

Article

Incorporating Contemplative Practices into the Classroom: An Auto/ethnographic Inquiry

Aarati Lamichhane 

aarati_mphilscw2025@kusoed.edu.np

Abstract

Contemplative practices are vital for socio-emotional wellbeing by integrating compassion, self-awareness, and ethical values to nurture life-oriented competencies. This autoethnographic study explores the alignment between personal experience, pedagogy, and contemplative practice. Emphasizing critical self-reflexivity, the study integrates autobiography and ethnography to bridge self and collective consciousness in the classroom. Through autoethnographic reflection, four key themes arose: emotional tensions in instructional delivery, masking of authentic ways of teaching, restoration of classroom dignity and shared vulnerability. Integrating mindfulness, reflective journaling, and somatic practices helped recognize emotional triggers and personal biases. This helped transform holistic learning spaces while enhancing students emotional resiliency and classroom engagement. The findings suggest that teachers' practices in somatic and emotional awareness aids students' holistic wellbeing noting teachers' presence, compassion, and relational growth.

Keywords: *Autoethnography, contemplative practices, emotional awareness, mindfulness, holistic wellbeing*

Situating Myself in the Research

Studies recognize the significance of educational institutions to enhance socio-emotional behavior among students. Such behaviors play a critical role in socio-emotional development and mental and physical health, followed by enhanced academic performance (Moffitt et al., 2011 as cited in Ruffini & Bei, 2024). By enhancing cognitive skills in solving the learning tasks coupled with incorporation of socio-emotional aspects into education serve as a significant underpinnings for holistic wellbeing. Low et al. (2015) recognize socio-emotional



development to be a key determinant equipped to understand emotions of self and others, regulate emotions and external behavioral patterns, control attention, solve various problems and engage in pro social behaviors (as cited in Ruffini & Bei, 2024).

From the foundation mentioned above, I thought of contemplative practices that might aid in developmental goals in the classroom settings. Contemplative education, as I understand, is not about academic performance or a pedagogical method but it is a way of being. It emphasizes personal transformation of beings and I find these being best fitted to two Nepali cultural contexts of upbringing: *Bachi khana sikaune* and *Gari khana sikaune*. This holds a profound educational and ethical significance with values aligning to compassion, self-discipline, and awareness grounded in making ethical choices. *Baachi khana sikaune* symbolizes living a meaningful life while *garikhana sikaune* symbolizes ‘earning a living.’ The core meaning I could construct from the concept of contemplative education is that it provides us (educators) to refine our practice guiding students toward development at heart and in hand.

My personal journey to contemplative practices began with having a fondness for listening to spirituality which was my sacred happenstance. By time I realized these practices led to profound spiritual awakenings that often have an ability to transform the understanding of self and reconnecting with the self. Contemplative practice, as described by Varghese et al (2025) serve as the bridge to connect with the inner self, encouraging stillness, presence, and receptivity. This built a realization in me, which was a significant aspect to transform my way of thinking throughout my educational journey. I have realized my over emphasis on ‘doing’ over ‘being’ where the heightened priority has been on content delivery and measurable outcomes based on assessments. I even attributed students’ growing distractions, restlessness, lack of survival in learning to their behaviors that fostered a victim-blaming culture in me. Thinking of what could be the contextual factors, I could incorporate into my pedagogical practices, and as a part of my living, I am delving much into heading up with being an autoethnographic researcher functioning as a contemplative practitioner. The contemplative dimensions I incorporate into the journey of autoethnographic study are self-awareness and the connection with self and the external world.

Looking into contemplative practice as experiential, a study by Varghese et al. (2025) led me to recognize the significance of contemplative practices to lead to performative transformation, philosophical shifts, and artistic expressions. Such practices are a great move to go beyond the passive acquisition of knowledge or a banking education system while shifting toward the embodied experience of knowing where the learning becomes a lived experience and evolving, turning out to be the result of mindful actions. Observing the research through this lens of incorporation of contemplative practices within the autoethnographic journey, the research here becomes a deeper, thoughtful, and reflective introspective journey of enlightening oneself. Getting inspired and by embracing it in my research journey following becoming a contemplative practitioner, I intend to step into the untravelled sea of autoethnographic journey.

