

Ways of enhancing joyful teaching and learning in a graduate class of Nepal

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Abstract

Adapting a Living Educational Theory Research methodology, I discuss how my teaching, my learning, and my research contributed to the enhancement of joyful teaching and learning in a university classroom. I share my own living-educational-theory that influenced me, my colleagues, students, and the university culture. Inspired by Bhagavad Gita and using a participatory action research design and dialogue method, I collected and analyzed data from reflective journals, presentations, assignments, and blog writing. In this paper, I present a cluster of five context-responsive approaches (voluntary participation, valuing a sense of wonderment, respecting interdependence, enhancing the Culture of Inquiry, and adapting aesthetic inquiry) as I answer the question: *How can I enhance joyful teaching and learning in my graduate classes?* Finally, I share three prerequisites and a challenge of promoting joyful teaching and learning in higher educational contexts.

Keywords: Higher education; joy; Living Educational Theory Research; culture of inquiry; dialogue as a research method

Introduction

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सातत्वकिं निर्मलं फलम् |
रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्जानंतमसः फलम् || 16 ||

It is said the fruit of actions performed in the mode of goodness bestow pure results. Actions that are done in the mode of passion result in pain, while those performed in the mode of ignorance result in darkness. <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/14/verse/16>

In this article, I describe and explain my practitioner research using Living Educational Research (Whitehead, 1989) in a Culture of Inquiry (Delong, 2013) with our community in preparing for our AERA 2021 symposium, entitled, "Accepting Educational Responsibility: Building Living Theory Cultures of Educational Inquiry in Global Contexts". This article explores context-responsive joyful teaching and learning approaches in the interdisciplinary university classroom setting by seeking to answer the question: *How could I enhance joyful teaching and learning in graduate classes?* This research was prompted by my experience that influenced my learning and the learning of my colleagues and students.

Socio-historical-cultural context

Current Professional Context

Right after my Ph.D. award, I joined (July 2023) the Kathmandu University School of Education in the Continuing and Professional Education Centre (CPEC) as a program coordinator. The program of CPEC, Continuing and Professional Education Program (CPEP), was developed or designed from the learning/insight of my Ph.D. research, a living model of TPD. Through this program, I am reaching out to the community and offering school-based programs to the teachers of schools, colleges, and universities for their continuous professional development. This way, I am enhancing community and University relationships, supporting teachers in pursuing university education and professional development in their workplace. I adapted the socio-cultural-historical conceptual framework (tama-raja-satva) and action research design to support teachers in improving their curriculum, pedagogical and assessment knowledge. CPEP has influenced my learning, teachers' learning, and the learning in my social formation, the university. I am also a living theorist who has been experiencing the enhancement of my living values within and through the culture of inquiry since 2020 (Dhungana, 2020).

Socio-Historical-Cultural Context of Learning

Let me explain my interpretation of some of my Eastern Wisdom Tradition influences and understandings.

Prior to commencing my inquiry process, I had an uncritical assumption that 'karma (work or action) as dharma' (right or good action) as working is enough. In the process of inquiry, I realized that working alone cannot be enough unless the actor acts for the common good. I explored the deep meaning of 'karma as dharma' as working for the common good. Perhaps I was informed by Buddhist philosophy which promotes right or good action. Accordingly, good action is to take on higher social responsibilities; for example,

to work for the common good in an educational context in general and a classroom context in particular. In such a situation, the good action could mean my taking voluntary responsibility for co-facilitating, co-learning, cooperation, and collaboration with a sense of interdependence and interconnectedness.

However, being a student, I was limited to learning from teachers, and being a teacher, I was limited to teaching students. I acted but lacked enough goodness (sense of common good) in my professional practice. Deep inside I did not experience sufficient joy in my Nepali university classrooms.

I valued joy. However, my uncritical belief in karma as dharma developed my passion for teaching and learning. Enhanced passion (obsession) did not let me experience and promote joyful teaching and learning. Instead, it caused increased restlessness unless I worked for the common good. Joyful teaching and learning were for the common good and contributed to my learning and the learning of my students.

I believe that joyful teaching and learning in the university setting is both possible and necessary. My doctoral study (Dhungana, 2022) showed that an action-oriented or passion-driven teachers' professional development model was one of the reasons for the joyless professional learning culture in Nepal. Passion was essential but obsession increased restlessness, not goodness (e.g., joy, happiness, harmony) (Dhungana, 2022). While for many years I was deeply engaged in completing courses in the name of being a passionate teacher, I did not experience the peace that was supportive of fostering joyful teaching and learning. Instead, I experienced restlessness and disharmony.

Joy is a spiritual value of a successful workplace (Marques et al., 2007). However, too often it seems to be overlooked. When I was a student, I perceived teachers as evolved beings; therefore, teachers (including myself) need to use their teaching to enhance their students' lives. My socio-cultural-historical educational tradition of perceiving a teacher as a guru was deeply rooted. According to Senese et al., 2014, a teacher educator must cultivate curiosity, trust, and community for dynamic synthesis of theoretical knowledge and practical insight in order to enhance the ability to manage paradox and tension. Recognizing this, I got an insight that a balance of theoretical knowledge and practical insight might be possible in such circumstances and contribute to a joyful teaching and learning context.

However, the positive influence of the value and experience of joy seems to be overlooked. My study (Dhungana, 2020b) showed that joy is and should be a professional value for in-service teachers in the context of interdisciplinary teaching and learning in Nepal. "Living love" is my living educational value that carries the values of love, care, respect, and joy (Dhungana, 2020b). These values influence the self and learners positively through joyful teaching and learning in a school setting. With this in mind, I argue that joy is an inherent quality of a teacher, and joyful teaching and learning in the university setting is both possible and necessary.

