

**THE IMPACT OF BOOK FREE FRIDAY PROGRAM OF KATHMANDU
METROPOLITAN CITY AMONG THE STUDENTS OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS**



**A Thesis
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Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW)**

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LETTER OF DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis titled “**The Impact of Book Free Friday Program of Kathmandu Metropolitan City Among the Students of Government Schools**” submitted to the Central Department of Social Work, TU, Kirtipur is a record of original work done by Nisha Shrestha under the guidance and supervision of Mr. Abhiyan K.C.

The information and data given in the report is authentic to the best of my knowledge. This thesis has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship or published any time before.

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

The thesis entitled “**The Impact of Book Free Friday Program of Kathmandu Metropolitan City Among the Students of Government Schools**” was prepared and submitted by Ms. Nisha Shrestha to the Central Department of Social Work, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur under my guidance and I therefore forward the thesis for the final evaluation and approval.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates and explores the impact of the Book Free Friday (BFF) program, an initiative launched by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City aimed at enhancing active student involvement and learning in government schools of Kathmandu Metropolis. The program supports experiential learning, skill-based learning, project-based or hands-on activities instead of traditional academic approaches and thereby encourages 21st century skills such as creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration through various clubs based and practical skill-building activities. Using a qualitative research design, data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and a survey which gave the participants an opportunity to express their views regarding the effectiveness and challenges of this initiative. The result indicated the effectiveness of the BFF program, as there has been an increase in student participation and creativity. As per the study, students feel more empowered, motivated, confident and closer to their peers, while teachers have improved their teaching-learning approaches and professional growth in their teaching career. Along with positive aspects of the program, several challenges were also noted, such as, a lack of proper resources, a lack of genuine alignment between activities and students' interest and a call for better planning of the program. As a researcher, I believe the program has potential to bring about change in the learning environment in schools through holistic development and a sense of belonging among the students through student agency. With continued improvement through reflection and support, the BFF program has the potential to contribute to long-term improvements in Nepal's education system and serve as a model for innovative educational practices.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BFF	Book Free Friday
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
CEHRD	Center for Education and Human Resource Development
CTVET	Council of Technical and Vocational Education Training
DoE	Department of Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KMC	Kathmandu Metropolitan City
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NEB	National Examination Board
NESP	National Education Sector Education Plan
NNEPC	Nepal National Educational Planning Commission
OAE	Outdoor Adventure Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEE	Secondary Education Examination
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Education is the crucial foundation to create an equitable, democratic and prosperous society. Education is one of the basic needs of human beings and is essential for individuals and for collective growth and development. According to the constitution of Nepal 2015, the right to education is defined in articles 31, 38, 39, 40, and 42. It emphasizes everyone's fundamental right to an education with particular attention to the rights of women, children, and people with disabilities. School education is very crucial for every child as it is the foundation of educational momentum for an individual child's learning journey to become a responsible citizen. According to the 2016 Eighth Amendment of the Education Act, the school structure is realigned into Basic and Secondary levels of education where basic level consists of Early Childhood Education Development (ECED)/ Pri-Primary Education (PPE) to Grade 8 while secondary level consists of Grade 9 to Grade 12 (Nepal Education Sector Analysis 2021 (2078 BS)). It is important to point out that schools in Nepal are classified into two main categories: community schools and institutional schools. Community schools are funded by public or government resources, whereas institutional or private schools rely on fees. While some schools have a religious affiliation, they are still required to adhere to the government curriculum and are therefore categorized as community schools. Conversely, religious schools that are financed through fees or public donations fall under the category of institutional schools (FLASH I REPORT- 2079, 2022/23).

Government of Nepal has been working towards improving the access to school education and enhancing quality education all over the country. For quality education, various initiatives have been taken by government of Nepal by prioritizing education as a key development agenda. There has been formulation of different educational policies and programs to develop and enhance education sector in Nepal. The current constitution of Nepal 2015 is also committed to create equitable and inclusive education by guaranteeing people's rights to education. According to the constitutional provision of Nepal, three tiers of government have been formed in a federal republican system of governance which constitutes of federal, provincial and

local government (School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32, 2022). Under the new federal structure, the federal level of government are responsible for formulating national policy, law, regulation and standards, preparing the National Curriculum and producing sample curriculums to empower local governments to deliver sectoral services efficiently and effectively. In the same manner, the provincial government is responsible for provincial level research, formulating provincial policies and laws and preparing and producing school level curriculum. Similarly, local governments coordinate, regulate and implement school education, and manage school construction and infrastructure (Nepal Education Sector Analysis 2021 (2078 BS)). The shift to a federal system in Nepal has given local administrators, particularly municipalities and rural municipalities more authority over the education sector. These local organizations supervise public schools, making ensure that school infrastructure is built and maintained, and distribute funding and resources locally to assist educational institutions. International and non-government organizations (NGOs) also contribute significantly to Nepali education by buildings, offering teacher resources and training, and pushing for reforms in the educational system. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is the fundamental document of the school education in Nepal. The NCF is the primary document that outlines the guidelines for creating and implementing curriculum in Nepal. In order to handle them methodically, it illustrates the relevant learning domains and the instructional actions. It attempts to oversee education in schools so that the learners are prepared to face the problems of the 21st century (National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal, 2007).

With the restructuring of the nation's governance through the constitution of Nepal 2015, the education rights as well as responsibilities has been decentralized into all three levels of the government. While education has been included in schedule 9 of common rights list of all federal, province and local level, basic and secondary level education has been enlisted as an exclusive right of local level in the schedule 8. Similarly, higher education, province universities are included as exclusive rights of province level in schedule 6 of the constitution. While these provisions were regarded as revolutionary and highly commendable at the time of promulgation, various hurdles have been seen in the process regarding rights and responsibilities of each of the levels of government and also regarding interference from other government levels. The federal education act has still not been drafted by the parliament making it

incredibly twisted and difficult in managing various aspects of education in local levels as well as regarding the teachers, their authority as well as many other aspects. The whole nation's education system has been in operation with reference to the 2028 Education act which has been heavily criticized for not being relevant to the current education scene. While the policy level uncertainty and dilemma has already been a huge problem in itself in the education scene of Nepal, the education level, the quality of it, the quantity of it as well as the expenditure related to it in regard to result has always been a matter of question, allegation and attribution.

While more than 2/3rd of the whole nation's education system relies on public schools and government funding, the difference in quality, the difference in dropout rates as well as other aspects is enormous. The SEE results of 2024 showed only 48% of the total exam appearing students passing the exam while the remaining 52% falling non-graded. Every year, the SEE results show a huge disparity between the government and private schools. For instance, the 2019 SEE results showed that while 11% of private school students were able to score GPA above 3.6 only 0.8% of government school students were able to do so. (Chhetri, 2019). More than 85% of public-school students had scored less than 2.80 GPA in the exams while only 29% of private school students scored less than 2.8 GPA. Mahashram Sharma, the director of National education board after the declaration of SEE results 2024 referred that the results of technical subjects such as Science, Maths and English were significantly low in comparison to other subjects and cited various reasons such as physical infrastructure, teaching pedagogy, number of teachers to be the cause of minimal success of government level students. (bikashnews, 2081). While in the national spectrum, the result of government schools are well below satisfactory, some schools even having to resort to a completely null results in the SEE exams, (Naya patrika, 2081), some few government schools have had a well reputed name in the education scene. School such as Gyanodaya HS of Kathmandu, Narayani HS of Bharatpur, Amarsingh model HS of Pokhara, Kalika HS of Butwal as well as few other schools have delivered excellent results in SEE exams as well as competed well enough with reputed private schools operating within the same space. This goes on to prove that if given enough resources and a structured teaching mechanism, government schools are equipped well enough to generate results in part with the private schools. While the

curriculum is the same for all the schools, the teaching strategies employed within these specific schools is what makes the difference in results.

As the curriculum adds technology, student-centered teaching strategies, hands-on learning and technical streams in secondary education, many private schools have incorporated these learning approaches into their curriculum. Along with that the curriculum includes children's intellectual, emotional, mental and physical growth specific skills. In NCF 2076, life skills have been kept as an essential component in educational curriculum. In today's era, life skills education is considered as one of the important aspects as it equips students to face the challenges in their life. The curriculum places strong emphasis on enhancing and developing life skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving. The goal is to develop these skills through experiential learning and hands-on learning approaches. Experiential learning is the process of learning by doing. In this learning process students delved themselves into hands-on experiences through which they are better able to connect with theories and knowledge learned in their class to real world scenarios. Experiential learning is a holistic nature where students bring their own ideas, insights, knowledge and interpret them based on their experience. Kolb has described experiential learning in four stage cycle starting with concrete knowledge, then reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation and this sequence results that knowledge is creation of transformation of experience (Bartle, 2015).

Most of the progressive schools of Nepal has started to incorporate experiential learning in their curriculum where students are given a platform to express their ideas and knowledge and experiment through various hands-on activities. The teaching approaches are learner centered, and student directed than direct instruction of a teacher. The structure focuses on problem solving, discovery and inquiry based. This approach to learning has benefited students to self-evaluate their own progression and their capabilities. However, in contrast, if we look into the government schools of Nepal, the teaching approach to learning is still conventional and textbook based. The teachers are also not well-equipped and well-trained. The traditional methods of teaching, teacher oriented, and exam focused patterns have hindered the growth, development and meaningful learning among the students at

government schools. Thus, in order to introduce experiential learning and development of active participation and meaningful learning in government schools, Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) have introduced “Book Free Friday” program in government schools within its metropolis. The program is set to be the first step towards student centric approach to learning experience in a positive and non-dominating way to bring remarkable changes in government school education in Nepal.

The Book Free Friday Program is an educational initiative which aims to provide a dedicated day, typically Fridays, where traditional academic classes are replaced with activities that promote experiential learning, creativity, and social interaction among students. As part of this initiative, initially, 56 out of 89 community schools have designated Fridays as “Book Free” days, allowing students to engage in hands on learning experiences (Ojha, 2023) but as of now, this initiatives has been running in all community schools of KMC. According to KMC, various 90 hours training for “Skill in Education” and 75 hours training for “Creative Skill Learning” has been formulated and being implemented in schools. These kinds of training not only aim to teach and develop competencies in students but also ensures the transfer of competencies into the practice. KMC has prioritized skill-based learning as it helps students to prepare for the future and help them learn employability skills. In “Skill in Education”, various training has been available to students such as fashion design, electrical wiring, plumbing, mobile repairing, sketching and sculpture, cosmetology, mural arts and so on (Ojha, 2023). These training courses are targeted especially for grade 9 students. Similarly, as part of “Creative Skill Learning” various club-based model activities are designed for grade 4 to grade 8 students. These club includes scout club, music club, STEAM club, dance club, Balbalika Tatha Batabaran Samuha (BABA) club, reading culture, storytelling club and so on. As the concept of knowledge-based learning aims to develop an understanding of theoretical concepts but in contrast, skilled-based learning methodology is more practical learning, which we can observe in the characteristics of BFF program that includes experiential learnings, promotion of creativity, enhanced social interaction and holistic development of students. The program is a wide experience that embraces every moment of student’s experience in school. During Fridays, students engage in hands-on activities, projects and workshops instead of regular national curriculum courses.

These activities are designed to encourage exploration, problem solving, and application of knowledge along with skills in practical contexts. The main idea is to develop students into independent thinkers and prepare them for the challenges in the future. Also, to prepare human resource skilled in at least one technical field after completing the school level.

As one of the key objectives of the School Education Sector Plan 2022 is to ensure that all the learners graduate with life skills and capable of pursuing lifelong learning by bridging formal education to accreditation of skill (School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32, 2022), KMC is putting an effort through the initiation of Book Free Friday program to ensure that students are not only equipped with theoretical knowledge but also possess validated practical skills that meet the demands of modern workforce. The program also emphasizes the activities that stimulate a student's creativity, imagination and critical thinking. The activities includes art and craft projects, music, drama, creative writing, tinkering and project making activities. It provides a platform for students to collaborate with peers, work in teams, and help develop interpersonal skills. It seeks to provide students with an exciting shift of pace that might re-energize their passion for learning. This program prioritizes holistic development including students' mental wellbeing and overall personal development. In order to implement the program so as to teach student actual skills, certified trainers from the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTVET) have been recruited by KMC (Ojha, 2023).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Education is the fundamental human rights of the people. It is a powerful tool for economic growth, social advancement and individual empowerment. Under the SESP, it is mentioned that along with the formal education system, various skills supporting income generation and improving the living standards are to be strengthened and established. However, in practicality, it is not seen in majority of governments schools in Nepal, although few have been integrating in private schools. Likewise, the School Sector Development Plan 2016-2023 mentions that there is a direct relationship between the development of skills and making the students ready for the world of work. As skill development improves the learning experiences of students, the teaching methods should be more focused on creative thinking and

enabling the core skills instead of textbook focused and lectured oriented. If we look into the education in Nepal, particularly in government schools, faces numerous challenges, including limited resources, and primarily implementing rote learning-based approach. This affects the overall development of students including their academic performances, social skills, creativity and wellbeing of students. Text-based and rote-based approach to learning often leads to lack of self-confidence to face the dynamic world after graduating from the education system. Moreover, there is a significant gap between knowledge and skills. As a result, students encounter challenges in applying their skills in their workforce.

In other hand, Nepal's current development goals emphasizes high priority on poverty reduction, fostering national economic prosperity and improving the overall wellbeing of its citizens. In order to achieve these goals, both the quality and quantity of education is essential, especially in the areas of technical and skill development which helps in achieving an increase in individual income, enhancing national productivity and boosting the overall quality of life of people. One of the widely practiced approaches to skill development prior to workforce is technical and vocational education (TVE) as it prepares youths for workforce thereby generating income to live their life and contributing to social and economic growth of the nation as well. At every government levels the significance of technical and vocational education is acknowledged and to address the need of such education since it plays a crucial role in developing the skilled manpower for the nation, CTVET and CEHRD has been offering various courses that includes pre-diploma, diploma and 9-12 technical programs in schools and other various institutes (FLASH I REPORT- 2079, 2022/23). As per Flash Report 2079, a total of 507 schools across Nepal is offering technical stream in grade 9-12 by CEHRD whereas 1106 schools are regulating the various courses under CTEVT across the whole country. According to the School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2016), technical and vocational education (TVE) in secondary schools should be provided to develop and familiarize technical skills and abilities (School Sector Development Plan 2016-2023, 2016). However, with the limited reaching out the schools as per data from Flash report, it is not seen proper execution in practicality in all secondary level schools across the country. As a result, this is creating a gap between the policy and implementation which is hindering the expected outcomes from the policy.

Therefore, in order to bridge the gap to provide the required skills for job market and to provide high quality employment oriented and practical education to all the students, Kathmandu Metropolitan City has taken a step ahead and introduced the Book Free Friday Program in government schools within its metropolis along with the aim to achieve the Government of Nepal's envision on achieving rapid, sustainable and employment oriented economic growth. The Book Free Friday program is a new concept in Nepal based on experiential learning approach shifting from conventional to progressive classrooms activities which aims to develop creativity, social interaction, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking skills along with technical skills development among students. This program is primarily designed in order to boost overall development of the students, which is often lacked through old traditional curriculum.

Although, Book Free Friday is being implemented currently in many government schools of Kathmandu, there has been limited empirical evidence on its actual impact on the students. It is very crucial to understand the effectiveness of the overall program as it paves the way for potential expansion and for continuity of the program. Along with the introduction of a new concept and program, there comes many challenges and issues that needs to be addressed in a proper and systematic way. Firstly, it is essential to assess whether the programs helps or harms academic attainment as it is unclear about how a day without regular national curriculum and academic activities impacts academic performance of students. Moreover, the traditional and text-based methodology and practices in governments schools often ignores the development of 21st century skills so it is important to assess if the BFF program fills this gap by improving such skills among students.

Thus, the aim of this research is to evaluate the overall impact of the Book Free Friday program among the students at government schools of Kathmandu metropolis, including bridging the knowledge and skills gap in the education system. There is limited research and documentation on its long-term impact, scalability and sustainability. This lack of evidence highlights a research gap that needs to be addressed in order to better understand, strengthen and replicate such programs across the nation. Hence, the research will adhere to valuable insights into the program's

effectiveness and provide recommendations and suggestions for its improvements to make a model program.

