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Master's Thesis of Arts

A Case Study of Adult
Women's Literacy and
Empowerment in *ReFLECT*
program in Nepal

네팔 리플렉트 프로그램 참여 성인 여성의
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Abstract

A Case Study of Adult Women's Literacy and Empowerment in *ReFLECT* program in Nepal

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The purpose of this study is to identify how the women's experiences who participated in *ReFLECT* program of village B in Nepal are related to the women's empowerment and to reveal the interaction between factors related to the women and program, which is the practice of critical literacy education. To this end, this study conducted field study in the village B of Godawari municipality in Nepal with the question "What are the experiences of women participating in the *ReFLECT* program and how are these experiences linked to women's empowerment change?" In detail, the analysis included interviews with women who participated in the *ReFLECT* program in village B, participatory observation in women's meetings as follow ups of *ReFLECT* meeting, and reports from the

Ministry of Education in Nepal and international organizations such as UNESCO. Based on this, this paper tried to understand the experiences of women participating in critical literacy and to understand how their experiences are related to empowerment through the related factors.

The researcher stayed in Nepal and gathered raw data through Focus Group Interview. Also, based on the symbolic interaction, the collected data were analysed according to grounded theory which is qualitative research methodology suitable for exploring the personal experiences and the interactions and processes forming such experiences. As a result, it was analyzed through the process of open coding and axis coding according to the method of Strauss & Corbin (1998). Upon the categorization of the raw data, it was possible to create a paradigm model of experience and empowerment of women participating in the Nepal *ReFLECT* program.

As a result of the research, the women who participated in the program, experienced 'participation in literacy class', 'improvement of self-confidence', 'enhancement of our voice', 'improvement of quality of life' appear. The research participants in the interview commonly testified that they were able to enjoy confidence in their lives and recognition in the public sphere after their participation in *ReFLECT*. The participants now became possible to make their own voices in public since they learned that they have the same rights as men and others in the class. In addition to being confident at home, it is also possible to express opinions in the public domain even dealing with government agencies. Women acquire new information and knowledge through *ReFLECT*, which leads to their improvement of quality of life. And the rights that were previously unfamiliar and unattainable to them because of lack of knowledge.

The causal conditions that make this possible were 'aspiration to learning', 'being recognized in public domain', 'expectation of change', and 'economic incentive'. The women experienced how

important to be registered as Nepalese citizens through the issuance of a identification card and this experience was connected to their more desire for better life and learning.

Contextual conditions involved in women's experience were found to be 'community-oriented', 'cultural lag of perception of housework and care work', 'hierarchy of donors and beneficiaries'. Thanks to the strong community-oriented atmosphere, women in B village actively participated in *ReFLECT* and continued to follow-up. This attribute of the village B has also influenced the process of information sharing, leading more women to participate, and a virtuous cycle in which they share many success experiences and empower the next collective action. On the other hand, despite advance of the political empowerment and change of women, the perception of unpaid labor in the household was still laid behind. This context has led women rather to take more burden to housework to participate in *ReFLECT*, and men in the village found out that they see the critical literacy education as activities for a better 'wife' or 'mother' role. Third, the social hierarchical relationship of the Nepalese society was found to underpin in the *ReFLECT* program. *ReFLECT*, which is a practice of critical literacy education, is meaningful for educators and learners to raise critical awareness of society through dialogue in an equal power relationship. However, in the actual field, hierarchy and social tensions were found between the facilitator conducting the lessons, ActionAid Nepal, the implementing agency, HomeNet Nepal staff and learner participants. Participants in the study showed more active discussions and frank answers in the absence of staff.

The interaction between the women in the program and the society surrounding them was divided into positive interaction and conflict interaction. Positive interactions were categorized as 'collective action', 'success experience', and 'profit'. Women's success experiences affected the whole village. The villagers who

ignored or opposed *ReFLECTive* meeting were also benefited from the political empowerment of women in the facts such as village road maintenance, forest management, and so on. As a result, the perception about the meeting changed in positive way and the women became respected. Women also have a very strong belief in the power of collective action that "we cannot do it alone, but we can do it together." This can be regarded as a part corresponding to the connection to collective action through conscientization which is aimed at critical literacy. On the other hand, there were still some people in the village who ignored or refused to cooperate with the women. The participants used 'profit' strategy and had repeatedly shown the contributing to the development of the actual village against this objection.