I continue here explaining these concepts that I was trying to implement within the university classroom and tell the story of how I did it. Joyfulness or happiness (beyond passion) is the inherent quality that can be achieved in the mode of goodness (the Bhagavad Gita, 14:27). Goodness is the state of oneness or non-division, and where there is no division, there can be love (Krishnamurti & Hunkin, 2020). In this respect, the Bhagavad Gita, a recognized body of spiritual work, values goodness as the highest form of quality. Chapter

14, verse 5 states that “material nature consists of three modes: satva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance).” It is culturally believed that goodness is the highest mode, the best attribute or quality that humans can possess.

Humans have all three qualities, but they can be dominated by one of the qualities. When we are dominated by satva, considered as satvic people, we become inquisitive (14:11). Rajasic people have a passion for action that arises from desire and attachment (14:7) and prefer to remain in their comfort zone and tamasic people seem selfish and lazy as a consequence of their ignorance (14:8). The idea of inherent qualities (e.g. passion) is not merely based on belief but on my experiential knowledge. This has influenced my students' learning about their learning. This study also references my learning, as it contributed to the shift in my perspective.

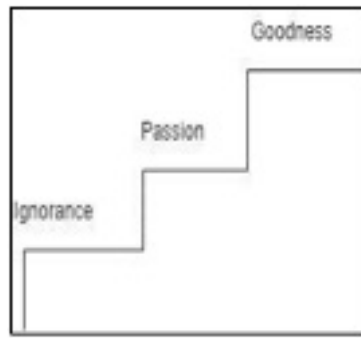


Figure 1. The three modes

I think the three states are loosely connected to Wilber's (1997) notion of 'I-we-all of us' as tamasic people seem more self-centric, rajasic seem more 'we' centric and satvic people seem more 'world centric'. Among the three modes, the attainment of goodness is the highest human attribute, form, or state (the Bhagavad Gita). For instance, the following verse of the Bhagavad Gita (14:6) states:

तत्सत्त्वं नर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् |
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नातजिज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ || 6||

It means (my interpretation) satva, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illumining (enlightening) and full of well-being. It binds the soul with the rest by creating an attachment to a sense of happiness and knowledge. Although attachment to goodness seems achievable and useful in a teaching culture, going beyond it is the goal of a spiritual or blissful journey.

In the context of education, I connect satva or goodness with the qualities (openness, inclusiveness, inquisitiveness, and joyfulness) of learners who engage in 'sat karma' (good work or right action).

For instance, ignorance (i.e., tamas) is the quality of remaining in the comfort zone and the state of being unaware of the unknown which discourages a person from acting. Passion (i.e., rajas) is the quality of engaging in action which encourages one to be passionate. But passion does not sustain happiness or peace within. Beyond passion, there is goodness (i.e., satva), which is the quality of being joyful while engaging in activities.

I realised that I was joyful when I engaged in teaching for the common good. I could ensure the sense of the common good when I could contribute to my learning and to the learning of my students. Therefore, sat karma or good action in the classroom context of a teacher is engaging in the teaching and learning process, not only teaching or learning. Thus, teaching and learning are for the common good and contribute to the learning of students and teachers.

I worked with the uncritical assumption that performing multiple actions passionately - in the context of education - cannot benefit all students and facilitators. Educators may be required to explore the multiple realities of being inquisitive and joyful and thereby thoroughly commit to responsible social and educational activities. The connection I made was that while I developed a sense of educational responsibility when I chose teaching as my profession, this sense of educational responsibility was not explicit until I connected the notion of satva (e.g., joy) from the Eastern Wisdom Traditions with the emancipatory teachings of Habermas (1972). Through this, I also found limiting teaching to human cognitive interests meant less focus on the affective aspect of our life and learning. The reason for this is that traditionally educational pedagogical practice tends to engage more with the mind than the heart. There is a lively body of literature on Freirean 'critical pedagogy' which asks useful questions about ethics, justice, and politics (e.g. Reed, 2018). The Living Educational Theory Research (Whitehead, 1989) process gives this study social and political relevance and encourages my focus on my value of joy when other theories of education may not find 'joy' irrelevant but too weak considering it may not work for global justice and well-being. I focus on human and spiritual qualities such as the intuitive heart and the merit of living values such as love, care, respect, and joy of a mentor or teacher as explanatory principles to explain influence on self and others.

Theoretical framework

I believe that I can influence people significantly by living my living-educational-theory, living love (Dhungana, 2020b) rather than by relying on traditional beliefs and theories. Living love transcends the rajasic (passion) (Dhungana, 2020b) and thereby satvic (joy) quality lives in me, colleagues (Dhungana, 2022), and my students. Living love, the theory of living heart, refers to 'being lovingly' (loving, caring, respectful, and joyful) in life and in professional practices for the common good (Dhungana, 2020b). Love shares the qualities of satva, for example, openness, inquisitiveness, joyfulness, sense of working for a common good. As we all possess satvic qualities, we can enhance satva by living the value of joy to the fullest. Living joy creates a joyful teaching and learning space: if I am happy, I can create a safe learning space where learners engage in learning happily.

Methods

I draw insight from many methods and methodologies to create my own living-educational-theory methodology. Inspired by LaBoskey (2004), I found self-study a suitable methodology for me, as a teacher educator. It supported me to do a self-study to examine my enhancing or evolving living values. My research was intended to transform myself (uncritical to self-critical) first and then my students by enhancing my approach to joyful teaching and learning for the common good. The cyclical processes of participatory action

research (Kemmis, 2008), plan-act-observe-reflect, supported me continuously to improve my teaching and learning. Roughly dividing each of my classes into reflection, action, observation, and reflective planning sessions I, in collaboration with my colleagues and students, undertook this research for one year, through two semesters of work with Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) graduates of the University of Nepal. The one-year research process (from January 2020 to January 2021) employed dialogue as a method (DeLong, 2020). Like Willink and Jacobs (2011), I drew on my teaching experiences and on students' writing in electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) during the one-year research project. The e-portfolios include students' artworks and designs, reflective journal entries, blog writing, and reflective articles that hold evidence of the ways of enhancing joyful teaching and learning in graduate classes: through taking on voluntary tasks; valuing a sense of wonderment; respecting interdependence; enhancing the culture of inquiry (DeLong, 2013); and undertaking and adapting aesthetic inquiry methods. I will share each of these interventions.

Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation for the common good can make us inquisitive and joyful and can prepare us to take educational responsibility. For instance, on 24 December 2019, I sent an email to my supervisor offering to do a volunteer assistantship. This created a suitable space to take social responsibility as in my culture volunteering is one of the ways of taking social responsibility. In the email, I wrote: *"Among them, Participatory Action Research seems very friendly! I am eager to learn more and grow better as your assistant."* His instant positive response delighted me. After some days, I got the opportunity to learn and work with M. Phil students in the Department of STEAM Education, particularly in the Participatory Action Research course/class. I was happy to become a mentor to support my students to explore and enjoy their potential (Yamamoto, 1988). In taking the role of a mentor, I enjoyed providing a safe (e.g., loving and caring) space for digging deeply to explore joy within (Yamamoto, 1988).

Seemingly, my inquisitiveness led me from *tamas* (ignorance) to *rajas* (passion) while voluntary participation allowed me to be with others including critical friends, facilitators, and students, and provided a suitable space for co-learning thereby growing my experience from *rajas* to *satva* (goodness). The co-learning space was a curious and passionate space for me: a space in which I participated joyfully from the beginning of the day and that supported me in enhancing my sense of taking higher responsibility.

Similarly, my journey of taking educational responsibility continues with the response, *"Great to hear from you. I would love to blind-review this paper. Yes, I can do it and I will do it"* to the email of the EJOLTS Editor dated 29 October 2020, who wrote: *I was wondering whether you might enjoy reviewing this paper and as you review it you might also find it helps you to develop your understanding of Living Educational Theory research.* Although it was a new task for me, I took an initiative and it expanded my horizon. From the experience of peer-reviewing, I could compare and contrast and situate local university education policy and practices within a global context. From that experience, I learned that there is a need to empower Nepalese facilitators and student-teachers to take on voluntary

tasks and to encourage values-based inquiry (Living Educational Theory Research) by the teacher educators of our universities.

Moreover, I found that I influenced my students by creating inquisitive and joyful spaces so that students could take on voluntary tasks for the common good. I created opportunities for students' voluntary participation through in-class observation, peer teaching, peer review, peer feedback, peer evaluation, and group assessment. These opportunities challenged them to enhance their inquisitiveness and happiness. For instance, on 2/9/2020 a student experienced excitement from peer teaching and wrote in her reflective journal, *"I was excited and nervous. The task was challenging as I was eager to provide proper ideas to the participants. Hence, they understood what I wanted to explain, which will help them develop their proposal easily."* If I was only critical, without loving and caring, the students might not continue peer teaching and learning and to learn through being both challenged and joyful.

The students' excitement and challenge within a safe space created a synergistic effect. There were mixed feelings of excitement and challenge and the students felt responsible. Overall, they found immense pleasure in their voluntary participation. For instance, on 23/9/2020 a student wrote in her journal:

I felt a huge responsibility playing the role of co-facilitator. Although I was supposed to present my research topic and the methodology I had planned to use, I was agitated as I was unsure. But having finished my role as co-facilitator, I felt immense pleasure and could feel my research journey clear.

Thus, the educational responsibility this student accepted enhanced her pleasure in teaching and learning. This added clarity to her understanding and, I think, the student experienced pleasure as a spiritual quality. Similarly, she experiences voluntary co-teaching as joyful engagement that contributes to meaningful participation in teaching and learning.

Further, peer feedback delighted the students. For instance, on 23/9/2020, a student wrote in his reflective note, *"First of all I am very grateful to my classmates and Parbati Ma'am for providing me some constructive feedback. Definitely, my peer feedback helped me a lot to realize what to focus on from now onwards."* Similarly, another student expressed his gratitude towards a classmate on the same day. He said, *"I am very thankful to my classmates and co-facilitator. My co-facilitator helped me find out missing parts of the research methodology. I am grateful."* In line with Andrews & Clark (2009), reciprocal peer learning and support involved students in an educationally-focused relationship. They supported each other academically over a specific time.

Moreover, the sense of responsibility enhanced students' critical self-reflection as they engaged in a self-audit activity by developing evaluation criteria through dialogue and critical self-assessment. The self-audit included critical self-reflective questions such as, What did I do? What didn't I do? How can I improve what I have been doing? Student responses suggest the sense of volunteering enhanced their inquisitiveness and happiness. The voluntary task motivated all of us to take educational responsibility. For instance, I began to support my colleagues struggling with writing dissertations. I was inspired by Jackie DeLong's living value "Culture of Inquiry" (DeLong, 2013) and "dialogue as a research method" (DeLong, 2020) and I took social responsibility. In short, voluntary

participation enhanced facilitators' and students' sense of self, and their educational responsibilities in many ways as it challenged us to support colleagues and students voluntarily and empathetically.

Valuing an (everyday) sense of wonderment

Sense of wonderment refers to an aesthetic quality that each individual possesses including ignorance and passion. Valuing an everyday sense of wonderment can provide an opportunity to pose a self-reflective question, 'How can we improve what we have been doing?' We can then seek a better solution to immediate problems.