1.3 Research Questions

The primary research questions were:

- i. What are the significant impacts of the Book Free Friday Program on students in government schools of Kathmandu metropolis?
- ii. How does continuous participation in the program influence student's future educational and career aspirations?
- iii. What are the main obstacles/ challenges schools encounter during the execution of the program, and how can these obstacles be overcome?

1.4 Research Objectives

The research will have the following primary objectives:

- i. To investigate the impact of the Book Free Friday program
- ii. To examine how the program affects students' school experiences as well as their future educational and career aspirations
- iii. To assess the obstacles/ challenges faced by schools during the execution of the program and recommend possible solutions

1.5 Rationale of the study

The conventional approach to learning and exam-oriented system does not equip students to face the problems that may arise in real life and thus require critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Such skills can be developed in students through experiential and hands-on learning pedagogies. There is a need for a practical based program that can enhance and foster these 21st century skills. In order to mitigate this educational gap, BFF program provides experiential learning activities so that students can gain such skills which are also equally important for the job market. The BFF program emphasizes the development of more diverse skills set over academic success so that they can excel in their careers. As education plays a central role in students learning, understanding and constructing new knowledge which supports in significant contribution in society, this program helps students to explore their interests, learn new skills and engage in different activities. Experiential learning

is a holistic approach of education, and this approach is in line with international educational trends which supports and encourage students to become resilient, creative and empathetic. Additionally, such programs adds more value and importance to government schools' students as they lack such learning opportunities as compared to private schools. This platform may help bridge the gap between knowledge and skills required for the future workforce.

This research may have an influence on education policy and practice of Nepal. This study can provide valuable insights to policy makers, educators and schools administrators for scalability of such programs into larger educational frameworks by featuring the advantage and underlining its drawbacks and challenges. This program has the possibility to create creative and successful teaching learning methods that may result in impacting students, teachers and society at large. In conclusion, this study attempts to strengthen the educational policy and practices of Nepal by providing empirical evidence of Book Free Friday program.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is in providing insightful and valuable empirical evidence on the potency and effectiveness of the Book Free Friday program among the students at governments schools of Kathmandu metropolis. In addition, by studying the impact of the program, the research can provide interesting and important insights on how experiential learning, skill development and creative learning helps students to become competent and ready for the complex world outside. The findings from this study can be used to understand the strengths and weaknesses of this program by the educators and policy makers which can be beneficial and helpful for them to analysis the proper implementation and possible expansion of BFF in future not limiting to Kathmandu Metropolitan City but also other local government units across the country. This study can also be included for larger discussion about the education of Nepal by contributing to holistic development that prioritizes skill development and student wellbeing as a whole.

1.7 Limitation of the study

The limitation of the study is mentioned below:

- i. This study is entirely focused on government schools of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, which has not represented the diverse educational contexts across other regions of Nepal. The findings could not be generalizable to any schools in remote areas or different metropolitan settings.
- ii. Despite the sample size of 85 students providing comprehensive insights, the results did not fully reflect the broader impact of BFF program on all students attending government schools in the metropolitan area.
- iii. The data may be biased as it has been collected through interviews and self-reported questionnaires.
- iv. Researcher's own expectations and perspectives may have an impact on observation of BFF.
- v. The consistency of data may differ based on how the BFF program is being implemented among different schools. Depending on the different kinds of activities and quality, the influence on students may differ accordingly.
- vi. Different teachers may have different levels of excitement and involvement which may influence how students perceive it.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Book Free Friday program by KMC, is a crucial transition from traditional textbook-based learning to experiential and skill-based learning. This literature review is an attempt to explore larger spectrum and theoretical underpinning of such new initiatives, which would provide a background to assess the impact of the program on students in government schools of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. It therefore aims to position the BFF program in the context of contemporary pedagogical approaches and modern educational practices, informed by global, national and local views on innovative educational practice. The aim of this literature review is to establish the level of existing knowledge regarding experiential learning programs. It will identify how similar initiatives have influenced student engagement in skill development and learning outcomes. The review will explore theoretical frameworks to understand the program's pedagogical basis. The review will also cover the scope on alternative learning programs from a global perspective and national efforts at improving the quality of education in Nepal. This review synthesizes the relevant literature and lays the foundation for analyzing the impact and effectiveness of the BFF program within the unique socio-educational context of Kathmandu.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Skill based education focuses on practical competencies. It is more oriented towards experiential learning and hands-on practice. In the Book Free Friday program, skill-based education along with practical learning is a central component. It ensures that students are academically proficient, emotionally resilient and socially aware. A theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding and implementing BFF program. The theoretical framework provides a framework against which the program's objectives, processes and results can be reflected upon and integrated with best practices in social work and education. The focus paves the way for understanding the program through theoretical framework that supports its principles and practices. The following theories from the social work discipline emphasizes some key underpinning principles of BFF program.

2.1.1 Constructivism

Constructivism learning theory was not developed by a single person, but rather shaped by several influential theorists in psychology and education such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewy and Jerome Bruner. According to Jean Piaget's constructivist learning theory, learners develop their understanding of what they learn based on their prior experiences. He argues that how a person constructs their knowledge is dependent on their existing knowledge. The learners are not the passive recipients of information but instead constructors of meaning based on their knowledge and experiences. Therefore, learning is different for different people. Thus, constructivism as a learning theory, learners continuously build their own interpretation of the world through their perceptions of that world via experiences and interactions with the environment (Olusegun, 2015). Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development provides insights into how learners actively construct knowledge as they interact with their environment. The main principle of constructivism is that students learn when they are actively engaged through hands-on activities where they can explore, iterate, experiment and make meaning of the concepts through direct engagement and involvement rather than just observing (Chand, 2024). It is also equally important to make sure that learning is meaningful and in constructivism meaningful learning occurs when learners are engaged in active problem-solving and critical thinking, mainly when their tasks involve real world problems (Eryaman & Genc, 2010). This theory also put emphasis on the value and importance of social interaction, collaboration and scaffolding in strengthening the learning process. As Lev Vygotsky put forward the social context of learning, he thus developed social constructivism. He argues that the learner's cognitive and intellectual development is based on social interaction. In his theory he introduced the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which signifies the differences between what a learner can do independently and what he or she can achieve with help or guidance from a more knowledgeable peer or teacher or person. Thus, according to constructivism learning theory, knowledge is not constructed in isolation but rather in a social context and setting with other people (Chand, 2024). John Dewy and Jerome Bruner advocated for experiential learning and learning by doing and promoted discovery learning and scaffolding in education respectively.

If we look at Book Free Friday Program, the center of learning is emphasized through learning by doing where learning is active rather than passive ensuring it is relevant and engaging at the same time. The BFF program is based on constructivism as students are actively engaged in various activities where they collaborate with their peers and teachers to learn new skills and knowledge. The workshops are designed in a guided learning than direct instruction within the zone of proximal development as students and teachers co-construct their knowledge during the learning process. From the constructivist framework, BFF program stresses interactive engagement, learning by doing and student-centered learning environments for students to help them construct knowledge through active participation and collaboration.

2.1.2 Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura)

Social learning theory based on the work of psychologist Albert Bandura, emphasizes that learning happens through the interactions with people in a social environment. He argues that social behavior is learned by observing and imitating the behavior of other people. As people observe behavior of other people, they tend to develop similar kinds of behavior if their behavioral experiences witness positive or rewarding experiences. The main aspects of this theory are the three key tenets of learning through others. This theory highlights the idea that learning occurs in social settings through observation, imitation and modeling. Bandura also explains a person's belief in himself and his capabilities in his actions through self-efficacy (Nabavi & Bijandi, Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Learning Theory, 2012).

According to Bandura, the first person who observes modeling behavior uses various cognitive processes to understand what has been observed in a specific way and then attempts to do it. When received positive feedback and reinforcement he/she is motivated to do it even more in a better way. This process fosters a sense of self-efficacy and those with high self-efficacy is likely to succeed in achieving their goals (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). In BFF programs students learn by seeing their friends perform various skills and also by observing their teachers' model behaviors in multiple activities. These observed behaviors are then imitated by students letting them to subsequently apply in practical way. In BFF program, social learning theory is incorporated into the learning process through observation, imitation and modeling

which is the important essence in developing skills, confidence and cooperation among the students.

2.1.3 Experiential Learning Theory (David Kolb)

From the word “experience” itself, we can have an idea that this learning theory is about how a learner can construct their new knowledge through their own experiences. This learning theory was introduced by David Kolb in 1984. According to him, knowledge is created through the transformation of the experience. He has developed a four staged experiential learning process cycle that gives descriptions of how a learner learn from their own experiences. Those stages are Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2012). The first Kolb’s learning process cycle starts from a concrete experience. In this process, learners are directly involved in a new experience through an activity or any tasks. They get firsthand experiences where the foundation to learning is being engaged or involved in an activity such as any group projects or conducting experiments. According to Kolb, learners should be actively involved in certain activities so as to gain new knowledge and information. After concrete experiences, there comes reflective observation where learners reflect upon the experience they had after the activity. Learners tries to understand what went well, what worked and what didn’t work well. They try to analyze being critical and try to understand what happened through discussions with others. In Abstract conceptualization, learners tries to draw new concepts or ideas and come to a conclusion based on their reflective observation. After learners had clear concepts, they do the active experimentation where they actually test their new idea or strategies or approach in new experience based on previous experience. This learning process cycle keeps on going as learners goes through these stages (Kolb & Kolb, 2012).

The BFF program is also experiential in itself as the students goes through all these stages to acquire new knowledge and experiences. In every BFF session, students get directly involved in activities, they work in teams and discuss their project activities with their teammates. After discussion and continuous experiments, they apply a new concept/ idea in the next activities. They continuously iterate with their ideas and designs and come up with the final results.

2.2 Skill Based Education

The most crucial element in an individual's development is education. Nowadays education is going through a transformative shift in the direction of skilled based education. In today's world, there has been rapid technological development and innovation in every sector which has created a competitive and skilled workforce. Therefore, the ability to apply and utilize one's knowledge into practice is important to excel in career. Skilled based education is in demand as it seeks to provide both theoretical and practical knowledge which are applicable to real life scenario of students and become a competent individual. This approach to learning is important from the early foundation of the education that is from primary to university levels and prepare students to acquire abilities that help them succeed in various facets of life rather than just concentrating on standard academic subjects which later helps them prepare for the lifelong learnings.

As it is distinguished by practical orientation, understanding the current trends, technologies and practices in industry, skill-based approach is interactive, progressive and active that exceeds the conventional learning boundaries (Bhasme, 2024). Since this approach requires active engagement of students, it is student-centered, and various models are used to achieve its goals and objectives. Among these are constructivist methods, activity-based learning and hands-on learning. The main goal of these approaches is to develop abilities that includes critical thinking, reasoning, collaboration, problem solving, questioning, comprehension, communication and creativity. Thus, teaching these skill sets are more crucial in student's growth and development and also for continuing learning skills for a lifetime (Gunes & Soylemez, 2018). The main aim of this approach to education is to help students acquire competence along with transfer of learned competence into practice in their everyday lives and in their future careers. Skill based education has a lot of advantages such as it enhance employability, boosts self-confidence and self-efficacy, it encourages lifelong learning and motivates for continuous improvement for growth and development.

Previously, skills were used to perceive as action that was observable which needed professionalism. Nowadays, in the discipline of education, it is referred to as mental ability of enhancing cognitive, linguistic and social skills (Gunes & Soylemez,

2018). Skill development in an individual is essential in today's world as the modern workforce requires competitive tasks and duties to carry out in an effective and efficient way. Such skills can be divided into two types. They are soft skills and technical skills. Soft skills are interpersonal and behavioral abilities such as creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership and so on. Similarly, technical skills are acquired through education, experience and training. It is the mastery of certain software, equipment, coding, data analytical, digital marketing and project management. In order to understand in a simple way, skill is one's capacity to perform a task, where having knowledge to perform that particular skill is important along with taking actions to perform the task using all physical and cognitive resources (Gunes & Soylemez, 2018). It is also known as the process of activating knowledge and implementing it into practice. It is equally important to practice and transfer knowledge, techniques, methods and concepts in order to develop certain skills. Thus, skills helps to get employment opportunities to grow and adapt inside the company to ensure long-term career development and success. Individuals with relevant work skills are able to demonstrate immediate productivity and flexibility and thus can receive job offers and prospects for career progression. In addition to this, the ones who have a broad range of abilities are better able to negotiate and adapt to the working nature and environment as needed, which later greatly enhances job performance. Both soft and technical skills are vital in the complex and dynamic world of today where innovation, problem-solving and critical thinking are highly valued. Individuals with these skills can provoke organizational growth and development via innovative problem-solving and improved productivity. They also contribute to a culture of experimentation via continuous feedback and improvements. Skills and employment goes hand in hand and in today's rapidly evolving world environment they cannot be underscored. Due to the rapid globalization and technological advancements in the world, the demand of highly proficient, skilled, competent and experienced human resources has escalated in working industries and workplace. Hence, people must emphasize and focus on prioritizing learning and developing lifelong skills and abilities to maintain an edge and meet the need and requirements of dynamic work environment.

Thriving and prospering both in economy and society are contingent on the growth and advancement of skills and employability. They helps to boost individual's

abilities, capabilities, aptitudes and chances of growth and career advancements while also elevating and upgrading social progress and wider economic affluence. As economic growth is heavily dependent on a pool of skilled individuals, which stimulates innovation and productivity across all industries that eventually elevates to robust economy and the overall productivity. Moreover, individuals with higher employability rates have less chances of underemployment and unemployment, that automatically lowers the social cost of unemployment. As a result, this helps to stimulate social mobility and equity by granting access to enhance career progression and career prospects for individuals from a range of backgrounds. By laying a high priority on skill development through education, trainings, opportunities to excel and cooperative efforts, individuals are prepared and ready to achieve the needs of present day workforce which will eventually promote a strong and promising future for every individuals (Peters, 2024). However, due to the growing demand for specialized skills, knowledge and experience, students may struggle to meet the required criteria. Thus, in order to bridge this gap vocational education plays an important role. There are students who studies related theories, concepts and practices within their field of interests and experts. Subsequently, there is less possibilities for them to apply those concepts in practical terms than the students who have enrolled in vocational education program. Such students lacks the technical experiences which are required for the transition from classroom knowledge and study to their actual field or career. Their conceptual understanding and knowledge is highly restricted when it comes to their capability to work. This may result in struggling to cope with the work pressure and expectations for graduates as they enter the workforce. Nevertheless, for those students who are already in vocational education and training settings, it is easier for them to make that transition as they already posed some technical and soft skills required for the positions and can make valuable contributions right away (Peters, 2024).

Skilled based education not only paves the way for better employment opportunities but also prepares students for entrepreneurial ventures. It provides students with proper skills to forge a path for oneself in their own specific area or field of interest as most of the students are interested in freelancing and owning their own business of self-employment. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate skill-based education into the curriculum so that educational institutions can fill the gap between

academic and real-world applications by providing students with a comprehensive education that satisfies the need of modern workspace (Peters, 2024). Hence, it should be given topmost priority to gain its benefits to the fullest. In order to achieve it, project-based learning, industry relevant coursebook and internships opportunities would be greatly appreciated. Schools and colleges can provide career counselling and skill evaluation tools to assist students in identifying and developing skills required for their intended career choices.

Skill based education seems inescapable in the new paradigm of the global work force. It helps to increase employability, boosts job performance and eventually advances societal and economic growth and development. Majority of countries are appreciating and implementing skill-based education around the globe.

