

Leadership Challenges and Opportunities of English Language Teaching Managers

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Abstract: This study explores the leadership challenges and opportunities faced by English Language Teaching (ELT) managers in Nepal. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 participants, including teachers, head teachers, department heads, and resource persons from Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. Analysis revealed nine core challenges, termed the '9Ms' Management, Motivation, Material, Machine, Method, Medium, Manpower, Money, and Minute. Despite these challenges, leadership opportunities such as professional development, team collaboration, and innovation emerged. Findings offer insights into leadership development for ELT managers in developing contexts and inform strategies for systemic improvement.

Keywords: English Language Teaching Manager, Leadership Challenges, Leadership Opportunities

A. Introduction

Let us begin with a leader first. A leader is a person who does the right thing (Mohan, 2007). A leader closely observes, analyzes and gives decision (Ayre, 2013). Our experiences, insights and expertise give us an idea that a leader delivers '7Cs': content, command, control, conduct, communication, competence and confidence. We are equally aware of the fact that a good reader can be a good professional leader. In other words, leadership comes through readership (Pandey, 2012). Teacher leaders need global knowledge about the world in general as well as content specific to the subjects they teach (Merryfield, Jarchow & Pickert, 1997). Usha (2002) asserts that a leader is one who transforms information into a vision. On the other hand, Khera (2002) asserts that being with professional makes a professional leader. Who, then, is a leader? There have been countless people through history that led people but were inhumane and destructive. Does that still make them leaders? In our mind, a leader is someone who does more than just lead people. They have to be driven by the right motivation and

make a positive impact on the people around them. A professional leader is the cry of the day for the effective management of ELT. Successful leaders are scanty to manage ELT in the context of Nepal.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, leaders face an array of challenges that demand innovation, adaptability, and resilience. The role of a leader has transformed immensely, and the dynamics of today's globalized and interconnected world present unique difficulties. The leaders grapple with the intricate balance between administrative responsibilities, resource allocation, and innovative initiatives to enhance student outcomes. Financial constraints, coupled with the need for stakeholder collaboration, underscore the importance of strategic planning and effective resource management (Tañiza, 2024).

Adams et al., (2020) stated that school leaders do not emerge fully prepared and effective from training programs. Their development is a more involved and gradual process that begins with their education and continues through their first year as school leaders. According to Senol (2019), school principals' professional development should continue and be sustainable after they have been appointed to their schools. School principals must engage in a continuous learning cycle due to the numerous changes and demands that come with a school leader's job. Many researchers around the world have emphasized the importance of strengthening leadership capacity to plan for and meet the complex challenges posed within the workplace (Carter, 2018).

From the above information it can be said that a leader is someone who inspires passion and motivation in followers, a leader is someone with a vision and the path to realizing it and a leader is someone who ensures their team has support and tools to achieve their goals.

Manager, on the other hand is a person who does the thing right (Mohan, 2007). We call ourselves a practicing manager. In a classroom both a teacher and resource person are a manager. In that sense, we consider manager as a general term. It does not only refer to the manager. It encompasses head-teachers, resource-persons, department heads and teachers. Regarding leadership and management Pandey (2012) asserts that if teachers manage students, they become a leader and if teachers manage themselves, they become successful. It clearly indicates the significance of management to become a good leader (Mohan, 2007). Usha (2002) presents the idea that a good management is possible through hands, heads and hearts. The winds and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators. The importance of good leadership today hardly needs to be stressed. For it is widely known that a democratic society cannot work effectively without it.

Covey (2004) asserts that management is clearly different from leadership. Leadership is primarily a high-powered, right brain activity. It is more of an art; it is based on a philosophy. We have seen some managers escaping from the difficult situation rather than solving it. What we have learnt is that a good leader emerges in hard times (Ayre, 2013). Then, the question arises, are our leaders good who leave their work in difficult times? The answer is they cannot be good leaders. In some schools and campuses, when students put pressure and demands for their rights, the managers' offices are closed. Somewhere, students padlocked their offices. In some institutions, managers confuse the clients. They do not demonstrate clarity and transparency in their dealing, discussion and decision. They do not understand the quality and power of customer satisfaction. What we have felt is that some managers' attitude towards ELT is not positive. English is a foreign language. It is not that much essential in Nepali context. As a result, quality education is being deteriorated. In this way, we see many challenges in schools and campuses of Nepal.

