

Research Article

# English Language Teaching in Mixed-Ability Classrooms: Teachers' Experiences from Community Schools in Nepal

Arjun Jung Rayamajhi\* 

English Language Education Department, Kathmandu University, Lalitpur, Nepal

## Abstract

This research paper explores English language teachers in community schools in Nepal. This research examines how teachers perceive and understand students with different abilities in the classroom. Recently, the debate on equality and inclusive education in Nepal has attracted attention and discussion, but it has been explained and analyzed in limited ways. The differences observed in the classroom stem from students' language proficiency, learning speed, socioeconomic background, and access to resources and opportunities. According to Rawls' social justice theory, the principles of fairness, equal opportunity, and other principles teachers use in the classroom are linked to educational justice. The data were collected through interviews and classroom observations conducted with four selected teachers from community schools. Key findings included understanding diversity and equality in mixed-ability classes; teachers' moral responsibility and student-oriented teaching; inclusive participation and student voice; and Structural constraints and injustice. Teachers' roles and agency are crucial. This research is for maintaining classroom equity. It shows that teachers should meet students' needs through ethical, educational practices, even when problems stem from systemic issues such as large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training. This research contributes significantly to policymakers, stakeholders, teachers, and teacher agency in advancing social justice in mixed-ability classrooms. It suggests that institutional transformation through subtle teacher development programs is essential for socially just learning in classrooms, ensuring fairness and equity, especially in mixed-ability classrooms, and prioritizing situation- and context-sensitive educational reform.

## Keywords

Mixed-ability Classroom, Professional Development, Social Justice, Equity

## 1. Introduction

Classrooms are more diverse than ever. Diverse classrooms are mixed-ability classrooms where students have different abilities, learning styles, interests, prior knowledge, and strengths; this is a natural reality. This is a natural truth: everyone's biological makeup is different. Such classrooms do not have learners at the same level, and teachers struggle with different problems daily. This is also a common feature and

challenge in Nepal's community schools. They face complex challenges in their activities. A mixed-ability class brings together students with a wide range of abilities in one classroom without discrimination, while promoting inclusive education alongside effective teaching [3]. The growing diversity of classrooms has complicated teaching and learning tasks, a reality Nepal is not immune to, even amid widespread

\*Correspondence: Arjun Jung Rayamajhi (arajamajhi16@gmail.com)

Received: 29 June 2026; Accepted: 10 July 2026; Published: 30 September 2026



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2026. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

dissatisfaction with public education. Learning achievement is not equal for all learners; however, we can improve it by designing teaching activities around learners' needs [2]. Mixed-ability classrooms, where students' intensive learning plays an important role, are characterised by this approach and viewed in a teaching and ethically integrated manner [1]. Across national and international research, inclusive education is emphasized, but from a limited-resource perspective, little priority is given to understanding English teachers' activities in Nepal [6]. When considering transparency, fairness, equal opportunity, and equality in the classroom, and how to address these issues as priorities, Rawls' social justice theory has been found to focus mostly on the Western region. However, empirical research has not been conducted in countries like Nepal. Social justice in education is rarely linked to classroom realities. In an inclusive education system, diverse students learn many things not only from teachers but also from peers. There are many cases in which students with disabilities or other diverse students have benefited mentally and academically from equal participation. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a gap by linking the experiences and understanding of English teachers who teach in community schools within the Kawasoti municipalities [8]. It views its output as knowledge, with fairness, inclusiveness, and equality as the main priorities. Similarly, it examines various contemporary topics through the lens of education policy and Nepal's overall education system in practical classroom settings.

This research adopted a qualitative case study approach. The researchers purposively selected four English-language teachers from community schools. It used interviews, classroom observations, and other data collection methods. The analysis used Rawls' theory and social justice theory. This research examines the problem in an extradimensional way, viewing the English language especially from the surface of the colony, [1] and it plays a major role in doing justice to the subject. Principles and ideals have been followed. If we look closely at public education, community schools have played a significant role in making the education sector accessible to all, taking into account different castes, religions, cultures, communities, classes, marginalized and vanishing communities, and social differences. In particular, it has also studied how students' different abilities are addressed and conditioned. The main issues that arise in these classrooms are transparency, fairness, equity, teaching, learning, and practice, as well as limited resources and the structure of education here. The classroom is a large flower garden where flowers of every nature are found, just as students are the flowers of the classroom. A mixed classroom accounts for students' learning styles, readiness, language, skills, social background, etc. It represents the education sector of the entire community school. A mixed-ability classroom supports students by keeping them in separate classes [6].