Study by Varghese et al (2025) show the crucial similarities between contemplative education and autoethnographic research with the inclusive elements of self-awareness, transformation, and the connection of inner and exterior shelves, personal with social, was the crucial cause for me to move with the autoethnographic journey.

Embracing Contemplative Practice for Self and Students' Growth

With increasingly common challenges faced by today's generations such as anxiety, restlessness, stress, contemplative exercises have been believed to support overall wellbeing resulting in better adaptability, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence. As I thrive to live a contemplative life in this research journey, the classroom is the central or the heart of the journey where I reflect on my practices, examine the underlying issues bringing out my personal biases, the assumptions I set, bringing a deeper observation in me that results in better adaptation, and transformation. Also, throughout this reflective journey, I stay connected to my core purpose of every action and thoughts I bring into contemplative practices of teaching and learning process- my 'why' which constantly guides my proceedings of being in the classroom. Until this point, I, being only an observer of these sorts of human inner landscapes, I now embark on this journey to engage deeply with the inner world of students. In this regard, contemplation is defined as the mindful engagement with self and others inner world making room for self-awareness, reflective way of living, understanding emotions and experiences in an unbiased way.

Besides, contemplative practices are not just taken as a pedagogical practice but also a practice to bring a shift in transforming the self through recognition of vulnerabilities and bias.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore my perception and practice of contemplative pedagogy examining how engaging with contemplative practices transforms my sense of self and pedagogical approaches. Additionally, this study explores ways to nurture values of contemplative practices among my students, fostering self-awareness, emotional resilience, and relational engagement in the classroom.

Contemplative Pedagogy: An Approach to Holistic Development

Previously, I used to think of a term, 'contemplative/ contemplation' to offer devotion limiting its external significance. During this research journey, I often questioned myself which was a broader issue to me, 'How can I nurture values of contemplative practices among my students when I doubt myself being embodied to the contemplative values?' My concern was bombarded with a multitude of questions, 'what should be my contemplative identity and beliefs to shape my autoethnographic inquiry?' These inquiries led me to explore perspectives of contemplative practices particularly with the work of Zajonc, that would leave me with some insights on integrating inner awareness with education. I felt the need for this exploration acknowledging education not merely transformation of a knowledge but a space for creating a meaningful value environment. As Zajonc suggests inner awareness to be the root to cultivate presence, compassion, and attention, I am motivated to instill these qualities in my practice together with students. Such practices also recognized as contemplative pedagogy has come forth supporting transformative education that aids development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, and compassion (Ohana et al., 2019). This pedagogy serves several education goals which seeks cultivating not just academic achievements but also personal development (Ohana et al., 2019).

Growing research studies demonstrate that contemplative practice enhances emotional and cognitive capacities. Contemplative practices such as moment-by-moment, non-judgemental awareness applying to the breath have been shown to improve attention and focus. Jha (2007), Tang et al (2007) and Zeidan (2010), and Moore (2009) mention the improved cognitive flexibility, enhancement, and mental adaptability as a result of such practices (as cited in Ohana et al., 2019). This as a result leads to survival in the presence, inner awareness, and experiential learning. With education institutions heading to the transformative movement, such practices offer educators to embed contemplative methods within their pedagogical journey.

Inner Landscapes in the Classroom

Based on the underlying principle of autoethnography as an autobiographical genre of writing and research that connects the personal experiences to culture (Carolyn & Bochner, 2024), this study journey emphasizes binding my contemplative journey together with students that get aligned to cultural dimensions. The main emphasis here is not to isolate my personal experiences but reflect on my experience through the lens of cultural dimensions of being a contemplative practitioner. By narrating my personal contemplative journey of practicing mindfulness, reflective journaling or spiritual inquiry, I examine how such lived moments resonate and differ from students' experiences. This helps situate my experiences with broader social or cultural contexts. Autoethnographers should look inward exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretation (Deck 1990, Reed-Danahay, 1997; Neumann, 1996) which has been my greatest realization as I proceed with this research journey (as cited in Panourgia, 2000). Recalling my moments from the victim-blaming cultures such as blaming for students' distractions, to their discipline problems, rather than understanding their socio-emotional attributes led me to reflect and acknowledge my own biases and refine my teaching practices through empathetic and culturally responsive lens.