Purpose of the Study: Leaders are influential, productive, communicative, decisive, and change agents in an institution, society and nation (Adair, 2003). They take challenge as a matter of opportunity. They enjoy working in challenges. In this line, the purpose of this study is to explore leadership challenges and opportunities of ELT managers in Nepal.

Research Questions: In a simple sense, research is answering a question. In other words, research is all about solving a problem. It is a systematic and scientific study of revealing a reality. In this line, this study has the following research questions: What are the leadership challenges of ELT managers? What do the leadership opportunities ELT managers have?

Educational leadership and management have been subjects of extensive research and discourse, reflecting their critical importance in shaping the quality of education and student outcomes. This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of key concepts, theories, and empirical findings related to educational leadership, focusing on the evolving roles of school principals and their impact on teaching practices, professional development, and student achievement (Bagacina, et al., 2024). The evolution of educational leadership reflects a shift from traditional notions of "educational administration" towards more contemporary frameworks of "educational management" and "educational leadership" (Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2019). While administration primarily focuses on operational tasks and compliance with regulations, management encompasses broader responsibilities related to resource allocation, decision-making, and organizational effectiveness. In contrast, leadership emphasizes vision-setting, motivation, and the empowerment of individuals and teams to achieve shared goals (Adams, Kutty, & Zabidi, 2017).

Instructional leadership emphasizes the importance of teaching and learning, involving activities such as curriculum coordination, instructional supervision, and support for teacher professional development (Schleicher, 2015). Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring and mobilizing stakeholders towards a shared vision of educational excellence, while distributed leadership promotes collaboration and shared decision-making among diverse stakeholders (Mulford, 2003).

Despite its significance, educational leadership faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness and impact. These challenges include the lack of established qualifications for school leaders, gender disparities in leadership positions, centralized decision-making structures, and excessive administrative burdens (Mushi, et al., 2021). Additionally, issues such as inadequate instructional support for teachers, limited opportunities for professional development, and the prevalence of top-down management approaches pose significant barriers to effective leadership (Ghamrawi, 2023).

Effective educational leadership has been linked to positive teaching practices, professional development, and student outcomes. Research indicates that instructional leadership, characterized by support for teaching quality and student learning, is associated with improved teaching effectiveness and student achievement (Ghamrawi, 2023). Moreover, transformational leadership has been shown to enhance teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to organizational goals, leading to better learning outcomes for students (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2023).

Leaders are needed in all fields and at all levels to give direction, create teamwork, and inspire people to give of their best (Adair, 2003). However, to my understanding and realization, the challenge is that a good leadership is not growing among the managers in the educational institutions. Managers lack planning, organizing, staffing, communicating, commanding, monitoring and assessing skills. Due to this, the managers are not in a position to solve the day-to-day problems efficiently and effectively. School leadership is crucial for shaping education quality globally (Berkovich & Bogler, 2020; Bush, 2021; Gurr et al., 2020).

Principals' multidimensional roles influence student outcomes, necessitating a deep understanding of contextual nuances and the school environment to establish a socially just climate (Bogotch, 2002; Brown, 2004). Awareness of their roles, contextual realities, and leadership dimensions underpin school practices (González-Falcón et al., 2020). Nepal, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse educational landscape, faces challenges shared by other developing countries, including limited resources, natural

disasters, and lack of leadership development opportunities amidst global demands, political interference, and high stakeholder expectations.

Adams et al., (2020) present that one of the most pressing leadership challenges in today's fast-paced environment is effective decision-making amidst uncertainty. The rapid pace of change, coupled with the unpredictability of global events, requires leaders to make informed choices in ambiguous situations. The ability to analyze data, anticipate potential outcomes, and make decisions that align with organizational goals is crucial. The fear of making the wrong decision can paralyze leaders, emphasizing the need for a robust decision-making framework that incorporates agility and adaptability (Carter, 2018).

Teacher leadership roles, such as curriculum coordinator, subject specialist, mentor and teacher trainers, are considered crucial to school development due to the teacher leaders' ability to undertake major tasks, influence changes and reforms, and serve as a bridge between the administrative leadership and fellow teachers. The main goal of the teacher leader roles is "to build and maintain a professional culture, a sense of social cohesion, and professional trust among teachers" (Wieczorek & Lear, 2018, p. 39). Their pivotal role in school functioning has convinced educational organisations around the world to assign leadership responsibilities and empower teachers to contribute towards the effectiveness of their organisations.