2.4 Global Perspectives on Experiential Learning Programs

The main philosophy of experiential learning is that students excel and learn best when they are experiencing through hands-on activities followed by continuous feedback via constructive reflections on their experiences (Ramaswamy, 2021). It is also a process where students gain new knowledge, information and develop various skills directly from their own experiences and learning. Since experiential learning highlights hands-on methods with respect to actual real-world situations, this approach to learning has been progressively adopted in various educational systems across the world. Theorists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, and David Kolb have made significant contributions to lay the foundation for experiential learning with regards to many learning theories. Majorly, grounded in theory of Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, this approach to learning encourages problem solving and critical thinking. This approach to learning has been accepted and adopted in many countries worldwide providing holistic development of students. The following are the few examples of how several countries are implementing experiential learning in their educational system:

1. Finland

Finland is known for its progressive, innovative and equal education system in worldwide. Finnish education system has been viewed as one of the exceptional and remarkable in the world with huge acknowledgement and respect. The Finnish model

focuses on the student's active role in learning, interdisciplinarity and practicality in real life. A decade ago, in 2014, Finland renewed its national core curriculum for basic education on the basis of which local curriculum have been developed and are being implemented in schools since August 2016 (Symeonidis & Schwarz, 2016). As reported by Finnish National Board of Education's head of curriculum development, the change in curriculum was in view of the fact that the world is evolving rapidly and since the 2000s the impact of globalization and the challenges for a sustainable future are growing. Therefore, in this new context, new skills for establishing a sustainable future are needed, and thus, the content of teaching and learning should be renewed correspondingly (Halinen, 2014). The main goals and objectives of the curriculum reform was to help educators teach what young people need in their lives. New mechanisms were developed to emphasize integrative, multidisciplinary pedagogical approaches. The main focus was to improve active engagement, joyfulness, social interactive and meaningful learning by maintaining equality, equity and quality education among the students. Hence, with the new curriculum, Phenomenon-Based Learning was introduced and implemented in schools.

A "Phenomenon" in the context of Phenomenon Based Learning simply refers to any events or topic or idea or concepts that bridges university subjects to real life which is relevant to students (Lee & Cuthbert, 2023). Moreover, this learning approach allows students to practice disciplinary knowledge in real context and scenarios through the observation of phenomena from different points of view rather than one single point of view. For example, the idea or topic may include sustainable development, climate change, natural disasters, coding etc. which integrates different subjects and themes. According to this model, there are five dimensions, they are holisticity, authenticity, contextuality, problem-based inquiry learning and learning process (Silander, 2015). In phenomenon-based learning, phenomena are holistic which indicates multidisciplinary approach integrating various disciplines or subjects to explore a single phenomenon. As a result, this makes learning all-inclusive and reflects how knowledge is interconnected with other disciplines and hence helps students to identify the broader view rather than a particular facts or information. In this approach to learning various pedagogical methods and materials are in use to solve the problems. Students are given opportunities to an authentic learning environment which encourages active engagement and motivation to connect their

learnings to everyday experiences and practical applications. In addition, it also helps to contextualize the learning and bridging the theoretical knowledge gap and practical application. In the learning process, students inquire about their topic or phenomena through a lot of questions and build answers together which eventually encourages creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and resolving issues through various possible solutions. During the classes a teacher's role is to facilitate the class as a facilitator instead of giving lectures. The main and greater part of their expertise is required to encourage and guide students to deal with the problem, they have identified for themselves (Silander, 2015).

Phenomenon Based Learning is designed as a compulsory part for the education curriculum in Finland. At least one phenomenon-based project over the whole year should be organized by schools for all students. Projects enables students to investigate real-world phenomena like sustainability, cultural diversity, technological innovation and to synthesize knowledge and skills across various disciplines such as science, mathematics, arts and social studies (Symeonidis & Schwarz, 2016). In overall, Phenomenon Based Learning has been focused on student agency and autonomy. Students are free to choose phenomenon that they will learn about, so the process of learning is aligned with their interests and motivations. They will be able to set goals, plan research and collaborate to find solutions, making them feel ownership of their educational journey.

2. Australia

Australian schools actively integrate General Capabilities into their teaching and learning practices to ensure that students develop the critical knowledge and skills required for 21st century. The general capabilities are central to the Australian Curriculum's focus on providing young Australians with the skills, knowledge and understanding that will enable them to live and work successfully. These capabilities are rooted in learning areas, and have a holistic approach toward academic, personal and social development. The Australian curriculum has included the seven general capabilities, they are: literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding. These seven general capabilities in all, each with the aim of ensuring students are adequately prepared to live in an

interconnected and quickly evolving world (General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, 2013). General capabilities are not taught as a single subject but instead are integrated across various learning areas in the Australian Curriculum. Teachers in schools incorporate general capabilities such as literacy, numeracy and critical thinking into their teaching across different subjects they teach to students. They plan the activities and assessments with a view to how such skills can be developed and demonstrated in contexts that are meaningful and relevant to the students. For instance, a science project may have a strong emphasis on critical and creative thinking, ICT skills and ethical considerations, but on the other hand, a history lesson may focus on literacy and intercultural understanding. The general capabilities framework in Australian Curriculum shows that Australia's dedication to develop manpower with the skills and essential knowledge required for dynamic world of today. These capabilities are integrated across the curriculum to help students become successful, confident, creative, active and informed citizens (General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, 2013).

In Australia, in order to help students explore career options and to develop employable skills, many initiatives have been taken such as School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships programs. These programs are available to secondary school students who are in year 10, 11 or 12. Students with aged 15 and over can get involved in this program while they are still completing their secondary school education (Smith & Wilson, 2004).

3. Canada

Co-operative Education (Co-Op) is a keystone of Canadian experiential learning allowing students to acquire practical work experience along with their academic studies. It helps to connect the gap between theoretical inputs provided in the classroom and applied practice. The well organized and systematic program gets students ready by equipping them with important employment skills, professional networking and hands-on proficiency. The Canadian Association for Co-operative Education defines Co-operative Education as an educational methodology that combines academic learning with relevant work experience (Helena, Dos, Matai, & Matai, 2010). There are two Co-Op courses included in Ontario curriculum. They are Cooperative Education linked to a related course and creating opportunities through

Co-Op (Cooperative Education, 2018). This teaching approach links business and schools in a partnership aimed at training qualified personnel to meet the ever-changing demands of the job market and technological innovation. In this program, students alternate regularly between academic study and practical work experience in industries, businesses, government and social services. This provides assurance that the training corresponds with the institutional pedagogical objectives, students are merely observing but are engaged in productive work, and students receive compensation. Supervising and evaluation by both the institution and the hosting organization ensures that at least 50% of their time is used to provide workplace experience to the learners (Helena, Dos, Matai, & Matai, 2010) . The program combines quarterly academic classes with professional activities, such as internships or work terms, in manner that guarantees at least one-third of the course time is practical. This educational model rearranges the school calendar into quarters rather than semesters and better utilizes institutional resources to optimize students overall learning (Helena, Dos, Matai, & Matai, 2010) . Co-Op education is designed for secondary school students grades 9-12 and post-secondary students in colleges and universities. High school Co-Op programs integrates in-schooling learning with learning obtained in the workplace, thereby granting students credits toward their diplomas. It helps a student at post-secondary level to get professional work experience in their related field of study and prepares them for the job market (Helena, Dos, Matai, & Matai, 2010).

The education system of Canada integrates the experiential learning in order to actively engage students towards learning. Therefore, most of the Canadian schools implement project-based learning along with inquiry-based learning approaches to motivate students to explore the real-world problems through collaborative projects. When students are engaged in such activities they are learning in an interdisciplinary way where their learning process becomes more active. As Canada is rich in natural environment this has opened many opportunities for outdoor learning as well. Program such as Eco Schools Canada (formerly Ontario Eco Schools), a certified program for K-12 schools, integrates the outdoors into curriculum around the topics such as sustainability, biodiversity and ecological awareness. According to SDG Report 2021, EcoSchools program strongly supports five global SDGs that includes clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, responsible consumption and

production, climate change and sustainable cities and communities (Campagnolo, 2021). We can see Canadian educational programs combining Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE), which focus attention on social and personal development with environment education that highlights the nature and a place. Such integrated methods use local history and traditional cultural narratives to enhance and boost students' technical and interpersonal skills while creating a feeling of community. In both classroom and outdoor settings, educators from other areas frequently co-teach interdisciplinary programs that combine subjects like biology, geography, history and leadership. These activities give assistance to students to connect with Canadian's geography and heritage by encouraging national identity and connecting human and nature by filling the gap (Asfeldt, Potter, & Henderson, 2013).

4. Japan

In Japan we can find Tokkatsu, a special activity that is unique in Japan's national curriculum. Tokkatsu aimed at the holistic development of students in schools. There are basically two categories of student learning activities in Japanese curriculum. First is cognitive learning which focuses on subjects such as science, literacy and mathematics while non-cognitive learning is represented by Takkatsu. As Tokkatsu is a non-academic module of the curriculum, it aims to promote social skills in students via collaborative and experiential learning activities within the school environment (Eskasasnanda, 2020). In Takkatsu, non-academic activities involves classroom activities/ discussions, club participation, cleaning time, lunch activities, class meetings, student council roles and school events. The idea of Takkatsu epitomizes the holistic approach on Japan's education system, placing great importance on problem identification to problem-solving, self-reliance and group engagement within a caring school community in developing a truly whole and independent person. Tokkatsu reflects that education should be directed at the upbringing of a responsible and well-rounded person who contributes to society. In other words, its essence lies in developing a feeling of social responsibility. (Tsuneyoshi, 2012).

5. China

Labor education is one of the significant aspects of educational reforms in China for basically acquiring practical skills, work ethics and holistic education combining theory and practice. In the latest national curriculum of China, labor education concentrates on hands-on, experiential learning along with the development of moral and cognitive through effective and productive activities. Such education helps in human development along with promoting productive labor and social development. Labor education is mandatory course from primary to middle school in China (Wu, 2022). Aged appropriate activities are conducted in school for students for better learning. Adult students are engaged in projects such as farming, cooking or vocational training that includes carpentry, plumbing, and mechanical work. In the same way, junior students are engaged in a simple activity like cleaning the classroom. In order to teach children about sustainability and the importance of hard labor, many schools include farming projects in which students' plant, grow and harvest crops. Schools also partner with local communities to offer practical work opportunities such as volunteer work and internships. According to The National Labor Education Framework (2020), labor education are required to integrate into the curriculum at all educational levels with active involvement of all students through Labor Education Week where schools will select a week for labor related activities to conduct in schools. The main objective of labor education is to link academic progress of students with their practical skill development in order to produce independent and versatile individuals by incorporating moral education along with experiential learning to develop cooperation, responsibility, respect and recognition of the value of skilled labor. What's more in emphasizing the attainment of labor skills is that labor education look around for the development of moral character, values and personality in students. It is a means of achieving moral integrity as well as significant content. Furthermore, it supports the advancement and enhancement of higher education of students as well (Peixiang & Sheng, 2024).

2.5 Experiential learning in context of education in Nepal

Learning is a process of gaining knowledge and skills which helps in developing the ability to learn new things in one's life. The individual who thrive for

new learnings and getting experienced in multiple aspects are always the ones who are ahead in their lives. In a competitive world like today, individuals with good learning attitudes and experiences are always in high demand. Learning is a cognitive process. Since children are centered to a learning process, experiential learning is active that allows children to utilize their knowledge where they can learn new skills. In our country Nepal, conventional education has been deeply rooted in schools, especially in government schools where the curriculum is primarily theoretical based, and marks oriented. As a result, such kinds of teaching and learning process hinders in overall holistic development of students (Bhattarai, 2021). Rote memorization is generally considered as traditional way of teaching while in contrast, an experiential learning approach supports in developing creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication. This approach to learning is guided by Kolb's four stage cycle which includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation, it provides a structured way to integrate real-life application into education. The common pattern seen in Nepal's private educational institutions is that they place more emphasis on curriculum related activities than the course itself.

The teaching and learning processes are gradually focusing on child-centered and providing student agency in the classroom. In private schools in Nepal, slowly and gradually, experiential learning started finding its momentum. Rato Bangala School, Kathmandu World School, Nisarga Batika School, Apex Life School, Aakshara, Sanskriti International School, and Premier International School are some of the schools that include this pedagogy into their curriculum. Such schools focus on the frequent field visits, volunteer work, involved in thematic projects, research based presentations, STEAM initiatives and related projects, environment conservation projects, gardening, cooking and waste management initiatives where students are given first hand experiences and teachers as a facilitator to provide the guidance and support (Bhattarai, 2021). The majority of progressive schools incorporate project-based learning activities to connect students with real world issues and promote environmental stewardship and also develop leadership qualities in students (Lama, 2024). Even though most of the private schools in developed cities both inside and outside valley are implementing these innovative teaching and learning practices but however, in ground reality it is very different in public schools where basic infrastructures were also difficult to meet, there is no adequate teachers

and appropriate teaching learning materials. The concept of experiential learning and skill based education is still new for government school's teachers in rural areas of Nepal.

Moreover, the teachers in public schools mostly come from a traditional educational background and lack professional training in modern pedagogies, which makes it difficult and challenging for them to adapt to experiential methods. These issues have also been identified by the Nepalese government and the education policy has been reformed to introduced activity-based learning. The newly revised curriculum focuses on the concept and the skills. The curriculum includes the lesson specific practical activities that can be done inside the classroom with minimal resources or the locally available resources. There is also the teacher's guide for each subject with detailed instructions. The Student Learning Facilitation Guideline 2020 introduces an experiential learning approach in classroom by shifting the focus from rote learning to practical, life-skills based education. For example, the revised curriculum integrates project based and inquiry driven learning activities that make students learn through exploration and experimentation. In this area, the lack of adequate teacher training and implementation support is still hindering progress. In addition, teachers mostly rely on textbooks rather than exploring the full curriculum. As the curriculum and teacher's guide are available online, in most of the cases, limited access to internet makes it challenging to access for many teachers, especially in rural context. Thus, physical copies of the curriculum and teacher guides needs to be made accessible and available in schools. The government has to start making greater investments in professional development for teachers and equally distribute resources across the nation, particularly to rural schools (Bhattarai, 2021).

2.6 KMC's Push for Practical Learning: Current Practices

With the aim to make the Book Free Friday more productive, impactful and monitor its activities, the education department of the Kathmandu Metropolitan City initiated a Call for City Volunteers to mobilize them in various government schools under KMC. Altogether 140 city volunteers were selected from various educational backgrounds such as environmental studies, public health, sociology, social work, psychology, development studies etc. The short-listed candidates were provided with the 4-days trainings from the experts before assigning the respective schools by KMC.

The selected volunteers were engaged with the eco club named “Baalbalika Tatha Batawaran” club to enhance the learning experiences of the students in environment stewardship through their active engagement and participation. The volunteer’s major roles and responsibilities were to commit two specific days which is Wednesday and Friday per week respectively to actively engaged in facilitating the BFF classes, training and support the focal teachers in conducting creative and skill based activities along with the documentation of all activities (edusanjal, 2024).

After few years of implementation of Book Free Friday program at community schools, Kathmandu metropolis has organized the educational event named, “Kathmandu Education Fair” which was held on 28 February 2025 for two consecutive days (My Republica, 2025). The main objective of this educational fair was to present and exhibit the knowledge, skills, creativity and innovations learned by students and how it has impacted in their learning process. In the fair the students showcased their projects and learnings through the exhibition, presentation, live demonstrations and interactive stalls. The educational fair was also aimed to include programs relating to mental and physical wellbeing, character development of children along with capacity development of teachers. The fair highlighted the diverse potential of students when given the right opportunities, platform and environment to learn and to grow. The quality education is placed as the top priority by the Kathmandu metropolis. The practical skills and knowledge provided to children in young age will enable them to become self-reliant in the near future as such skills equips children with the ability to earn their livelihood. The fair not only provided the platform for students to showcase their learning but also provided opportunities for teachers to participate in various activities to enhance their capacity development such as Teacher College programs, the exchange of best practices for improving results and an opportunity for them to learn about the city’s various educational activities. The main goal and objectives of the metropolis is to contribute to the production of responsible citizens by transforming theoretical approaches and bookish educational programs into experiential, hands-on, relevant and practical via initiating such programs like Book Free Friday. The educational fair also aligns with the national education policies which focuses on the development of the 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication along with prioritizing the life skills. The Kathmandu Education Fair wasn’t just an event to showcase the

learning but instead it also acted as a bridge between classroom learning and real-life application. The fair encouraged and realized schools to rethink and reimagine their teaching learning practices from conventional pedagogy to experiential learning approaches embracing more dynamic and student-centered approach to learning inside the classroom.

