are not able to communicate properly and they make sure the communication is right and beneficial.

Talking about whether each member supports in NELTA activities, Himal expressed that there are certain situations which do not allow for each member to contribute to the NELTA activities. One reason he mentioned is that people take membership of NELTA at one certain point of time and they might not remain in contact as they do not update their addresses. Another reason he saw was that being a voluntary organization, NELTA does not have enough resources to make use of the support all members provide. He added,

Some members are not in contact, some other members turn up and take the responsibility, some have to be told, then they support and some just pretend to support. So people join NELTA as a member and understand the dynamics of NELTA and how NELTA functions and that is also one of the reasons. It is our weakness that we are not able to tell them the different dynamics of NELTA, how it functions, and what NELTA expects from its members. We are not able to clearly convey the message. But those members who are in contact in NELTA these members always support.

Himal's conclusion that those who are in contact support actually highlights the principal idea of networking: the give and take relation between the member and the community. Those who are in network receive and provide support. Himal gave a concrete example of how he developed the network and how it helped him expand his personal network. In the following incident, he shares his experience that when people had a doubt over his quality as a teacher trainer, they changed their mind when they

came to know that he was the NELTA President. So, here NELTA works as an established authority that is recognised anywhere in the world. He narrates thus:

I went to Bangkok to teach in a college. They had also offered me a fulltime job but I accepted only as a visiting faculty. All my nineteen students were native speakers of English. These people had a kind of doubt: a Nepali person teaching them grammar, linguistics and second language acquisition. First two days they started browsing internet and searching what kind of organization NELTA is. On the third day, they told that they were very much privileged to have me there as their teacher.

Himal's response highlights the fact that once the members commit their allegiance to NELTA, they come in touch with so many similar people from Nepal and beyond. It means that the members expand the network of NELTA and NELTA expands their network.

Kanak used the metaphor of parents and children. He said, "There is a kind of symbiotic relationship between NELTA and its members just like mother and children." He believes that parents have an unselfish love for their children but they also expect something from them." He further commented, "Institution is not a banner only. The institution is an institution when there are members. So both of them have an interrelation and complementary position and with the absence of one party, there is no presence of other. So NELTA is also getting wider and is developing that is mainly because of the members."

He was claiming that NELTA is assisted by its members in its growth but he has a similar opinion as that of the other participants. He believes that not all members may have the strength and understanding to provide support. He has observed that there are two types of members.

We have members with high degree of belongingness to the organization and some are like ‘Okay, there are.... Let’s go and see....’ But slowly and gradually, knowingly or unknowingly they appear to be helping the institution to grow.

Kanak feels that exposure in the international arena is the primary expectation of the members from the organisation. When the members contribute to the organisation, they feel that they deserve a reward and the best reward for them appears to be the visit to the western countries, specifically the UK or the US. They want to go abroad and see new places and meet new people and come back. So he expressed his opinion that if we can create attractive opportunities the members may opt for them instead of going abroad. “We should be able to create such kinds of situation that the opportunities are within this country as well and within this institution also and their academic development can be done within this country also but the problem is we have not been able to fully convince them that the opportunity they have got in this country is also equally important than what other people get from abroad.” So, his idea is that the members’ expectation could also be addressed by giving them professional development opportunities within the country.

These participants’ responses include the word ‘forum’ when asked about the network expansion. It appears that the concepts of forum and the network go together. When the network is created, it turns into a forum and the forum helps its members to expand the network: both organizational and personal. Kanak had a similar response. The activities that he was involved in expanded his network. This network remains even after returning from NELTA activities.

When I participate in the conferences, I meet many individuals from different places, Nepal and other countries. We have more than 40 branches and there

are representatives from all branches and that also gives me opportunities to meet people from different areas within my own society plus international society. That is one way how it helps me to expand my network. I worked as an editor for the journal of NELTA. And that keeps me in contact and touch with experts and also writers, researchers and I happen to be in frequent touch with them asking questions about researches that they have developed. Yet, another NELTA has been running NELTA CHAUTARI, a kind of blog for almost three years. And I have been one of the editors. That also helps me to expand my network. In addition to this, I have been involved in different kinds of conferences outside because NELTA members and sometime I get opportunities to go outside. For example, I went to the USA, UK, sometimes I get scholarships and I went to Hyderabad. And last time I went to Ireland on my own because that gives you such kind of encouragement that it's worth spending.

Kanak seems to have been involved in many different activities of NELTA. Each activity enabled him to work with different people. Those who come to conferences are a mix of professionals- students to professors, but those who contribute to the Journals, print or online, are more focused academics. He seems to have a growing zeal for networking as he says he went to Ireland on his own. So, the organization gave a thrust for expanding his network but he also made his own efforts.

Muskan felt that there are teachers who have very high opinions about NELTA without knowing it properly and creating high expectations. She feels that there are some members who do not have the kind of awareness that Kanak also mentioned. She actually warned the members who 'over-expect', they should realize

that NELTA can help you, but for some members who come to NELTA once and who don't have sense of what NELTA can do, the expectations may not be met. Many teachers became life members expecting significant changes, but they commented that it was not helpful for them.

In the course of the interview, Muskan said that awareness is significant. When asked what she actually meant by the word awareness, Muskan said that people are aware that if they give to the association, they will both grow together. Taking part in activities will help not only NELTA but also themselves. Making the members aware develops positive attitude in them towards what is possible. If there is a mutual relationship between the members and the organization, there will be this give and take. Muskan seems to be well contented with the network she has now. She gives an explanation.

Networking has happened through meetings we have in the office. We have meetings there and we meet different people there. Next is through conferences in Nepal and outside. I have participated in two international programmes as well. I went Bangladesh for a seminar, so there were people from seven different countries, so we still have friendship. I went to the USA for SUSI programme where there were participants from 18 different countries. So we are still in contact with them as well.

Because of her participation in the events either organised by NELTA or by sending her outside, her network is growing. Through NELTA, she met many teachers and some remained in contact for a short time but others, she believes, will remain for life.



Saru expressed that there is a strong feeling within the members that they want to help. She feels that when NELTA needs support to organize the activities, it is the members who make it happen. So there is a mutual relationship.

I think there is a great contribution that members make to NELTA. Like NELTA has done different activities and NELTA needs support from the members for programs like trainings, workshops and seminars. I don't think it will be possible without getting support from its members. NELTA members are helping NELTA in different ways for conducting trainings for its smoothness as well as for its recognition. So I think all the credit goes to its members.

Saru also believes that NELTA members support NELTA in many other ways. Some support in the ICT development and maintenance. For her, the support comes in the form of money, resources for reading and even the information about different journals and websites. They all benefit other members in many ways and enhance the image of the association.

As Saru was discussing the way members support NELTA, I was curious if she considered herself as a resource and thus could contribute to NELTA. "Aren't you a resource for NELTA? Aren't you contributing for NELTA because you are delivering different trainings to NELTA members? Aren't you yourself a NELTA resource?" This question was a facilitator that enabled her to say what she wanted to say:

Personally, I am a resource for NELTA. I have proved that in many ways. I have been to different regions and conducted different trainings. That is one part. Next part, I have also helped NELTA to design training materials as well. So there also I have used my expertise as well. And also I have helped

NELTA to run different trainings and activities. Therefore, that time also I have shared my experience, my learning's and my expertise."

Thus, Saru gave a list of contributions that she claims she made which she thinks has been significant for NELTA as an organization. She sees a two way relation between the organization and the members. "At first NELTA is for them, no doubt but they also do something for NELTA. So when they grow themselves automatically they help NELTA. They are doing for both because NELTA can utilize expertise." What she tried to establish was that members are ready to contribute to NELTA but the question remains why. She interprets this phenomenon as a payback. She said, "Because NELTA also has given them something. They contribute something because they know they get something in return."

In the course of interaction I felt that there is a proportionate give and take going on. The more the members get, the more they give. I was curious if we could conclude whether the members who give more to NELTA get more in return. Likewise, the members who give less to NELTA get something less in return. Saru did not think that way:

I have seen so many examples where people have nothing from NELTA, but they have contributed a lot to NELTA. There are members who have got a lot of benefits from NELTA but they have done very little for NELTA. So mainly I think that the people who are encouraged, who are very much interested in their professional development, they are contributing a lot to NELTA.

However, people who do not have such kind of zeal for their growth they are not contributing to NELTA. Maybe they are money-oriented. I do not know.

Saru feels that NELTA gave her an opportunity to attend different programs where she made friends with many. In addition, she also communicates with the

branch leaders. So, she mainly ascribes her network expansion to participating in conferences and seminars to NELTA. Further, she recalls her time in Hyderabad trainers training where there were representatives from twelve different countries. They are still in touch with her. She credited this to NELTA as she was nominated by NELTA for the training there in Hyderabad.

Ritika ascribes the professional network that she has to NELTA. She says that being the member of NELTA meant getting in touch with many branch members. Now she knows many teachers from across Nepal and vice versa. The communication system that NELTA members use on the YahooGroups has been a quick way to stay in touch with the professional colleagues. Likewise, the network built due to writing in the NELTA Journal as well as in NELTACHoutari is a long-term and fulfilling reward in professional terms. Lately, the NELTA members have also started a Facebook page where they are getting non-NELTA people coming and 'liking' the page. This is another way to networked relationship. She also emphatically mentions the new contacts that she makes while she is on the training tour to the branches. She has travelled and made friends with colleagues from the far western region to Solukhumbu. "Now I have so many friends with whom I can talk and share and they can also share with us." She is euphoric that she is a member of an extended network.

Saru's words on the mechanics of the network expansion seem realistic. Due to the communication facilities, many people come in touch online and interact. We know them, but we do not see. Later, when we see them face to face at the conferences and other events, our relationship gets functional. We just do not know one another, and yet we start collaboration. This is what Saru implicitly said in this. "I did not know people from Janakpur. First, I met them electronically and then I met

them personally. It was so nice that I knew them. I did not know them personally before.”

As we discussed, I wanted to ask her about something one of the earlier participants had expressed. He had said that those members who see the benefits of coming to the organisation contribute to NELTA, those, who think there will be no benefit, may not. He meant that unless the members see something beneficial was going to come, they would not be ready to part with their efforts. To this, Ritika said that it was true to some extent because whatever we do, we think of some benefits. She also went rather philosophical. “We are not doing what Lord Krishna said, ‘don’t think of the fruits, work selflessly’. On one hand, it is correct because there are people who come and they only want to know about benefits but still there are many people who do not look for what they can take but what they can give.” She tried to exemplify this with her own case. “I did not think that way when I joined the NELTA. I had seen people going abroad but my intention was going to meet the people in the conference, to explore what is going on outside the country. Now I have realized that if opportunity comes, why not to grab. So we are human, so we can’t deny that people work for benefit.”