In my work and my life, I have valued the sense of wonderment, including small everyday wonders. For instance, sometime in February 2019, I was in the University canteen. As my University shared premises with a School of Arts (Fine Arts), which runs Master's Classes, I noticed something important about the students of the two schools. I was amazed to see the Fine Arts students happier, more joyful, more spontaneous, and more enthusiastic than the students of Education. For instance, some students were playing outside, some others were sitting in the canteen in a big group and talking joyfully. I could easily differentiate the students of arts and education by their outfits, body language, and movements. The students of Fine Arts dressed in informal clothing, had bright faces, and were carefree in their movements whereas students of Education looked more formal, serious, and rushed. The fine arts students were sitting in pairs or small groups, whereas education students were sitting with their laptops, absorbed in work. 'Why this difference?', 'Is it because of students' engagement with their study area?', 'Is it because of age and level differences?'

Further, those queries inspired me to plan together with a colleague to integrate arts activities and approaches into the Education courses that I teach. For instance, I used arts-based pedagogy to facilitate a Participatory Action Research class to create a joyful learning environment for the M. Phil students. In line with Mehta, Keenan Henriken, and Mishra (2019) I integrated arts to generate "aesthetic experiences of beauty, curiosity, wonder, awe, and the inherent pleasure of figuring things out" (p. 118) among the learners of interdisciplinary groups. Perhaps, my embodied knowledge, the living value of joy (Dhungana, 2020), supported me to be inquisitive. Moreover, I used different art forms like pictures, photos, videos, stories, drawings, poetry, and plays throughout my Ph. D research. My engagement with the arts convinced me that work of this kind helps teachers to develop a joyful working space in a community school (Dhungana, 2020 b).

Therefore, I was encouraged to integrate arts with a strong belief that art integration can create a joyful and co-learning learning environment for STEAM graduates. Thus, my belief was grounded in my satva. (I discuss more on arts integration in a later section.)

Further, intending to develop the value of an everyday sense of wonderment, I (along with a colleague) absented ourselves from the class without informing the students. Our aim was to encourage them to develop their understanding of taking responsibility by peer teaching and learning. We hoped our absence would provide a free and safe space where students could freely expand their sense of responsibility. We could have informed them about our absence, but we decided to explore their value of trust and everyday

wonderment. In her blog one student shared how the unexpected moment surprised the class and how that turned into an influential moment:

The third class of PAR was unexpected. We had reached class in time, but both of our teachers were not there. They had left some written instructions as classwork. At first, we were all surprised and a little upset that our teachers did not inform us earlier that they won't be in class. I thought that I would not attend the class if they were not coming and if I had known it earlier. However, the course soon became effective. We planned to develop our case study, which was our first assessment. Also, we visited the library and searched the literature for our case study.

The unexpected moment created a safe space for peer teaching and learning and valued peer group support. Moreover, a student realized that a "trusted peer can influence himself and his friends". Another student learned that 'oops' moments can be 'wow' moments when there is an open space for discussion with friends, "Oops, why didn't they inform us they are not coming??... Wow... library visit and discussion with friends was really different and fruitful learning."

My journey of wonderment continued, and I encountered and explored multiple new perspectives upon vulnerability. For instance, on 8 May 2020 right after sharing my experience of my living-educational-theory and Living Educational Theory Research Methodology, a colleague sent me an email:

I liked how you brought Elbaz–Luwisch's undertaking of 'aha idea' as the seed of creativity; and that it has its inherent unique qualities...And at the same time, you quoted Luwisch that our challenge is to make it explicit. The word 'challenge' may come with many contradictions to the earlier 'Ah' undertaking of the seed of creativity. Who gave us this challenge? And for what purpose? Will the growth of the seed remain 'authentic' if some other subject is working on its natural tendency, thinking that it is a challenge for him/her to make the seed explicit? Maybe the 'author ego' is still there. The 'ego' says it is 'me' to make it explicit. It is 'my' challenge. A Sisypus challenge! Maybe when the 'sense of duty' ceases, the ego dissolves, and wisdom arises. Maybe this wisdom has perfect joy and blessedness.

His email added wonderment an 'aha moment'. I was receiving extended, appreciative, informative and constructive feedback for the first time, but I was curious to know what prompted him to share his aha moment and I immediately responded:

Aah! What a comment! It's always great to hear from you, particularly your philosophical and methodological understanding of my performance. I feel easy to share my vulnerability with you as you always create a safe space for that. If I did not get that space, I would not perform as I am performing today. You were always there with me on this adventurous journey. I respect you more!

At that moment I acknowledged that I was vulnerable. But I tried to explain that my vulnerability was not a weakness but my way of living. In his words, my 'sense of duty' ceased, the ego dissolved, and there arose the wisdom. Maybe that wisdom had perfect joy and blessedness. The vulnerability was not my ignorance but a space of knowing.

It is because I found my ego melting at the moment of being vulnerable that I began to explore something new, aha! I became open and empty when I was vulnerable. Others

might see me surrendering. However, I do not experience myself as a failure or as ignorant. Instead, I am killing my egoistic 'I' and being more conscious. I prepared myself to take greater responsibility when I became vulnerable. At that moment, I felt a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) and remembered my value, joy, and the life-affirming values that had previously seemed to be missing. I became vulnerable with those whom I trust. Gradually, I learned that there are multiple perspectives on vulnerability, the state of ignorance, and the stage of being open or receptive.

