Research Article

Learners' Behavior in the Classrooms of Nepali Private Schools

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ABSTRACT

Learners' behavior in terms of ability and willingness are essential factors to improve their learning achievement. This study explores the learners' behavior attributed by their teachers in terms of learners' readiness level employing qualitative research through the workshop method among a purposive sample of fourteen teachers from five private schools of Kathmandu district to collect the information. The thematic analysis of the participants' collaborative shared experience was used to analyze the attributed behavior of the learners under two themes: Learners' ability-related behavior and willingness-related behavior. From the study, it was found that willingness is an important aspect in determining a learner's behavior, but it also interacts with ability. The findings of the study suggest the teacher to keep a balance between personal and environmental factors to modify the learners' undesired behaviors that eventually enhance the learners' learning achievement.

Keywords: learners' readiness, ability-related behavior, willingness-related behavior, teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Learners' behavior is an instrumental phenomenon in terms of ability and willingness of the students towards their learning. According to Chandra and Azimmudin (2013) and Tokan and Imakulata (2019), the ability and willingness are essential factors to improve learners' learning achievement. Many researchers like Chandra and Azimmudin (2013), George and Amalraj (2016), and others have revealed that ability assessed in terms of intelligence is found to be an effective factor in explaining learners' achievement and correlates positively. Likewise, willingness to learn is found as the key to success that is significantly associated with the learning process and intimately determines the achievement and behavior. For example, the willingness to communicate influences the pupils' attitude and behavior and also influences pupils' readiness in learning English as a second language (Yusoff et al., 2020). Similarly, even in distance education, willingness is significant that has a positive influence on readiness (Horzum & Cakir, 2012). Around a century back, psychologist Thorndike (1931) introduced readiness as one of the primary laws of learning, and states, the learners' readiness is determined by certain wants, cravings, annoying lacks, and the like, and it helps to determine the learner's behavior which is necessary to get success in their learning.

Despite several influencing factors on determining learner's readiness, in school/classroom context, teachers' teaching styles have a significant effect on the willingness (i.e., motivational) level of students (Muharam et al., 2019). As teaching styles interact with the learner's readiness and classroom situations, a teacher as a situational leader is necessarily to be responsible for learner performance in any classroom situation. For example, 'telling' and 'selling' leadership styles as defined by Hersey and Blanchard (1977) are more effective interventions as compared to 'delegating' and 'participating' for the students with low willingness level (Chandra & Azimmudin, 2013). However, in the absence of knowledge about the learner's behaviors in relation to their ability and willingness, it is difficult to select the evidence-based teaching style. Identifying learners' behaviors that are displayed at different levels of learner's maturity i.e., readiness (in terms of ability and willingness) in a classroom is necessary for a teacher to choose an effective teaching style. Then, teachers would be able to deal with the learners having the different ability and willingness to learn and having diverse behaviors and levels of attentiveness.

Considering this fact, this study attempts to explore how the teachers perceived the learner's behavior in terms of their readiness levels. The findings, consequently, would help the teachers in selecting appropriate teaching style/s, designing appropriate teaching modules, envisioning for change, and creating a learning environment as per the changing context.

LEARNERS' BEHAVIORS IN CLASSROOM/SCHOOL

A teacher always faces several challenges in his/her classroom due to the diverse behaviors of the learners such as some undesirable behaviors are late arrival, early departure, gossiping, disregard of deadlines for assignment, irresponsive, disruptive, and so on. Different

Degree of follower's readiness to assume personal responsibility

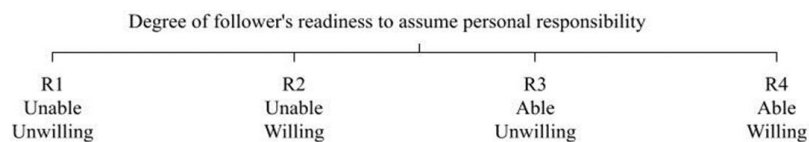| R1 | R2 | R3 | R4 |
| Unable | Unable | Able | Able |
| Unwilling | Willing | Unwilling | Willing |

Figure 1. Learners' readiness level based on Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory (adapted from Gordon et al., 2011, p. 331)

individuals behave differently as their behavior is influenced by various factors such as age, sex, or family background and so on (Denessen et al., 2010). Unal-Karaguven (2015) states that gender, school type, and family-related factors such as siblings', level of education and use of technology were found to have been associated with learners' academic motivation. Moreover, they are different in their ability and motivation level towards learning.