All her expressions indicated that though the organization is voluntary, humans do not always work selflessly. Moreover, for professional development purpose, teachers need to take the opportunities, otherwise, they do not grow and without growing, they cannot payback to NELTA. So, expecting benefits from the organization is not wrong.

### **Gaps and Challenges**

From what the participants shared above, we can see that the NELTA is what its members do to it or for it. However, the contribution the members make varies. In

fact, not all members actually contribute to the enhancement of its capability and its expansion. I asked the participants why not all members contribute.

To this question, Amar hinted at a tradition that many members expect more from the organization than they contribute. While explaining what keeps the members from contributing, he referred to the issue that was raised earlier. Those who were not satisfied due to lack of opportunities and or due to other differences with the leadership may decline from making a contribution. Another factor apparent to him was that the members whose workplace regulations allowed them to spend time for NELTA activities could contribute more to NELTA. Elsewhere, the participants expressed that the members do not enjoy the professional development activities because they do not get proper information. The same implication is indicted in Amar's expression when he said, "NELTA does not provide any directly visible benefit to its members once they join it. There are a few members who have realized the particular nature of unseen benefit or opportunities created by NELTA. They are more voluntarily contributing in this light." Amar saw the link that those who see the benefit of investing their time for their own development will happily make contributions.

Daan believes that leadership should mobilize the members having capacity to enhance the members with less capability. He sees that the mobilization of foreigners considering them as gods in ELT is a great mistake. He says that those foreigners actually replace the local professionals, practically not allowing the locals to contribute. He also hinted that NELTA does not receive contributions from many because there has not been wide investment on the members. Only limited members get the exposure and those limited pay back.

For Gaurabh, the problems can lie on either side. Members have not been well informed on how they can contribute to the vision and mission of NELTA, so most of them stay away from it. He also indicated that his own experience of having dealt with colleagues who get hold of leadership positions only for personal gain, not for the organizational benefit. So, they try to take more and give less. The third reason he gave was this: though NELTA has grown in size, it does not have adequate mechanism to integrate the aspiring members in the activities through which NELTA's capacity can be enhanced. "Had there been different task forces and sub-committees, there could have been so many enthusiastic members to contribute." So, he sees a need for developing an efficient mechanism for identifying members who have specific expertise to contribute.

Himal said that the voluntary nature and demanding dynamics of NELTA is not well understood by the members. So, when they come to NELTA and look back at their work places, they see that they cannot afford to spend time with NELTA. Only few see the possibility. For him the personal interest of the members plays a big role. Some members focus on one or two specific agendas for their capacity development." Himal brought one issue which others had not. He says, "There is a kind of prevalent psyche that it is the job of the central committee President and General Secretary to do most jobs and others to enjoy the benefit." So, he actually expects the members to come forward and support NELTA.

Kanak takes it easy saying that in volunteer organisations there are different types of people. He implicitly agrees with Himal's point that many members believe that people in the leadership should be able to give the opportunity and when the members do not see it happening, they turn away. In this case, Kanak feels that the leadership is actually accountable for maintaining the spirit of the members, "People

who are deeply motivated to join the organisation and expand the organisation get demotivated also because the leadership is not able to exactly identify the hardship and hard work that they are doing.”

Muskan also says that in a big organization, members differ in many ways. “I don’t think in a voluntary organization like NELTA, all the members would contribute in the same level.” She sees it as a human nature that when the members see the benefit of investing their time and resources in NELTA, they will do so. She went on using a rather satirical expression saying, “Some people who give priority to immediate benefits rather than to long term professional development goal do find NELTA very much useful to them.” Like most participants, she also suggested that NELTA Committee should make proper coordination among members for increasing their motivation and enthusiasm. “If members of NELTA enhance their own capability, it inevitably enhances the capability of NELTA.” She indicated to the value of give and take from the side of the organization.

Saru briefly hinted that it is the professional attitude that makes a difference. She commented, “In my observation, contributing to NELTA indirectly means developing our own professional skills. So, only the people who are professionally oriented are contributing to NELTA.” So, those having professional attitude will constantly associate themselves with NELTA.

Rita thinks one cannot guarantee full commitment from all the members and all members do not contribute because “It is not compulsory for everyone to contribute.” Time management, commitment towards their jobs, and financial constraints can be the possible reasons for the members not being able to contribute fully. She is supportive of the committee claiming that the motivation from the Centre is always there.

The interview data indicated that not all members contribute to the capability enhancement and network expansion of NELTA. Only a limited number of NELTA members are involved in its growth. I felt it is a significant issue to be explored and asked Kendra and Milan - two office bearers of NELTA- what keeps all members from contributing.

To this, Kendra mentioned the nature of the association. She explained that NELTA is a voluntary organization and no one can force members to work every day for NELTA. Members do not get paid and there is no incentive for the time they give to NELTA. They even pay for their own travel expenses while visiting the branches. So, in this working condition, only those members who can spare time and are ready to bear the expenses can make visible contributions. These were her views.

She saw that the voluntarism also has implications with the contribution expected from the committee members. The committee members are professionals having their own busy work. “Even at the committee level, few members work rigorously because it is a compulsion by position. People are willing to take posts and enjoy the power but they don't have time to work voluntarily for NELTA. Only limited members are working hard for the development of institution.” So, she was in agreement with the point that not all members contribute at the same level and the reasons were mainly time and the nature of the association. But she also indicated that the positions are powerful and that the individuals see them as ladder to power and perhaps to enjoy the benefits.

She also mentioned that the personal differences with the leadership may also be one of the reasons for some members not contributing to the association. She summed up her responses saying, “There may be some individual decision not to contribute. Sometimes people don't like leadership, sometimes people have different



commitments, and sometimes lack of time and involvement in earnings in life keep them from contributing. Relations and coordination part is also important.”

Milan hinted at one of the reasons Kendra had given: disagreement with the leadership. Even when members are in position to contribute, they may differ with the leadership and decide to keep away from them. Neither of the participants gave any specific example of what this different was.

Another reason she mentioned for lack of commitment was that the professional expertise a member has and the activities NELTA is organizing may not match. In such a situation, the members do not come and say they would like to do something based on their expertise. They do not communicate openly. “So it’s that person’s fault too.” She linked it with the cultural nuance of the Nepali society. “This is our Nepali attitude, we just take it easy. Things will not fall on your lap. You have to work to get it. And then you are jealous of supposing you climbing up the ladder. And why are you going abroad. But I have to do something. But I just sit back and say *bholi bholi (tomorrow, tomorrow)*.” Thus, she interpreted how the members wait till the situation becomes favourable to make contribution to the organisation.

From the discussion on the responses, both respondents agreed that all members do not contribute to the NELTA activities equally. The reasons they gave were also similar. They mainly saw the problem in two ways: members’ limitation with time and resources, and their differences with the leadership.

### **Members' Contributions in Other Organizations**

After the analysing how its members were contributing to NELTA in its activities and network expansion, I now go on with brief analysis of what the Central committee members of NNTA, NTA and PABSON said. When asked how its members contributed to the NNTAs activities, the NNTA Central committee members

shared, "Our members contribute through various fees like yearly fees and entry fees." This suggested that the contribution was measured in terms of the financial support. This is no surprising as the NNTA's main activity was to protect the rights of its members and the fees might work a means through which the members can expect such protection. As he said further, "They [members] call us to ask for help. They share various problems like salary discrimination, uniform, remote area allowance etc." His responses showed that the organizations supports its members and vice versa in matters of rights and security. Regarding the professional support to the organization the members seemed to be supporting just be indicating what they need support in as he added, "They also call us to share their short comings about their techniques and classroom approaches. They ask us to conduct some workshops and trainings, which will be beneficial for them." Raising the voices for professional support is definitely a kind of support but contributing to the professional activities is something different. Here I saw the different between professional organization and a trade union where the idea of social capital seems operating for a different cause.

The respondent from the NTA was more direct. He said the members supported NTA with their own political ideologies and agendas. Here he also seemed to mean that ideological agenda were bigger than the professional ones. Organizing professional activities was not out of the scene but not in the focus as he said, "Support for job security is very important but members also demand training." There seemed to be a commonality between the members of NTA and NNTA: demanding for training. Contrarily, NELTA members organized training, they did not demand.

The response from the PABSON respondent was slightly different. He gave the sole credit of private schools' success to its teachers. He said, "The reason PABSON has reached this current situation where parents turn towards PABSON

instead of free governmental institutes is due to the contribution of the teachers." He was equating PABSON with private schools. The support teachers give to the schools is working for a low salary. He added, "Even with the low salary given by different schools our teachers give quality education to the students. Our teachers understand the different problems the schools face. PABSON has come to this point only because of the hard work of our teachers." The way he put it shows that teachers have no contribution to the PABSON activities. He was simply prising the contribution of not being demanding.

The above discussion shows that teacher organizations than NELTA do not receive contributions in matters of professional activities. They expect and feel safe from the job security from their organizations. They demand more than they contribute.

### **Noticing the Patterns**

In this Chapter, the discussion is focused on the members' contribution to NELTA- how they contributed to its activities and its network expansion. Through their narratives and interviews, they shared how they made a difference to NELTA. In analysing the contributions, I saw that there were three aspects of their contribution: what they brought when they joined NELTA, their contribution in the activities of NELTA, and their contribution in the growth and network expansion of NELTA.

We may want to give back  
(as well as take from)  
NELTA in different  
ways—off and on line, in  
person and in groups, in  
formal and informal  
settings—but we can and  
should all give and take  
(Sharma, 2012).

When mentioning the resources they brought, the participants expressed that their experience was what they brought. They claimed that they brought with them

the knowledge and ideas that they wanted to disseminate with other people, the ideas from their classroom experiences (Freeman, 2009b). They also said that they contributed by giving time to the organisation. In reciprocation, respondents also mentioned that they brought expectations to which the association had to respond.

Regarding the contribution to the activities, they said that they travelled to different parts of the country to train teachers, they delivered sessions at the conferences, they coordinated the conferences and carried out other activities. In addition, they edited the journal and contributed articles to journals and blogzines. These contributions support the idea of K. E. Johnson (2009) that teacher development is 'by' and 'for' teachers. Again, their connections were useful in finding resources for many of the activities. On the other side, everyone stressed on the volunteerism. It appears that they also contributed by inviting international key ELT figures to speak in the conferences. Another contribution that they made was that their capacity in the place of their vocation was useful in generating resources for NELTA activities. Repeating what the participants stressed in their responses, leading NELTA by holding significant positions within the organisation was what made all the difference. This was possible because the teacher came out of their intellectual isolation into the community (NCFTE, 2009).