Then I introduced a class observation activity in which two students observed the class and shared their observation notes at the end of the class. Many students voluntarily participated in wonderment as they were smiling and openly sharing their experiences. Perhaps they were inquisitive to learn about observation (a method of data collection) from this activity which was not usual practice. For instance, they developed evaluation criteria, observed the class, and shared their observations. From this activity they learnt about observation and also developed a sense of accepting responsibility. For instance, sharing a class observation experience, a student wrote on 9/9/2020:

Being a classroom evaluator, first of all, I felt a huge responsibility. Having that responsibility, I was very conscious of how I can be helpful to the presenters and our facilitator and provide them with some constructive feedback so that they and I can learn how to make our classroom teaching-learning more fruitful and meaningful. Reflecting upon myself, I found myself clear on the concepts of my research journey. I also realized that nothing is wrong and right in learning. Learning is all about having the hunger to learn and be curious. So, I would like to thank Parbati ma'am for developing curiosity in me regarding my research proposal. Hope I will be able to feed my curiosity through upcoming classes.

I think students' enhanced curiosity was a result of their wonderment. Here, wonderment refers to inquisitiveness or curiosity. Their acceptance of the class observation activity (another educational responsibility) clarified their research process. Thus, I valued everyday wonderments and created a safe space for joyful teaching and learning that engaged the students to develop a sense of taking on higher responsibilities in learning.

Respecting interdependence

A sense of independence was a prerequisite for taking higher responsibility. Here, interdependence refers to accepting weaknesses and strengths and thereby using strengths to address deficiencies. Acceptance of this kind promotes mutually beneficial relationships and collaboration between students and teachers. Acceptance is the foundation of the spiritual workplace. As Marques, Dhiman, and King (2007, p. 43) state:

Acceptance may be seen as one of the main foundations of a spiritual workplace. The previously evaluated themes of respect, understanding, openness, honesty, encouragement, giving, trust, kindness, team orientation, few organizational barriers, a sense of peace and harmony, interconnectedness, and encouraging diversity all require acceptance to be possible.

As acceptance is the foundation of the spiritual workplace, fostering acceptance was central to my attempts to develop a sense of interdependency. To foster interdependence, I

tried to develop a sense of acceptance by enhancing cooperation and collaboration between students and colleagues.

For instance, I (including my colleague) continued building mutual relationships through our cooperation and collaboration, to improve our classroom practices. Students began to appreciate our participatory approach that valued students as co-learners and collaborators and valued values-laden research and working for the common good. Like the study of Dhungana et al. (2021) and Milford and Etmanski (2012), we collaborated to complement each other, and our collaboration was intended to address the queries of a multidisciplinary group of learners. For instance, my field experience supported my colleagues to address students' queries during the theoretical knowledge discussion. In the process, I realized that cooperation is a prerequisite for collaboration and acceptance and is necessary for developing a sense of interdependency.

Gradually, students developed a sense of interdependency. For instance, a student wrote about how collaboration (that shares the quality of interdependency) added excitement to his learning process:

My previous mindset and understanding of Participatory Action Research as other research methods in social science research has been drastically changed to practice it as a practice-changing practice by collaborating with the community of people. I am more empowered and automated for applying this research methodology in doing my M Phil research project which aims to improve the current pedagogical practices of mathematics and science by implementing STEAM as a pedagogical innovation. I am even more excited to use this research methodology and work with a community of people to transform our school education. This collaborative venture between researchers and co-researchers has led me to contribute to improving our educational practices.

Collaboration changed his mindset. His changed perspective added excitement to the process of learning and he developed the sense that he was contributing to improved educational practices. Similarly, one of the class observers found our class to be valuable because it was student-centric. He wrote:

... the best part of today's class was an activity where we have to write our feelings regarding our class, all our friends wrote and express their concerns and hoped for the best in the future classes. This activity resembles us in that we are in a collaborative and student's centric classroom where students' voices are listened to.

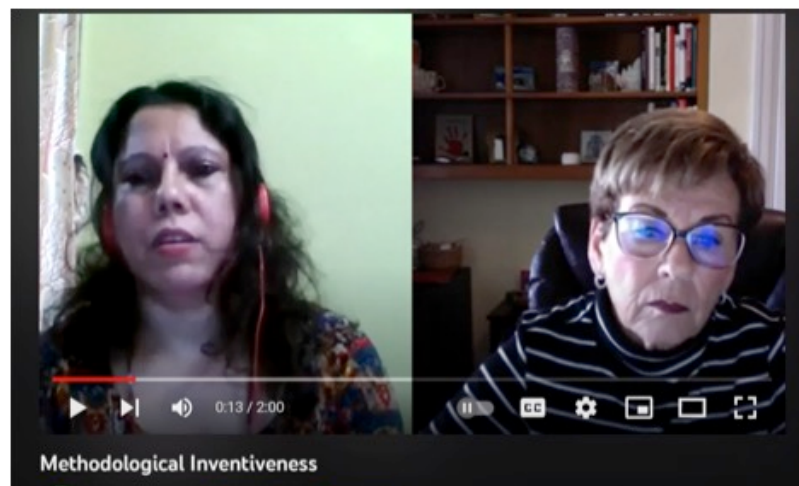
Similarly, a group of students took the initiative to support each other in understanding the research design and the research process that resulted in the formation of the Learning Community of Auto/ethnography. I think my encouragement to provide and receive constructive peer feedback and work in small groups created a safe space for the community to come together and co-learn about autoethnography. As a consequence, their sense of educational responsibility encouraged other students to form two other learning communities. Thus, our sense of interdependence enhanced our curiosity and happiness and expanded our activities and expertise.

Enhancing the culture of inquiry

“The Culture of Inquiry” (DeLong, 2020) preserves inquisitiveness and wonderment. We can pose as many questions as we like until we get a satisfactory answer. Here, “the culture of inquiry refers to a safe space where we can question, wonder and show our inquisitiveness and vulnerability” (DeLong & Whitehead, 2012). Just as a child asks endless questions, our childlike inquisitiveness, which lies deep within us (Palmer, 1997), can be revived and preserved by promoting the Culture of Inquiry. In Marshall’s (1999, p. 155) words, it involves the use of “inquiry as method” and “living life as inquiry”.