As a result, women who participated in the program experienced 'literacy acquisition', 'personal life change', and 'community change'. This was analyzed according to the definition and classification of empowerment of Stromquist (2002). Stroquist (2002) studied the empowerment of women on the basis of Freire's conscientization. Research participants seemed to have improved their psychological empowerment by recognizing the oppression to women derived from the inequality of power surrounding them, gain power to organize and mobilize collective action, and being proud of their existence and activities. Although there has been some progress in improving literacy, but it has not reached the level asserted in critical literacy education. Critical literacy education is 'literacy education' which is distinguished from civic education or humanities education. The learner who participates in the program should be able to develop not only conscientization but also ability to read and write. It also showed that women did not recognize the inequality of unpaid works within the household and this can be seen as some of the intellectual empowerment did not improve. Personal empowerment was tangible but it was doubtful whether the individual empowerment linked to

community empowerment as ReFLECT intended. Lastly, the hierarchy between participants of village and staffs from the implementing agencies. It can be guessable that the tension between the learners and staffs might be one of the limitations of realization of the theory of Freire since the power inequality between teacher-learner relationship cannot be covered easily.

Keyword: critical literacy, women empowerment, *ReFLECT* program

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. Study Background	1
1.2. Purpose and Questions of Research	6
Chapter 2. Literacy Review	9
2.1. Literacy and Development	9
Personal Changes	9
Political Changes	10
Social Changes	11
2.2. Concepts of Literacy and Paulo Freire	13
2.3. ReFLECT Program	16
Chapter 3. Methodology	24
3.1. Selection of Research Field	24
3.2. Data Collection	26
3.2.1. Focus Group Interview	26
3.2.2. Participatory Observation	31
Chapter 4. Findings	34
4.1. Original model and Implemented reality of ReFLECT ..	36
4.2. Learning of the participated adult women	42
4.3. Experiences of Participated Women with Others and Community	46
4.4. Empowerment of Individual and Community	55
Chapter 5. Discussion	61
5.1. Low literacy	61

5.2. Cultural lag or broken connection from personal to community empowerment	62
5.3. Hierarchy between facilitator and learners	63
Chapter 6. Conclusion	65
6.1. Summary of the Study	65
6.2. Significant and Limitation of Study	69
Bibliography	72
국문초록	79

List of Tables

[Table 1]	.....	25
[Table 2]	.....	27

List of Figures

[Figure 1]	.....	17
[Figure 2]	.....	19
[Figure 3]	.....	32
[Figure 4]	.....	36
[Figure 5]	.....	38

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Study Background

In 1975 the Persepolis Declaration stated that "Literacy is not an end itself. It is a fundamental human right"(UNESCO, 1975a). A number of conventions and declarations of the international community, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, emphasize literacy as fundamental human right and as the basis for realizing other rights, but there are still 780 million illiterate adult worldwide (UNESCO, 2015).

Two-thirds of these illiterate are women, and the more vulnerable socio-culturally and economically they are, the higher the probability that they will not escape from the lives of illiteracy. Literacy is a right in itself, and it is the most essential function for human being to live in society. Above all, Literacy is beyond the ability to read and write. It can be a driving force for strengthening the power that people can understand the surrounding society and participate in society as active agents. Thus, literacy education is an essential element in improving the quality of life and realizing the rights of human beings.

However, in spite of the importance of literacy and literacy education, discussions and research on literacy education are not as active as other educational issues such as formal education and elementary education not only in Korea but also in international academia. In Korea, the problem of illiteracy has almost been solved,

and the literacy rate in Korea is already approaching 100 percent. Thus, literacy is considered as mere ability to read and write only for some people whose education level are low or lagged behind.

In addition, there is still little interest from the governments and the international communities on the aspect of emancipation of literacy education. According to UNESCO (2013), only 18 countries out of 129 countries have understood literacy education and programs in terms of empowerment and improving autonomy of individual agents. Many literacy educations still remain in the functional dimension for improving the areas of employment and economic power. In addition, the world average expenditure of adult literacy is less than 1 percent out of the total national budget (UNESCO, 2012). Considering that about 8 billion people around the world still live as illiterate, this expenditure seems to be a very small. Many institutions, including governments and NGOs investing in literacy education require rapid outcome. However, literacy education which emphasizes the aspects of empowerment, human emancipation and pursues social changes through collective action are not easy to achieve such results in the short term. Thus, critical literacy which is one kind of abovementioned literacy education cannot easily take center stage (Stromquist, 2015).