With this, as I am directing myself toward facilitating self and students to connect with their inner self, presence, and receptivity, Jackson (1989) idea of radical empiricism of using all senses, bodies, movement, feeling, and the whole being- resonated to me that further helped validate my intent of nurturing a part of the whole being-somatic experience, emotional insights, and presence. By reflecting on my somatic and emotional experiences following insights I acquire, I am learning to understand myself as well as developing a capacity to understand my students. I have used my personal experiences as a pedagogical approach to understand others (as cited in Chang et al., 2013). On the other hand, as students and their classroom lived experiences are followed by my experiences to facilitate, entries from reflective journaling, emotion descriptions, and behaviors are a part of my experiences, and the narratives in this study become my shared journey together with the students.

In this autoethnographic study, I realize my emphasis on emotional, spiritual, and embodied knowledge is at the center of the research process, which is fostered through reflection on my own personal biases, emotion shifts, and observations, keeping aside detached objectivity. Ellis and Bochner (2024) advocate to foster reflexivity, stimulating more discussions of working the spaces between subjectivity and objectivity, passion and intellect.

Transformative Learning Theory

The study led me to explore perspectives of contemplative practices particularly with the work of Zajonc, that would leave me with some insights on integrating inner awareness with education. I felt the need for this exploration acknowledging education not merely transformation of knowledge but a space for creating a meaningful value environment. As Zajonc suggests inner awareness to be the root to cultivate presence, compassion, and attention, I am motivated to instill these qualities in my practice together with students. Such practices also recognized as contemplative pedagogy has come forth supporting transformative education that aids development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, and compassion (Morgan, 2014). This pedagogy meets several education goals which seeks cultivating not just academic achievements but also with personal development. These insights led me to align my study with Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978) following a contemplative pedagogy framework. Mezirow notes the significance of questioning previously held assumptions of things that have been taken for granted (as cited in Fleming, 2018) as vital for transformative learning. This insight led me to resonate with contemplative pedagogy.

Incorporation of contemplative practices like mindfulness, reflective journaling would open space for inner inquiry also questioning our thinking minds and frames perspectives meaningfully. Deur et al. (2003) and Mezirow (1978) view that transformation is not theoretical but is lived and it is central to all spiritual traditions. This equips us with an insight that educational transformation is not merely about academic achievements but should be connected to the inner awareness, lived experience and survival at the present moment.

Research Methodology

My illusory self appears more self-aware, mindful, and wise teacher, instead of showing my authentic self just role as a performer showing off my personal growth. Rooted in the ideology of Freire and many educators, education is something that is done with them in mutual action for liberation (Darder, 2002; Giroux, 1983; Hooks, 1994; MC Laren, 2003). Inspired by this perspective of mutual doings/ collaborative actions, throughout the research journey, I co-create the classroom culture of shared learning where teachers and students are co-learners in the process of transformation of evolving selves. As the research journey is also an arena of struggle to me having my initial exposure to this experience, where practices, views, and beliefs are questioned and willing to transform, criticalism fits into the research paradigm of this autoethnographic study. As a critical researcher, my role is situated much on being a co-liberator or a co-learner shifted from authoritarian figure. Here, to shift toward a transformative journey, the practice is much rooted in questioning the dominant behavior and practices where criticalism best fits in the process.

On the other hand, correcting my illusory self appearing more self-aware, mindful, and wise teacher instead of showing off my authentic self, this research brings out a shift away from my performative illusion embodying authenticity also addressing my bias. Foregrounding my real emotions and challenges rooted in meaning-making involves an interpretive paradigm.

Mirror in the Soil: Uncovering Meaning Through Self and Others

Being inspired by Bochner (2020) on making themselves experimental subjects, I replicate their experimental experiences in my research. I seek to enrich my experiences of way of life by immersing myself in being an autoethnographic researcher, contemplative practitioner and a grade teacher. With the academic scrutiny of embracing my own educational journey, I immerse myself in depth and insights into the way of my life through the method of using my personal experiences to know others as a core focus of this research. Further, as my personal experiences serve as primary data, this approach encourages me as an autoethnographic researcher to acknowledge my biases and perspectives within the cultural contexts I thrive. With this, as I embark on the journey of collaborative autoethnography, my journey involves working together with students and co-teacher to capture data to pursue understanding of socio-cultural phenomena. This emphasizes reflexivity by gazing through social and cultural factors I inhabit and looking inward focusing on my vulnerable self (Deck, 1990; Neumannn, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 1997 as cited in Bochner, 2020).