My journey of developing a Culture of Inquiry began with meeting Jackie DeLong in Croatia while attending CARN-ALARA Conference in 2019. Since then, Jackie has been creating a loving culture that supported me to develop my own living-educational-theory: “living love” (Dhungana, 2020b).

Similarly, whenever I feel I am stuck, I communicate with her on the process of my academic writing, including my Ph.D. Dissertation. The Culture of Inquiry not only supported me to become unstuck but to explore my potentialities. For instance, I could not have developed my living-educational-theory-methodology if she was not there to understand my articulation of the metaphorical presentation of “Ardhanarishwor” (an image that appears half Shiva and half Parvati which is a metaphoric representation of inherent masculine and feminine qualities of human) (Dhungana, 2020 b). On 21 April 2020, I explored what I had never explored before in a video I named ‘Towards ‘methodological inventiveness’ (Dadds & Hart, 2001).



Video 1. Methodological Inventiveness

<https://youtu.be/9NlaX4ojpFU> (Dhungana, 2023b)

Moreover, within our Culture of Inquiry, I found a safe space where I could articulate and thereby connect my Eastern Wisdom Tradition and perspectives. For instance, the following Video 2 (Dhungana, 2023c) explains in detail how I connected the notion of *tamas*, *rajas*, and *satva* to the theme, “Accepting Educational Responsibility”.



Video 2: Influencing self and others with Nepali culture of values
<https://youtu.be/zPoNpawl-Wk> (Dhungana, 2023c)

Although I inherited a questioning culture from my ancestors, who questioned their gurus to influence themselves and their social formations (see the Bhagavat Gita), I could not understand it until I experienced being “loved into learning” the Culture of Inquiry.

For instance, when I was introduced to the course plan, I questioned, with my colleagues, the less empowering planning of facilitating the Participatory Action Research course through a non-participatory approach. Although I was new to the university and the curriculum development and implementation process, I questioned the curriculum and pedagogy that was proposed when I found it non-participatory. It was pre-designed as an outcome-based curriculum with fixed contents, learning objectives, learning resources, assignments, pedagogies, and evaluation criteria with only some possible flexibility in outcomes.

Beyond my assigned responsibilities, I wanted to take educational responsibility for social justice by respecting students’ diverse needs, interests, aspirations, and levels. Inspired by the process-based approach of Mckernan (2008), I proposed adopting the participatory process, as a research pedagogy, in the class to facilitate a participatory action research class. We (colleagues and students) discussed and agreed to engage in each class's planning-action-reflection cycle. That provided a safe space for the students and me to question (the self and others’) practices.

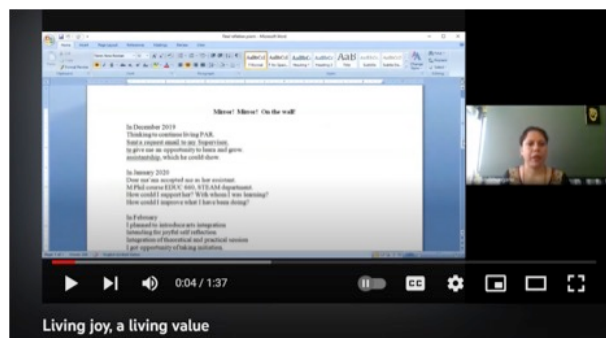
Besides questioning disempowering practices, I began to promote self-reflection. For instance, a student wrote: *Our second class began with a reflection of the former class and recording video which we had already decided. Parbati ma’am’s reflection was about classroom diversity and democratic classrooms in traditional settings.*

Moreover, I was fostering joyful learning. I influenced my colleague as she also experienced the value of joyful teaching and learning as she said, *“I did not know when classes were getting over. I used to find my classes long.”* She was smiling and sharing in the canteen. I was happy because she was enjoying her class.

Further, the questioning culture influenced students positively. For instance, valuing the critical reflection processes, a student said: *The first experience of exploring problems, making plans for solving problems, and critical reflection as a cross-cutting practice across all the steps of the cycle made me strengthen my abilities to use PAR as a methodology.* Moreover, the questioning culture was enhanced through guest speakers in the class. My

invitation of guest speakers (two international and five national) into the class improved the questioning culture. One of the class observers wrote: “After that the presentation of the guest lecturer... there was active participation like posing questions and getting feedback which was also really practicable.” It seemed that peer feedback, peer review, and engagement of critical friends enhanced our curiosity and thereby supported the Culture of Inquiry.

I continuously developed and thereby lived the Culture of Inquiry. For instance, I developed and presented the Living poster “Living joy” where I articulated the joyful, artful and playful journey Watch the 1:37 minutes YouTube video “Living joy” for detail (Dhungana, 2023a).



Video 3: Living Joy, a living value

<https://youtu.be/UnDsuyAA9gM> (Dhungana, 2023c)

Further, I enhanced the Culture of Inquiry and created a joyful learning culture within my workplace by promoting collaborative inquiry. For instance, in collaboration with my colleague I developed an abstract entitled *Creating an Aesthetic Learning Space for STEAM Graduates: A Participatory Inquiry*, presenting it at the Seventeenth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI) 2021.

Adapting aesthetic inquiry

Here, aesthetic inquiry refers to arts-based inquiry, integrating photos, images, videos, poems, designs and posters in teaching, learning, and assessing. Art explores inquisitiveness within the artist and thereby enhances aesthetics. Aesthetic refers to joy and appreciation, and aesthetics refers to the interconnectedness of perception, thinking, and feeling (Given, 2008). I used art to express my lived stories to promote critical reflection and a joyful learning environment.

At the beginning, inspired by the autobiographical approach of Branyon, Diacopoulos, Gregory, and Butler (2016), I used multiple forms of art to unpack my past, understand the present, and impact the future. Adult learners' engagement with different art forms provided exposure to individual and societal change and motivated them to take collective social action (Brigham, 2011). Understanding this, I encouraged students to use multiple art forms to create a joyful learning space.