Concerning the learner behavior, some research has been conducted to identify the learners' behaviors, and likewise, for assessing the learner behavior, some scales are also developed. For example, HOPE scale consists of the items that assess the behaviors of giftedness and talent in elementary-aged students, with a focus on students from low-income and/or culturally diverse families who exhibit intense interests, have sensitivity to larger or deeper issues of human concern as the academic behavior, and demonstrates compassion for others as social behavior (Peters & Gentry, 2012). Similarly, Erdem and Kocyigit (2019) categorized the student misbehaviors into "interfering with the teaching of a lesson, not being interested in the lesson, inappropriate behaviors towards the academic, inappropriate behaviors towards peers, and disobeying the rules" (p. abstract). Veldman and Worsham (1983) identified four syndromes of classroom behavior as good, outgoing, rebellious, and withdrawn. They further explored that junior high school students who are emotionally mature, persistent, academically independent, good work habits and confident were grouped as 'good' students; the 'outgoing' students' behavior were characterized in terms of class participation, interaction with teachers, happiness, extroversion, good peer relationships; 'rebellious' students were characterized as disobedient, having behavior problems, undependable and having poor relations with teachers, and having poor work habits; and 'withdrawn' students had poor peer relationships, introvert behavior, unhappy, little class participation, little athletic ability.

In addition, while reviewing the learners' behaviors based on their readiness (ability and willingness), readiness is observed in terms of ability and willingness in a workplace setting, Hersey and Blanchard categorized into four groups of learners' readiness levels (Raza & Sikandar, 2018; Gordon et al., 2011). There are learners with high levels in both ability and willingness, learners with high level in ability and low level in willingness, learners with a low level in ability and high level in willingness, and learners with a low level in both ability and willingness to do their assigned work. The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory as depicted by Gordon et al. (2011), highlights the four readiness levels (R1, R2, R3, and R4) of the learners. Figure 1 illustrates these four readiness levels of the learner.

If the four levels of learners are compared with the learners in a classroom setting, it is necessary to identify the learners' behaviors at different levels that indicate their levels: R1, R2, R3, or R4 under two domains: ability and willingness. However, it is still under-researched, especially in Nepali schools' classroom settings, which is the major focus of this study.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was intended to explore the learners' behaviors with different levels of readiness attributed by their teachers. Qualitative research was employed for constructing the meaning through the "workshop method" (Ahmed & Asraf, 2017; Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017) of data collection that followed structural-phenomenological research as it is grounded in a posteriori condition of knowledge based on someone's empirical evidence and personal knowledge (Aurora & Flack, 2018).

The credibility and trustworthiness of the study were established through the transferability and triangulation of the sources. The process of the workshop with participant teachers was written in a thick-rich descriptive way so that it could be transferred in similar contexts, whereas the discussion in two groups of participant teachers was conducted to confirm the quality of data by triangulation of sources (Pandey & Patnaik, 2003). The participant teachers who participated in the workshop engaged intensively in collaborative discussion between/among participants with the researcher's facilitation. The participants provided constructive feedback (as cited in Ahmed & Asraf, 2017) on the concern that how they would experience the learners' behaviors that they would attribute them at four readiness levels.

A sample of 14 teachers from the basic and secondary level of five private schools of Kathmandu district was purposely selected taking informed consent with them and school authority in the study so as to get the information-rich data. As there is provision in Education Act 2075, amendment of 2019, private schools named as Institutional Schools are established by private sectors under education act and regulation however, they do not get regular grants for the government (GON, 2019)

They were subject teachers of the respective levels. They had at least one year of teaching experience in the class from which their experience was shared. In the group of basic level, four female and three male teachers, and in secondary level (grade 9 and 10), two female and five male teachers were selected considering the gender inclusiveness with an assumption that male and female teachers perceive their learners differently (Etaugh & Harlow, 1975; Wood, 2017). So, the information could be compared and contrasted for the collaborative decision.