This process involves three core aspects- collaborative, autobiographical, and ethnography where the study of culture is done through ethnography, while autobiography involves study of self and pairing ethnography with study of self seems contradictory as ethnography emphasizes on studying the culture (Chang et al., 2013). Hence, through the integration of my personal narratives with the core component of ethnography, I intend to develop autoethnographic study in a way that helps bridge the gap between my personal experiences and collective consciousness within the classroom, pedagogy, students learning, and colleagues' perspectives. This approach leads me toward critical self reflexivity. Scholars such as Chang and Bilgen (2020); Phillips et al.(2022), Finlay (2002), and Spry (2001) emphasized critical self reflexivity in autoethnographic inquiry signifying the importance of examining one's inner world to understand cultural and personal thoughts, feelings (as cited in Phillips & Frølund, 2021). This helps safeguard my pitfalls to narcissism or self-indulgence ensuring my personal perspectives are interconnected to broader culture (Dhakal & Panta, 2024).

Being a contemplative practitioner, an autoethnographic researcher, and a grade teacher throughout the research journey, I could acknowledge from Jackson's (1989) concept of radical empiricism the significance of sharing researcher's ethnographic experience through interactions with participants as integral to study (as cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2024). So, engaging in a research process with these three major roles throughout the research process, the meaning-making or comprehension shall be based upon my lived experiences and participants interaction. Here, I serve as an active instrument and participant in creating meaning and constructing values as emphasized by Anderson (2006) and Lapadat (2009) referring to Chang et al.(2013). Hence, rather than being a detached observer, I engage my experiences with interactions which are central to understanding my cultural phenomena together with participants. Use of self to understand others is a foundational concept in autoethnographic inquiry (Coen, 1992; Jackson, 1989; Okeley, 1992; Turner & Bruner, 1986 as cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2024). Personal self of a researcher is situated within social and cultural aspects that serves both as a method and a text where understanding of society is acquired through the unique lens of self (Ellis, 2022). The idea is further expanded by Chang et al. (2013) stating that weaving each other's experiences and voices together thus creates a synergy in a way autoethnography can exceed research conducted in isolation.

I hence find out ways for interpreting my participants' realities with my own feelings and my lived experiences throughout the research journey through the lens of my own experiences. Self being a mode of inquiry, my experiences are shaped by both personal and cultural contexts that allow a richer understanding of the experiences of others, where my positionality is to engage with experiences of others through self empathetically and engage rigorously. Inspired by the fact from Chang et al. (2013), the meaning-making of personal stories having two or more co-researchers can enable deeper levels of analysis. Such moments of shared experiences and collective understandings resonated to me to move beyond self, and emphasizing connection beyond the content served as a major learning to me here.

Autoethnography holds an emancipatory power that helps build a sense of one's personal experiences (Keles, 2022) and to me, emancipation serves as a shift from the classroom as a theater space and teachers serving as actors to teaching as a presence through mindfulness and self-awareness. Through this, I aim to liberate myself from 'doing' over being, which implies my facilitation as a garden, a holding space to reflect and grow, and a breath where cultivating self-awareness, empathy, and presence becomes a core.

Access to a Research Site

Being a pedagogical practitioner, regularly interacting with and facilitating students of age groups 8 to 10, alongside engaging in collaborative pedagogical practice with my co-teacher naturally offers me access to a research site. The consent was taken from school authorities, co-teachers and students before proceeding with the methodological process to ensure ethical compliance.

Since, the study focuses on collaborative autoethnography, I engage in a dual role of both being a facilitator and researcher, which aids me with an in-depth understanding of the pedagogical transformation as contemplative practices, which include various mindfulness techniques being incorporated.