As teacher leadership promotes a culture of collaboration, it may be an uphill task in more traditional and top-down management systems. Literature illustrates that organisational structures and professional barriers can hinder teacher leadership in a school context as bureaucratic, top-down and hierarchical school cultures are obstacles to collaboration, learning and development (Murphy, 2007; Sanocki, 2013). Likewise, Silva et al. (2000) note that "organisational characteristics and structural components can adversely impact the work of teacher leaders" (p. 790). For example, in technocratic systems, professional barriers in the form of administrative workload, lack of autonomy and professional support and added responsibilities often result in teacher leaders' burnout, obstruct teacher leadership and make teachers feel isolated and less connected to their peers (Harris & Muijs, 2004). This isolation is mainly the upshot of teachers' resentment and their lack of trust in teacher leadership roles as teacher leaders are perceived as an extension of top management.

Although the significance of teacher leadership is widely acknowledged in general education, its presence in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) is scarce. Two most recent empirical studies by Greenier and Whitehead (2016) and Whitehead and Greenier (2019) have investigated this notion in ELT, which indicate a lack of research in this direction. The importance of teacher leadership in ELT is evident in the assertion

by Underhill (2005) that a paradigm shift from hierarchical and traditional models is needed towards more horizontal and shared leadership models. Moreover, Liu (2008) suggests that, to meet global challenges in the ELT world and achieve professional excellence, every ELT professional should take a range of active roles and contribute to the success of their organisation and the ELT profession. However, there seems to be a lack of empirical research on how teacher leadership appears and what different roles English language teachers perform as teacher leaders in EFL institutions. Therefore, this exploratory study as part of a larger qualitative case study (Shah, 2016) contributes to the literature on teacher leadership in ELT by understanding the concept from the perspective of EFL teachers as teacher leaders in the Saudi EFL context.

From the above literature, it can be deduced that educational leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of education and student outcomes. By adopting effective leadership strategies, school principals can foster a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, thereby creating conducive learning environments for all stakeholders. Addressing key challenges and leveraging diverse leadership styles are essential steps towards building responsive, inclusive, and future-forward education systems that prioritize the well-being and success of every learner.

B. Methods

This qualitative study adopted an interpretive phenomenological approach to explore ELT leadership experiences in Nepal (Husserl, 1931). Data were gathered from 12 participants through semi-structured interviews (Peoples, 2021). Participants included English teachers, head-teachers, department heads, and resource persons from Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. Purposive sampling ensured the selection of information-rich cases (Heidegger, 1962). Data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically using an inductive approach supported by triangulation, thick description, and member checking to ensure credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

We have deployed both secondary and primary data. We have reviewed the available literature and we have taken an interview to generate first hand data. The site of this study is Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts comprising both urban and rural setting. The population of this study is teachers of English, department heads, resource persons and head-teachers. The sample of this study comprises only 12 participants; 6 English teachers, 2 department heads, 2 resource persons and 2 head-teachers from Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. Six participants were purposively chosen from each district. Purposive sampling has been adopted to undertake the study. In purposeful sampling, researcher's inner intention is to learn or understand the key phenomenon. The benchmark used in opting participants and sites is whether they are information rich (Creswell, 2015).

Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Data analysis involved transcribing, translating, categorizing, and interpreting interview excerpts using a grounded theory interpretive approach (Saldaña, 2016). Themes were generated and analyzed iteratively (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), as further interviews were conducted with the principals depending on the need of the research. The resulting themes framed the discussion, supported by pertinent literature (Atkinson, 2015). Qualitative method follows inductive data analysis method. Qualitative research rapidly gathers huge amounts of data and early analysis reduces the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for future focus (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Interpretation is assigning meaning to the available data. Therefore, we have carried out analysis and interpretation in the following themes.