In the process of conducting the workshop, a venue for the workshop was fixed in one of the selected schools, the researcher defined his role as a facilitator to conduct the workshop of teachers. The workshop was conducted in April 2019 and the workshop was scheduled for four sessions of one and half an hour each. In between the first and second, and third and fourth sessions, there was an interval of 15 minutes for refreshment, and in between the second and third session, there was a lunch break of one hour. In the first session, there was inception and orientation on the tasks to be accomplished during the sessions. In the second session, they worked in groups of seven teachers on each level through a collaborative approach. In the third and fourth sessions, the group leaders of basic and secondary level
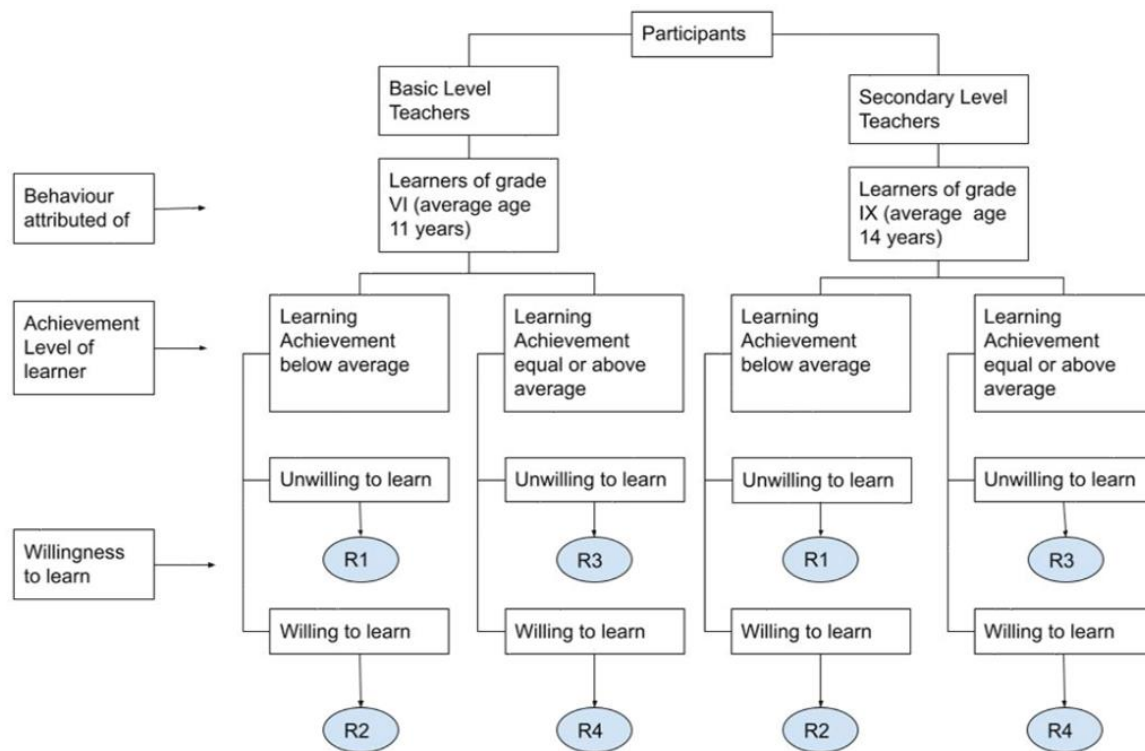
Figure 2. Categories of participant teachers and learners

groups of teachers were asked to respectively present their outputs (attributing behaviors of the learners that they had experienced in their classes) for 30 minutes in whole sessions, and the rest of the time was allocated for in-depth inquiry by facilitating researcher, and audiences for the clarification of their group findings. **Figure 2** explains the participants and four readiness levels of their learners.

In the first session, they selected one class in which all of the group teachers had been teaching. In the basic level, the teachers selected the students of grade six with an average age of 11 years whereas, in secondary level, they selected the students of grade IX with an average age of 14 years. In the second session, in their paperwork, they divided the class students into two groups based on their past results, and in the first group of students with their learning achievement below average, and in another, the group of students with learning achievements above or equal to the average learning achievement.

As presented in **Figure 2**, the participant teachers were divided into two groups. Then, they had four groups of learners- with both the low level of ability and willingness (R1), high level of ability and low level of willingness (R3), low level of ability and high level of willingness (R2), and both the high level of ability and willingness (R4). The group teachers collected the behaviors of each group of learners based on their experience from the classroom context in the dimension of academic, psychological, or social behaviors. They further discuss within the group of participant teachers to come up with their group's shared results. Then, in the final session, their leader presented their outputs, and clarified their attributions of each group of learners, and also answered the researcher's and audiences' questions. Finally, as stated by Ahmed and Asraf (2017), both groups submitted their final collaborative shared experience about their students to the facilitator.