Collaborative Data Generation and Rationale for Methodological Choice

Proceeding the research journey together with students, co-teacher with expectation of shared understanding, the study emphasizes collaborative autoethnography. This shared journey of collaborative autoethnography highlights research as a shared journey of qualitative research that is collaborative, autobiographical, and ethnographic (Chang et al., 2013). Drawing upon the methodological orientation of Bochner (2020), on making themselves experimental subjects, this inspiration in the study has led me to position myself not as a researcher but as a shared experiencer and a meaning-maker. This orientation thereby resonates deeply with my research aim of enriching my experiences being an autoethnographic researcher, contemplative practitioner, and grade teacher.

With Bochner's (2020) emphasis of self both as a method and text, my engagement in the study is in alignment to reflexive engagement in the field contributing to meaning-making. As I proceed through collaborative means of data generation together with students and co-teacher, observed behaviors, reflective journals, artifacts as lesson plans, student

works, and group reflections are the site of digging into data which include biases, personal vulnerabilities, and shifts in one's views and practices. Acknowledging Chang et al. (2013, p. 73), 'Meaning making of personal stories include two or more co-researchers that can enable deeper levels of analysis.' My data analysis journey approached with the same vision where I am not detached from others thus incorporating collective consciousness in the classroom.

Strategies for Information Generation and Meaning-making

Engaging with the book, collaborative autoethnography by Chang et al. (2013, p.87) led me to critically reflect on the guiding question which encouraged me to proceed with data collection following given insights in a shared journey: when should I work independently to collect autobiographical data? how and when should I engage teammates in collaborative data collection? what kind of data should I collect individually and collaboratively? This guided question stimulated me intellectually which was a turning point for me to open the locked door hence moving toward a more thoughtful and a deeper way of collecting data.

Self- reflective Practice

Keeping in mind my role of engaging in the field as a participant-practitioner, while collaborating with my co-teacher and students, this emphasizes my transformative role toward shared meaning-making and individual reflection. My intention here is toward independent thinking followed by opening space for diverse perspectives through collaborative inquiry. Acknowledging solo data collection opportunities that aid with self-reflective time without being influenced by my participants (Chang et al., 2013), I was aware of not imposing my pressure on participants' opinions or actions while also not imposing external temptations from the participants. This aspect drives me to critical self-reflexivity which is also a guard against self-indulgence, where I become aware of my inner world to understand the external environment.

Collaborative Group Reflection

With the curiosity for group data collection, as I delved deeper into the book chapter, 'Data Collection Strategies,' I felt a concurrent model to be best suited for this collaborative research journey. To intersperse individual data collection sessions with collaborative discussion sessions (Chang et al., 2013), is a motive for me to weave my experiences and voices with the participants where autoethnography exceeds research conducted in isolation. The moments experienced by participants are shared, put in relation to, and interpreted in a conversational and inclusive setting.

Following the guidance of Chang et al. (2013), the recorded group reflective sessions would be forwarded to discuss the evolving experiences and perspectives of incorporating contemplative practices into the classroom.

The research space serves as a site for group analysis and shared understanding. This well aligns to the concurrent model of collaborative autoethnography wherein individual data is collected by each participant (a researcher and a co-teacher along with selective students). These individual experiences, or reflective journaling, were shared during the group discussion time, also called a morning meeting. The reflective sharing will be interpreted based on shared understandings. The research approach hence values both individual autonomy and shared meaning making. The methods I used include:

Individual Review

Firstly, I began with individual reflective journaling to document one's own experiences, emotions, and perspectives on incorporating contemplative practices into the classroom. I will assure not to have my influence on my participants and also protect myself against the opinions. I assured respect for individual autonomy. The entries will be coded.

Thematic coding of Group sessions

Ensuring inclusivity, participants were given an open and safe space to express and interpret their personal narratives and strategies being used, which was non-hierarchical. This was held twice a week with a co-teacher and selected group of students. The themes will be identified resulting from the process of coding, which reflected our shared understandings

Conversational Inquiry

Observations, experiences, and group interactions with participants' consent, especially when contemplative practices are reflected and shared together. The differences in meaning generated will be valued, encouraging co-construction of meaning.

Refinement and Interpretation

Data analysis resulting from self-reflection, group sharing, and rewriting occurs in a cyclical way, so, to gain in-depth insights, the meaning constructed collaboratively was used for the data interpretation process.