Regarding the growth and expansion, they shared their experiences and contributions while establishing new branches, carrying out membership drives, establishing connection with newer partner organizations, and linking NELTA to IATEFL and TESOL which brought more collaborative opportunities (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

In order to see the patterns, I developed the following chart and saw how the participants contributed to the NELTA activities. This chart shows that seven to eight

participants contributed to NELTA by volunteering personal time, being on a leadership position, expanding NELTA network, delivering training and workshop and organizing conferences. Two to five participants said that they helped NELTA by utilising other backgrounds and connections benefitting NELTA activities, visiting or setting up a branch, mentoring juniors, initiating new and major activities, editing NELTA publications, representing NELTA to other agencies and countries, and contributing to the journal articles. These contributions establish that teachers work together to find their own solution for the problems they face (Guskey, 1995).

	Amar	Daan	Gaurabh	Himal	Kanak	Muskan	Saru	Ritika
Voluntary times	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Other background/ connection benefitting NELTA activities	√	√	√	√				
Visiting or setting up a branch	√		√	√	√		√	
Being on a leadership position	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Conducting training / workshop	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Organizing conferences		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Mentoring juniors	√		√					
Expanding NELTA external network	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Initiating new and major activities			√	√				
Editing NELTA publications			√		√		√	

Representing NELTA to other agencies / countries			√	√	√	√		
Articles	√		√			√	√	√

*Figure 6.* Contributions to NELTA made by individual participants (Source: Field Data).

As with the professional development opportunities, there was discrepancy in the members' contribution to the network too. When asked why, the participants responded that many members look for opportunities for themselves but do not want to contribute. There were also responses that this is the way voluntary organizations work: few people contribute significantly, and others do not. As mentioned earlier, the participants who were office bearers claimed that NELTA was doing what it could but the members were not contributing. In contrast, other participants opined that the leadership need to create an environment so that a maximum number of members can contribute. However, there was a unanimous opinion that not all members were contributing to NELTA.

I will admit that NELTA as an organization has not always tapped into the potentials of its members very well. We see young people come in with excitement, and cool down after a while (Sharma, 2012)

The analysis of the data from other organizations showed that their members expected and demanded more support from the organizations and they contributed very little. NTA and NNTA considered the demand for the training and membership fees as the contribution whereas PABSON seemed to receive no contribution other than non-demand for high salaries.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the participants' contribution to NELTA. I first looked at the resources they brought when they came to NELTA. How they were involved in the events and activities of NELTA, and how they helped NELTA in its capability enhancement and network expansion were also discussed. It appears that NELTA stands as it does with the support and contribution from NELTA members. In the course of analysis, it was evident that contributions varied, so I tried to see why there were gaps. The analysis was also done on the contributions of the members of the other organizations and it was seen that there was negligible contribution in professional activities. The chapter concluded with the patterns I noticed.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this Chapter, I discuss the findings of my study and discuss them from the perspectives of the theories I discussed earlier. Based on the discussion, I draw the conclusions on the TPD experiences in relation to teacher associations. The Chapter concludes with the implications for policy and practice.

#### **Findings and Discussion**

I started my research with the aim to explore the EFL teacher associations in relation to the teacher professional development opportunities they create, and the experiences the members undergo. I also tried to look into the contributions the members make in enhancing the capabilities of the associations. In order to substantiate my research, I reviewed relevant literature, established theories, TPD policies of the Ministry of Education, and available previous studies on teacher professional development for EFL. Then, I designed my research under interpretive paradigm and used interview and narratives as the data collection technique. As I had selected NELTA as the field of study, eight NELTA members were purposively selected. Later, two NELTA office bearers were also interviewed to explore their perspectives. Interviews were also taken with one office bearer each from NNTA, NTA and PABSON. The data thus collected were analyzed and below I present the summary of the findings derived from the data analysis under three sections relating to three research questions of the study.



### **Formal Strategies Employed by NELTA for Members' Professional Development and the Perspectives of the Participants regarding them**

The data from the document analysis and the members' views showed that NELTA has formal provisions for the teacher professional development for its members. The documents mentioned the formal provisions, and the members expressed their views on those provisions and how those provisions have been realised.

1. The vision, mission and goals in the statute and the prospectus aimed to enhance the quality of ELT through professional networking, support and collaboration. The documents also showed that NELTA aimed to create opportunities such as training, workshops and conferences, exchanges of ideas and experiences for its members.
2. The strategic planning showed that NELTA planned for leadership development, developing teacher resource materials, training for public and private school English teachers, website update, NELTA Journals, Newsletters, conferences, and web based magazine NELTACHoutari.
3. In order to execute these aims, NELTA has a central executive committee, branches, websites, blogs, yahoogroups and telephone and other communication channels. They also have affiliation with other similar associations.
4. The analysis of the members' views on its professional development strategies showed that NELTA organizes for its members events such as trainings, workshops and conferences. These events seemed to be accessible and available to most members and were organized in and outside the Kathmandu Valley.
5. The data showed that NELTA also arranged for enhancement of professional capabilities through foreign visits for short exposure activities or for the higher

degree purpose. Only a limited number of members seemed to benefit from these activities.

6. Other opportunities that were formally planned and organised were the journals in which the members got their articles published.
7. The participants viewed that NELTA made an arrangement such that the members would get benefits from its activities as well as contribute to the events thus organised. They believed that NELTA can offer as much as it can receive: the development is reciprocal.
8. Participants also valued the responsibilities which led to gaining confidence. They found the forum an opportunity to expand their own network. They also valued that NELTA created opportunities while it also gave responsibilities for the members to grow and develop.
9. There was a unanimous response that NELTA creates an environment where opportunities are possible. However, it was seen that the promises NELTA made in its formal documents were partly realised: many promises remained unfulfilled. Most participants expressed that it developed plans for which it was not equipped in terms of necessary resources: human and material. There is much dependency on external donors. There were some divided responses regarding the role of the leadership. However, the participants who had been in leadership positions argued that most members had one way expectations, while those who had not been in leadership positions complained about the leadership being selective while providing opportunities for professional development.
10. The NELTA strategies differed from those of NCED, NNTA, NTA and PABSON in many ways. While the NNTA and NTA mainly focused on rights and security of the teachers, NELTA stressed only on professional growth. NELTA seemed to

update itself with the latest developments in the professional field, teachers unions did not seem to. NNTA and NTA claimed that the trainers who were trained 15 years ago still work as trainers. PABSON office bearer claimed that the main aim of their organization was to ensure the security of investment of the school owners. He said that they also organized trainings but they were largely for school heads for leadership development. The major activities of NELTA were organized with the purpose of teacher development, whereas, the other organizations focused on other agenda. The policy of NCED had a clear policy coverage in teacher training from madarasas, gurukuls and gumbas, whereas, NELTA served only those who came to it through membership. NCED had a policy to serve only public school teachers, whereas, NELTA did not make that distinction.

In Chapter II, I reviewed three theories: network theory, social capital theory and learning organization theory. As I tried to link the above findings to those theories, I saw that they relevantly linked to the network theory. So, I discuss the findings in light of the same theory. This is because learning about network theory helps specific network building approaches, methods, and tools (Kallenbach, Lee, Downs-Karkos & Taylor, 2013). Network theory helps understand conditions for engaging association members in different types of network activities such as collaborative activities, peer learning or working with external stakeholders.

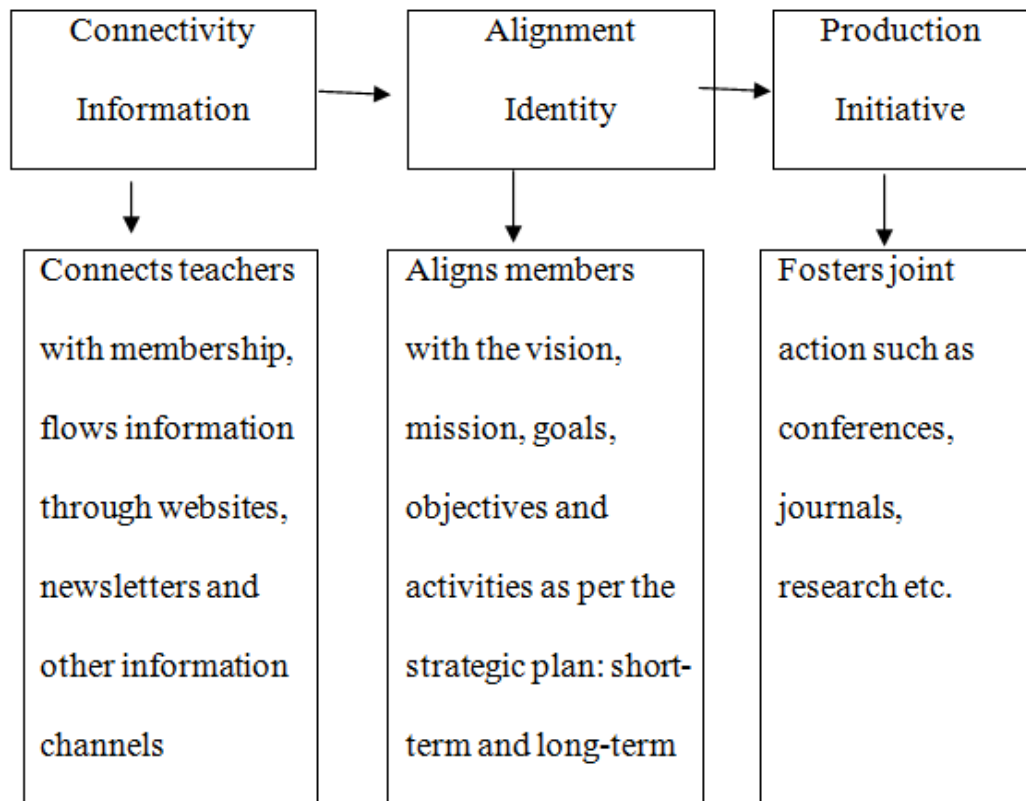
NELTA as a teacher association consists of members along with a set of ties that link the members. The ties that exist in the form of centre, branches, and memberships connect these members. This study showed that members gather the support of the colleagues in order to contribute to NELTA. They have shown their capacity of the association as network to be able towards internationalizing NELTA by linking it to IATEFL and TESOL associations, thereby, expanding the network. By

connecting themselves with these networks, many NELTA members are able to attend the international conferences and training events in different parts of the world. So, the existence of NELTA as an association has become a node to get connected to other associations thereby bringing on more opportunities of expansion.