The participant teachers' collaborative shared experience including the workshop notes were analyzed to get into the participants' understanding towards the attribution to the learners' readiness. First,

the Nepali-version information collected from the workshop incorporating the workshop notes was translated into the English version and then sent back to the participant teachers for member checking to "provide them with the opportunity to change their mind and to rescind what they have said…" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 1396) in the workshop. After the completion of workshops, the researcher collected each group's written works which were prepared through collaborative shared experience and workshop notes. Through workshop notes, the information or additional information that was not in their reports but that would attribute the learners' readiness, were collected. Then the researchers engaged in the initial exploration of the data through the coding process, and matching the patterns for drawing the themes. From the cross-group analysis of the responses given by the groups, the shared experiences were thematized into four different readiness levels which were attributed by the participant teachers about their learners.

RESULTS

In connection to the behavior of the learner, a group leader of the basic level said, "The learners of R1 were not obedient and sincere at their work." Then, the facilitator asked the group leader, "What did the learners actually do so that you rated him/her as a disobedient student?" The group leader said, "When I, as a teacher, asked a question to the student, first, the student pretended, as if he did not listen to me, he just stood up without any response." Similarly, the researcher asked the group leader and his group members "how would a teacher identify a learner of R4 level who understands very quickly?" The group leader explained, "She/he (learner) starts her/his work after the instruction given by the teachers, does the assigned task rightly, and submits to the teacher." These were some instances about the interaction between researchers and participants that would help the researcher to prepare

Table 1. Learners' behaviors across their four levels of readiness

Level R1 (unable & unwilling)	Level R2 (unable but willing)	Level R3 (able but unwilling)	Level R4 (able & willing)
» They often achieve poor results.	» They often obtain poor results.	» They understand quickly but are overconfident at their work.	» They understand very quickly.
» They do not grasp problem at once & make a lot of errors in a single job.	» They do not understand subject at once & make regular errors in their job.	» They just do an assigned task to make teachers happy to get rid of the disciplinary action.	» They try to solve a problem using different techniques.
» They submit assignments copying from others, even, not within the time.	» They have a low level of confidence.	» They do not bring necessary materials in the class and also do not do assignments on time.	» Teachers do not need to use various techniques to make them understand.
» They are not obedient to the teachers and also not sincere in the job.	» They are hesitant/ uncertain about doing some job.	» Sometimes, they do their work quickly & then start interrupting classes.	» They are totally attentive & inspired to study.
» They are not regular in the schools, and come out of school uniforms in the school, and even delay in the classes.	» They submit assignments copying from others, not in schedule time.	» In their study, they are not curious and not sincere.	» Everybody appreciates them.
» They do not have good relationships with others and are not well disciplined.	» In job, they are obedient & sincere.	» They are not regular in school & present at school not with proper get up.	» They are curious & sincere in their study.
» They do not worry about their poor achievement.	» They have good relations and are well disciplined with others.	» In a teacher's absence, they go out of control.	» They are argumentative with peers and teachers occasionally.
»They often create issues in the class, interrupt, and if not, stay silent in the classroom activities.	» They are regular in school with proper uniforms and with required materials.	» They keep good relations with peers & teachers.	» They are regular in school & school activities.
	»They try to engage in all activities but struggle to get success at a satisfactory level.		» They are able to keep good relations with friends & teachers.

workshop notes to adapt with the participants' experienced information. The general picture of attributing behaviors to different four different levels of readiness is presented in the following summary **Table 1**.

The narration of the participants' experiences was compared and contrasted to the statements across four levels shared by both groups of participant teachers (basic and secondary levels) that attributed the learners' behaviors. It was then thematized on the basis of attributions to the learners' ability and willingness that would explain the readiness of the learners. From the written works of the participants, the explicit meaning of students' behaviors for each level of readiness R1, R2, R3, and R4 were identified and clustered according to the underlying experiences that they represent. Following two types of behaviors of the learners, *ability-related behavior* and *willingness-related behavior* as defined by Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) model were identified as the themes related to learners' behavior. The behaviors of the learners related to readiness were experienced at higher to lower levels. The learners with readiness R2 and R4 exhibited higher and positive levels whereas the learners with readiness R1 and R3 exhibited lower and less positive levels.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of learners' behavior experienced by their teachers in the classroom, the behaviors are categorized into two groups of behaviors: Task-oriented behavior and relation-oriented behavior. In task-oriented behavior, the behaviors in terms of the ability which are related to learners' readiness for the task accomplishment such as home/classroom assignment, participation or interaction are included whereas in relationship-oriented behaviors in terms of willingness such as communication with teachers and friends, cooperativeness and friendship behaviors are discussed.