Principal's or Head-teacher's Perception

It is said that principal plays a role of a manager. Management and leadership are related to each other. Management is getting things done and leadership emerges from readership. Management operates through various functions such as planning, organizing, leading, motivating and controlling (White & et al., 2008). Similarly, Swanson (2001) presents five dimensions of leadership: empowerment, expertise, reflection, collaboration, and flexibility. One of the principals from institutional school says:

Apart from private schools, most teachers have the problems of pedagogy and proficiency. And some of them have problems of content. It is difficult to find a professional teacher. He or she engages in many types of work available to him or her. For instance; he or she teaches tuition, involves in plagiarism and share market, and goes to three to five institutions in a day. In rural setting, many teachers involve in farming. When they enter the class, they ask to the students which lesson we are going to learn today. They have neither planning nor preparation. How can we expect professionalism from such teachers? Therefore, there is challenge in professionalism. In an interview with the head teacher from the public school, he says: Teachers do not teach sincerely. They have become so much individual. They talk of their family, children and themselves. They do not share the subject matter to teach. They do not focus learners in learning. They do not motivate them with material and machine. Most of them have problems in method and medium of instruction.

From the aforementioned data, it is deduced that English language teachers are facing pedagogical and technological problems. They lack English proficiency and material. They have problems in dealing with motivation, methods and techniques, classroom management and medium of instruction. To solve these problems, teachers need to sit together, care, collaborate and reflect each other (Pandey, 2012).

Resource-Person's Perception

Covey (2004) mentions that human beings are interdependent; for instance, teachers need students and students need teachers. In collaboration and cooperation, new ideas emerge and they are useful to solve the problems in teaching and learning. In an interview with a resource-person, he says: Teachers come to the training centers. They learn some teaching techniques. They feel happy there. Upon their return, they do not take techniques to their classroom. The administration tells them to use audio-visual aids but they do not. Administration blames them. They are technically poor. Medium of instruction is there only in the classroom but not outside of the class. Balancing the stakeholders is really a challenge. But the opportunity of leadership is the leader becomes competent and confident. He/she becomes both independent and interdependent.

Continuous professional development is a must to grow professionally. It develops a horizon of knowledge. It refreshes and renews an avenue of knowledge and skill. Being with professionals makes a professional. Taking part in training, presentation and publication are some indicators of professional development of teachers (Pandey, 2012). In this context, another resource-person remarks the following; We do not have continuous teacher professional development; we are limited to teacher training only; we train teachers without manual and there is not a proper follow up system. Curriculum, syllabus and course are not updated on time. Therefore, it needs further work in this area. As a result, we have challenges in teaching and training. Only teacher training is not a panacea. Along with training, continuous professional development is a must. Follow up system further facilitate teachers to grow more on their profession. Teaching and training parts need to be made strong with rich resources.

Teacher's Perception

Liberman and Miller (2004) assert that teacher leaders are those with the capacity to transform schools. This statement stresses the need of transferring knowledge, teacher autonomy and valuing the teachers for the effective learning environment. A social role is defined as a coherent pattern of behavior common to all persons who fill the same position or place in a society and a pattern of behavior expected by other members of

society (Hoyle, 1969). Teachers, in an interview, express their experiences and expertise in the following ways.

One of the university teachers of Kathmandu district opines that there are challenges of resource and research, time management, material, centralized leadership, use of technology and method. It is seen that teachers are working in a poor resource environment. Teachers lack a knowledge of research. Time management part of a teacher is poor. They do not prepare enough material for teaching and learning. Even an authority seems to be centralized. After all, language learning is a social process (Hoyle, 1969).

Similarly, another teacher from Lalitpur district mentions, “Managers compel teachers to speak English but they themselves do not speak English. Everyone praises English but the problem is that they do not use it. There is less exposure of managers in teaching. Leadership seems authoritative.”

From the above data, it can be explored that managers themselves are not supportive to create English speaking environment. They simply compel teachers to create English speaking environment. It shows that implementation part is very weak. Even the leadership is authoritative which is not helpful to grow institutionally (Carneige, 2019).

The next experienced and qualified teacher of ELT from Kathmandu district said, “Even the trained and experienced teachers are poor in applying ELT methods and techniques in the classrooms of Nepal. A teacher is a leader, manager of classroom, curriculum designer, textbook writer, policy-maker, reflective practitioner, life-long learner, content presenter, and pedagogical practitioner.”

The bitter reality is that implementation part is weak. Teachers should not forget the fact that they are the leaders of readers (Sharma, 2017). They have to be good in managing a classroom. Teachers have many roles to play such as curriculum designer, textbook writer and policy maker.