Educational inequality is not limited to a region or country; it is global. A study by [2] shows that among English language teachers in Nepal, classroom size, limited resources, and lack

of training necessitate inclusive education or structures to ensure every student learns. Many studies and research on students with mixed abilities are very few in the context of Nepal, and the problems faced by Middle English language teachers, such as classroom size, limited training, and resources, require greater educational justice [2]. This inequality is deeply rooted in the country's educational policy and system. From a social perspective, teachers play a significant role in the current context, where fairness and equal opportunity are the natural rights of every student. Therefore, John Rawls' Social Justice Theory [1] will play a major role in the future of the country's educational reform.

## 2. Rawls' Social Justice Theory

As a philosophical foundation, particularly through transparency and equality, it profoundly affects various fields of education. Rao mainly spoke of two principles: the principle of autonomy under social justice and the principle of non-discrimination, which guarantees every student a fundamental right. However, due to socio-economic disparity in society, the children of people with low incomes are deprived, while the children of those who have resources are comfortable. The future has to be taken into account when creating a social structure. Therefore, when considering the current situation, policy, and the future, address disadvantaged groups. Applying this principle to Rawls's theory in education can help achieve high-quality learning for every student. It develops a method, especially by removing inequality. Such problems and structures are most evident in community schools. Economic inequality in society has many causes. It does not just mean treating all students equally. This allows all learners to make a choice fairly and transparently. This study shows that Rawls' theory of social justice connects with a mixed-ability classroom. This study has made a major contribution to educational equity. In particular, this theory clearly shows the problems and challenges teachers face. When applied, differentiated instruction is highly effective in addressing institutional deficiencies. At the same time, curriculum and evaluation policies must be inclusive and focused on students with diverse needs; as a result, they maintain transparency in policy, structure, and curriculum reform. Researcher Strike applies Rawls's theory of social justice in classrooms, where equality can be applied to the country's teaching, evaluation, and policy. Inclusiveness in South Asia: only education focused on classroom diversity can address these issues. According to [2], such diversity is a deficiency in Nepal's education system. Similarly, according to Rawls's theory, it is not only about the concept of teachers. This can significantly change the structure of education across every field.

Rawls describes two core principles of social justice in education. The right to liberty is a fundamental legal right. It ensures equal access for every individual, including the rights to freedom, thought, expression, and education. Especially in the

classroom, students should be treated equally without discrimination. Teachers should be able to identify each student in their classrooms. They should understand each student's language, economic condition, social status, and whether they are a fast or slow learner, and support them fairly and inclusively. John Rawls' theory guides the concept of a just society for tomorrow, rooted in classroom justice. The principles of Rawls are mainly the principle of equal autonomy and the difference principle, skillfully combined with the mixed capacity of the classroom. Nepal's Constitution recognises equal autonomy as a fundamental right. Every student in the classroom should ensure that everyone's fundamental rights are upheld, regardless of ability. Students should practice self-respect and dignity, focusing on the quality of learning regardless of background, through expression, participation, etc.

Similarly, identifying each student's needs, reducing social and economic inequalities, and providing student-friendly teaching, activities, and materials can lead to significant learning gains. If schools give greater priority and resources to students with more serious problems, education can improve significantly [4].

### 3. Research Method

This study used an interpretative qualitative case study and followed specific guidelines. The research has examined the perceptions and views of English language teachers who teach in mixed-ability classes in community schools within the Kawasoti Municipality, Nawalparasi (Bardaghat Susta Purva), Nepal. A qualitative method was chosen to allow detailed discussion of participants' perceptions, beliefs, and classroom practices regarding mixed-ability classrooms and social justice [3]. This approach is well suited to this research. The case study method enables in-depth insight into multifaceted educational contexts and teachers' perceptions in natural research environments [5]. To maintain the study's credibility and trustworthiness, I triangulated all collected data. I chose four English language teachers from the community school, with no sample size limitations, who teach in mixed-ability classrooms. Community schools have greater diversity than private schools in terms of economic class, remoteness, and societal beliefs. To collect more data, I used maximum variation sampling to bridge ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries. Each participant worked in mixed-ability classrooms. They had diverse backgrounds, and this was intended to provide rich information for understanding and implementing inclusive practices in community schools. The semi-structured interviews collected data, allowing flexibility in participants' perceptions of medical education while ensuring consistency across interviews. The interviews used questions to explore mixed-ability classrooms, teachers, and their understanding of inclusive and equitable participation. It also explored how equity and inclusion are applied in practice.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed word-for-