Learners' Ability-Related Behavior

Ability-related behavior of the learner can be explained through regularity and punctuality in their job, on-time work, and prompt response to others. As experienced by the participant teachers, the learners' regulatory behavior could be categorized into two groups. First, the learners with the willingness (R2 & R4) exhibited their readiness to do an assigned or regular task on time such as assignment submission, a regular presence in schools, presence in class with proper uniform and with necessary learning materials. In reverse, the learners with an unwilling or low level of willingness (R1 & R3) delayed doing the tasks, escaped from the duty such as submission of assignment copying from others to be saved from teachers' annoyance.

Furthermore, the ability-related behavior was attributed through the responsiveness of the learners to the teachers or others and included the promptness of the learner's response and his involvement in the classroom discussions. As stated by Peters and Gentry (2012), these behaviors are more social and academic. The learners with state R2 and R4 promptly responded to others, however, the learners with R2 were less innovative and less correctly responded to others. Sometimes the learners with state R3 were prompt, otherwise not responsive in general. The willingness to learn seemed to be the driving force to prompt response but the ability was one of the determinants of the quality of the response.

Learners' Willingness-Related Behavior

Willingness-behavior means the behavior that keeps the relationship with teachers, peers, or others. It is more emotional behavior that shows how close they are with others. Participating teachers explained learners' relationship behavior through their experiences in two ways: Innovative behavior and disruptive behaviors. The learners with a high level of willingness (R2 & R4) were found to maintain good relations with others. However, the learners of states R1 and R3 were closer to their peer groups with similar readiness levels. The learners of state R4 were close to all, however even closer to their peer group.

Moreover, the teachers experienced that the learners with R1 state or in some cases of state R3, disruptive behavior was more noticeable. For example, the learners with these states interrupted the class activities, quarreled with others over simple issues such as they were not friendly in the classroom, in the playing grounds, in the lobby while

walking and even in the toilet or restroom. These observed behaviors of case schools' students were similar to the behaviors identified by Erdem and Kocyigit (2019) such as interfering with teaching, not being interested or inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. In reverse, the learners with states of R4 were more innovative in their work, they were more curious, they used to solve the given problems using different methods. The learners of state R2 were not able as compared to the R4 group of learners however, some cases of state R2 would accompany the R4 learners to know something.

While comparing the students' behaviors identified by Veldman and Worsham (1983), the learners' behaviors with levels R2 and R4 are similar to those of the 'good' students and 'outgoing' learners' behaviors whereas R1 and R3-type students' behaviors are similar with those of 'rebellious' and 'Withdrawn' students. Although this study did not explore the reasons why they exhibit different types of behaviors, some researchers like Denessen et al. (2010), Muharam et al. (2019), Unal-Karaguven (2015), and others have found the personal (age, sex, eemotion, and similar others), socio-economic (culture, income, or family background) or school factors (peers, use of technology, teaching styles, school/classroom environment, etc.) as the factors for explaining the learner's behavior. For example, classroom engagement such as independent work for the learners was effective in special learners in higher education (Mattson, 2018). Likewise, Ghazi et al. (2013) found eighteen types of learners' disruptive behaviors such as late arrival in the classroom, making noise disturbance in the class, losing temper while responding to teachers, and reported thirteen causes of the students' disruptive behavior such as lack of consistent parenting or caring, lack of teacher's motivation, poor quality teaching. Similarly, Ardin (2020) revealed seeking attention, classmates, close friends, learning environment, family, or social environment as the causal factors for the secondary school learners' disruptive behavior in learning English in secondary. In addition to the stated factors above, Belle (2017) identified new media as an impactful factor for a learner's behavior. All these factors personal, socio-cultural, or school-related factors might have been influencing the learners' either ability or willingness-related behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to explore the teachers' experience on their learners' behaviors exhibited in their regular school/classroom activities. As collaborative experiences shared by the teachers, four different relative behaviors of the learners with a low level of ability and willingness, high level of ability and low level of willingness, low level of ability and high level of willingness, and both high level of ability and willingness. Learners with high levels of willingness exhibited timely task completion, regularity, punctuality, and prompt responding behaviors. Learners with higher levels of ability were found to be more innovative and to have better interpersonal relationships. The learners who had a low degree of willingness exhibited disruptive behavior and were to accompany the classmates who had comparable levels of willingness, potentially encouraging them to engage in disruptive behavior. Considering these findings, willingness is an important aspect in determining a learner's behavior, but it also interacts with ability. Further intensive research is needed to establish this proposition, which states that learners' willingness and abilities determine their behavior. The findings would be transferable in a similar context so as to keep a balance between personal and environmental factors to modify the learners' undesired behaviors that eventually enhance their learning achievement.

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