Then I gradually developed my artist-activist or ‘artist’ perspective (the perspective of using different forms of arts for creative expression). This emerged as an activist pedagogy

(Mesías-Lema, 2018). My artivist pedagogy made the classroom environment joyful, which enhanced the learning environment. Realizing the role of arts in reflection, a student expressed through a poem:

I could express inner reality – developing creative and critical thinking
 I could portray my feelings – having multiple genres to presenting
 I could paint my inner self
 I could dance my past abilities and inabilities
 I could sing my song of future actions
 I could picture my distortions
 I could dramatize my emotions of highs and lows
 I could film the entire process of learning
 I could play the music of happiness and sorrow
 I could better explain and depict my learning – an unstoppable journey of
 experience!!

Similarly, besides joy, a student enhanced his critical thinking and creative thinking through artistic integration as he wrote:

We collaboratively made a significant decision to do arts-based reflection, which opened up a new dimension of creativity. I was enthralled by this creative means of reflection, and I was able to heighten my level of creation by using the right brain. I came to understand the immense power of using arts to reflect upon. I started exploring my hidden abilities in arts. I found several such skills, such as writing poems and songs, making videos, dancing, drawing pictures, and so on, which transform my creative thinking and critical thinking.

His joyful participation in arts and learning activities transformed him. Not only that, students developed their poetic logic. For instance, a student said, *“This semester, I realized that I could write poems that I never knew before. These days I feel I can participate in a poetic debate.”* His confidence and glowing face confirmed the significance to him, of his way of making meaning: poetic inquiry. Similarly, a student began his research proposal with a poem entitled 'Happiness':

You’re going to realize it one day —
 that happiness is never about your job, or your degree,
 ...
 That happiness will always work with the informants.
 That happiness will always be about bringing new knowledge.

It is always subjective, connected with feelings and emotions.
 It is always reflective of understanding and evaluating one’s work

I found I could influence students significantly by integrating arts. One student wrote:

Similarly, through the arts-based reflection, the class had become exciting fun, and we were being creative and innovative. The journey had been empowering us with developing dimensions of transformative learning like being critically reflective, creative, innovative, adopting arts-based pedagogy, developing collaborative skills etc. we were learning and getting insights about PAR doing PAR as our pedagogical practice. I created three poems for arts-based reflection, and I am happy this PAR journey explored that quality in me that I didn't know before. So, this journey of PAR is one milestone in my learning journey.

Another student also expressed the joyful moment of being a researcher through a poem:

Inductive is the nature of research
Style of writing determines the type
Once the researcher enters the field
Enjoy a lot never try to return reference

Another student explored his living values of care and love that he realized while developing poetry:

*Fighting the way through the sun, rain, and snow,
It must have been a rough journey though
I have learned to value them more,
For the magnificence, they show,
Exploring what they love for them to grow,
I am the gardener just helping them to bloom,
Season after season, as spring arrives.*

Similarly, a student explored his living social value as he wrote:

Arts-based reflection was a tremendously fruitful journey for me to develop both skills and knowledge about using multiple perspectives or genres of arts to reflect my experience, learn from them, and improve my practice to make it more empowering and justifiable for others... made me aware of my past actions, learn from these actions, be imaginative to improve, and transform my core belief system to make a contribution to society as a human being.

Thus, his willingness to make his practice more empowering and justifiable for others and his desire to contribute to society as a human being showed his sense of social and educational responsibility. Similarly, presenting a proposal, a student reflected on how he realized he was developing a sense of common good as:

While developing my proposal, I realized that I need to go beyond. While talking about my transformation, what does my nation get? This question engaged me for some time, but I could not change the title as I needed to re-work it.

Thus, we created joyful learning and joyful teaching culture. We used learning and teaching, not the other way around, as we believe that one needs to learn before teaching. Therefore, I went beyond active participation in teaching, learning, and assessing to learn something new and found the best version of myself when I was joyful in the learning process. Similarly, I explored the higher responsibilities I took and worked for the common good when I was joyful.

Conclusion

When I was joyful, I took the higher responsibility (of working for the common good) by taking voluntary tasks. When I took on a voluntary task, I enhanced my inquisitiveness. Gradually, my sense of wonderment and inquisitiveness increased, and I thereby began to value small wonders of everyday happenings and noticeable wonderment nourished a sense of interdependence. The sense of interdependence was the “life-affirming energy” (Whitehead, 2013) inherent in Living Educational Theory Research processes that I realized when I realized my influence on and with other people. When I connected with others, I enhanced interdependency through cooperation and collaboration and that developed into a Culture of Inquiry enhanced through arts integration. Every time I learned something new (at least for me) that made me feel content in the whole process. Thus, I explored answers to the question--How could I enhance joyful teaching and learning in the graduate classes? through (1) voluntary participation, (2) valuing (every day) a sense of wonderment, (3) respecting interdependence, (4) enhancing the Culture of Inquiry, and (5) adopting aesthetic/s inquiry. This became a satvic framework or context-responsive approaches to/for accepting educational responsibility that influenced my learning, improved my professional practices and the learning of my students.