As part of the Skill in Education, Kathmandu metropolis has taken an initiation to organize “SEEP Mela” in Kathmandu. SEEP Mela is a month-long skill fair whose main aim and objectives are to provide free skill training to students and youths related to various areas and occupation (SEEP Mela 2081: Empowering Entrepreneurial Ambitions, 2081). This skill festival provides a short-term vocational training for employment to youths by providing training on high demands fields. By doing so, this skill festival is aiming to bridge the skill gap and help in increasing employment opportunities in Nepal. Such mela helps to foster community of learners and skill development which eventually equips youths with the competence and skills to gain employment opportunities as well as to step into an entrepreneurial venture. As a result, such opportunities not only help in increasing employability but also help in contributing to Nepali’s economic development. KMC started seep mela from year 2081 and has continued to the year 2082 as well at Tudikhel, Kathmandu. As per my visit to Seep Mela 2082, the mela was offering free training in 34 professions across 10 sectors at Tudikhel. The mela provides wide ranges of vocational training in the various areas such as Information Communication Technology (ICT) which includes courses of AI and its application, Cyber security, Multimedia and PHP, Special Ability Support Skills which includes courses of House Keeping (PWD) and CWD Facilitator Training , Electronics which includes the courses of Laptop Repairer Technician, AC and Refrigeration, CCTV Repairing and Mobile Repairing, Garment which includes the courses of Garment Fabricator and Basic Fashion Designing, Construction which includes courses of Electrician, Plumbing, Mason, Welding and Carpentry, Hospitality includes courses of Barista, waiter/Waitress, Fast Food and Bakery, Automobile includes the courses of Electric Vehicle Maintenance, Light Vehicle Mechanic and Motorcycle/Scooter Repairer with EV, Art and Culture includes the courses of Thanka, Ceramics(Terracotta), Jyotish and Purohit, Agriculture includes the course of Flower Decorator, Management and Services includes the courses of Beautician, Makeup and Hair, Nail Technician, Barber, Stock Market and Wig Maker. Each

course contains theory and practice simultaneously. After completion of the course participants will be certified with the certificate. Additionally, after completion of the course or training, participants are ensured to get employment opportunities after the selection processes.

In overall, we can say that Kathmandu Metropolitan City has emerged as an aspiring leader for other local governments in promoting integrated learning, creative learning and skill-based education within the government school system. With these innovative initiatives, KMC is transforming regular classrooms into space for exploration, creativity and growth of students. By partnering with community organizations, government institutions, NGOs, private businesses and mobilizing volunteers, KMC is bringing these innovative initiatives to life and making it successful.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research adopted a mixed method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to achieve comprehensive understanding of the Book Free Friday program. Quantitative data was collected through the survey and the structured questionnaires helped to measure the impact of the program on students. Similarly, qualitative methods such as interviews and classroom observations provided deeper insights to understand perceptions, experiences and challenges while implementing the program. This design was chosen to increase the validity of the findings and to capture both measurable and contextual perspectives which a single method alone could not provide.

3.2 Universe and Sampling

The universe for this research consists of secondary level students enrolled in government schools within Kathmandu Metropolitan City who are participating in the Book Free Friday program. There are around 47,694 students studying in 87 community schools in KMC. This includes students from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and both genders, providing a broad context for understanding the program's impact. Out of which around 5,290 and 4,958 students of grades 8 and 9 (Rising Nepal, 2024) are the universe for the research respectively.

A purposive sampling method has been used to collect data and information because the research is focused on specific group of participants involved in BFF program who could provide relevant and in-depth information. This method has allowed me to select participants who are most inclined to contribute informative data and information about the implications of the Book Free Friday program. Not all stakeholders had equal experiences of the program so selecting information rich cases was necessary to meet the study's objectives.

A sample size of 85 students were selected in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact on students. Similarly, a total of 4 teachers from different schools were selected to collect the valuable insights and experiences

about the effectiveness and challenges encountered by schools during the implementation of the program. I have purposefully chosen the 4 teachers that includes teachers from secondary and basic schools in order to gain unique perspectives and experiences. The sample size was manageable and sufficient to identify the patterns and meaningful insights regarding the impacts of the program.

3.3 Nature and Sources of Data

I employed surveys for students of grades 8 and 9 respectively and interviews were conducted with head teachers of different schools. The in-person interviews conducted were semi-structured, allowing for open-ended questions and in-depth exploration of their viewpoint and experiences. For interpretation and analysis of data and information, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed later. Secondary data sources have been reviewed and analyzed according to academic literature, reports and policy documents relating to education. This has provided a deeper understanding of the present situation of implementation, policy framework and current research findings in this field. In order to identify the gaps and to provide support for the discussion and analysis of the students' findings, the existing research were explored.

Through the utilization of interviews, surveys, classroom observation and existing literature, this study has acquired a wide range of data and information in order to meet its objectives and offer a comprehensive analysis of the program.

3.4 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The data has been collected, managed, analyzed and presented in a proper way. The data and information has been interpreted and explained. Primary data was collected through techniques like survey and interview. Questionnaires were designed to capture a wide range of information from the participants. These have included open-ended questions to allow for qualitative insights and analysis. To facilitate qualitative research, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Secondary data were collected through the relevant literature and published and unpublished materials.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In my research, I have employed various data collection methods to gather rich and diverse insights and information. The data analysis were focused on both narrative and thematic analysis. The respondents' answers has been organized to present in a graphical representation. The findings from the analysis has been interpreted and explained in the context of research questions and objectives. For clear understanding and explanation of the findings, the responses has been simplified and arranged in a logical way in different themes using relevant literature and theories.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

As the research is conducted in a school setting with students and teachers respectively, it was essential to protect their privacy, comfort and safety following the ethical norms and values. The following are the ethical considerations that was taken during the research:

1. **Informed Consent:** Informed consent from all participants, including students, teachers, and school administrators, was sought prior to any data collection. From the very beginning, the goal of the study, the procedures followed, the participant's role in research, and their freedom to leave the study at any point without consequences was made clear to participants.
2. **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Throughout the study confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect participants' privacy. He identifiable information such as personal names and schools were not disclosed in the findings of the study.
3. **Voluntary Participation:** Voluntary participation was done during the study. The participants were acquainted with the liberty to refuse to participate in the study at any moment. It was ensured that students were not coerced to participate in the study.
4. **Non-Bias and Fairness:** Throughout the study no biasness or any form of discrimination was kept up. Fair and just treatment was provided to each and every student despite their social background and

learning abilities. Participants were assured to feel comfortable, valued, safe and respected during the whole process of the study.

5. **Minimizing Harm:** Any sort of harm for participants were taken into consideration. The first priority was given to the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the participants throughout the process. They were not interrogated or immersed in activities that could make them feel uncomfortable or distressed.
6. **Respect for Cultural Sensitivity:** As the study was undertaken in Kathmandu, where cultural values are important in society and education, I have taken cultural norms and practices into consideration by avoiding any acts or inquiries that might have seen disrespectful or inappropriate.
7. **Transparency:** During the whole research process, I have maintained transparency in communicating goals and objectives of the research. As a researcher, I have guaranteed to provide the findings of the study in an unbiased manner.

By following the above-mentioned ethical criteria, the research has been carried out with the greatest ethical standards.

CHAPTER IV

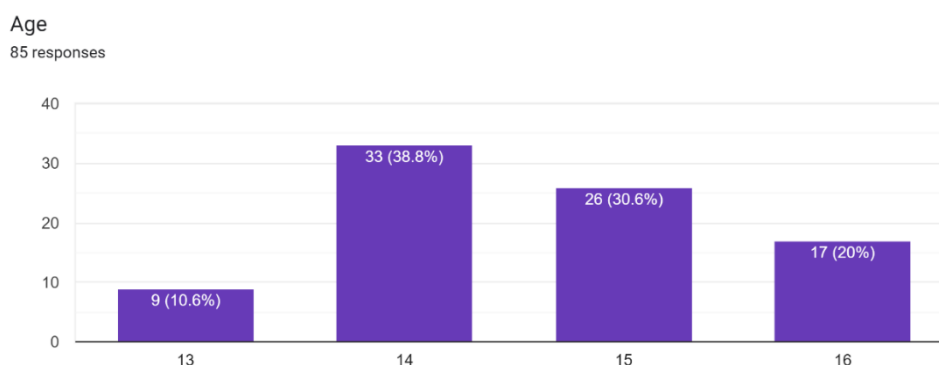
IMPACTS OF BOOK FREE FRIDAY PROGRAM: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter includes the interpretation, discussion and description of the research findings. As I have used survey as a tool for understanding the perception of students towards the BFF program, I have first interpreted the data from the student survey in a graphical representation followed by the narrative and thematic analysis of the teacher's interview. The discussion and interpretation is centered on the results in relation to the objectives and research questions. This chapter provides overall comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness in government schools of Kathmandu.

4.1 Student Survey Analysis

Figure 1

Age group distribution of students participating in BFF program

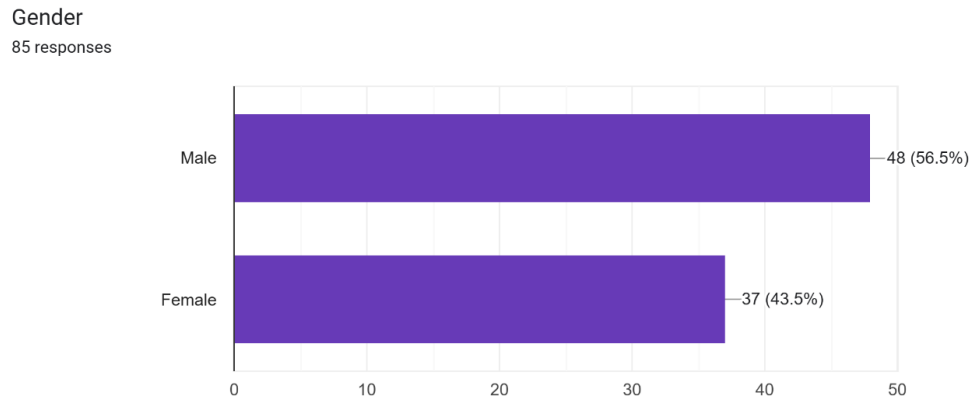


Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 1 shows the age group distribution of students participating in the BFF program. According to the data, it shows that the majority of students fall within the age range from 13 to 16 years group. A notable majority of students are seen in the 14-age group.

Figure 2

Gender distribution of students participating in BFF program

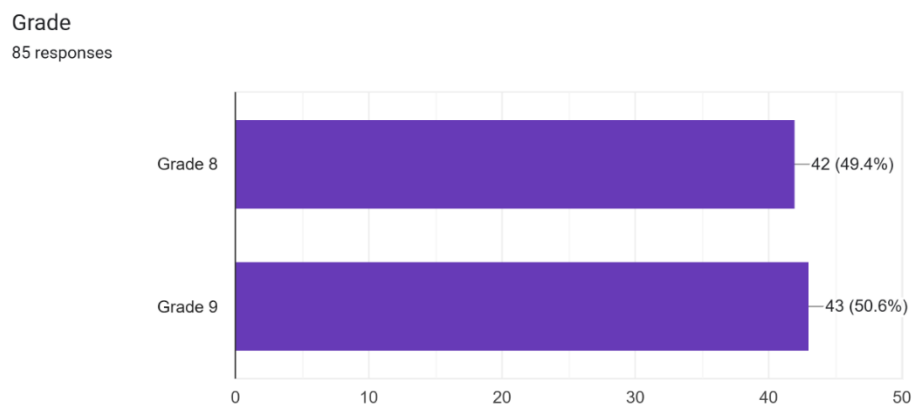


Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 2 shows the gender distribution of students participating in the BFF program. The data shows a representation of 56.5% of male and 43.5% of female students respectively. Comparatively the female participation is seen slightly lower than the male participation. This might be due to the ratio of male and female numbers in schools and absentees of students during the survey.

Figure 3

Grade distribution of students participating in BFF program



Source: Field Survey, 20224

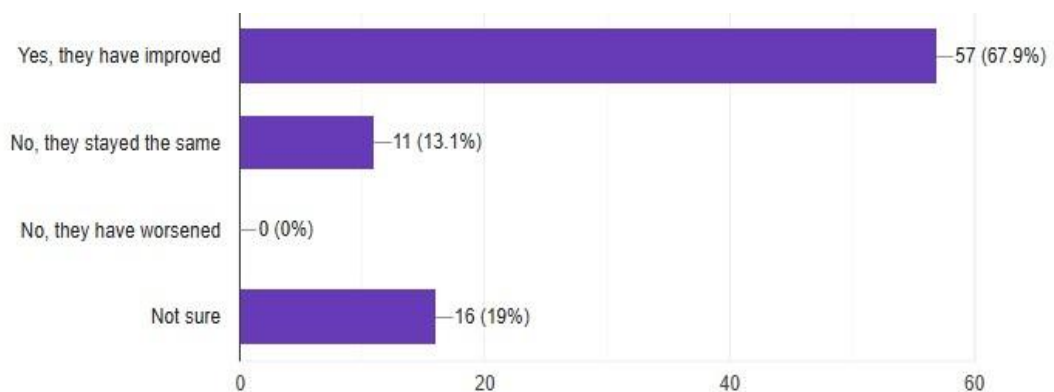
As can be seen in Figure 3, the data shows that there is almost equal participation from both grades of students. These grades constitute a major portion underlining the program's strong engagement in middle school students.

4.1.1 Theme 1: Academic Performance

This theme evaluates the impact of BFF program on academic achievement of the student. These kinds of experiential learning programs reflect on how such methods of learning impact a student's understanding, engagement and application of knowledge. This theme shows the influence of BFF program on students' academic achievement, highlighting improvements in grades, understanding the concepts and overall learning.

Figure 4

Grade improvement among the students participating in BFF program

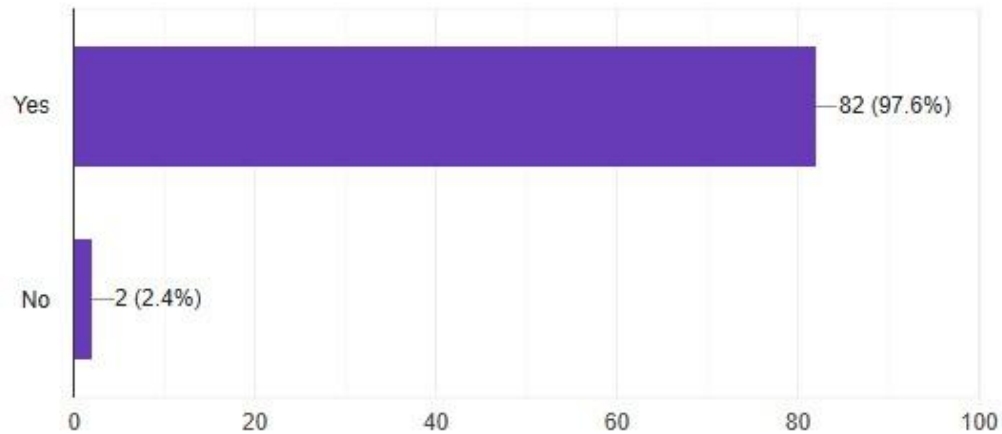


Source: Field Survey, 2024

As can be seen in Figure 4, the program is seen effective at promoting academic success, with a majority of respondents having better grades. About 13.1% of students did not see a change in their grades. This indicates that the program could not have universal impact to some extent among the students. However, the absence of negative responses shows that the program did not negatively impact academic performance of the students. Only 19% of students are unsure if their grades have improved or not. This shows that there is a potential opportunity for KMC to improve program design or tools that allow participants to track and attribute academic success.