Head of the Department’s Perception

Quality emerges through continuous effort. It does not occur overnight. It demands hard work, consistency and persistence from a manager and leader. A true leadership emerges at hard times (Ayre, 2013). In this context, one of the HODs who teaches in campus from Kathmandu district says, “We have the opportunity of personal and professional development, team effort, quality, exploring new areas and learning in leadership.”

It is commonly believed that training and conference develop one's horizon of knowledge and skill. Taking part in them a great opportunity to the teachers (Swanson, 2001). Here is a case of experienced department head of institutional school from Lalitpur district. She presents her experience, feeling and fact in the following ways: The letter comes to me requesting to attend the training and conference of English language teachers on a particular date. Then, I go with the letter to the principal. The principal does not allow me to go to the training. The principal says, "If you go to the training and conference for five days, who do you think will teach your subject?" With this, I feel both bad and sad. Professionally, I myself feel poor. I am a teacher not only a manager. I have to look after the teachers. I am the bridge between the management and teachers. Some teachers do not want change. They are stubborn. I am older than other teachers in the department. Young teachers are over-ambitious. They engage in so many works. They do not seem dutiful. When there is meeting, I prepare the minute with commitment. They all sign on it. It somehow makes them responsible. I motivate teachers with positive punishment. Sometimes, I have to be straight-forward and diplomatic.

The above case of HOD can be linked with the idea of Sharma (2003) who asserts that a good leadership emerges from a good relationship. Therefore, professional network is always important to influence one's potential among people. A true leader touches lives, adds true value to the world and leaves a legacy that lasts. Carneige (2019) says that learning is an active process. People learn by doing. Sharma (2017) presents that a leader solves a problem. He or she should be open, flexible and democratic.

My Own Story

A leader emerges from a difficult context. Leadership is a matter of opportunity and it is a great matter of challenge (Pandey, 2012). Every occasion is a matter of learning. It is an active and mental process. Learners learn through doing and making mistakes (Carneige, 2019). Here is my case which I faced as a manager in a private school and I would like to reflect it.

We initiated one private school in partnership in Kathmandu. We were seven members in the school management committee. I was appointed to the post of the principal for four years. In course of time, the school was in loss. Some of the members could not tolerate this situation. As a result, there was conflict in the meeting. Most of the members expressed that they could not invest further. They were ready to return the share. The problem was how much to return. They said they could not tolerate the loss. I returned their share selling the ornaments of my wife. Finally, recruiting the new members I left school for my further study in leadership. In my MPhil class, I realized

my managerial weakness. Now, I have become the chairman of the same school where there are 400 students and 35 teachers. I can now transform conflict into creation.

Now, I would like to link this aforementioned case with the idea of Chitrakar (2013) who asserts that to read is to lead. My personal and professional experiences give me space to claim that leadership generates vision to transform frustration into creation. Mohan (2007) presents that leadership is a matter of process but not a matter of position. Hawkins (2011) argues that the world needs more people that can lead teams not just to be functioning and effective but to be high performing learning systems that can transform the wider system they serve. Peale (2017) presents that leader cultivate friendships with hopeful people and surround with friends who think positive, faith producing thoughts and who contribute to a creative atmosphere. This will keep leaders re-stimulated with faith attitudes. I would like to remember Sharma (2017) who opines that in handling any problem, we must have the courage to assume a measure of responsibility for whatever situation we are in and realize that we also have the capacity to use the setback to our advantage. Life's greatest setbacks always reveal life's biggest blessings.

C. Results and Discussion

On the basis of objectives and research questions, the study explored the leadership challenges and opportunities of English language teaching managers. A related literature review was done to stand strong theoretically and conceptually. The study adopted a qualitative method and a phenomenological design to gather data. The data were inductively analyzed. From the interpretation and analysis of data the following findings and opportunities were explored.

Challenges: 9Ms

The role of a school principal requires a combination of leadership, management, communication, and decision-making skills. It requires a deep commitment to student success and a willingness to take on a wide range of responsibilities and challenges. A principal has to maintain the discipline of the school as well as he/she has to look up if the study process and outcome of the students are active enough. Principals are facing challenges each day towards improving student achievement on campus. Every principal faces some of the biggest frustrations to control student behaviour, recruiting teachers and staff, promoting personalized learning, improving teaching effectiveness, student retention, and parent support. Leadership involves the administration and management of schools, aligning vision with resources, developing educational programs, and creating supportive environments (Ainley & Carstens, 2018; Connolly et al., 2017). Effective leadership requires understanding education, adopting a visionary

style, and considering stakeholder perspectives (Connolly et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2019). It involves managing school operations, budgeting, human resources, and community relations (Ainley & Carstens, 2018).