Meanwhile, the world is in the process of achieving 17 comprehensive goals in the name of Sustainable Development Goals, over the next 15 years from 2015. The fourth goal is 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning *'Quality Education'* which claims that ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (UN, 2018). It has 9 concrete targets to achieve the goal. Here 'inclusive' means that the

world will make efforts to 'eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations'. 'Lifelong learning' includes that 'ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy' from the targets with goal 4. The international community recognizes the importance of socio-cultural vulnerable groups in education, including women, and adult literacy for sustainable development, and strives to achieve the development.

Also, goal 10 aims to 'Reduce inequality within and among countries, which targets to strengthen and promote social, economic, and political participation of all people regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, or economic or other status until 2030. In the same context of the goal 4, all people in society could have rights to enjoy their lives in every aspect including education regardless of their own backgrounds.

Nepal is one of the poorest developing countries in West Asia and is an agricultural country that relies on agriculture for more than 40 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). More than one-third of Nepal's population lives in rural areas. Nepal has long been influenced by the Hindu caste system according to Hindu tradition. As a result, women and low caste people have been subjected to extreme discrimination and oppression for a long time. The sociocultural discrimination against them resulted in depriving women and lower caste classes of right to education and the access to basic education. According to the National Census of Nepal in 2001, Of the total population between 15 to 60, eight million people were found to

be illiterate (Nepalese Ministry of Education, 2016). Notably, more than 65 percent of them were women, 73 percent of those in the lower castes, and 53 percent of the minority groups. This shows that the illiteracy rate of Nepal is unevenly distributed according to gender and social class.

Literacy rate in Nepal is the lowest in Asia. The adult literacy rate for aged over 15 was 59.6 percent, slightly more than half of all adults, and the severe gap by regions and genders was found high. Approximately 58.9 percent of the population in Kailali can read and write, but in the Rasuwa region, only 41.3 percent of the people has the literacy, which is 20 percent lower than the Kailalli area. In the case of the female literacy population, it was found that it lagged behind the male literate population in all parts of Nepal (UNESCO Kathmandu, 2013). It can be said that Nepal has a low literacy rate of the whole country, but it has an unequal literacy rate according to the socio-cultural class. In other word, women and people in lower caste in Nepal are at risk for being excluded from the chances to learn and enjoy the literacy and right to education.

Women and girls in Nepal are still experiencing persistent discrimination and violence in the social and culture structure that are rife with patriarchal and Hinduism, despite the efforts of Nepalese government, international organizations and civil society groups. "Chhaupadi" can be the example of gender discrimination in Nepal. Chhaupadi is a tradition in Nepal, which means menstruation women as untouchable. This social tradition isolated menstruating women every month because they are thought to offend the Hindu gods and bring down a curse on their household if they remain indoors (Ranabhat et al., 2015). Thus, women and girls are separate from the

family during their period and stay in cattle, etc. This tradition is still easy to see being performed.

In Section 18 of Article 3 of the Constitution of Nepal, it clearly states "Right to Equality", but the right of reality seems to be given only to men. Violation against women's rights and discrimination in Nepal can be easily perceived in issues related to women such as early marriage, discrimination against widows, violence against women, prostitution and trafficking (Nepal Human Right Report, 2016). The early marriage of women leads to the dropout of education, which takes away the access to education of women. The more women are dependent on their husbands, the more difficult to resist sexual violence and domestic violence. It is also reported that half of the 15-24-year-old in Nepal experience sexual violence within their marriage (Puri et al., 2010).

Particularly discrimination and violence against women are prevalent in rural areas because it is not easy to escape from the religious and cultural traditions in rural communities, also lack of education. As a result, the basic rights such as right to vote, right to property are neglected (Nepal Human Rights Report, 2016). Women in Nepal often rely on men because of lack of access to resources or power due to a lack of labor opportunities (Lee, 2012) as well. This is more noticeable in rural areas where job opportunities are even weaker. Economic subordination soon leads to gender inequality, weakening women's right to education, social participation, and political participation. In order to emancipate women from poverty, violence, discrimination and oppression in this situation, it is necessary to secure political and social rights as well as economic independence.

Women in Nepal are unable to speak their voice and subserviently

accept the system which is male-dominant and structured oppressing. Hinduism and patriarchal culture in Nepal exclude women and girls from every aspect of society.