Figure: 5

Understanding the subject specific concept through practical based learning via BFF program

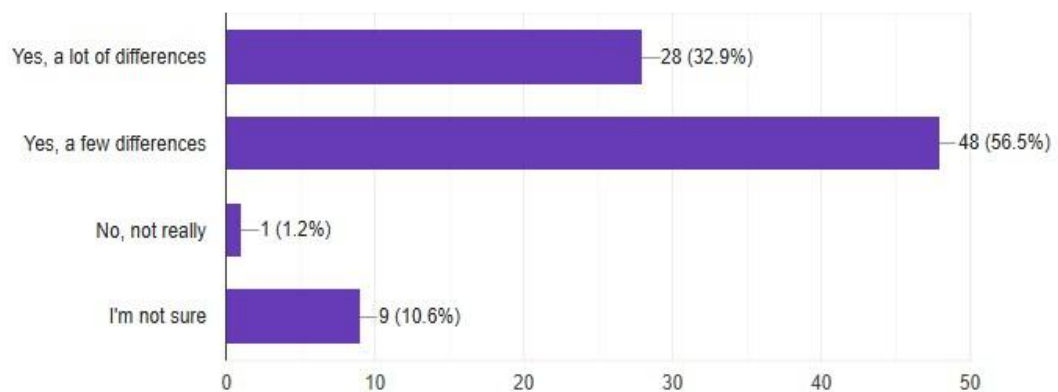


Source: Field Survey, 2024

The above Figure 5 shows that almost all the respondents, 97.6%, reported that the program was helpful in acquiring knowledge through practical-based learning. This demonstrates that the approach taken by the BFF program relates to the students and thus helps them enhance their understanding. A very minimum percentage (2.4%) of the respondents did not find the program helpful in understanding the concepts. Thus, this could have been personal differences in learning preferences of students or other contextual factors.

Figure 6

Perceived differences in between traditional and practical learning

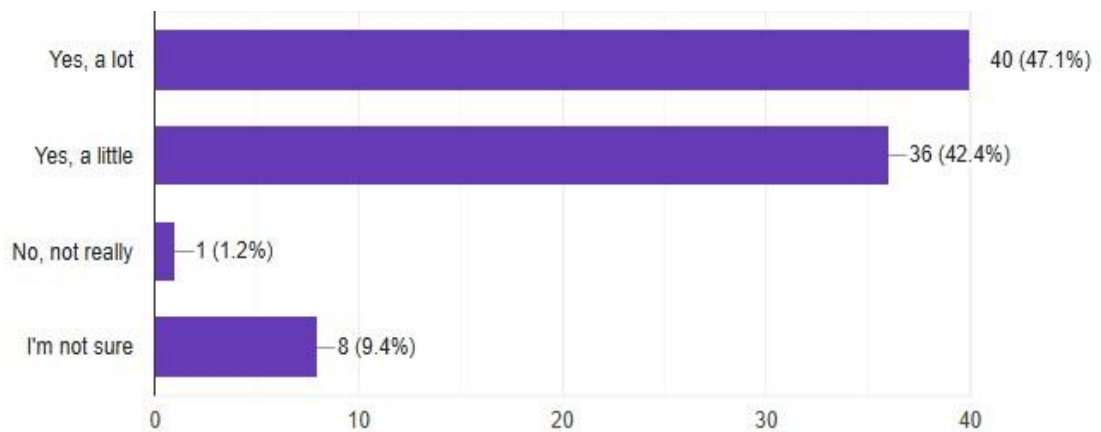


Source: Field Survey, 2024

As can be seen in Figure 6, 32.9% of participants reported observing significant differences between traditional and practical learning during the BFF. This shows that the transition to practical learning has been significant and impactful. Most of the respondents, which is 56.5%, noticed some differences. Very few respondents of about 1.2% reported no differences, which shows that practical learnings is generally noticeable and prominent when compared to conventional approaches. A small but notable percentage of about 10.6% respondents were unsure, this shows either partial exposure to the methods or inability to describe differences.

Figure 7

Helped students gain interest in studying the subjects through BFF

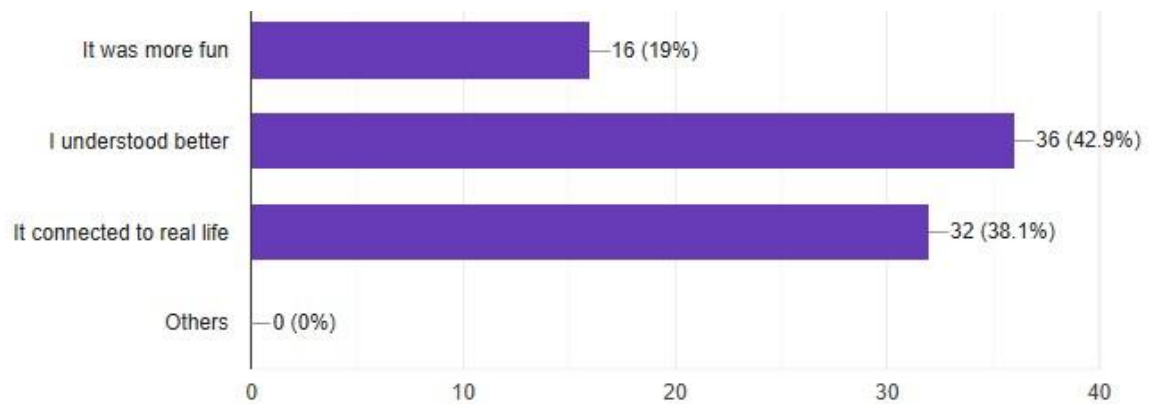


Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the above report, the respondents reported a significant interest build in the subjects through BFF and hence resulting that the program is engaging and effective in promoting enthusiasm for learning. As we can see, only 1.2% reported that the program did not help them gain interest in subject matter and a small group of respondents were uncertain about the program's impact on their subject interest, which may have reflected due to varying learning styles of students or incomplete experience with the program. Thus, this report highlights the opportunities for KMC to enhance the program's inclusivity and better engagement strategies.

Figure 8

Enhanced the experiential learning among the students through BFF program

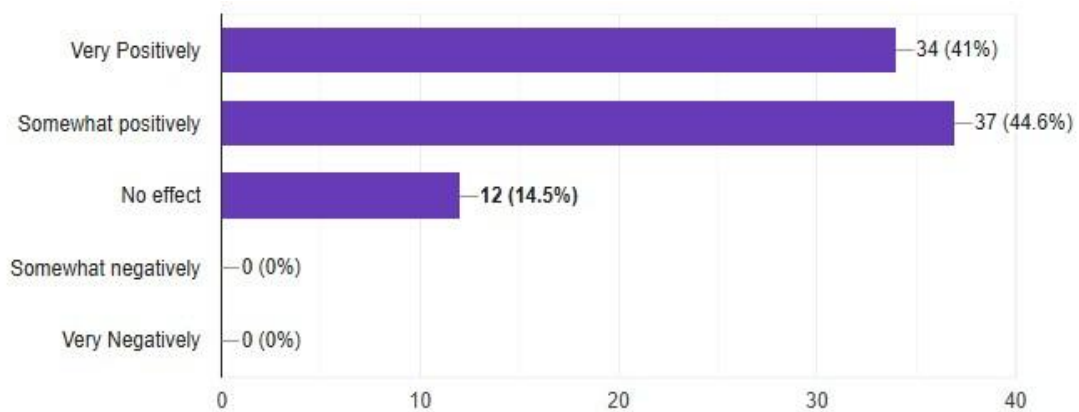


Source: Field Survey, 2024

As can be seen in Figure 8, 42.9% of respondents indicated that learning through hands-on or experience enabled them to better understand the concept in an easy way. This underlines how appropriate use of practical methods makes complex ideas easy to understand. Many respondents appreciated experiential learning as it focused on practical aspects of the topic which makes it more interesting and useful. About 38.1% reported that they could connect the learning to real life application in the real world. Additionally, 19% of the respondents reported that there is more fun and enjoyment with experiential learning. Hence, this shows that this method of learning is seen immensely effective and active while at the same time learning complex concepts makes it easier and understandable.

Figure 9

Impact on overall academic performance of students who participated in BFF program



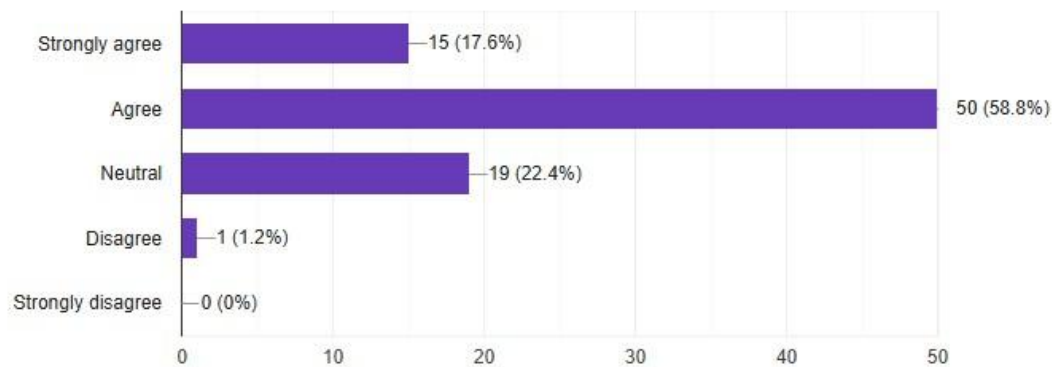
Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to Figure 9, the academic performance was reported very positively affected in the students. Hence, the program is seen beneficial in increasing academic performance for most of the students. About 44.6% and 41%, students responded somewhat positively and very positively respectively, indicating strong approval. The lack of negative feedback and high percentage of positive responses shows how successful this program was in meeting its objectives. However, the 14.5% reported no effect which may indicate a need for further exploration on how the program could be modified to attract or serve this population more effectively. Both, somewhat negatively and negatively, received 0% responses, which shows that no one perceived a detrimental effect.

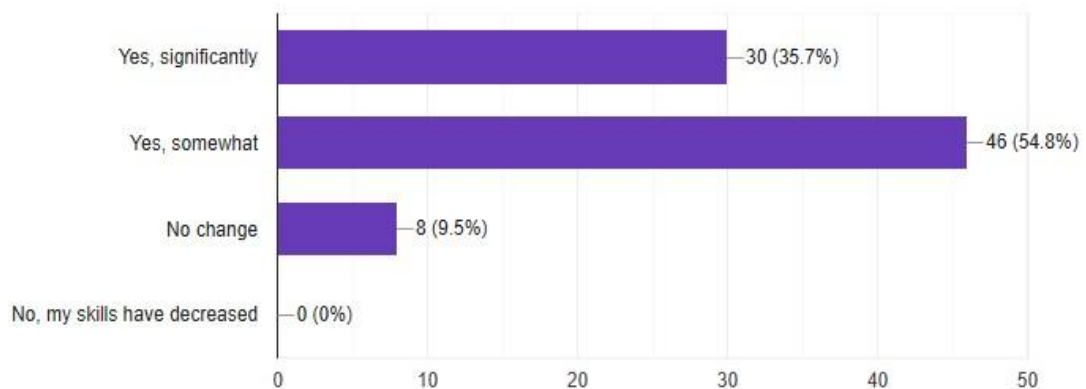
In a nutshell, the findings clearly demonstrates that the BFF program has positively impacted on the academic achievement of the students as this has given an opportunity to experience learning in a more practical way that helped students to learn better, get interest in the subjects and retain what they learn.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Social skills development

This theme focuses on how the program has influenced students' social skills and interaction with peers and other settings. This theme explores students' ability to work in groups, establishing positive peer relationships, enabling to interact effectively and building confidence in social settings.

Figure 10*Improvement in peer relationships among students after BBF program**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

According to the above Figure, 58.8% and 17.6% respondents agreed and strongly agreed on building strong relationships with their peers respectively. The program has helped them establish a closer circle with their peers, indicating its positive outcome in enhancing cooperation and social engagement. Even though it has had a good impact in most of the students, about 22.4% remained neutral, indicating the program didn't have any effect on their relationship with peers. A small portion of about 1.2% had a minimal disagreement, this concludes that while the program foster active social interaction, but not all participants sense it has remarkably affected their relationships.

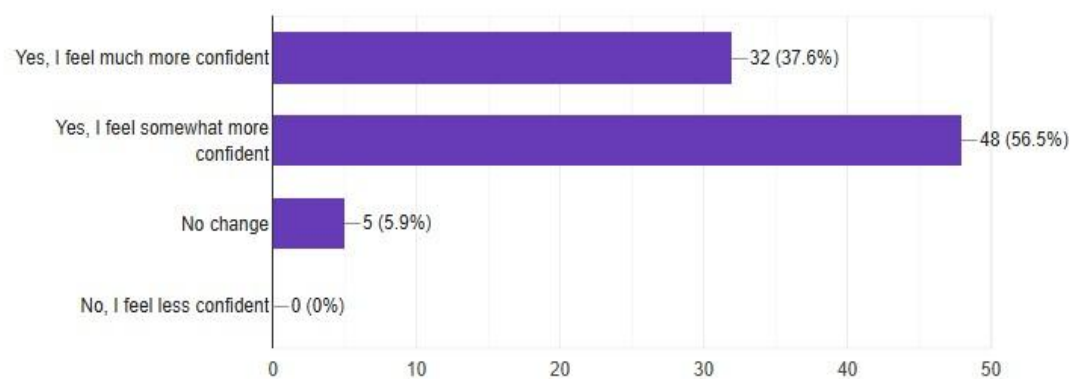
Figure 11*Improvement in communication and teamwork skills among the students**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

As can be seen in Figure 11, the majority of the respondents reported a significant improvement in their communication and teamwork skills, showcasing the

program's strong impact on interpersonal development. Only 9.5% did not perceive any change in their skills enhancement, which suggests that while the program benefits most, it may not fully address everyone's developmental needs and thus KMC should come up with a strategy that may help in development of all these fundamental skills in students.

Figure 12

Building confidence level in social setting



Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the Figure, we can say that the program remarkably boosted the confidence level in social settings for most of the students, with 37.6% and 56.5% experiencing much more and somewhat more confident respectively. About 5.9% neutral and 0% negative response concluded that the program is a valuable tool for boosting confidence of students in social settings.

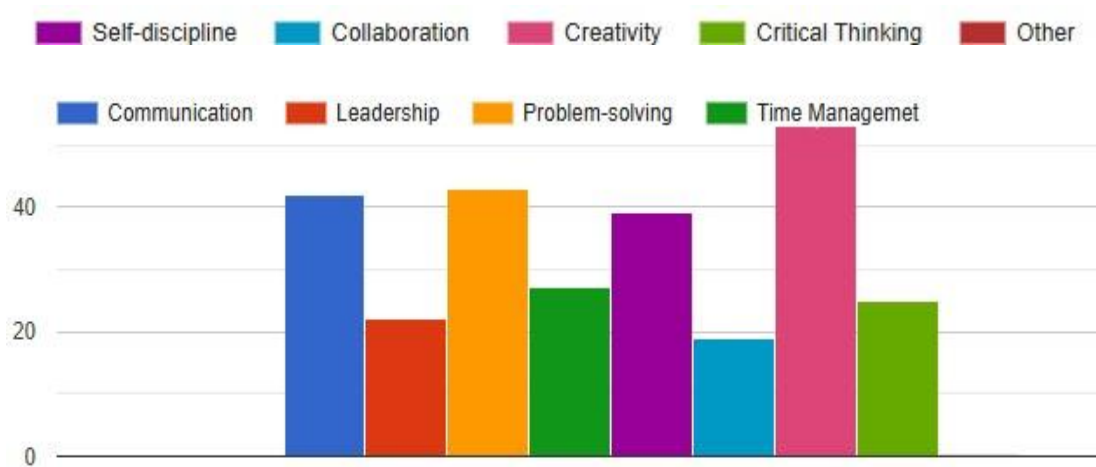
As a conclusion, the majority of activities student perform are group-based, where they learned to work as a team. While working in a team in a social setting, students learn new information, observe positive behavior and practice social interaction. As per social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, it highlights the importance of peer interaction, observation, role model and collaborative experiences in developing social skills. Through BFF activities, it is seen that students have developed effective communication and teamwork skills along with building self-confidence by interacting with peers and teachers.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Skills development and career perspectives

In a world that never stops changing, students need the right skills to adapt, innovate and thrive in a competitive environment. The foundation of these skills is developed through experiential learning with real life application of the knowledge. This theme explores how the BFF program has influence in developing various skills and inspiring the students in their career aspirations.