Findings and Discussion

Challenges and Tensions

Scene 1: *Nourishing the Being: From Instruction to Insight*

This theme has emerged from my classroom experiences of instructional delivery that have led both me and my students to confront emotional distress. Exploring a varied emotional topography in the classroom setting I engage in, frustrations and stress arise by observing students' obvious hurdles to grasp my teachings. However, these challenges are even balanced by the pleasure and satisfaction I live through when students can well comprehend their learnings and complete their assignments that are errorless. These moments show my obligation to their learning journey where students listen attentively, demonstrate timely submission of tasks given, and work responsibly.

At the same time, I have deeper concerns about the students' holistic wellbeing. I observe routine behaviors among children such as anger, impulsivity, and fear, which indicates emotional and social challenges. While I strive to address these issues through verbal cues and moral instruction, I question myself whether these interventions are sufficient to enhance students' social skills and emotional resilience.

As a result of the reflective process arising from the question, I felt a personal crisis resulting in soul searching aiming to understand what my purpose, values, and actions should

be toward my journey to education. Being familiar to the significance of the contemplative practices, I scrutinized various research articles and scholarly papers thus finding the role of contemplative practices—such as mindfulness, reflective journaling, and self-inquiry—in enhancing both my teaching and my students' development. This brought an interest in exploring how these practices can cultivate a classroom environment that nurtures the 'being' aspect of each student.

At this point, with a shift in researcher's perceptions, students struggling with low self-esteem, negative self-talk were recognizable to some extent. Drawing from Beck's theory of cognitive restructuring (Beck et al., 1979 as cited in Beck et al., 2024), I am learning and guiding students to examine and redefine their beliefs.

In this autoethnographic study, I integrate contemplative practices into my teaching methodology, also following reflection on my actions and reflective investigations on how my personal experiences acquired through the process connect to the social meanings. By examining my personal experiences and reflections, I seek to understand how such practices can contribute to the 'beings of the students,' ultimately transforming the classroom into a space where both teaching and learning are deeply interconnected with personal growth and social consciousness.

Scene 2: *The Masked Educator: Unmasking the Core of Authentic Teaching*

With a greater acknowledgement of the paper about overshadowing holistic development of students with emphasis on 'doing over being', the practice is even found evident in the teaching practices of educators, where this scene highlights practices of Ms. Sujena. Despite her dedication and hard work for her subject, she exhibits a behavior that excludes students' emotional and developmental needs. In the classroom, students are captivated in a repetitive cycle: the teacher begins with a lesson that ought to be taught, assigns tasks, and evaluates the assignment, which is a repetitive cycle taking place each day. Her emphasis on just assigning tasks, listening to lectures, overshadows students' being or their personal growth. Drawing inspiration from Heuertz (2018 as cited in Govender & Timm, 2024) concept of loosening attachments that leads to spiritual openness, which otherwise results to addictions that keep individuals closed-minded, spiritually blind, and deaf to the inner voices of love, at this point, observing teachers-students relationships, I find students being locked into academic demands ignoring inner love- grades, assignment, discipline, correctness.

According to Greenberger and Padesky (1995), it is necessary to understand and gain awareness of bodily sensations as a result of emotional exposures (as cited in Beck et al., 2024). In line with the rigid curriculum patterns of Teacher-1, such practices invite the need for authoritarian figures to impart a nature of awareness and being. Incorporating body-scanning mindfulness activities allowing both teachers and students helps explore the emotions that signal various aspects of behaviors. Such strategies are believed to build acceptance and exploration of bodily sensations that often help students and teachers build curiosity on bodily sensation, also exploring ways body and mind reacts (Surawy et al., 2015). Through such practices, students get a space to connect with their physical and emotional realities and counteract such disembodied learning.

Scene 3: *Bringing Humane Qualities: Restoring Dignity of Classroom culture*

In this scene setting, I examine, experiment, and act on students' engagement together connecting with mine and students' inner engagement. Drawing inspiration from Heuertz (2018 as cited in Govender & Timm, 2024) concept of loosening attachments and hearing inner voices, this scene aims to identify pathways through my novice practices that facilitate self-discovery, dissolving self-ego and liberating false aspects of self together with my students.