word to ensure validity. Participants were given pseudonyms (Evidence at Tara, Bharat, Chandra, and Deepa) to maintain anonymity and ensure confidentiality. The researchers upheld ethical practices throughout the research. All interlocutors signed an informed consent form before the interviews. The researchers guaranteed confidentiality and respected participants' right to withdraw at any time. All data obtained were stored in a secure location and used only for academic research. The data were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework [1]. The transcripts were first read several times to guarantee immersion in the data. Next, I generated patterns and ideas inductively, producing initial codes. I then combined these codes into broader themes aligned with the study's social justice theoretical basis. I continually refined and tailored the developing themes to address the research concerns. To enhance the validity and reliability of the results, I conducted peer debriefing with academic peers. I used their feedback to streamline the coding process and strengthen the reliability of the development. I conducted three data reviews to ensure consistency and enrich interpretation. This rigorous, reflexive approach to data collection and analysis kept the study rooted in participants' authentic voices while also critically engaging them with theoretical constructs.

### 4. Findings and Discussion

Teachers play a key role in creating inclusive classroom practices. Research in Nepal indicates that most teachers find it difficult to adapt to diversity because of structural constraints such as large class sizes, limited time and resources, and inadequate training [2]. Despite many educators' clear understanding of its significance, the pressure to meet syllabus coverage targets and inflexible curricular requirements undermines the intended work [3]. Although the notion of mixed-ability classrooms is well developed internationally [4], most related studies in Nepal rely on policy discourse or comparative analyses of public and private schools [1]. Much has been written about the importance of inclusive education and social justice, both formally and informally. Diverse students can interact more effectively and learn through positive expressions and attitudes. A sense of belonging is essential to social justice and inclusiveness. This research examined the perceptions and practices of English language teachers in mixed-ability classrooms in Kawasoti Municipality. I have gathered teachers' voices and perspectives on learner diversity. Community schools in Nepal commonly have mixed-ability classes. To critically analyse through the prism of social justice theory, according to the research results, four English language teachers reported six major themes around data that were collected based on interviews and classroom observations: Implementing and understanding academic performance, student engagement, and personalised learning; equity and fairness promotion; and academic success in diverse classrooms. Six interrelated themes connect to theoretical and practical implica-

tions for inclusive teaching. This paper has several applications in education. We need to consider this topic broadly and address it academically and formally.

### 4.1. Understanding Diversity and Equality in a Mixed-Ability Class

Each classroom includes students with mixed abilities. They differ in many ways. Students differ naturally, socially, economically, and psychologically. These differences affect many aspects of learning, so academic achievement is not the same for everyone. Learning does not occur regularly in classes and is not determined solely by student participation. One participant: I do not find that everyone in my class has the same abilities and qualities. However, it is not possible. How can I handle this situation? How is inclusive education possible in this situation? [1]"

Likewise, the second participant stated, "In my school, 95% of students' parents are not with their children. Some are abroad, have left, or have run away with other men. When I call them and inform them about meetings, they hardly attend the meetings. [2]"

This is a bitter reality of today's family and society. Addressing them brings many challenges. Such differences reveal societal stratification and reflect real social issues through Rawls's principles. Each student in the class has their special qualities, and how can all these characteristics be taught equally at the same time? A student is determined by their home, society, environment, culture, desire, etc. Fair equality of opportunity that connects to Rawls' principle | Such inequalities are primarily due to social and economic factors that society and schools should address. Only if teachers consciously understand the whole structure can they take legitimate action to remove them. Teachers abide by their responsibilities in community schools. Whatever the realities of students and schools, they always adjust and adapt their teaching activities to fulfil students' needs. The students have different natures, but treating them fairly maintains the bond between teachers and students. [2] stated that teachers should feel empathy and sympathy for all their students in the classroom fairly. The best teacher inspires, motivates, and cares for students as if they were their own children [1]. Similarly, also said that teachers are more moral and responsible in rural areas. They fill gaps through their moral behaviour, where students feel a homely environment and learn eagerly and quickly. Weaker students are also in constant contact with their teachers.