Teacher associations have a social psychology aspect. Associations create social status for the members. Being on teacher association gives teachers the social and professional status of the individuals. This sense of higher status is enhanced by the trust the association gives to itself and to its members (Uzzi, 1997). The teachers who take the membership of the teacher associations are not only showing trust to the association but also winning trust of other stakeholders and the members of the society at large. The same applies to NELTA and this trust was able to expand its network.

Owen-Smith (2011) argues that the networks have functions which very well apply to the EFL teacher associations. These networks create resources and information for the teachers and channelize them. The resource availability signals status of the members in the larger community: in the education community and also in the larger society. This status thus signalled gives the members social prestige which leads to social influence and network building.

The functions of the teacher association as network proposed by Kallenbach, Lee, Downs-Karkos, and Taylor (2013) are realised in a more linear way. The associations first connect teachers to allow easy flow of and access to information and resources. Once the information and resources are available and accessible, the members get aligned around a common set of standards and objectives. The members thus aligned are now in position to joint initiatives and meaningful actions with specialized outcomes.



*Figure 7.* NELTA in operation as a teacher association (adapted from Kallenback, Lee, Downs-Karkos, and Taylor (2013).

NELTA seems to have diverse ways to flow information. For the prospective members, the sources of information are the existing members, the website, the newsletters and the events. The participants shared that they either knew about NELTA from their teachers, or colleagues or they realised what it was when they came to the conference. For those who are inside, the information and communication takes place at the committee meeting, through word of mouth, telephone calls, emails, events, Yahooogroup mailing list, blogs, flyers and brochures. The participants' responses showed that the information flow is smooth and members are usually informed of the events and activities.

At NELTA as a teacher association, the members are networked feeling the sense of belonging. This allows them to share their expertise. NELTA gives them space. The responses also showed that NELTA has a 'hierarchy-free' environment,

which allows the members to align themselves as insiders. Voluntary undertakings actually develop a person as a responsible member aligning them with leaders and identifying themselves with the organization.

Then, the association allows the members to finally take joint initiatives with innovations. The data showed that the teachers, even though working under very difficult circumstances, have started publishing their articles. If they were not networked within the association, they would not have taken the initiative. The NELTA volunteers set the blogzine 'NELTAChoutari' as an example.

The idea that the networks go beyond the boundary exploring newer nodes seems true. Unlike in the beginning years, there seems to be more collaboration, more research, and links with government and foreign agencies working in the field of ELT. With the connection with others agencies and networks, NELTA is gaining knowledge, as well disseminating it.

Having found all the benefits NELTA brought to its members, I tried to see the totality in the network theory perspective. The members came to NELTA by way of the communication and were aligned so they could be productive. However, there were perceived gaps in the way communication took place and the members were able to be part of the groups. The promises made in the formal documents have contributed to the network building and expansion, but still the teachers working in the outlying parts have not benefitted from the network of NELTA. Some made milestone contributions, and others were less visible. In away, the production, in the form of opportunities that were made available, also had discrepancies.

When I look back into my journey: journey with NELTA and this research journey, I feel that networking is a power tool. As I depicted in the reflection Chapter, I have been able to snowball my professional strength because I joined NELTA and

moved with its flow. I made many friends who catalysed to help me in making more friends. Working with the Central Committee, branches, and partners of NELTA, I saw the expansion of the network of NELTA as well as mine. As I wrap up my research, I feel that EFL teachers need to join networks and associations like NELTA, but those who can maintain the dynamism of the association can benefit from it. That is why not all members report satisfaction in the way NELTA realizes its promises.

### **Teachers' Experiences in Their Professional Capabilities Enhancement**

From the analysis of the data from the interviews and narratives, I derived the following findings on the participants' professional development experiences as an answer to my second research question.

1. The participants took membership of NELTA only when they saw a reason to make the entry. Amar, Daan, Saru and Ritika were impressed by the conferences they attended. Amar and Muskan were advised by their teachers and colleagues and Kanak was inspired his own father. While Himal and Ritika had watched the activities of NELTA closely before they decided to join, Gaurabh entered as a founding member.
2. The participants reported that they underwent professional development due to the experiences they had at NELTA. Except Himal and Gaurabh, all participants regarded the events like training, workshops and other events as the learning opportunities.
3. All participants unanimously said that the conferences and getting to know the other professionals and the interactions with them as learning experiences. Due to these opportunities, they also saw that their networking expanded to explore other professional development opportunities.

4. They also valued the foreign exposure as valuable learning experience. Gaurabh and Himal took a higher degree through opportunities made available by NELTA.
5. The participants considered the opportunities to support others as their own learning opportunities. They also found the opportunities to get published, to edit the journals, and to deliver sessions as opportunities for growth. Two respondents who held important positions saw the responsibility as a way to realize their potentials which also helped in their own development.
6. The respondents included three women and they did not find any difference in the way NELTA treated them but their family activities had to be adjusted.
7. Parallel to the professional development, the respondents reported on personality development. The biggest change they felt was the confidence building. They started developing habits of reading, experimenting and collaborating. Their communication and sense of team building also was enhanced. Personally they also benefited by earning social prestige: the recognition.
8. The benefits of association were not without some price. All respondents complained about the time away from the family, particularly on the weekends. They even had to give up their professional work that brought them remuneration for the sake voluntary work for NELTA.
9. The professional development opportunities these participants enjoyed were not available to all NELTA members. When asked, most respondents said that the association was now big and the opportunities were not adequate. The geographical distances were also one of the reasons why the members outside Kathmandu could not enjoy the facilities in Kathmandu. In matters of the accountability of the Executive Committee, the participants were divided. The office bearer participants saw the problems with the members who expected



benefits without contributing and not communicating with the Centre. The other participants saw that the leadership was not dealing with the members in equal manner. They said that there were no transparent criteria to make selection for the professional development opportunities.

EFL teacher associations can sustain and survive only when they adapt to the changing situations particularly because the status of English teaching is ever changing. As the socio-economic and technological scenario changes, the teaching and learning also changes. So, the teachers' professional associations also need to change and it is possible when it keeps learning. When it learns, it is in position to facilitate its members to learn who reciprocate by helping the association to learn further. The findings above showed this phenomenon going on in NELTA. I want to discuss the phenomenon by linking the findings to the learning organization theory.

As Shon (1973) stated, professionals live in a situation that keeps changing leading to the need for learning all the time. Though stability is good from one point of view, it should not turn into stagnancy. This is more significant for the EFL teacher associations as the language teaching principles and practices keep changing fast. Teachers need to update themselves with the latest development. Gaurabh's response summed it up all: because of the external environment, NELTA faces a challenge that it has to grow. It grows by learning from its experiences in the past and also integrating the opportunities available around it. For Gaurabh, the growth of NELTA is due to its experience and realization from the past. It undergoes an experience and changes the ways it works. When signs of growth are seen, they indicate the learning NELTA has had.

As the participants expressed and wrote in their narratives, NELTA seems to have undergone different changes over the years. These changes seem to have come

as a response to the changing times. In the past, when a journal was published, this would sound a big success, however, in the course of time, the EFL professional community started valuing the peer-reviewed journal better. So, since 2009, the NELTA journal has been peer reviewed. Likewise, earlier the conference presentations were enough for the people to add to their bio-data but later, the inclusion of their presentation had a better value in the conference proceedings. In the recent years, NELTA has been publishing conference proceedings. They learnt from other professionals from within and outside the country, by taking initiatives and publishing the Journal conference proceedings. One of the participants noted that the two chapter conference was also a demand from the members in the branches. So, this shows that NELTA adapts to the demands of the changing times.

There are also changes in the way events are managed. Muskan added a few things related to the conference. There were no rapporteurs for the conference and now there are rapporteurs. NELTA learnt that such provision is useful for the presenters and also for the organizers. With the latest technology in place, NELTA organizes the conferences more efficiently with instant information flow globally. The participants' responses show that the practices of training delivery, publications, and involvement with other organizations is much more systematic. The participants took the need assessment practices before designing the training manuals as the refinement in the activities.

The data showed that NELTA as an association has changed the ways it works. There are improvements in their planning, services and products. Due to the improved quality, NELTA is gaining faith of the partners and ELT stakeholders. So, there are signs that allow one to claim that NELTA has learnt in the course of time.

Senge (2004) supports the idea of moving beyond learning alone to learning together. The teacher network organizations need the commitment from the members and their capacity to learn and create the opportunities for others to learn. For this, he proposes five disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, shared visions, team learning and systems thinking. I would like to discuss these disciplines with the findings from my study.

- a. Personal mastery refers to the learning the individuals do. As a network learns only through individuals who learn, this personal mastery is significant for teachers' community like NELTA. Without it, organizational learning will not occur (Senge, 1990). For the motivation to learn, individuals make vision for what they might achieve.

NELTA's activities are geared to help members to learn different skills of English language teaching. Whether it organizes conferences, or workshops, or publishes journals or brings opportunities for further studies and foreign exposure, all these help teachers to develop their professional skills with personal mastery. The members take advantage of the opportunities available. There are different ways through which they learn: by receiving training, attending workshops, going for further study and getting exposure; and by giving training, contributing articles, volunteering and networking.

The leadership development also starts with the idea of personal mastery. When one is given responsibility, one develops certain personal quality. These qualities ultimately prepare him or her to gain leadership positions. Daan felt he was being groomed by being given the responsibility of managing events. He took it as a test and he proved his worth. At a time when he was questioning his own

leadership capability, NELTA Centre asked him to lead his branch to organize a pre-conference event and the major part of the International conference.

- b. Mental models are assumptions that influence how we understand the world and how we take action. When these models are brought to public the models that are conducive to change will facilitate learning. The idea of personal mastery also has a relation in confirming or disconfirming the existing beliefs of the members. The conferences and the dialogues with the colleagues help the teachers to either confirm or disconfirm the practices and beliefs. They either find that what they have been doing is not appropriate or they need to change their ways. In Muskan's case, she had a firm belief that all the learners have the same ability to grasp what she teaches in the classroom. Only during a conversation with a conference presenter she realised she had to change her belief.
- c. Shared visions are the visions the members of a network have in common. The visions that teachers share collectively facilitate collective learning. The shared vision of NELTA is realised in its key documents. The vision of NELTA focuses on the quality of ELT and links it to the of the teachers' professionalism in their outlook and attitude. Following the spirit of the vision statement, the mission statement states that work to enhance the quality of English language teaching and learning through professional networking, supporting and collaboration. These three words give the members what is expected of them, giving a sense of ownership. NELTA aims to provide training and other professional development services to ELT professionals; and develop support mechanism for teachers working in more outlying and under-resourced regions of Nepal. So, NELTA has developed a plan so that all of its members have a common vision of what is intended and expected.