My Personal Contemplative Shifts with Students' Growth

Acknowledging Jackson (1989 as cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2024) emphasis on radical empiricism, using embodied experiences, thus nurturing my somatic experiences, emotional insights and presence, I together with my students am engaged in bodily sensations and emotions. A feeling of pressure in my chest, often with a feeling of getting anxious and annoyed as a result of students distraction, I held an assumption of students not disciplined or understandable. By practicing contemplative education alongside students, with guided mindfulness to bodily sensations, I could recognize my such biases. This was the point for uprooting habitual judgements, thus embracing a pedagogical model of somatic responses. Radical empiricism was an inspiring and shifting doctrine to me to embrace sensory experiences together with the experiences.

Research supports such practices to be effective in managing bodily and emotional triggers through cognitive behavioral conceptualization that builds acceptance and exploration of bodily sensations that often build curiosity on exploring mind and body works (Surawy et al., 2015). Being able to uncover such unconscious biases like blaming culture, seems to facilitate my deeper understanding of my own inner self. By working on strengthening relationships with students at this point helped connect and nurture social and emotional domains. This approach is now found refining the classroom culture that is filled with empathetic and supportive growths. Such ability contributes to emotional regulation and openness following Rogers (1961) humanistic triad- congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. Exemplifying my experiences with Varghese et al (2024), I find through this practice of contemplative autoethnography, I am able to deepen my self-awareness to some extent, thus fostering inner transformation that helped refine overall classroom culture.

Scene 4: *Emotional Labor and Shared Vulnerability*

Moving further, I followed a pathway to 3 key insights: i) blending personal transformation, inner awareness, and bridging inner self with social realities that helped gain deeper insights into shared understanding (Varghese et al., 2024). The second was moving forward with a synergistic cycle: contemplative journaling, sharing the journals with peers, and relational understandings. During the contemplative journaling process, students shared their feelings and insights on their experiences followed by their automatic thoughts or emotional triggers expressed through journaling. The journal entries were shared and discussed among their

peers where participants themselves tried figuring out the meaning behind the activity and bringing out their own perceptions. Integrating the breathing techniques into journaling led participants to engage in 'being' process rather than 'doing' thus holding on to the emancipatory power (Keles, 2022), to shifting toward a mindful presence thus bringing out participants' realities through their own lens of embodied experiences. The boundaries between inner and outer shelves were thus blurred through such practices. Together, the findings demonstrate how weaving together the contemplative practice, journaling, and collaborative autoethnography fosters being in a mindful presence and culturally situated pedagogy.

Participants' Feelings Experienced During Contemplative Practice

Exploring journal entries, students experienced calmness, tension, or pressures on body parts like neck, shoulder, chest, releasing easement as a result of body scan, improved focus as a result of mindful yoga and movement helped with self-regulation and focus. Activities such as sense scavenger hunts were recorded to be the most fun and loving experiences for children. While most of the students also found mindfulness pressure. Priya says, 'I was unable to do mindfulness meditation because I won't be able to sit still. I want to draw instead.' Based on the reflection of students who engaged in arts oriented mindfulness practice or bodily movements, they stated, 'I felt happy doing the activity and my body is now active.'

However, recognizing mindfulness is challenging to some students demonstrates the need for personalized strategies respecting the child's comfort. In overall, students participating in arts-based mindfulness activities reported their joyful feelings and increased awareness of bodily sensations.

Positionality, Workload, and Uneven Adoption of Contemplative Practices

Reflecting on my professional personal experiences of incorporating thoughts, feelings, and reflections informing my therapeutic conversations (Sappio et al., 2023) particularly with students has led me to critically examine my role as a practitioner. Despite my pre-plan of involving teachers in a journey toward collaborative autoethnography, I faced complexities in the process due to their lack of willingness toward the practice. This circumstance led me to reflect on my assumptions and core beliefs held in connection to that of my colleagues. Hence, engaging in my own reflective practice helped me examine my positionality and how this might impact colleagues. This is done through creating an environment that appreciates open dialogue and diverse perspectives.

Teacher participants were concerned about time management, also stating such mindfulness-related activities to be done by yoga teachers or school counselors. They emphasized their time constraints for lesson completion, making it difficult to focus on the field of contemplative practices. These findings present teachers' feelings of lack of time due to workload as a barrier. Thus, the findings demonstrate uneven practices without proper support or willingness to take support.