### 4.2. Moral Responsibility of Teachers and Student-Oriented Teaching

Teachers are not just teachers. Teachers are seen as having many roles. The theme is not only facilitated but also taken as a guide, guardian, friend, mentor, trusted character, and ideal personality. Teachers should facilitate learning for every

student without compromising their ethics or religion. Inclusive teaching methods should treat everyone in the classroom equally and transparently without prejudice. However, the issue is how teachers take on their role in the classroom. If they do their duty, then there is no chance of a moral environment developing. Job-oriented duty does not support this student-oriented teaching.

"If I cannot give equal time and physical presence to everyone in my class, I should give special priority to vulnerable students. However, I am compelled to complete the syllabus rather than get to know the students and their abilities. [3]"

"I have personally experienced that language also matters for the students. I used both English and Nepali in the classroom. When I use the language as much as possible, they learn quickly, which makes it easier to facilitate learning in their mother tongue. [4]"

Equality was evident in the classroom while listening to the two participants above. That is, by providing instruction tailored to each student's abilities rather than using the same teaching method for everyone, all students have a fair opportunity to achieve the desired results. Similarly, various studies and findings show that when classrooms lack resources, teachers can close these gaps by playing a just role [3]. [4] Inclusive teaching is essential for students. Because it teaches teachers the value of moral education and its positive impact, students should not be judged based on their background, poverty, language, or caste. They should have the same opportunities as students from elite backgrounds. Similarly, [1] takes it as a systematic failure. Structural inequality has obstructed efforts to address students' needs. The teachers want to focus on every student, but the rigid educational system prevents them from doing so.

### 4.3. Inclusive Participation and Student Voice

There are many methods of learning. To learn easily, students learn how to learn and how fast they learn, and they depend on teachers' encouraging words and behaviours. When students learn independently through active participation, they gradually develop a position in the class. Inclusive participation is necessary because not everyone learns at the same pace. Teachers can use different methods, such as learning within the same age group, group work, round learning, etc., to support students of all natures. "Learning is easier by giving it according to the characteristics of all the students. [1]"

"When I told the weak students in my class about their language, they actively participated in answering," said Bharat.

The participants' responses above highlight how we prioritise each student's voice and participation despite their varying levels. These findings have aligned with Rawls' principle of equal liberty. Every student has the same right to express, hear, and learn in a fair and equal environment. Students' participation depends entirely on teachers' behaviour. How do teachers take them and motivate them? Every student has their

self-respect [7] Knowing or not knowing has a psychological impact on students. Therefore, alongside opportunity, self-respect and participation help students who are behind come forward, which connects with the principle of social justice. Educational justice requires meaningful participation in learning by recognizing identity and need, rather than focusing only on access to resources [1]. Similarly, in South Asia, it is an injustice that the curriculum does not include teachers and students; [1] argues that democratic practices should guide education. When there is no discrimination between weaker and more talented students, students can participate meaningfully in learning activities. Students should not be discriminated against in the name of medium, class, caste, etc. Likewise, [4] stated that class size is a major issue in Nepal. In such a class, the teacher struggles to address every student's needs. In large classes, teachers generally do not hear students' voices, and it seems impossible to focus fully.

#### 4.4. Structural Constraints and Injustice

Every student has their special talent and identity. If those talents and identities are recognised and taught accordingly, then great justice will be done. In Nepal, the education system has become the main obstacle. Although teachers' individual efforts have helped to some extent, students have suffered great injustice because of overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, insufficient training, and minimal support.