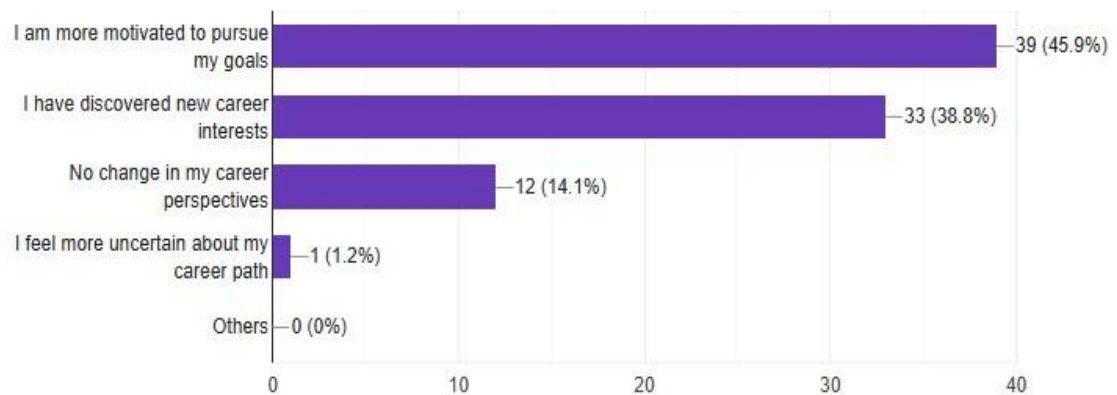
Figure 13

Skills development through Book Free Friday program



Source: Field Survey, 2024

As can be seen in Figure 13, the BFF program has positively helped to develop various skills, with the most notable increase in creativity, problem solving and communication skills respectively. The students have developed meaningful progress in time management, critical thinking, leadership and collaboration skills. These skills are vital in today's complex and competitive world, which are practiced in BFF activities in order to help students develop and enhance these skills.

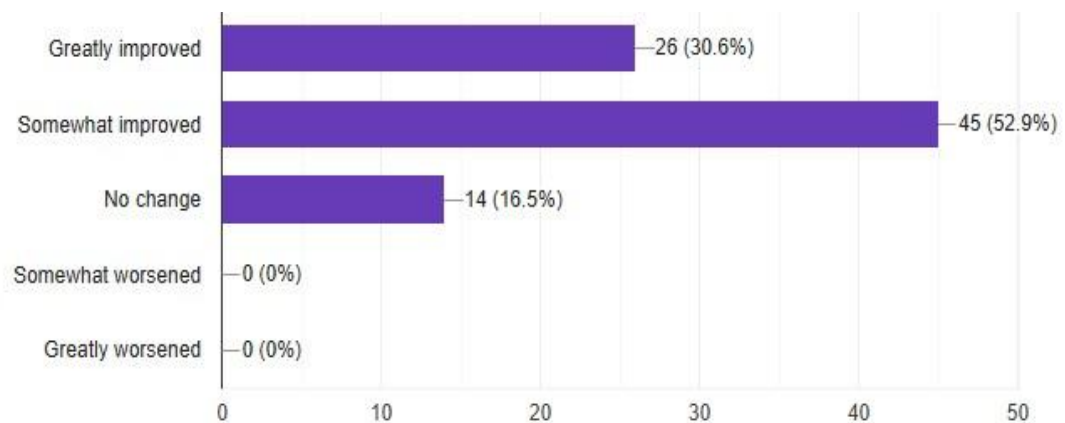
Figure 14*Influence of Book Free Friday program on career aspirations**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

According to the above Figure 14, 45.9% respondents felt more motivated to achieve their goals, this results that the program has inspired determination and focus on personal career aspirations. About 38.8% respondents explored and discovered new career avenues, showcasing the program's role in discovering new things and horizons along with sparking curiosity about diverse sectors. However, 1.2 % felt that they are uncertain about their career choice as it may take time for them to figure out the specialization they are interested in.

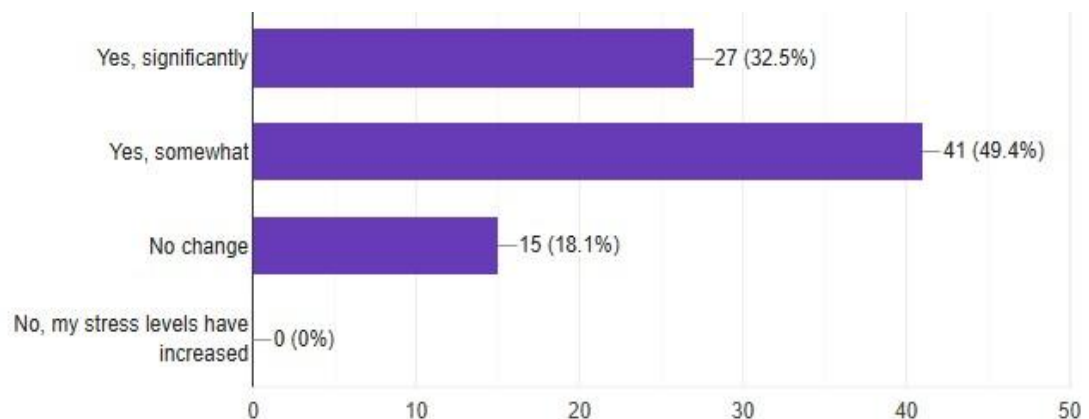
In conclusion, along with the development of skills, such programs inspire students to think about their future too. As the activities are grounded in real world scenarios, such initiatives are career focused where students begins to identify and develop their abilities. As a result, this leads to clear vision of what they want to pursue in future.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Emotional well-being of students

One of the important aspects of students' overall development is emotional well-being as it influence their ability to learn, build relationships and cope with challenges. This theme explores the impact on emotional well-being of students focusing on reducing stress, improving in their mood and enhancing their happiness in school.

Figure 15*Improvement in overall happiness of participants at school**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

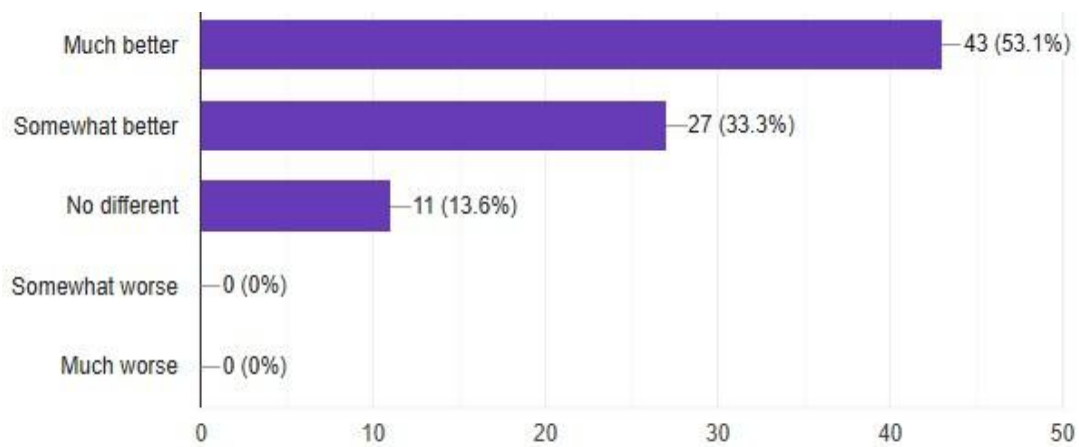
As can be seen in the Figure, the program has a substantially boost in student's overall happiness at school. About 52.9% and 30.6% have reported that the program has somewhat and greatly improved the happiness of the students respectively. This indicated that the program has been successful in creating a joyous and engaging atmosphere in school. Although, a small group of 16.5% felt no change in their overall happiness, which suggests that the program aid the majority of students, yet its impact may vary based on personal experiences.

Figure 16*Decrease in stress level since participating in BFF program**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

According to the Figure, we can observe that significant decrease in stress levels among the students. A total of 81.9% responded positively, which shows that the BFF program is effective and indicates its consistent positive impact on well-being for most of the students. However, 18.1% responded with no change or no effect. The absence of negative responses clearly indicates its value in promoting emotional well-being.

Figure 17

Improvement in emotional well-being during Fridays as compared to other school days



Source: Field Survey, 2024

As can be seen in the above Figure 17, the program has a remarkably positive improvement in emotional well-being, with a total of 86.3% of respondents feeling better as compared to other school days. Although 13.6% of respondents reported no difference in emotional well-being. The findings and the absence of negative response has greatly underscored the program's success at maintaining well-being of the students.

To conclude, the BFF program has a very positive effect on students' overall school experience, demonstrating its significant role in enhancing the school environment and students' satisfaction. The findings shows that the program is appreciated and contributes meaningful school experience of students.

4.1.5 Theme 5: Students' perception about the BFF program

As BFF program is designed and developed for the students, it is crucial to understand student's perception regarding its effectiveness and valuable insights on how the program is impacting their learning experiences. In the survey questionnaire, there were a few open-ended questions to share their experiences on being part of BFF programs. The question included the best thing they like about the BFF program and their favorite moments with their friends and teachers during the BFF activities. Following are some of the responses of the students towards the program.

Student 1: *The best thing is that BFF program increases our creativity, helps in study, learn new things, gain extra knowledge and learn with fun.*

Student 2: *The best thing is that I can do experiments about science, and it helps me in my science studies.*

Student 3: *Students who can't read properly can get knowledge from BFF program.*

Student 4: *I learn new things and it makes me feel better.*

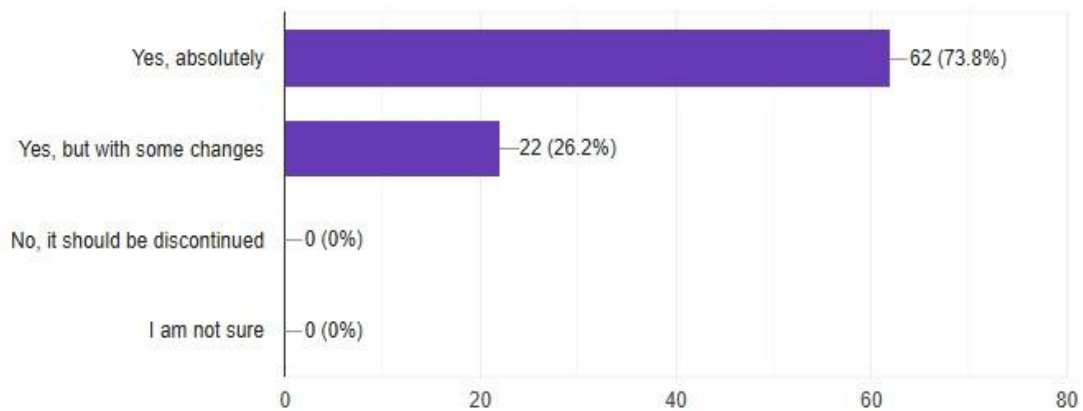
Student 5: *I can communicate and develop relationships with my friends better.*

Student 6: *The student get more knowledge about their career and give some more extra knowledge.*

Student 7: *While working with friends and teachers, they correct my mistakes. I learn new things. I feel happy while I present my work.*

Student 8: *Teachers being very friendly and also teaching unique concepts.*

Above are some of the responses from the students which proves that they are enjoying and learning at the same time. Students' valuable insights demonstrates that the program has positively impacted their learning experiences, engagement and overall satisfaction. Upon being asked about the continuation of the BFF program, see figure 18 for their responses.

Figure 18*Student's perception on future continuation of BFF Program**Source: Field Survey, 2024*

According to the above Figure, about 73.8% respondents strongly believe that the program should be continued in the future. The finding shows that the program is beneficial for students' growth and development. Around 26.2% reported that the program should be continued but with some changes by reflecting its broader appeal and perceived value. The outcome of the results suggests areas for improvement and an increase in its impact on students for better engagement, growth and development.

In overall, as per the responses from the students via survey report, the Book Free Friday program has profoundly impacted students in a positive way contributing to their personal and academic growth.

4.2 Teacher Interview Analysis

The qualitative data and information obtained from teacher interviews provided a more comprehensive understanding of how the program was conceptualized, executed and organized in various schools. The interview delved into the teacher's perceptions of the program, including its initial ideas, how it started, how the program is currently organized or structured in schools, its benefits and impact on students as well as challenges faced and how they are mitigating with those challenges. To gather the information, a total of 4 teachers from different government

schools were interviewed to get the qualitative data including basic and secondary school.

4.2.1 Theme 1: The idea and the concept of BFF in the starting phase

During the interview, the teacher explained how the program was initiated. Most of the teachers agreed that the program tried to break free from the traditional academic practices and offer room for students to develop 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking.

Initially, three years ago, when the program started to kick off, a lot of discussions was made about whether to name the program Bag Free Friday or Book Free Friday or Bookless Friday. The main concept of the program was not to have a regular class on Fridays. This led to many discussions among the teachers on how it would be possible not to take regular classes as this might hamper the course hour that has to be completed within the academic year. Most of the teachers disagreed with this idea. A group of teachers then delved into the calculation of the course hour and as a result they figured out that the hours wouldn't get hampered even if Fridays were done as Book free. This resolved one of the issues regarding this program. However, there was another challenge on how to run Book Free Fridays. There were many questions raised on how to engage students on Fridays without books and regular class. One of the ideas shared by the teacher was splitting into two classes: Co-curricular classes and Extracurricular classes. In the first half of the day students would be engaged in different co-curricular activities aligned with the curriculum such as different science experiments, field work or field visit of different subjects and the other half of the day for the extracurricular activities. In this way, the concept is also met, and students are also engaged in practical activities. This idea was accepted by most of the teachers. Thus, one of the teachers prepared the sample routine to conduct the BFF classes which helped other teachers to implement the program. Moreover, in the first year of implementation schools executed this program as co-curricular where they enhanced the curricular topics through activity-based learning. One of the teachers shared that creativity comes when they provide freedom to teachers. Here, freedom means controlled freedom where teachers have liberty to plan their work and activity, but they are also being monitored at the same time.

The concept of co-curricular activities for BFF was executed for a year. During the reflective meetings with KMC, teachers and KMC representatives realized that not all schools had executed the program in a proper way. Since teachers were fully involved in planning and execution, not all schools were active with full dedication. Therefore, with all the reflective feedback on the program, in second year for its execution, the team came up with the Club Model idea. In club model ideas, the schools were recommended to form clubs such as dance club, music club, STEAM club, Eco club, reading culture, creative arts, scouts, BABA (Balbalika tatha Batabaran samuha), personality development, traffic club etc. to engage students in different club activities as part of Book Free Friday program for grades 4 to 8. For grades 9 and 10, the activities were more focused on skills in education with an aim to develop skills that will equip the student to gain employment opportunities. The training included beautician and hairstyle, fashion and tailoring, mobile repairing, house wiring, plumbing, sketching and sculpture etc. was introduced. A total of 30 students can be accommodated in one club. Thus, based on the total number of students, schools choose the number of clubs for their schools. However, the STEAM club, BABA club and Scout was made mandatory for every school and the school could add more clubs based on their number of students. To execute the club-based model, KMC recruited the vendors and outsourced human resources as a trainer to run the clubs in the school. The trainer along with focal teacher from school as a support, the club activities were conducted. A total of 50k per club budget were allocated from KMC.