Conclusion

This study integrates the exploration of teaching, living, and researching through my identity as a contemplative practitioner, grade teacher and a co-researcher. This research developed a

meaningful understanding in me of how contemplative practices shape a way of being connected to the cultural metaphors of *bachi khana sikaune* (living meaningfully) and *garikhana sikaune* (earning one's livelihood). As I stand in the classroom as both a practitioner and a learner of contemplative practice reflecting on responses to the intent of my study-how I perceive and enact contemplative practices, how contemplative practices transform self and teaching, and how I can nurture these values among students I teach, I find contemplative practices to serve as a pathway to self-transformation through self-awareness and presence that results in greater emotional balance and a sense of connection among young children. Nurturing students to embrace meaningful living and responsible labor can be supported by contemplative practices that help develop ethical choice, self-discipline, and compassionate engagement, where contemplative practice becomes a living form of education.

Also, insights drawn from this research highlights how weaving together students' voices, co-teacher insights and my self-narratives helps create a collaborative space for shared meaning-making coverage for personal transformation. First, contemplative journaling paired with peer sharing helped participants to be present, embodied, and reflective, thus practicing the transformative potential of contemplative education (Keles, 2022). Secondly, recognizing the uneven adoption of these practices due to positionality, heavy teacher workloads, and the willingness to adapt contemplative practices underlines a key challenge to incorporating contemplative practices into the classroom. For meaningful and sustainable adoption, contemplative practices need to be integrated as a living form of education where being precedes doing.

Implications of the study

As the emphasis of the study is situated on the need for shifting the pedagogical practices to the one that honors students' emotions, their inner growth, and teachers' active presence toward a student, this calls for a pedagogical transformation and transformation of norms and culture as a whole of educational institutions. On the other hand, there was a time when I had to experience emotional labor where my colleagues were not there to support and give hands in my contemplative journey in the classroom. This situation led me to question my own positionality of me being unable to share my contemplative values with my colleagues and could not convince them with my thoughts. This demands educational institutions to create a space for teachers where they can share their own reflective practices and get supported for their positive intentions. As presented by the research findings on uneven workload among my colleagues, there is a need to have a systemic embedding of contemplative practices to mark well-being for teachers and students.

Further, contextualizing contemplative practices within Nepal's educational landscape, there has been a growing awareness of the need for students' holistic well-being, which incorporates social, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Though the early learning development standards for students, which include physical, social, emotional, and cognitive status, have been identified, the teacher development program only asks teachers to foster their creative thinking so teachers contribute to lesson delivery and their pedagogy (Shrestha, 2022). The case of Kenisha Thapa from The Kathmandu Post (2025) illustrates emotional trauma that the so-called strict-school environment can impose on the students due to lack of awareness on

mental health and counseling support. Her shift from a liberal school to a school governed by authoritarian social norms led to two years of emotional distress with unavailability of mental health or socio-emotional support. Such norms have been accessible in many schools until now, though there must be a large number with growing awareness of current needs. However, the case demonstrates a critical gap in Nepal's educational system in terms of implementation of policy and curriculum that has ignored student wellbeing at large. The teacher preparation framework prepared by the National Centre for Educational Development, as explored by Shrestha (2022), highlights the need for teachers' competency in i) content knowledge, ii) pedagogical knowledge, iii) knowledge about learners, iv) learning environment and classroom management, v) communication and collaboration, vi) continuous learning and professional development, vii) legal bases and professional conduct, and viii) information and communication technology. In Nepal's educational context, the concept of incorporating contemplative practices within pedagogical practices is often overlooked, and during the process of reviewing empirical reviews in the context of Nepal, only rare cases are found, which reveals a gap in research and practice. There is a pressing need for the policymakers to acquire policy support that incorporates spiritual dimensions and well-being within school counseling frameworks.

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Author's Bio:

Aarati Lamichhane is an educator and contemplative education practitioner with experience in holistic pedagogy. Her work integrates contemplative practices and learner-centered approaches to support students' emotional, social, and academic development. She is M.Phil. scholar in School Counseling and Wellbeing at Kathmandu University School of Education. Her academic interests include contemplative pedagogy, humanistic psychology, and reflective practice in education settings.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7459-4362>

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