*"There is no ratio between students and teachers; one teacher has to teach 50 students in a limited time. It is possible in a small class, but in reality, it is not, so they cannot help identify every student. [4]"*

*Adding to the third participant's words, "I cannot teach my students in my classroom freely because the education system controls my hands. This is a major issue in providing and ensuring justice for students in learning matters. [3]"*

Therefore, under Rawls's principles, this lack of room for personal justice is a barrier not only for students but also for institutional justice. Facilities should align with students' needs, and disadvantaged students should not be deprived. Somewhere, this mistake may not produce the desired result. Because of this structural error in Nepal's education system, the results have not been as expected. Therefore, this institutional structure needs review and improvement. A single teacher cannot bring change or ensure justice. Nepal's education system is a major barrier to social justice for students in classrooms. The educational system determines how they teach in mixed-ability classrooms. [5] stated that the concerned bodies of government and education lack a vision or a clear roadmap. No teacher training addresses this issue. The teachers are taught only principles and theory, but there is no practical teaching, no real teaching in the classrooms. This mismatch and these barriers make it difficult to ensure justice for every student. The system should serve as a barrier for learners.

## 5. Conclusion

This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of English language teachers teaching in mixed-ability classes at community schools in Kawasoti Municipality, Nepal. The study used questionnaires and classroom observations to gather information from purposively selected teachers to examine how they handle classroom diversity. The research showed that teachers understood the problems in heterogeneous classes but used different methods, such as group and pair work, differentiation, and feedback, to address students' needs. Nevertheless, most teachers believe adaptive approaches enable quality provision in mixed-ability classrooms, even when they lack resources and training. This study adds to the empirical evidence on instructional approaches and social justice in education, especially in Nepali community schools. It also offers methodological implications for using qualitative case studies to study classroom dynamics in less research-intensive environments. In practice, the study emphasises the need for ongoing training, seminars, and workshops to equip ELT teachers with tools to manage diverse classrooms effectively. Policy support through teacher incentives, consistent supervision, and curricular flexibility can greatly enhance inclusive teaching practices. Future studies need to investigate the roles of teachers and students in mixed-ability classes across primary, lower secondary, and tertiary education levels. Although it has no limitations, it was conducted in a single municipality with a small number of participants, which limits the generalizability of the research's major takeaway. Another limitation is the focus on teachers, not students. The study does not include students' voices or the school administration, and including them could have provided a more authentic, complete understanding of equity in classrooms. This topic also raises further questions for future research. Future research could include primary- or lower-secondary-level classrooms and both public and private schools across different communities and locations. Studies on students' perceptions and the effects of differentiated practices on learning outcomes would also strengthen our understanding of effective inclusive teaching.

## Abbreviations

|       |                                             |
|-------|---------------------------------------------|
| ELT   | English Language Teaching                   |
| EFL   | English Foreign Language                    |
| NELTA | Nepal English Language Teachers Association |

## Acknowledgments

The author sincerely thanks the participating English-language teachers from community schools in Kawasoti Municipality for their valuable time, experience, and cooperation throughout the study. The author also acknowledges Kathmandu University for providing an academic environment that

supported the completion of this research.

## Author Contributions

**Arjun Jung Rayamajhi:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## References

- [1] Bozkurt, A., & Sharma, R. C. (2020). Emergency remote teaching during a global crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 15(1), i–vi. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3778083>
- [2] Gheysens, E., Consuegra, E., Engels, N., & Striven, K. (2020). Differentiated instruction: The diversity of teachers' philosophy and practice.
- [3] Makarova, E., & Herzog, W. (2021). Teachers' beliefs about ability grouping and inclusive education: A latent class analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 101, 103320. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103320>
- [4] Laxmi Prasad Ojha (2022). World Englishes, Monolingual Bias, and Standardized Tests in a Multilingual World: Ideologies, Practices, and the Missing Link. *Journal of NELTA*, 27(1–2), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v27i1-2.53197>
- [5] Narrative Analysis in English Language Teachers' Professional Identity Research: A Review. (2023). *Journal of NELTA*, 28(1), 17–29. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v28i1.61371>
- [6] Tomlinson, C. A., & Moon, T. R. (2020). How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- [7] Trust, T., & Whalen, J. (2021). K-12 teachers' experiences and challenges with using technology for emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Italian Journal of Educational Technology*, 29(2), 10–25. <https://doi.org/10.17471/2499-4324/1192>
- [8] Katz, J., & Mirenda, P. (2009). Including students with developmental disabilities in general education classrooms: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(3), 285–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110701284680>