The findings highlight the importance of sincerity, a positive attitude, and maintaining momentum in seizing opportunities. Leithwood and Louis (2012) further explain that displaying self-confidence and determination can positively influence professional careers and institutional improvement. Participants recognized context-related challenges; however, professional achievement remains an aspiration for success. Often a lack of motivation among principals serves as a barrier to improving school outcomes, leading to increased stress. Participants identified the lack of support from government authorities as a major hindrance to improving academic standards in schools (Mathema, 2007). Overall, the findings confirmed that leadership presents both challenges and opportunities to transform.

In line with my research question, the available literature, methods of the study and data, we have arrived at 9Ms challenges. The study has revealed the following leadership challenges of ELT managers in Nepal.

To meet the purpose, the study has revealed these leadership challenges of ELT managers in Nepal. *Management*: The management does not involve and inspire people in the organization. Rather, it seems to be authoritative. *Motivation*: Teachers talk about their family but not about their teaching profession indicates that there is a motivational challenge in the organization. *Material*: In the rural setting, the material does not reach on time and in urban setting material development does not take place on time. *Machine*: Machine is linked with technology. Most of the classrooms do not support the intervention of technology. *Method*: There are different methods pervaded in the yard of ELT. Which one to choose is always a problem in the school settings of Nepal. *Medium*: There are 129 languages in Nepal. The concept of multilingual education has made the medium of instruction complex. *Manpower*: The human resource does not seem to be deeply engaged towards profession. *Money*: Our education system heavily depends upon international fund and donation. It is because of this there is financial challenge most of the time. *Minute*: Minute refers to time. Leaders do not seem timely in their dealing, discussion and discourse.

Therefore, to address these challenges our expertise, experience and knowledge tell us that we must have positive attitude towards ELT. The next thing is that any challenge is a matter of opportunity. In opportunity, there is insight. We have to cultivate the seeds of collaboration, motivation, customer satisfaction, shared values and systemic approach. As a manager and leader, we must visualize and realize the challenges to unlock the door of opportunity and success. As a manager, we should understand the

questions of how and when whereas as a leader we should understand the questions of what and why. A leader is a dealer in hope. We should inculcate hope to motivate the clients in the institutions. Finally, we have to transform our vision into action.

Opportunities

Ayre (2013) mentions that a good leader emerges at hard times. We assert that any challenging moment is an opportunity to positive people. With good leadership quality emerges. Leaders need followers. There is synergetic effort in the team. The doors of possibility can be explored. Learning and creation are crucial in good leadership. Trust is earned but not demanded in good leadership. A good leadership has to articulate competence, command and confidence in an organization. National and international exposure can transform and enhance personal and professional development. Then only, leaders can be independent and interdependent.

D. Conclusion

This study highlights the multifaceted leadership challenges facing ELT managers in Nepal, framed through the 9Ms model. Despite these obstacles, opportunities for professional development, collaborative leadership, and systemic reform remain tangible. Addressing these challenges requires integrated strategies that prioritize motivation, technological enhancement, methodological clarity, and leadership training. The findings contribute to the limited body of ELT leadership research in developing contexts and offer practical insights for educational policy and practice.

The findings of this study have implications for leadership practices particularly in developing and underdeveloped countries. The qualitative data can guide other Nepali schools in developing sustainable cultures of collaboration and improving student academic and wellbeing outcomes. Moreover, it offers insights for principals in similar countries to identify areas for leadership improvement. This research can contribute to policy reforms and leadership development initiatives by promoting context-sensitive approaches and implementing relevant pedagogies based on contextual findings. This study informs policymakers in Nepal about the importance of considering contextual insights in educational policies. It advocates for better leadership preparation opportunities and the integration of contextual sensitivities into curricula. It challenges assumptions about principals as authoritarian leaders, highlighting their multidimensional roles that embrace diverse sociocultural realities. The study addresses the gap in Nepali school leadership literature, providing practical knowledge for career pathways and informing leadership practices in similar sociocultural settings beyond Nepal.

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