- d. Team learning takes place if the collective actions in the networks represent the members' wishes. Personal mastery and shared visions make the team learning possible. NELTA organizes most activities that involve large number of members to be able to participate. It organizes workshops, conferences, publishes journals, and runs Yahoogroups mailing list. During the exchanges and events, members get opportunities not only to get input from the others, but also to explore what they have for others, so it is give and take relation. The members learn together and from the same sources. Due to the collective activities, the team learning takes place.
- e. Systems thinking is the central idea that binds the other four. The network leaders need to think from long term point of view. NELTA has systems thinking. It has strategic planning updated every two years. The planning is thematic, and time bound with each theme working out in different activities and the date of accomplishment is determined. The latest strategic planning includes such plans that an effective teacher association needs to have. The document includes plans to develop leadership, generate resources, develop ELT materials, set up and update Resource Centres, provide services to outside NELTA organizations, advise the Ministry of education on policy matters, conduct research, and improve the quality of the journals and other publications. These plans, of which some are short-term and others are long-term, establish that NELTA has a characteristics of learning organization.

From the discussion, we can deduce that learning organizations theory was also realised but there were some contextual realities. The personal mastery was a main goal for all members and the association and the members strived for the same. However, due to the limitations of the resources and opportunities, not all the

members benefited in an equal manner. There were practical gaps and there were grievances expressed by the members. Though the systems thinking was in place and team learning was realised, the extent to which they took place had discrepancies.

After presenting the findings and discussing them in the light of the learning organizations theory, I would like to briefly put my take on the learning experiences at NELTA. NELTA is expanding itself in its size and activities. More teachers are taking membership and more branches are being set up. This growth allows more opportunities for teachers to benefit from. This also means that the NELTA leadership has more members to look after and more plans to make and implement. However, the resources are not increasing in the same ratio the members are increasing. This is the reason there were grievances that not all members benefit from the opportunities. Careful planning only can maximize the benefits and minimise the grievances. The learning organization theory has been true to the NELTA phenomenon on the part of association, however, the benefits have not reached to all its members, the main stakeholders.

### **Members' Contribution to NELTA in its Initiatives and Capability Enhancement**

The data showed that NELTA members contributed to its capability enhancement in different ways. I present the summary of findings on the third research question from what the participants shared about their own contribution as well as that of their fellow members.

1. The participants reported that they contributed to NELTA in different ways. One of the contributions they made was what they brought with them when they entered NELTA as new members. They said that they brought with them knowledge and ideas that they wanted to disseminate with other people: the ideas

from their classroom experiences. The participants also claimed that they brought expectations to which the association had to respond.

2. The unanimous response from all participants was that they gave voluntary time to NELTA activities. They said that as a voluntary association, NELTA did not pay for the involvement in the events and activities. Regarding the contribution to the activities, they said that they travelled to different parts of the country to train teachers, they delivered sessions at the conferences, they coordinated the conferences and others activities. They also edited the journal and contributed articles. They did all these activities voluntarily.
3. Their connections were useful in finding resources for the activities. As the NELTA members worked in other organizations, the positions they held there became influential in facilitating the NELTA activities. Gaurabh used his position at the university to organize events at the branches while Himal used his connection as human rights activist to expand NELTA network. The connections also worked to explore and invite international key ELT figures to speak during the conferences.
4. The responses showed that NELTA's growth and expansion was due to the efforts made by these members. Amar, Gaurabh and Himal set up branches, made membership drives, established connections with newer partner organizations, and linked NELTA to IATEFL and TESOL.
5. However, there was a unanimous opinion that not all members were contributing to NELTA. As in the professional development opportunities, there was also discrepancy in their members' contribution to the network. When asked why, the participants said that many members looked for opportunities for themselves but did not want to contribute. Kendra and Milan, who were the office bearer

participants, claimed that NELTA was doing what it could but members were not contributing. In contrast, the other participants opined that the leadership need to create an environment so that a maximum number of members can contribute.

6. The analysis of the data from other organizations - NNTA, NTA and PABSON - showed that the members only expected support and security from these organizations. They made negligible contributions in professional matters. In this regard, NELTA seemed a successful organization where the members' contribution in professional activities gave this association the strength.

The data analysis and the discussions showed that the members of NELTA are involved in several activities in the field of ELT such as teaching, teacher training, lecturing, research, leadership and management, writing and publishing (Baber, 2012). They cannot achieve all these on their own, individually. They are engaged in the social interactions and exchanges which create the social capital. Social capital in the EFL community is a resource comprised of the benefits of professional connections and relationships of the members of the association (Conrad, 2007).

The individual teachers have potentials but on their own nothing much happens (Hanifan, as cited in Conrad, 2007). When they are connected to other teachers, their potentials are realised. From the ideas and experiences they all have, the social capital is built to help other teachers to learn the teaching learning skills. This is possible with the goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among fellow teachers who make the associations and networks. If a teacher comes into contact with other teachers, there will be an accumulation of social capital, and this satisfies their professional needs that bear a professional potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of teaching learning conditions in the



community they are working. This is how the EFL teachers' community as a whole benefits (Hanifan, 1916, as cited in Morse & McNamara, 2013).

Bit by bit the NELTA members add to the capacity of this association with ever bringing in new ideas as the metaphor of the *coral reef* goes. They add to the social capital available for the fellow members to have access to. As Saru noted, "NELTA members go to different places to attend training and workshops, and they know what type of training is necessary and they know about the ELT scenario there, what is the level of teachers and students in there. When they come back, their learning becomes NELTA's learning. I think a member stands for the whole NELTA. When members learn that means NELTA, too, learns."

The explanations of the participants show that there is a close link between social capital and the social prestige. When one has earned social prestige, it can facilitate the members to professionally deliver. What they use as their power is the prestige they have which is the same as the financial capital in the business. According to the social capital theory, individuals create a space in their community and in many cases that space cannot be filled by any other person.

Himal's case is an example of social capital building through social recognition. The Government practically recognized NELTA as an organization and decided to decorate him, the President, with National Education Award. Though he received it, it was due the social recognition of NELTA. So, the recognition also came at both the personal and the organizational levels.

Saru's response, too, was relevant to the *coral reef* metaphor. Each member adds to the body of the knowledge they live with. As the time passes by, the coral reef gets bigger and more solid. I asked if with increased learning, NELTA was performing better. She responded positively, "In the past we were unable to peep into

the journal. It was not accessible to us. Now even foreigners use extracts from its articles. I think there are changes and they have changed for the better.”

NELTA as an EFL community has informal norms that promote cooperation between teachers (Fukuyama, 1999, as cited in Conrad, 2007). They communicate to each other, they furnish information and they volunteer to the collective activities. The data showed that social capital built at NELTA helps the member teachers of NELTA. The help and opportunities are enjoyed by the members when the teacher association has a well-connected system.

The participants’ interview data showed that the relationship they were able to build added to more social capital by bringing in more resources and information (Field, 2008). This is what I termed as snowball effect: the better the relation, the higher the quality of connection.

The NELTA members said that they have been able to achieve things which they would not have achieved alone. They have been able to get the membership of IATEFL worth GBP 40 only for NRs 500 as they go through NELTA. No individual would have been given such privilege unless they had NELTA membership. So the adage which I had adopted as my thesis idea *Sanghe Shakti Kalau Yuge* (which means *organization holds the key to strength in modern times.*) seems to have come true.

Putnam (2000) is of the opinion that teacher associations create social capital for individuals and communities. When the individuals come to association, they gain as well as they contribute to the network creating more capital for the members to benefit from. Each participant in this research has shared that their relationship with NELTA is of give and take. When they became NELTA members they got opportunity to volunteer. This voluntary contribution gave them opportunities for

further degree, and also foreign exposure. The learning from these opportunities again paid back to the NELTA's strength. The relation was reciprocal and cyclical.

NELTA has developed a system that has norms and communication channels. It has been able to efficiently facilitate coordinated actions for teacher professional development (Putnam, 1993, as cited in Field, 2008). It organizes international conferences attended by over 1000 participants who come from all over the world. The connections that have been developed with the members having other connections make the communication possible.

As with Bourdieu's proposition (as cited in Field, 2008), social capital of NELTA is the sum total of the actual and potential resources made possible with the relationships of members. This situation supports its members with the collectively owned resources, the social capital. The relationships among the members allow meaningful exchanges which further help to maintain the relationships. The capital sustains as long as the teacher members volunteer to give and take. Participants seem very articulate in outlining the events, incidents and their initiatives. In their tenures they render their selfless services to the organization. In their narratives, they present a cyclical relationship between them and NELTA. Their getting an opportunity brings in more opportunities for NELTA. When NELTA benefits from their initiatives, they get to enjoy more benefits. The members promoted NELTA and at the same time they also got promoted from teacher to teacher educator and to a national level teacher leader through the network of NELTA. As Lin (2001) says, NELTA's social capital made up by the members actually pays back for the investment made. NELTA's resources are mutually shared and contributed by its members. The resources are the results of the reciprocity (Colman, as cited in Field, 2008).

The NELTA members are able to help high profile government officials in professional matters and the question was how an English teacher developed that expertise. They now believe that being in NELTA meant being at a capital rich forum. The recognition that it has gained, the professional identity that it has created and the kind professionalism that it has established, has resulted in harbouring social capital. It has a very special status which cannot be converted into any monetary amount. The data also showed that in order to create that image of NELTA, it took decades. A lot of hard work seems to have gone into it.

Social capital for a voluntary organization is the recognition made by the community at large. The participants felt that if they were not the NELTA office bearers, they would not have been known as they are now. They also know that they are known for two things: the NELTA membership and for their performance.

The data also showed that NELTA has a better expertise recognized by international agencies, the expertise that resulted from the learning by citing examples of the increasing reputation. As Himal put it, “NELTA received orders for the NELTA publications from the Library of Congress in Washington DC, US government. Normally, they wanted two copies, but last year, they ordered for 15 copies of conference proceedings.” This showed that NELTA has been building the relations at the international level. This has further added to its social capital.

The findings of the study also showed that in the real world, theories may not be realised as they are proposed. Given the context of the association and the dynamics that interplays within, the social capital may not form the way it is expected to. In NELTA, the members bring the resources and add to the capability of NELTA as an association. But this contribution did not come from all members and the level of contribution also varied. Some members contributed time whereas others were able

to expand the network of NELTA that brought more resources, thus, realizing the theory of social capital. Those who added more to the social capital, also gained more and were more satisfied.