In the third year of implementation, there were slight changes in the program. Skill in education programs is implemented for grade 9 only. For grade 10, there is a new program as Natija Sudhar which focuses on SEE preparation.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Teacher's perception on active engagement of students in BFF program

Teachers shared that there has been an increase in students' engagement on Fridays. According to most of the participants, students are more active, energetic and enthusiastic during BFF as compared to regular school days. Skill in education has helped to build the basic concept which later helped students to gain deeper

understanding. When I asked a question about the student engagement during BFF, the following narratives were made by the teachers:

Teacher 1: *During Book Free Friday, I noticed that students are very happy and excited about their club activities. I have witnessed many of the students who were very shy and not so responsive when asked to share their ideas or their projects have transformed themselves into confident speakers. Students have built self-confidence and have known their own strength and capability. I have seen them becoming self-disciplined and responsible. What I believe is when students are given opportunity to express themselves, they can do great work with their hardship and dedication. And this platform is given by Book Free Friday program.*

Teacher 2: *The students of STEAM club are very active in their club activities. They gather and build their projects in a group. They divide their tasks within their group and does a short presentation on their projects in every class. They even incorporates the junior members in their team and transfer their knowledge. They do not depend on the teacher for the projects, instead they themselves ideate on the project and work independently in a great way that they seek focal teacher just for guidance and to clear out the confusions. By seeing our students taking ownerships in what they do and developing leadership qualities makes me feel happy and proud.*

Teacher 3: *After taking fashion designing course, students were curious about the fashion world. Few of the students shared with me that they wanted to pursue their career in fashion designing. It feels good to see our students thinking about their career through the experience of Book Free Friday. They were sad when they came to know that the fashion design course was not shortlisted for this year in our school.*

Teacher 4: *Students enjoy the Friday activities to the fullest. Students makes inquiries about the Friday activities and eagerly waits for it. However, very few introverted students find it difficult to blend in the circle of peers. Nevertheless, we encourage them to participate in the activities and have seen positive changes in their participation.*

These responses from the teachers underscores the transformative change they have witnessed in their students. They have also witnessed the academic growth of the students. The platform that KMC has provided through BFF place students at the center of the learning process. As majority of the experiential learning is group-based, with student working in their groups, they have learned to work effectively as a team by making plan of actions and utilizing team member's abilities while working in their projects (Bhattarai, 2021) as mentioned by one of the teacher. It is crucial to realize that the role of teachers are to create the knowledge and provide students chances to reflect and better express their ideas, understanding and perspectives (Caroline & Baagala, 2024). Without a doubt, the BFF program has inspired students to become more active in any engagement, teamwork, improved motivation, exciting, fun and passionate about learning among students.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Teachers' perception regarding their focal teacher's engagement in BFF program

As the program includes focal teachers' involvement in making it successful, it's crucial to engage focal teachers in planning, executing and monitoring the program activities. When I asked a question regarding focal teacher's engagement and how do they perceive their engagement in BFF activities, the following were the narratives shared by the school leaders:

***Teacher 1:** In my school focal teachers have taken this as an opportunity to enhance their own knowledge and skills as most of the contents and courses are also new for them. Teachers are seen excited and enthusiastic about the new approach to teaching and learning. They are also learning and adapting along with students.*

***Teacher 2:** As it is also new for the teachers, it takes time and effort to understand the contents. They already have pressure to complete their regular national curriculum and adding up the BFF activities, few teachers perceived the required additional time and efforts as a burden and added tasks particularly since there are no any compensation or incentives to acknowledge their contributions.*

Teacher 3: *Yes, teachers are somehow demotivated when they are not paid for their extra time, efforts and work. However, as a school head teacher, I have been motivating my teachers by opening them opportunities to participate in various workshops and training which help them enhance their existing knowledge. I believe that it's not always just about the money, sometimes providing them with such platforms to groom and be a better version of themselves adds more value to them. This is how I motivate and appreciate my teachers and the work they do for the betterment of our students.*

Teacher 4: *I have seen teachers being hesitant because the program activities may require use of technology. Nevertheless, with proper orientation, teacher training and motivation, teachers have stepped out of their comfort zone to practice new knowledge and skills.*

With the introduction of a new program, it is equally important to have the teachers who are also ready to adapt the new programs and ready to opt for it. According to the responses from the school leaders, we can conclude that the program has opened the learning environment for the teachers too to enhance their knowledge and skills. The findings result in positive engagement of focal teacher. However, most of the teachers expects some sort of incentive for the efforts.

4.2.4 Theme: 4 Parents' perception regarding BFF program

Initially, in early years of implementation, parents were concerned that how their children would learn without books. A lot of absenteeism were seen in early days as parents were unaware of the program and its importance. Eventually, as they observed their children enjoying the learning process and acquiring new skills and knowledge, their perspective shifted. Gradually, participation increased, and now the program boasts 100% participation.

Teacher 2: *In our school we frequently conduct parent's meetings where we update students about all the activities. This has helped them understand what their children are learning and doing. Also, at the same time they have known about the BFF program and the impact it has on their child's learning.*

In overall, as per the teachers, parents have shown positive response towards the program. Although, schools have not conducted any survey with parents regarding the program. However, based on their observation, meetings and casual conversation, parents are happy to see their children learning and growing through a practical approach. Few parents of grade 10 has recommended for children focus on the studies than extra activities.

4.2.5 Theme 5: Effectiveness in Monitoring and Evaluation of BFF program

Monitoring and evaluation plays a vital role in the successful implementation of any plans, policies, projects and programs. Effective monitoring and evaluation system helps to obtain essential data and information required for the formulation and implementation of plans and programs. It helps to check and balance whether the programs are being executed in proper ways or not. The execution of Book Free Friday program are also being monitored and evaluated by the KMC to verify whether the project activities are being implemented and whether or not the intended output are being achieved in accordance with the project plans. When I asked about how the activities of BFF are monitored by KMC, the following were the narratives given by the teachers:

Teacher 1: *As part of monitoring and evaluation of the program, KMC has recruited Resource Teacher (RT) for timely monitoring and evaluation process. They frequently visits to schools and make updates on the implementation of the program. The resource teachers frequently gets in contact with focal teachers via phone calls on weekly basis to take the updates. For asynchronous messages, WhatsApp communication channels has been created for the exchange of information.*

Teacher 2: *Resource Teachers are assigned to all schools for regular monitoring. They observe the classes and share their insights. However, when we shared the particular challenges faced during the implementation, the resource teacher lacked critical suggestions and recommendations in solving the problem which resulted in unsolved issues for prolonged period of time.*

Teacher 3: *KMC has circulated the online forms for the record of every Friday classes which includes detailed information such as how many students attended, who was the trainer, how long the class was, what topic was taught*

and what the learning outcomes were. The respective focal teachers are responsible for submitting the forms after every BFF class. This is a mandatory process to be followed by the schools.

From the narratives of the teachers, we can conclude that KMC has built the human resource for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation as “Resource Teacher”. The resource teachers are assigned to different schools, and they act as mediators between the KMC and schools to convey the information and updates of the implementation program. The regular phone calls, physical visits for observation, WhatsApp community and online forms are the major tools for monitoring the Book Free Friday activities.

4.2.5 Theme 6: Challenges in implementing BFF

Launching an entire new program itself is a challenge uphold by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City. The Book Free Friday program has shown promising positive outcomes. However, the program also encountered several challenges during its execution. Teachers have encountered a number of challenges from their initial days to till date. The following are some challenges shared by teachers during the interview which I have highlighted below:

- **Lack of proper structure and guidelines:** There is still a lack of proper structure of the program and clear guidelines on how to execute the program effectively. This has led to difficulty in initiating the BFF programs in schools which eventually has hampered the learning outcomes resulting ineffectiveness of the program.
- **Trainers’ punctuality:** The outsourced trainers who are responsible for conducting the regular classes and training often failed to show up on time. No proper communications are made, which eventually impacts on the consistency and effectiveness of the classes.
- **Inconsistent trainers:** Most of the school faced frequent changes in trainers every week without any prior information and communication by the respective vendors which led to repetition of the course content affecting the learning experience of students.
- **Motivational challenges for focal teachers:** As the program does not provide any allowance or incentives for focal teacher’s roles and

responsibilities, this has made difficulty in motivating them to dedicate their time and efforts for the program activities.

- **Vendor selection complications:** In the third year of implementation, schools were initially given the autonomy to select the vendors. Many of the schools have already started the process of selecting them. However, this process proved difficult for schools and time consuming. Later, KMC streamlined the process by providing schools with a pre-approved list of vendors. This resulted in the decline of the vendors selected by the schools. The selection process took longer than expected, which resulted in the late start of the classes.
- **Lack of contextualized training:** The selected resource persons were unable to tailor the training sessions to align with the specific needs, circumstances and expectations of the schools, that resulted in reducing the relevance and impact of the sessions among the students.
- **Student club hopping:** It is one of the basic and common challenges faced by most of the schools. Students wish to switch their selected clubs after seeing more exciting, engaging and fun activities in other clubs, indicating a lack of sustained focus and interest in their own chosen club. This reflects the need to better understand students' interest from the teachers and ensure their commitment during the club selection process.
- **Resources availability:** Teachers shared that some of the vendors does not provide the necessary materials for the training sessions. For example, one of the teachers added that while yoga classes have started, no yoga mats were provided by the vendors. Likewise, in a few cases, vendors expect schools to purchase the required materials and resources themselves, asking them to allocate their own budgets for it. This has been very challenging for schools to manage resources.
- **Lack of coordination between the focal teacher and vendors:** When respective trainers are absent or on leave, classes often remain unproductive as focal teachers lack familiarity with the course contents. This is due to no proper discussion and communication with focal teachers. To address this challenge, the course contents should be

thoroughly discussed and coordinated between focal teachers and trainers. This would enable focal teachers to step in and conduct classes in the absence of a trainer ensuring continuity in student learning.

4.2.6 Theme 7: Suggestions and recommendations for improvement from school leaders

The program has been proven to be highly effective, fruitful and remarkably impacting students in a positive way by enhancing their skills, engagement and overall learning experiences. However, there is always room for the improvement to further refine and strengthen the program's effectiveness. Here are some of the suggestions by school leaders for consideration for the effectiveness of the program:

- **Empowering focal teachers:** The focus of the program should also be on empowering focal teachers for long-term sustainability of the program, as external resource personnel does not provide lasting impact. Provision of more opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge should be provided. Considering all the hardships, dedication, efforts and activeness in program activities, KMC needs to think through about the provision of certain allowances or incentives to teachers as an appreciation.
- **Student interest assessment:** It would be better if the programs were selected by the schools based on students' interest in enhancing engagement and ownership. For this, conducting interest assessments of students before finalizing or selecting programs would be beneficial for the longer run.
- **Smaller group sizes:** The group size per program is said to be of 25-30 students which is quite high in number which may not result in active participation. Therefore, limiting the student number to 15-20 would be more effective for their engagement and for positive learning outcomes.
- **Starting from the academic year:** It would be beneficial if the program could have started from the beginning of the academic year rather than the fiscal year. This provides opportunities to plan for better

alignment with the school calendar and national curriculum which makes it easier to go with the flow of the program activities.

- **Timely provision of resources:** It would have been even better if KMC could provide the budget and other necessary resources before the program's commencement to avoid delays and challenges.

Above are the suggestions shared by the teachers during the interview for better understanding and implementation of the BFF programs. When it comes to the execution of any plan, policies and programs, the reflection part is very crucial to discuss what went well and what can be done to make it even better and more relevant. Thus, KMC should organize frequent reflective gathering sessions with teachers to discuss how they can move forward as a team by mitigating the challenges together for better improvement and success of the program.

4.3 Major Findings

This section includes the major findings of the study in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Objective 1: To investigate the impact of the Book Free Friday program

- The program had a positive impact on the students' academic performance. Students have gained interest in subjects such as science and math as most of the students feels these subjects are intimidating. The practical and project-based learning especially STEAM club activities, Coding classes has helped students to better understand the concepts. In addition, Balbalika Tatha Batabaran (BABA) club has also developed awareness about the environmental issues through practical activities like plantation, waste management and recycling projects. This has connected classroom learning with real-life applications by applying science and social studies concepts to environmental activities.
- Students have developed skills such as creativity, communication, collaboration and communication via various group projects, free play and hands- on activities based on various club-based programs

including, storytelling, mural arts, coding, STEAM projects, BABA, scouts, music, dance and so on.

- The program has increased students' engagement as the learning was linked to their interest and real-life experiences making it more joyful and meaningful.
- The students who were shy and weak in studies improved their confidence level through participating in group activities and presentation. The students have improved social interaction and collaboration with peers, thereby reducing the feeling of isolation.

Objective 2: To examine how the program affects students' school experiences as well as their future educational and career aspirations

- Exposure to diverse skill-based activities such as mobile repairing, beautician, fashion designing, plumbing, carpentry, sculpture and sketching and so on has helped students to explore their interests and guiding towards their potential future careers.
- Many of the students have expressed clear aspiration for pursuing careers aligned with their skills and interests. Some of them has expressed their aspiration to become a fashion designer, electrician, beautician after taking these classes and are grateful for these opportunities to learn such technical skills.
- Participation in BFF activities has helped students to relax and enjoy school.
- The program has boosted overall happiness and intrinsic motivation to learn and grow.

Objective 3: To assess the obstacles/ challenges faced by schools during the execution of the program and recommend possible solutions

- Challenge during the implementation of the program
 - In the initial first year of its implementation, schools faced difficulties in systematically and smooth execution of the program due to lack of clear guidelines, instructions and structured planning. BFF program is in third year of its implementation and still there it lacks proper structured

guidelines. Therefore, it is recommended to develop well-defined framework and guidelines to ensure consistent execution across all schools.

- Time constraints
 - Due to the long process of vendor selection, the program often starts late which disrupts the academic schedules causing delays and incomplete activities or training hours. It is recommended to align the program activities with school calendar instead of fiscal year so as to complete all the deliverables on time.
- Focal teacher engagement
 - As focal teachers are responsible for the timely and regular execution of the activities with outsourced trainers, they invest significant time and effort in planning and implementing but there's no formal incentives or recognition which has resulted in lack of motivation. Thus, it is recommended to provide, recognition, allowances or any awards to acknowledge teacher's contribution boosting their motivation and ownerships.
- Student participation
 - It is observed that students changes their clubs which disrupts the club activities, continuity, planning and skill development in particular areas of streams. It is important to introduce and implement guided selection process in the initial stage along with proper orientation and counseling so that students can make informed choices and commit to their club for longer period of time.
- Monitoring and feedback
 - There is lack of proper monitoring and evaluation processes which have made it difficult to resolve the issues or challenges raised. In order to resolve the immediate concerns or issues, regular reflective meetings need to be conducted with teachers

and KMC representatives and co-create the possible solutions and make necessary adjustments.

4.4 Overall impact of Book Free Friday program

According to the study, the Book Free Friday program has undoubtedly impacted positively on the students at the school in terms of academic, social, and emotional growth along with the 21st century competence skills. This process of experiential learning involves new knowledge relating to students' prior knowledge of what they already know and then incorporating it into their understanding of the world around them. Students also construct their own viewpoints, interpretation and ways to think based on their own experiences. These types of learnings helps them in deepening their regular curriculum too (Caroline & Baagala, 2024). Knowledge-based national curriculum has also been linked conceptually through club-based activities during Book Free Friday which has helped them in understanding the difficult topics in much simpler way through hands-on which has helped them in the retention of the knowledge. The BFF program is a child centric where students are kept in centered to learning. Therefore, the teachers or the resource personnel act as a facilitator and help students construct their ideas and knowledge themselves through scaffolding. Instead of direct instructions, students are encouraged to have free play and guided play for deeper learning. Thus, this kind of learning process directs students to naturally interested in their learning. The effectiveness of this program has also resulted in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. The students tend to engage in learning activities because they enjoy, have fun and value them as well. The program has guided students in pursuing their future aims and new career opportunities. This holistic approach has resulted in building confidence and focus about the future of the students.

As I conclude, the Book Free Friday program has proven to be a model for innovative education with unwavering support for the continuation of this program. Teachers and students both found it very effective and productive, yet there is still room for improvement to make it even better. Overall, the program is becoming a transformative initiative in education to create a meaningful learning experience at school.

4.5 Policy into Practice

With the initiation of every new program, it is always important to look into how does it align with the national policies and figure out those gaps in practices. In context of Nepal, we see a huge gap in educational policies and actual classroom practices. Through the initiation of BFF program, it tries to bridge between educational policies and practices inside the classroom. The National Education Policies of Nepal including Constitution of Nepal (2015), National Education Policy (2019) and School Education Sector Plan (2022-2032) has emphasized the holistic learning and skill development in students. Here's how BFF program aligns and fulfills the goals and objectives of the three major national policies of Nepal.

1. Constitution of Nepal (2015)

According to the Article 31, every citizen has the right to free and compulsory basic education and free secondary education. In this regard, all the activities under the BFF program is free for all students. Students can choose the program based on their interest and attend every Fridays. Similarly, Article 18, ensures the equality and non-discrimination by promoting inclusive education for marginalized and disadvantages groups. BFF ensures to provide equitable, inclusive and holistic education to every students. It creates an environment for diverse learners to participate meaningfully in learning process including those students who might not excel in conventional academic environments. The program makes accessible and engaging for all students regardless of their socioeconomic background or ability.