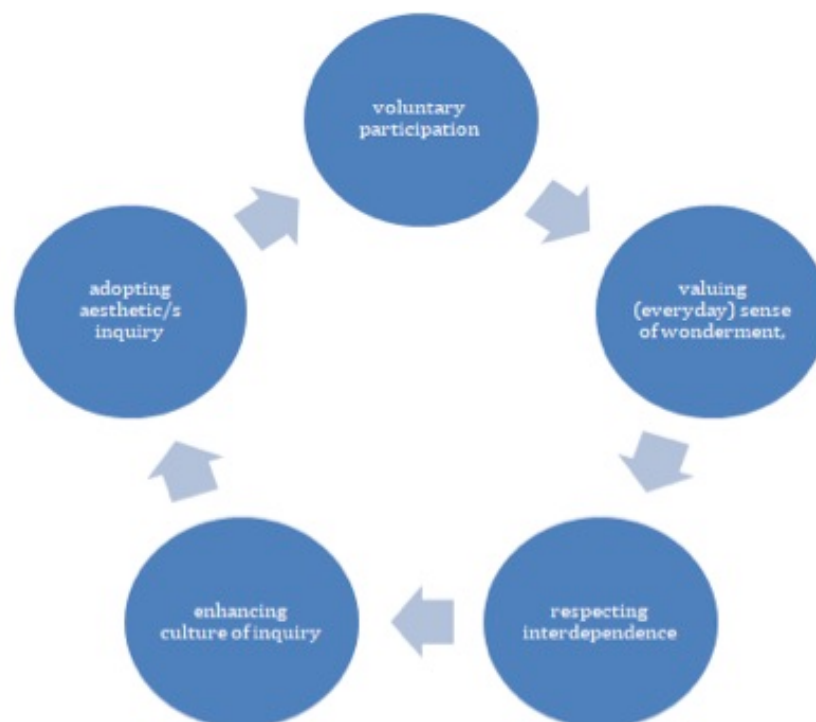


Figure 2. A satvic framework

The satvic framework required three prerequisite factors: gender equity, caring, respect, inquisitive facilitation, and a loving learning environment. For instance, a student acknowledged as:

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to my mentor and facilitator Mrs. Dhungana for her love, care, inspiration, visionary support, and step-by-step guidance throughout preparing this proposal. I would like to appreciate her advice and continuous support to create a lovely atmosphere and frequent responses to my calls and emails

In short, the journey of enhancing joyful teaching and learning is satvic as I continuously lived my values influencing self, others, and social formations for the common good.

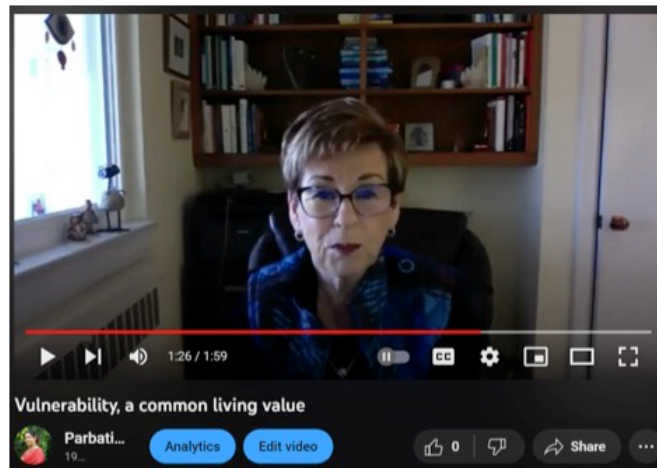
However, the journey was not easy as I had the challenge of vulnerability or joylessness. Before this study, I thought vulnerability was commonly synonymous with ignorance (tamas attribute), and ignorance is taken as the worst form of human quality, particularly in the Nepali university classroom context. In other words, I used to think that being vulnerable was becoming a living contradiction. But I developed a non-dual socio-cultural perspective. I possessed all three forms (tamas or ignorance, rajas or passion, and satva or joyful). I was joyless at one point (e.g., passionate state) in time, but not all the time! Every time, I improved myself by living joy and made a cyclical journey of being tamasic -rajasic-satvic within the Culture of Inquiry.



Figure 3. A cyclical journey of being tamasic -rajasic-satvic

Seemingly, there was a fine thin line or a blurred space between vulnerability and joyfulness. When I consciously examined my attributes and video conversations, the blurred space seemed to be a source of authenticity, seed, value, or joy. For instance, the following 1:59-minute video of our conversation on 25 January 2021 (Dhungana, 2023d) showed that vulnerability was significant to me and many of us as a shared living value.

The moment of living shared values was the state of ultimate happiness, the state of interconnectedness (inner connection and interconnection) or oneness. The state of oneness occurred while taking educational and social responsibility for the common good, influencing ourselves, each other, and our workspaces within a Culture of Inquiry.



Video 4: Vulnerability, a common living value

<https://youtu.be/H6oTNgURZbg> (Dhungana, 2023d)

The moment of living shared values was the state of ultimate happiness, the state of interconnectedness (inner connection and interconnection) or oneness. The state of oneness occurred while taking educational and social responsibility for the common good, influencing ourselves, each other, and our workspaces within a Culture of Inquiry.

Final insights

While planning and working together for the AERA 2021 Symposium within the Culture of Inquiry, we looked for interconnectedness referring to inner-connection and inter-connection in the spiritual workplace, which values professionals' completeness and joy (Marques, Dhiman, & King, 2007). We experienced interconnectedness through being loved into learning connection, collaboration, and building relationships. So, we are developing a sense of community, of 'we' (oneness) by connecting and collaborating. In the collaborating process, we were retaining our individual 'self' and finding common or shared 'selves' in 'we.' The shared or common self is not a separated or egoist self but a spiritual self-common to all of us. When we found that commonality among us, we felt connected and complete, and then we experienced joy. In line with Krishnamurti and Hunkin (2020), we have been fractured or divided within ourselves so joy is not possible as divided selves cannot love and become joyful. It means we can experience oneness when there is joy or vice versa. Seemingly, we were healing ourselves and others by 'living joy' or developing a sense of interconnectedness.

Finally, I realized that I added another meaning to my living-educational-value, 'living love' that is interconnectedness within a Culture of Inquiry.

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