Upon reflection, I gather that the teacher associations grow in size and number, the social capital becomes more significant. In the case I worked with, the idea of social capital relating to NELTA is an apt theory as the EFL teachers and their reciprocity makes NELTA roll on; with some discrepancies though. When I looked back into how NELTA functioned while I was in office, I visualize that NELTA as an association existed due to the fact that the incoming members brought expertise and resources. Each individual brought something which contributed to the synergy of the association. This synergy was capitalized to impress other organizations that also ultimately added. So, the very existence of NELTA was reason enough for EFL teachers to create social capital so there would be professional development opportunities for themselves and other fellow teachers. What I would like to resonate is that there is discrepancy in the way the members contribute: not all members contribute and the level of contribute also varies. NELTA can gather more social capital if it sends out a clear message how the contributions can be made.

### **Conclusions**

I conducted this study following the interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach. The data generated with the help interviews, document analysis and narratives were analysed. From the analysis and the outcome of the study, I draw the following conclusions:

For the teacher professional development, the teacher associations generate or acquire resources, much from the members and from their network connections. The activities that are aimed at the teacher professional development include organizing

annual conferences, workshops, seminars and trainings; publishing journals and proceedings; running blogs and mailing lists; providing opportunities for foreign exposure and higher studies. In all activities, learning from each other seems to be the core of the learning process. They also partner and collaborate with other organizations to create similar opportunities.

Teachers learn and grow while they are in the association. When they participate in the association activities, the first thing they realise is that they need to learn and they can through the teacher network association. They confirm or disconfirm their beliefs about teaching and learning. They learn the technical aspects of ELT: the what and the how. They learn by getting involved in activities in the field of ELT such as teaching, teacher training, lecturing, research, leadership and management, writing, and publishing. A great aspect of learning is that they get the information about the resources and opportunities for learning. They learn also by sharing their ideas and experiences. There is a strong tendency to learn by writing and getting published. When they know they can explore more, they expand their own network and bring more resources for themselves and for the association.

The way of learning is reciprocal: everybody learns from each other. When individuals are in an association, they gain from and give to the fellow members. They enjoy the resources and become resources themselves.

The associations bring immense benefit for the members. In fact, the association builds up learning as the individual members learn. The association members add to the capacity of this association with bringing in ever new ideas. When they attend training and workshops elsewhere and learn, their learning becomes the learning of the association. In the course of time, the organization displays the symptoms of their enhanced resourcefulness and capability.

The members enjoy the membership and other facilities of international association because of the membership of their mother network. The learning is also reciprocal between the members and the association. When they become NELTA members, they get opportunity to volunteer. This voluntary contribution gives them opportunities for further degree, and foreign exposure. The learning from these opportunities again has paid back to enhance NELTA's strength. The relation is reciprocal and cyclical. Their getting an opportunity brings in more opportunities for the association. When the association benefits from the members' initiatives, they get to enjoy more benefits. The members promote the association, and at the same time they also get promoted to teachers to teacher educators to national level teacher leaders in their own right.

The association members build relations with government agencies in professional matters and this brings recognition for the association. With this recognition, there come more resources and opportunities. As the members facilitate the change that the time demands, the association undergoes a change that is relevant to the contemporary socio-economic and technological scenario. When the quality of the products and services improves, the government authorities and the society recognise the association which, in turn, brings more resources and opportunities.

The associations also improve their products and services such as publishing journals and conducting conferences due to the external anticipations and demands. The practices of training delivery, publications, and involvement with other organizations, it is much more systematic as the time passes. Though the association has formal hierarchy, the working culture shows that it actually has a 'hierarchy-free' environment, which allows to the members feel like insiders.

This shows that the EFL teacher associations are learning organizations that build their strength on the association of their members. The better the association mechanism, the better the learning of the members and the association. The association and its members build social capital with the resources they have and they bring and create conditions for their own learning. The learning is reciprocal, collaborative and shared.

The professional development strategies facilitated by NELTA differ with those of other organizations namely, NNTA, NTA and PABSON. NNTA and NTA focus more on rights and facilities for the teachers and less on the professional development aspects. PABSON mainly works to ensure security of the investment of the owners. NELTA practices also differ with those of NCED. NELTA does not seem to reach all types of schools whereas NCED reaches upto religious school. One discriminatory practice NCED seems to have is that its only includes public school teachers. NCED considers only training as professional development whereas trade unions mainly work for the rights and security of the teachers. The members' contributions to the professional associations appear significant whereas the trade unions do not seem to enjoy such contributions.

In some cases, the members suffer a setback with the loss of quality time away from their family. They also lose their weekends and other personal time. However, their sense of success in learning and contribution seems to outweigh their loss.

The findings also indicate that there are gaps and challenges in the teacher associations. Though NELTA is a learning organization and PD forum for English teachers, the road is not always paved smooth and not for all. The promises made in the documents are realized but there are limitations. The communication gap, growing number of members but limited resources, and selective distribution of the



opportunities limit the way the members benefit from the promises and the opportunities. In this regard, the office bearers have a different perspective compared to that of the members. The office bearers do not see gaps and think the members are responsible for the initiatives whereas, the members expect the leadership to act equally for all members. The findings also indicate that the association also receives the contribution in a varying manner. Some contribute immensely whereas others try to benefit and not pay back. Communication gap and degree of closeness in the relationship with the central committee seem to be some reasons for the members not being able to contribute. Some members expect to be asked for the contribution whereas the leadership expects them to volunteer.

### **Implications**

From the conclusions, I have drawn the following implications:

1. Members are the heart of the association. They need to be provided with opportunities for learning as well as making contributions. However, as the participants' views partly matched with the provisions made in the NELTA statutes, a workable feedback mechanism would be worthwhile to set up. So, if the association develops a more accessible mechanism for the new members to come and the existing members to stay by creating a good learning environment, both the association and the members would benefit in the long run. As the associations usually have thousands of members, collecting information about the potential contributors is crucial. So, more opportunities for the members to demonstrate their capabilities would help the association build a better social capital that eventually benefits itself and its members.

2. The association needs to develop a more transparent system for the opportunities to be available so all members have access to them. The selective approach to the opportunities can lead to grievances.
3. The members need to be more active in the activities for the association. The more they participate, the more opportunities they have.
4. The association needs to develop a feedback mechanism regarding the professional development opportunities and experiences. This will maximise the distribution and minimise the grievances.
5. If the members try to understand more about the association, they can realise how best they can benefit and contribute. For this, they need to stay in touch and explore the information sources as much as they can. The association should develop sound information channels.
6. Because the EFL teacher associations are low-cost ways to teacher professional development, the Ministry of Education should collaborate formally with the association and facilitate in their activities. They should make a formal declaration of partnership, as the declaration will indirectly give the association social prestige and resources can come to the association from many others sources.
7. This study was first of its kind and looked at the teacher professional development aspect of the EFL teacher associations. There are many other pressing issues to be studied to unearth the EFL associations. Further research can be carried out looking at other issues that has surfaced during this study.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter started with a brief outline of my research process before presenting a summary of my research findings. First, I dealt with the findings on the formal strategies that NELTA was found to have employed for its members'

professional development. Then, I presented the findings on how NELTA contributed to its members' professional capabilities enhancement. This was followed by the highlights on the members' contribution to NELTA in its initiatives and capability enhancement. Then, I drew conclusions of my research from these findings. Based on the conclusions, implications relating to the teacher development policy and practice were also drawn.

## REFERENCES

- Adey, P. (2004). *The professional development of teachers: Practice and theory*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Alacantara, E. (2010). *A lonely rooster cannot bring on a new dawn: The role of a FL teachers' association in the professional development of its associates* (Master's dissertation, Universidade de Brasília, Instituto de Letras, Brazil).
- Allwright, D. (1991). *Exploratory teaching, professional development and the role of a teacher association*. Paper presented at the English teachers' conference in Havana, Cuba.
- Arega A. A. (2012). *Teacher development: English language teachers' associations impact on the professional development of English language teachers with a special reference to Addis Ababa English Language Teachers' Association (AAELTA), Ethiopia* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Lancaster University, UK.
- Awasthi, J. R. (2003). Teacher education with special references to English language teaching in Nepal. *Journal of NELTA*, 1-2, p.17–28.
- Baber, E. (2012). The many faces of ELT. *IATEFL Voices*, 229, p. 3.
- Barduhn, S., & Johnson, J. (2009). Certification and professional qualifications. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, K., Kagan, D., Klemp, R., Roderick, S., & Takenaga-Taga, D. (1997). *Toward a growth model of teacher professionalism*. Retrieved from <http://www.teachnet.org/TNPI/research/network/lafellows.htm>

- Bhusal, T. (2011). *Teacher development, its nature and classroom observation as a tool*. Retrieved from <http://neltachoutari.wordpress.com>
- Borgatti, S. P., & Halgin, D. (2011). On network theory. In *Organization Science*. doi 10.1287/orsc.1110.0641.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York: Greenwood.
- Britten, D. (1988). Three stages in teacher training. *ELT Journal*, 42, 3–8.
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, L.S. (2012). *Conferences*. Retrieved from <http://mysite.du.edu/~lclark29/conferences.html>
- Clement, M. V. (2000). Teachers' professional development: A solitary or collegial (ad)venture? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 12, 62-101.
- Cohen, D. (1990). A revolution in one classroom: The case of Mrs Oublier. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12(3) 311-329.
- Cohen, D., & Hill, H. (1997). Policy, practice ad learning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, March 1997, Chicago, IL.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2008). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.) London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Conrad, D. (2007). Defining social capital. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. Retrieved from [http://www.sociology.org/content/2007/\\_\\_\\_contrad\\_social\\_capital.pdf](http://www.sociology.org/content/2007/___contrad_social_capital.pdf)
- Corcoran, T. B. (1995). Helping teachers teach well: Transforming professional development. In *Policy Briefs of Consortium for Policy Research in Education* Retrieved from [http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/policybrief/857\\_rb16.pdf](http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/policybrief/857_rb16.pdf)

- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2nd ed.). California, CA: Sage.
- Dahal, H. R. (2012). *17th international conference of NELTA phase I highlights*. Retrieved from <http://neltachoutari.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/17th-nelta-conference-phase-i.pdf>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). Target time towards teachers. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20(2), 31-36.
- Davidson, G., Dunlop, F., Soriano, D. H., Kennedy, L., & Phillips, T. (2012). *Going forward: Continuing professional development for English language teachers in the UK*. London: British Council.
- Denzin N. K., & Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2003). Options for teacher professional development. *English Teaching Forum*, 41(2).
- Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004) *Teacher-centred professional development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Edge, J. (1992) Co-operative Development. *ELT Journal*, 46(1).
- Ellis, R. (1986). Activities and Procedure for language teacher training. *ELT Journal*, 40(2), 91-99.
- Evans, L. (2008). What is teacher development and how is it achieved? Ontological and processual models. Paper presented within the symposium, *Issues in teacher development: linking theory and practice*, at the ECER Gothenburg, September 12, 2008.