2. National Education Policy (2019)

According to the National Education Policy 2076, Section 10.11 and Section 10.12, emphasizes the importance of technical and vocational education incorporating life skills into the school curriculum. Skill in Education program under Book Free Friday is providing the life skills training in various topics such as arts, electronics, mobile repairing, plumbing, carpentry etc so as to develop competences in students for the labor market. The program promotes creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem solving and skills that reflects real-life experiences. The Education Fair and Seep Mela events are the platforms to equip students to make capable and ready for the labor market which comes under the Section 10.12.

3. School Education Sector Plan (2022-2032)

The education system in many schools in Nepal remains heavily rooted in teacher-centered learning, where traditional, lecture-based methods dominate the classroom. This approach, which primarily focuses on exam preparation and lacks real-life application, has turned learning into a boring for students. As a result, students are concerned with passing exams than with gaining meaningful learning experience. This challenge is highlighted in the key objective 2 of Nepal's 10-year SESP (2022-2032), which emphasizes the need to enhance the quality and relevance of overall school education. The plan also highlights in promoting inclusive and child friendly learning environment, enhancing skills for employability and entrepreneurship ventures, supporting local government leadership and innovation in education. Book Free Friday program fulfills and reflects the SESP's emphasis on inclusivity, joyfulness and creative learning space for student's well-being and engagement. Similarly, it emphasizes local government ownership and decentralized educational governance initiated by Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

In conclusion, BFF program is seen to be an effective initiative led by KMC that puts national policy commitments into meaningful educational practices at local level.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

5.1 Conclusion

The Book Free Friday program has proven to be a transformative initiative, positively impacting students, teachers and the overall learning environment in schools. The entire program turned out to be a miracle for the students that offers a positive learning environment with great engagement. This has brought pioneering ways of learning into play that stretch beyond the regular and have helped students learn new skills and interests. Accordingly, students have shown excitement in learning, creativity at its highest level and higher participation in the life of the school. With hands-on, applied knowledge, students developed with thinking critically, resolving problems, and teamwork capabilities needed for a holistic development of them. Teachers have also benefited from this program by using it for the improvement of their skills and trying to find something new in teaching. The program has positively influenced the relationships between the teachers and students along with the great bonding within the peers developing the sense of belonging and collaboration through various inclusive and interactive activities. The students have built their confidence and known their capabilities and potential in a better way. While the program's success is evident, constant efforts to confront the challenges of the program and provide critical feedback will make it sustain its impact for a longer period within student's educational experience.

The BFF program is supported by key educational theories. Constructivist theory is at the heart of this emphasis on the BFF program encouraging students and learning by doing as they acquire knowledge through discovery and critical analysis. Similarly, social learning theory emphasizes observation, imitation and modeling as avenues of learning which are demonstrated in classroom interaction and activities that enhances the skills and social development of students.

In overall, the BFF program sets the example in education of Nepal on how the experiential and interest-based learning can transform education. The ultimate aim of education is helping people develop their full potential and produce a well-rounded

manpower to serve the society. Book Free Friday program has helped to develop the skills required for the specific workforce, thereby bridge the gap between the knowledge and skills. The efforts made by Kathmandu Metropolitan City is appreciable and such programs can be recommended to other local government units but before that a proper and systematic guideline and framework are to be established by reflecting upon the current challenges and issues. The program has great potential to be a model innovative educational practices across the country and have a long-lasting positive impact on students and larger education system of Nepal.

5.2 Recommendations

The recommendation part acts as an important section of research as this section ensures the continuous improvement and sustainability of the Book Free Friday program as a way to move forward to make the program more fruitful and meaningful. This section majorly pinpoints the actionable steps and strategies to address challenges, enhance implementation and strengthen the impact of BFF program in a better way. These recommendations are based on feedback received from school leaders and students. The recommendations are developed to overcome the current issues and challenges faced during the execution. These suggestions also helps to make the program evolve and adapt to the dynamic needs of the education system. Through the collaborative efforts of KMC, schools and policy makers, these suggestions and feedback may help program achieve its full potential and serve as a model for educational initiatives in Nepal.

5.2.1 Recommendations to school leaders

School leaders or head teachers are the main responsible person for the welfare and operation of the whole school. It is important to realize the full potential of the program to school leaders as they are the ones to create supportive environments where teachers and students are motivated in their teaching learning journey. School leaders should create a space for teachers to be engaged in planning, implementing and monitoring the program activities. In order to create ownership among the teachers regarding the program, various opportunities should be provided for their professional growth and development. As a result, the program's outcomes becomes more sustainable and effective. In addition, leaders should encourage them

to have frequent interaction and collaboration between focal teachers and external trainers for better planning of the contents, program continuity and consistency of the program activities. Another important area of school leadership is to understand and respond to student interests. It is very important to assess students' preferences and interest in which club or training they want to be part of because by doing so it helps students to become more engaged and interested in the learning process and there is fewer chances of students hoping for the clubs. Besides this, decreasing the group size to 15-20 students per club will provide an opportunity for more strong interaction, active engagement and quality of learning.

Finally, school leaders should create an environment supported by continuous feedback and reflection. Timely gathering of information from teachers, students and also parents is crucial in order to point out areas for improvement. School leaders are strongly recommended to recognize and appreciate the hardships, dedication and contributions made by teachers to encourage and motivate them to achieve a vibrant and effective learning environment.

5.2.2 Recommendations to Kathmandu Metropolitan City

For the program to be effectively implemented and have long-term success, KMC must be proactive in dealing with exiting challenges and strengthening implementation. First and foremost, KMC should develop clear and concise guidelines of the program which will help to bring about well-organized, systematic and consistency in execution of the program in all schools. A well-developed framework should be developed so that it would help teachers to have a clear direction. The focus should also be made on empowering the teachers through various skill development and knowledge enhancement workshops and training for leading program activities. For this, KMC should also invest in capacity-building initiatives. Along with this, to motivate and encourage the focal teachers for their efforts and dedication, it would be great to provide certain allowances for them as an appreciation. As per the interview with teachers, they have observed that it would have been better if the programs and clubs were aligned with the interest of the students to ensure active engagement and ownership of such training. For this, student interest assessment should be incorporated in planning and selection process by KMC in collaboration with respective schools to focus on student-centered approach.

Additionally, KMC is recommended to align the timeline of the program in accordance with the academic year instead of fiscal year allowing for better execution with the school annual calendar and the curriculum.

Likewise, before the program begins KMC is recommended to ensure that all schools are provided with adequate funds and materials on time. In addition to this, as per teachers, the vendor selection process is very tedious and time consuming. Hence, streamlining this process is also important as schools were unable to commence the program activities on designated time because of the vendor issues and challenges. Lastly, a comprehensive program monitoring and evaluation system needs to be generated which will help to track the progress of the program and its expected outcomes. It is also crucial to organize a regular reflective meeting with schools to collect constructive feedback which would help to identify the gaps and come up with immediate possible solutions for improvements. In regard to these recommendations, the basic foundation of the BFF program would be strengthened and increase the program impact at larger scale.

5.3 Social work interventions

Intervention are designed to bring positive changes by navigating and overcoming the difficulties. Social work interventions can crucially contribute to responding to the challenges in improving the outcomes of the program. Social workers can help stakeholders by encouraging cooperation and ensuring sustainability by utilizing their knowledge and experience of community engagement, resource management and advocacy. Here are some key social work interventions in enhancing the Book Free Friday program:

- 1. Micro Level Intervention:** The micro level social work interventions specially intend to address the immediate needs and problems of students, teachers and parents. Personalized support for the students through identifying interests, strengths and barriers towards participation in the activities can become a goal of the social work service by establishing a student's tailored strategy. Individual counselling for students who are not willing to participate could foster a student's confidence and motivation. Individual mentoring could be useful for focal teachers to observe and develop strategies towards

involving students in the program. Social workers can also visit parents in their homes or have one-on-one meetings to raise awareness about the program and address any issues and encourage them to be active supporters of the programs. These efforts might ensure that individuals who are directly involved in the program are supported and enabled to achieve the best possible outcomes from the program.

2. **Mezzo Level Intervention:** Mezzo social work involves the development and implementation of social services at community or group level where they directly interact with the people in need. In order to strengthen program implementation, the mezzo social work practitioners focuses on creating collaborative and supportive system in schools. Social work practitioners can facilitate various workshops, training or orientation for students, teachers and parents to build the understanding of the BFF program's aim, objectives, activities and impacts. These workshops would help teachers with essential skills needed to effectively engage students in activities and empower parents to support their children's participation in the program actively. One of the important aspects of mezzo level intervention may include proper and effective coordination and communication between schools and vendors. Social workers can act as mediators in ensuring clarity in communication and the delivery of resources by vendors.

Social workers can also initiate and moderate meetings between focal teachers and resources personnel to resolve any gaps in delivery and communication. It is also important to establish a culture of feedback at the group level in order to identify challenges and areas of improvement. Social workers can also organize focus group discussions among the implementing schools with representatives of KMC to provide diverse perspectives, develop solutions and make sure everyone is at the same pace on the implementation of the program. Interventions at the mezzo-level give assistance in creating a unified and well-coordinated space which supports the program and maximizes its impact on the school community as a whole.

3. **Macro Level Intervention:** Social work interventions at macro level focus on addressing the systemic and structural problems that influence the program's sustainability and effectiveness. In this respect, social workers may contribute

to advocating for policy changes in ensuring adequate funding, teacher incentives, and resources allocation in a timely manner. By working together with policy makers and educational authorities, the social worker can contribute to designing policies that reflects the needs of schools, teachers and students. Another important macro-level intervention is resource mobilization. Social workers can collaborate with local governments, NGOs and private organizations in securing funding and other materials needed for schools. In addition, developing a strong monitoring and evaluation framework at the policy level can ensure that implementation of the program is continuously evaluated and enhanced based on evidence. Social work at the macro level could address these problems so that an enabling environment would thus be created to assist schools, empower teachers, and create maximum benefits for all students from the program. These interventions ensure the program's immediate benefits, as well as the sustainability and scalability of its impacts over a long period.

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ANNEX-I

Questionnaire for interview with Principals

1. About the Book Free Friday Program
 - a. What was the idea and the concept of Book Free Friday in the starting phase?
 - b. How did you initially start the concept of Book Free Friday in your school?
 - c. How is the program structured in your school for effective implementation?
2. About the activities under Book Free Friday Program
 - a. What kind of activities are conducted during Book Free Friday?
 - b. What is the duration of the workshops or training? Does students get a certificate after completing the trainings?
 - c. Who are responsible for conducting the regular activities during Book Free Friday? Does schools have to outsource the trainers or does KMC provide the trainers?
 - d. Are the activities curriculum aligned? If yes, how is it aligned?
3. Perceptions of students, teachers and parents regarding the Book Free Friday
 - a. How have students responded to the activities of Book Free Friday?
 - b. Is there any change in the attendance of the students in schools after implementing the program?
 - c. How have schoolteachers responded to this program? Do they feel a burden as they have to invest extra time and effort in effective implementation? Or do they take it as an opportunity to learn and develop their skills along with students?
 - d. How have parents responded to this program? Have parents shared any feedback?

4. Program Benefits and Impact
 - a. Have you noticed any positive changes in student engagement and learning? If yes, what are those changes and growth in students?
 - b. Have you noticed any change in academic performance of students or increase in learning and participation in class?
 - c. How do you think the program has impacted students in developing their career aspirations and development of technical and soft skills?
 - d. What kinds of skills are students developing through this initiative?
 - e. Have you observed any kinds of improvements in students' mental health and overall wellbeing of students because of this initiative? If yes, can you share some of the instances you noticed in students.
5. Challenges
 - a. Can you describe the challenges that you faced during the implementation of this program?
 - b. How did you overcome those challenges?
 - c. How often were the challenges shared to KMC and how did KMC respond to address those challenges?
6. Monitoring and Evaluation
 - a. How often does KMC monitor and evaluate the progress of the program? How do they do the monitoring and evaluation?
 - b. How often do school and KMC meet to plan the way forward from reflection?
7. Suggestion and recommendations
 - a. What are the suggestions and recommendations you would like to provide to KMC for better execution of the program?
 - b. What kind of support you would like to get from the policy maker in order to make the program more successful?

ANNEX- II

Survey Questionnaire for students:

Demographic Information

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Gender:
4. School Name:
5. Grade:

Section 1: Academic Performance

This section aims to evaluate the impact of the Book Free Friday Program on your academic performance.

1. How do you feel the Book Free Friday Program has affected your overall academic performance?
 - a. Very positively
 - b. Somewhat positively
 - c. No effect
 - d. Somewhat negatively
 - e. Very negatively
2. Has the Book Free Friday Program allowed you to better manage your academic workload?
 - a. Yes, significantly
 - b. Yes, somewhat
 - c. No change
 - d. No, it has increased my workload
 - e. Unsure
3. Have your grades improved since the introduction of the Book Free Friday Program?
 - a. Yes, they have improved
 - b. No, they stayed the same
 - c. No, they have worsened
 - d. Not sure

Section 2: Social skills Development

This section focuses on how the program has influenced your social skills and interaction with peers.

1. Do you think the Book Free Friday Program has helped you build stronger relationships with your classmates?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. How often do you participate in group activities or social events during Book Free Fridays?
 - a. Always
 - b. Often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Never
3. Since joining the program, have you noticed improvements in your communication and teamwork skills?
 - a. Yes, significantly
 - b. Yes, somewhat
 - c. No change
 - d. No, my skills have decreased
4. Do you feel more confident in social settings after participating in the Book Free Friday activities?
 - a. Yes, I feel much more confident
 - b. Yes, I feel somewhat more confident
 - c. No change
 - d. No, I feel less confident

Section 3: Life skills and Career Perspectives

This section aims to evaluate how the program has influenced your life skills and career aspirations.

1. Do you feel the Book Free Friday Program has helped you develop important life skills (example: Problem-solving, leadership)
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. Which life skills have you improved as a result of participating in Book Free Friday activities? (Select all that apply)
 - a. Communication
 - b. Leadership
 - c. Problem-solving
 - d. Time Management
 - e. Self-discipline
 - f. Collaboration
 - g. Others (please specify)
3. Has the program made you more aware of potential career paths or helped you think more about your future career?
 - a. Yes, significantly
 - b. Yes, somewhat
 - c. No change
 - d. No, not at all
4. Do any of the activities in the Book Free Friday Program connect to your career interest?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

5. How has the Book Free Friday Program influenced your career aspirations?
- a. I am more motivated to pursue my goals
 - b. I have discovered new career interests
 - c. No change in my career perspective
 - d. I feel more uncertain about my career path
 - e. Other (please specify)

Section 4: Emotional Well-being

This section explores any changes in your emotional well-being, stress levels, and happiness.

1. How has the Book Free Friday Program affected your overall happiness at school?
 - a. Greatly improved
 - b. Somewhat improved
 - c. No change
 - d. Somewhat worsened
 - e. Greatly worsened
2. Have your stress levels decreased since participating in Book Free Fridays?
 - a. Yes, significantly
 - b. Yes, somewhat
 - c. No change
 - d. No, my stress levels have increased
3. How do you feel about your emotional well-being on Fridays compared to other school days?
 - a. Much better
 - b. Somewhat better
 - c. No different
 - d. Somewhat worse
 - e. Much worse
4. Do you feel the program helps you manage your emotions better throughout the week?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

Section 5: Perceptions of the Program

This section asks about your overall thoughts and experiences regarding the program.

1. Do you enjoy participating in the Book Free Friday Program?
 - a. Yes, very much
 - b. Yes, somewhat
 - c. Neutral
 - d. No, not really
 - e. No, I do not enjoy it
2. What activities do you usually participate in during Book Free Fridays?

Ans:

3. Do you think the book free Friday Program should continue in the future?
 - a. Yes, absolutely
 - b. Yes, but with some changes
 - c. No, it should be discontinued
 - d. I am not sure
4. What improvements would you suggest for the Book Free Friday Program?

Ans:

5. How does the Book Free Friday Program influence your overall school experience?
 - a. Very positively
 - b. Somewhat positively
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat negatively
 - e. Very negatively

To,
Central Department of Social work
Tribhuvan University
Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Subject: Self- declaration

Dear Sir/Ma'am

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