- Falcão, A. (2004). *A Brazilian teacher association for teachers of English: Organisational improvement through an international and comparative educational perspective* (unpublished Master's dissertation). University of Leeds, UK.
- Falcão, A. (2004). *Report on British Council seminar: Strength in numbers: increasing the impact of English language teacher associations*. London: British Council.
- Falcão, A., & Szesztay, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Developing an association for language teachers: An Introductory handbook* (3rd ed.) Kent: IATEFL.
- Field, J. (2008). *Social capital*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Freeman, D. (2009a). The scope of second language teacher education. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, D. (2009b). Collaborative teacher development. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giri, R. (2010). English language teachers' resource centre: A model for developing contexts. *Journal of NELTA*, 15(1&2), 64-76.
- Gnawali, L. (2001). *Investigating classroom practices: A proposal for in-service teacher development for the secondary school teachers in Nepal* (Unpublished master's dissertation). The College of St Mark and St John/University of Exeter, UK.

- Gnawali, L. (2008). Teacher development: What is it and who is responsible? *Bodhi, An Interdisciplinary Journal of Department of Language and Mass Communications*, 2(1).
- Gnawali, L. (2011). Promoting ELE in Nepal: The NELTA way. In L. Farrell, U. N. Singh, & R. A. Giri (Eds.), *English language education in South Asia: From policy to pedagogy*. New Delhi: Foundation Books.
- Griffiee, D. T. (2012). *An introduction to second language research methods: Design and data*. Berkeley: TESL-EJ Publications.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation: Judging the quality of fourth generation evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Guskey, T. R. (1995). Professional development in education: In search of the optimal mix. In T. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices* (pp. 114-131). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harwell S. H. (2003). Teacher professional development: It's not an event, it's a process. Waco, Texas: CORD. Retrieved from <http://www.cord.org/uploadedfiles/harwellpaper.pdf>
- Hoepfl, M. C. (1997). Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers. *Journal of Technology Education*, 9(1). Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v9n1/hoepfl.html>.
- IATEFL. (2012). *Associates*. Retrieved from [www.iatefl.org/associates/](http://www.iatefl.org/associates/)
- Johnson, J. (2009). Ways to continuing professional development. Retrieved from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/ways-continuing-professional-development>



- Johnson, K. E. (2009). Trends in second language teacher education. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jung, C.G. (1921). *Psychological types*. Retrieved from [www.Abika.com](http://www.Abika.com)
- Kallenbach, S., Lee, K. S., Downs-Karkos, S., & Taylor, M. B. (2013). *Adult education and immigrant integration: Networks for integrating new Americans*. Washington DC: World Education.
- Khan, R. (2011). The role of ELT professional associations in South Asia: A case. In L. Farrell, U. N. Singh, & R. A. Giri (Eds.), *English language education in South Asia: From policy to pedagogy*. New Delhi: Foundation Books.
- Khanna, A. L. (2011). ELT professional associations: Their changing roles and responsibilities. In L. Farrell, U. N. Singh, & R. A. Giri (Eds.), *English language education in South Asia: From policy to pedagogy*. New Delhi: Foundation Books.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning*. New Jersey, NY: Prentice Hall.
- Kolesnikova, T. (2011). *Use of appropriate tools in village teacher professional development*. Paper presented at the International Conference organized by the British Council in Hyderabad in January 2011.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lieberman, A., & Pointer M. D. (2008). Teacher learning: The key to education reform. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(3), 226-234.
- Lin, N. (2001). *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Denzin, N. K. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- MacBeath, J. (2012). Learning and teaching: Are they any chance related. In C. McLaughlin (Ed.), *Teachers learning: Professional development and education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mann, S. (2005). The language teacher's development. *Language Teaching*, 38, 103–118. doi:10.1017/S0261444805002867
- McLaughlin, M.W., & Zarrow, J. (2001), Teachers engaged in evidence based research: Trajectories of teachers' enquiry, analysis and action. In A. Lieberman & L. Miller (Eds.), *Teachers caught in action: Professional development that matters*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Meighan, R., Harber, C., & Meighan, J. (1989). Democratic practice: A missing item on the agenda of teacher education. In C. Harber & R. Meighan (Eds.), *The democratic school educational management and the practice of democracy*. Ticknall, Derbyshire: Education Now.
- Merriam, S. B., & Brockett, R. G. (2007). *The profession and practice of adult education: An introduction*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ministry of Education. (2009). *School sector reform plan 2009-2015*. Kathmandu: Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2012). *Mid-term evaluation of the school sector reform programme*. Kathmandu: Author .
- Morse, S., & McNamara, N. (2013). *Sustainable livelihood approach: A critique of theory and practice*. Houten: Springer

- National Centre for Education Development. (2009). *Independent technical review of teacher education project*. Sanothimi, Bhaktapur: Author.
- National Centre for Education Development. (2011). *Teacher development policy guidelines*. Sanothimi, Bhaktapur: Author.
- National Council for Teacher Education. (2009). *National curriculum framework for teacher education: Towards preparing professional and humane teacher*. New Delhi: Author.
- NELTA Profile* (2011). Kathmandu: NELTA.
- NELTA Statute* (1992). Kathmandu: NELTA.
- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Odhiambo, F., & Nganyi, D. O. (2007). Sharing examples of existing successful practice in ELT associations in East Africa. *English Language Teacher Education, 10*.
- Owen-Smith J. (2011) Network Theory: The Basics. Lecture Notes, University Of Michigan, Michigan.
- Padwad, A. (2011). *Professional development- Why bother?* Paper presented at the International Conference organized by the British Council in Hyderabad in January 2011.
- Padwad, A., & Dixit, K.K. (2008). Impact of professional learning community participation on teachers' thinking about classroom problems. *TESL-EJ, 12*(3).
- Pandey, D. (2008). *An experience in teaching english in rural Nepal*. Retrieved from <http://www2.cffn.ca/usha/volunteer-experiences/17-an-experience-in-teaching-english-in-rural-nepal-deepak-pandey-2008> on 2011-02-13

- Pant, J. R. (2012, October). *Teacher training in Nepal: Reflection and realities*. Retrieved from <http://neltachoutari.wordpress.com/2012/09/01/teacher-training-in-nepal-reflection-and-realities/>
- Pickering, G. (2008). *Strengthening teacher associations: Regional project review Report*. Kathmandu: British Council.
- Quick, H., Holtzman, D., & Chaney, K. (2009). Professional development and instructional practice: Conceptions and evidence of effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 14(1), 45-71
- Reimers, E. V. (2003). *Teacher professional development: An international review of the literature*. Retrieved from UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning website [www.unesco.org/iiep](http://www.unesco.org/iiep)
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2009). *Second language teacher education today*. Retrieved from <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/wp-content/uploads/second-language-teacher-education-today-2009.pdf>
- Richards, J. C., & Nunan, D. (Eds.). (1990). *Second language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan
- Rijal, M. (2011). *Opportunities and practices of teacher professional development in the school setting*. An unpublished master's dissertation). School of Education, Kathmandu University, Nepal.
- Rijal, R. (2013). Professional development of English language teachers in Nepal (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

- Rizvi, F. (1992). Educative leadership in multicultural society. In P. A. Dugnan & R. J. S. Macpherson (Eds.), *Educative leadership a practical theory for new administrators and managers*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Sams, D. A. (2010). *An Analysis of leadership beliefs and practices of 25 TESOL leaders* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). School of Graduate Studies and Research, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Sarwar, Z. (1994). *The role of professional organisations in teacher development*. Paper presented at the second NELTA conference, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Schön, D. A. (1973). *Beyond the stable state. Public and private learning in a changing society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Senge, P. M. (2004). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sharma, S. (2012). *Growing together with NELTA*. Retrieved from <http://neltachoutari.wordpress.com/2012/09/01/growing-together-with-nelta/>
- Shrestha, K. N. (2008). Teacher development and management at Secondary education in Nepal. *Journal of Education and Research*, 1(1).
- Smith, M. K. (2003, 2009). Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger and communities of practice. In *The encyclopedia of informal education*. Retrieved from [www.infed.org/biblio/communities\\_of\\_practice.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/communities_of_practice.htm)
- Stormy, P. (2009). *Why do people go to conferences?* Retrieved from <http://stormy.scorner.com>
- Szestay, M. (2004). An association of teachers is as its members make it. *IATEFL Issues*, August-September, p.23.

- Szesztay, M. (2006). Teacher associations at the crossroads? In A. Falcão & M. Szesztay (Eds.), *Developing an association for language teachers: An introductory handbook* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) Kent: IATEFL Publications.
- Tarnas, R. (1991). *The passion of the Western mind*. London: Random House.
- TESOL. (2007). *Position statement on the role of teachers' associations in education policy and planning*. Retrieved from [www.tesol.org/about-tesol/press-room/position-statements/teacher-education-position-statements](http://www.tesol.org/about-tesol/press-room/position-statements/teacher-education-position-statements)
- TESOL. (2011). *An introduction to TESOL's global affiliates*. Retrieved from <http://www.tesol.org/docs/default-source/affiliate-library/worldwide-affiliates-list-nov-2013.pdf?sfvrsn=6>
- TESOL: Associations. (2011). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/links/TESOL/Associations/>
- Tripp, D. (1985). *From autopilot to critical conscious: Problematising successful teaching*. Paper presented at the Sixth Conference on Curriculum and Classroom Practice. Dayton, Ohio.
- Underhill, A. (1986). Editorial. *Teacher Development Newsletter*, 1(1).
- Underhill, A. (1988). Training development and teacher education. *Teacher Development Newsletter*, 1(1).
- White, R., Martin, M., Stimson, M., & Hodge, R. (1991). *Management in English language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, T. (2000). Teacher development: A personal view. *CAVES English Teaching*, 24, 38-43.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. London: The Guilford Press.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Interview Protocol for NELTA members**

1. When did you hear about NELTA? When did you join it? How long have you been a member of this association?
2. What made you decide to join it? Does the same reason still hold true? What did you expect to gain when you joined NELTA?
3. How do you see yourself as a professional now and the time you just joined? What changes have taken place in your professional strength? How has NELTA helped you in your professional development?
4. How have your expectations been met? What have you been able to do professionally because you have been a member of NELTA?
5. When you entered NELTA, what did you bring with you for NELTA? How has NELTA benefitted from you? What is the give and take between you and NELTA?
6. Do all members benefit in the same way? If not, what makes the difference? What kind of members avail the opportunities? Does NELTA benefit from all members in the same? How?
7. Please recall an incident or an event pleasant or unpleasant, that happened to you with you in relation to NELTA?
8. How has NELTA helped you in creating and or expanding your professional network?
9. Has NELTA helped you in personality development? How? How are you different now than before?
10. How has NELTA enhanced your social prestige?
11. What opportunities does NELTA create for its members? How does it create them?
12. Do the members help NELTA grow? How do they help them? Do all members do that?
13. How does NELTA make its members expect more? How do they develop higher ambitions?

## Appendix 2: Interview Protocol for NELTA Members (Last Round)

Dear respondent,

This is a follow-up of the interviews I had with you last year as part of my PhD study. In course of data analysis, a few issues arose and I am back to you. Please spare some time and respond to these questions.

Please insert your responses in the cells following the respective questions. Expand as required. I am thankful to you for your continued support. It would be helpful for me if you could send me the responses by coming Saturday.

Laxman Gnawali PhD Scholar KU

1. I can see that the professional development opportunities that NELTA promises in its statute (bidhan) and strategic planning are not fully realized. There are gaps between the promises in the documents and members' experiences as shown by the interview data. Please explain why? What are the reasons?
Response to Q 1
2. In our last meeting you said that not all members benefit from the professional development opportunities at NELTA and the level of development also varies. Why do you think that happens?
Response to Q 2
3. You also indicated that not all members contribute to the capability enhancement and network expansion of NELTA. What may be the reasons? What keeps all members from contributing?
Response to Q 3



### Appendix 3: Interview Protocol with NELTA Office Bearers

Dear Participant,

This is a brief interview as part of my PhD study. My area of research is English Language Teacher *development through professional associations: The NELTA way*. I have conducted interviews with some NELTA members and done preliminary data analysis. In course of data analysis, a few issues arose and I decided to add extra respondents. Please spare some time and respond to these questions. Be assured that your name and other personal information will be kept confidential. Please respond honestly. It would be helpful for me if you could send me the responses by coming Sunday. Please insert your responses in the cells following the respective questions. Expand as required.

Laxman Gnawali, PhD Scholar KU

4. I can see that the professional development opportunities that NELTA promises in its statute (bidhan) and strategic planning are not fully realized. There are gaps between the promises in the documents and members' experiences as expressed by some members. Please explain why? What are the reasons?
Response to Q 1
5. The data collected so far indicate that not all members benefit from the professional development opportunities at NELTA and the level of development also varies. Why do you think that happens?
Response to Q 2
6. The data also indicate that not all members contribute to the capability enhancement and network expansion of NELTA. Only limited number of NELTA are involved its growth. What may be the reasons? What keeps all members from contributing?
Response to Q 3

**Appendix 4: Interview Protocol for NNTA, NTA and PABSON Office bearers**

1. What are the aims and objectives of your organization?
2. What activities does it organise?
3. What does it do to help teachers in their professional development? What are the policies and activities?
4. How do the teachers support your organization?

### **Appendix 5: Provisions in the Key Documents**

The literature review showed that the teacher networks and associations bring the benefits to their members. So, I wanted to explore what teacher professional development opportunities NELTA formally offers to its members. For this, I tried to see from two perspectives: what NELTA says it offers and what the members see it offers. First I would like present the perspective of NELTA as an association. Then I will present it from the members' perspectives.

To explore the teacher professional development opportunities that NELTA formally offers, I went through two documents of NELTA that outline NELTA's policy and activities: NELTA's Statute and Strategic Plan 2011-13.

When I went through the statute of NELTA, I saw that it was more of legal document than strategies for the teacher development. However, it has stated the objectives of the association that it will work as a common forum for teachers of English in Nepal. Then, I read NELTA Profile in which the same objectives were adopted, but before the objectives the vision and mission have been added. So, I felt that the prospectus has a bigger coverage for what NELTA is upto, so I analyzed its content too.

The 2011 Profile states that the vision of NELTA is "Enhanced quality of English language teaching and learning in Nepal and high degree of professionalism among the ELT professionals". This vision focuses on the quality of ELT and links it to the teachers' professionalism in their outlook and attitude. So the essence of this statement is that professionally developed teachers can increase the quality of ELT. It also indicates that the sense of professionalism in teachers is what triggers further professional development initiatives. Once some development takes place, they can explore their own avenues.

Following the spirit and essence of the vision statement, the prospectus states its mission statement that clarifies that the NELTA will be established as a forum for enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning through professional networking, supporting and collaboration. The three words networking, support and collaboration look at the idea of working together: being on a network is to exchange support and also to undertake collaborative activities. Based upon the vision and mission statements, the document has stated the goals of NELTA as an association. The words *objectives* and *goals* seem to be used interchangeably because the same items have been termed as goals as well as objectives. Anyway, I am going to use the word goal for my discussion purpose.

I thought I would analyse only those goals that relate to the TPD activities but I saw that all its goals have the intent that its members have opportunities for their professional development. There are nine goals altogether but they can be divided into three sets. One set of goals are directly related to teacher professional support and development. The first goal is to foster professionalism among the ELT professionals by creating opportunities and challenges for which the second and third goals help materialize. Other goals state that NELTA will “provide training and other professional development services to ELT professionals; and develop support mechanism for teachers working in more outlying and under resourced regions of Nepal.” So, an association aims to prove that it not only creates opportunities but also implements the plan it develops to help teachers grow and develop. It also

The other set goals are of policy level or organizational level but in the end they also intend create an environment for teachers to grow and develop. These goals intend to provide a forum for exchanges of ideas and experiences at national, regional and international level; collaborate with government, non-government and

international agencies in various ELT activities, and promote professional network nationally and internationally with ELT associations. NELTA seems to work towards the networking in the country with the government agencies and in non-government sector as far the partnering organization related in some way to the ELT field.

The third set of goals are stated as follows: carry out research and consultancy services for the promotion of ELT, develop English language teaching and learning materials relevant to local and international contexts, provide advisory support for policy formulation and implementation. They aim at working in the professional research, doing consultancy services, providing advisory support to the government, and also developing the ELT materials.

Though the goals seem to benefit the non-NELTA agencies through these services, the members who will be involved in delivering these activities will also develop their own expertise in the process. When NELTA does something, it is the members who perform it. As they perform, they knowledge, skills and motivation for such professional activities goes up.

The vision, mission and goals are written in kind of abstraction that needs concrete actions to materialise so the members are benefitted. As an insider of NELTA for eight years, I knew the general activities that NELTA does including developing strategic planning. Just to verify if the same tradition continues, I talked to the sitting President and General Secretary. They informed that the strategic planning had been updated in 2011. The planning drawing its main ideas from the vision, mission and goals is discussed below.

The planning is thematic, and time bound. Each theme is worked out in different activities and the date of accomplishment is determined. Usually there s one Central committee member is the lead person for that activity. For my purpose, I

picked up those themes and activities that are related to professional development of teachers. (Appendix 1)

The types of activities that are planned, we find several strategies that help the teachers develop. These activities include training to receive and to conduct, to publish, to organize events, to network. The planning provides that the members are involved in the process in all activities. They also plan and deliver higher order activities such as research convincing the donor agencies that they can deliver as promised.

The planning is thematic, and time bound. Each theme is worked out in different activities and the date of accomplishment is determined. Usually there s one Central committee member is the lead person for that activity. For my purpose, I picked up those themes and activities that related to my research.

- a. NELTA believes that its leadership should development in a planned way. So, it runs training for its executive members that are potential senior leaders for the future. This activity is planned at an on-going basis. Looking at this phenomenon from members' perspective, these committee members who get leadership training are also teachers who teach English or train English teacher and are affiliated. Training to NELTA lead does end with the NELTA activities but they get the skills for life. Their leadership skills benefit them personally and the school or University they work for.
- b. Another plan that NELTA included in the strategic planning is resource generation. This would be realised by training package development for different school levels, and also running an academic writing course. In the process throughout, NELTA members would be involved thereby sharpening

their skills in the said area. The tasks would be accomplished within a stipulated time.

- c. NELTA has teacher support materials and one of them is Classroom English written by one of the past office bearers of NELTA. This book is to help teachers to learn the language functions required for managing the classes. In the 2011 planning, it was going to be revised and published as the second edition. Again, the NELTA members would do that task within six months.
- d. NELTA also plans to publish supplementary materials and resource materials for schools teachers, also publishing local stories representing different languages, cultures, geography. It plans to divide the tasks among its members and go ahead with the schedule.
- e. Making resources available is one of the strengths of NELTA. It has Resource Centres at the Centre and at the branches. The resource centre consists of a library, computers, and internet. For this it planned in 2011 to request to the government agencies, NGOs, international missions within one year.
- f. The plan includes teacher training for public and private school English teachers and the themes include English language development courses. Again this would be developed by the members and delivered. They will assess the needs and develop the package accordingly.
- g. NELTA members are in this way or the other involved in the Education ministry's activities. One of them is the administration of listening and speaking tests in the SLC examination. So, NELTA planned to conduct continuing training for the examiners so they can conduct the tests well. The trainers would be experienced members of NELTA.

- h. NELTA conducts professional research for other organizations. But since 2008, it has been involved in large scale research titled ELT survey of Nepal. Initial activities have been done: team formation, detailed proposal development, and approaching partners, conduct piloting. The plan was to conduct the survey and write the report and disseminate. Only the NELTA members were and would be involved in the whole process.
- i. NELTA maintains a website that gives information about the NELTA and its activities, uploads NELTA Journals, Newsletters. The 2011 planning aimed to updating it. Except the web related technical part, all the tasks are carried out the NELTA members.
- j. NELTA members maintain a blogzine where they publish articles and other materials. They have rotational editorial responsibility. The 2011 plan would select the best stories/articles and publish. The plan was also to publish an anthology on ELT collecting the papers from its members.
- k. The planning also included its next conference to be held in 2012. The members divide the task for the theme selection, exploring key speakers, disseminating information, resource generation and so on. The conference proceedings would be published.

The accomplished activities were not reported in one document and some were not properly reported. So, I asked the office bearers if the 2011 planning really represented the activities NELTA conducted and they replied that the planning was a regular phenomenon and all the activities were accomplished, mostly in time and a few later than planned. Anyway, when we see the types of activities that are planned and executed, we find several strategies that helped the teachers developed. These activities include training to receive and to conduct, to publish, to organize events, to



network. The members are involved in the process in all activities. They also plan and deliver higher order activities such as research convincing the donor agencies that they can deliver as promised.