As we have seen, the world calls for attention to socio-cultural and vulnerable groups, which are the greatest victims of social inequality. Education must continue to raise sharp questions about the dominant society and the structure surrounding it, while at the same time these challenges must be directed towards a universal humanity in relation to the life of the marginalized. (Michael Apple, 2014). Thanks to the efforts of global society, many illiterate populations have disappeared, but there are still 800 million people around the world who are not enjoying the right to read and write. What does it mean that two-thirds of the world's illiterate population is female? It means that there are people who have missed the chance to learn literacy because just they are women. What is the educational approach to improve the literacy rights of women experiencing discrimination and violence in the socio-cultural context and to improve the quality and capacity of women's lives?

1.2. Purpose and Questions of Research

The purpose of this study is to understand the program of *ReFLECT*, adult literacy education program for women, and to reveal the change of empowerment of participating women through *ReFLECT* class. The *ReFLECT* program is a literacy education based on the philosophical basis of the critical literacy proposed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. *ReFLECT* programs is a process

of acquiring the ability to read and write the words but at the same time, a process of understanding the society where learners live and fostering the critical perspective to find out the power relationship. Collective action among the learners enable them to be the main agent of social transformation. This study is a single case study conducted in the village B in Nepal. The purpose of this study is to investigate *ReFLECT* program implemented in the village and understand what features of critical literacy were revealed from the case. In addition, the changes of empowerment of the women who participated in the *ReFLECT* program in the village will be explored.

With this research, we expect to catch a glimpse of implementation of the literacy class. This study can provide insight to literacy education from the data collected field research not only for the women in Nepal but also women in the world who make up 2/3 of the illiterate population.

Under abovementioned background, the research questions are as follows.

- What features and theoretical origin does the *ReFELCT* program has? and how is it implemented in real field of program?
- What do the women participated from village B in Nepal in *ReFLECT* program learn?
- What changes do the participated adult women experience through *ReFLECT* program?

- How do the shared experiences of participated adult women connect to empowerment of individuals and community?

Chapter 2. Literacy Review

2.1. Literacy and Development

Stromquist (2005) emphasizes that literacy is essential for decision-making, empowerment of the individual, and also affects active or passive participation of people in local and international communities. In addition, the global society including UNESCO (2006), argues that literacy is a right and a purpose itself, but at the same time plays a role as essential foundation and mechanism for strengthening other fields such as politics and economics. In this chapter, we will examine the effects that literacy education has on personal, political, and social capacity building and changes through reviewing previous researches conducted. These four aspects of empowerment are not respectively existing but overlapped and connected closely.

Personal Changes

First, literacy education greatly contributes to the empowerment of learners, especially female learners. Empowerment does not just change individuals' behavior, but also causes collective action in various contexts such as home, work, and community. Literacy education itself provides a place for learners who participate in learning to construct their learning and knowledge and to communicate with others about the reality surrounding their lives (Easton, 2005).

Robinson-Pant (2001) also found that women learners are more

likely to express opinions and voices in their family planning process than before participating literacy class, and to recognize that they need to change their oppressive environment. The awareness on their social structure connects to collective action to transformation. Although these changes are limited to the scale of family structure, but the changes of perception and attitude of the literate women is noteworthy.

In addition, learners who have acquired literacy through literacy class experience the improvement of self-esteem and positive changes in their self-recognition (Bown, 1990; Stromquist, 1997; Egbo, 2000; Farrell, 2004; Laugle, 2001). Literacy does not mean simply acquiring the ability to read and write. It is rather basic and social mechanism which allows the literate (or learners) to communicate with others by writing and reading. within the environment and social context where the literate person belongs (Choi, 1990). The change from the illiterate to the literate person naturally increases the self-esteem of the individual by greatly widening the role and the level of communication that an individual can perform in society.

Political Changes

Those who are educated are more likely to participate in political activities and tend to have more democratic values ??and attitudes(Hannum & Buchman, 2003). There are many case studies which assert that adult literacy education is also related to political participation, such as trade unions, collective action, and domestic political activities. Ireland (1994) reported that the literacy education of Brazilian construction workers reinforced their participation in trade union activities. Carron et al. (1989) also found that literate people have more tendency to participate actively in election and local

political activities than the illiterate. In Nepal, women who participated in literacy education showed more political knowledge and conviction than non-participating women (Burchfield et al., 2002). And political empowerment which allow women to freely express their opinions can be seen from the women who becomes literate through literacy class. They were more likely to attend public meetings or gatherings than the illiterate groups. (Egbo, 2000; Purcell-Gates and Waterman, 2000).

Social Changes

Many of studies state that the acquisition of literacy leads to changes of social aspects. Researches on social changes are related to the issues of health, education and gender equality. First, women's literacy education contributed to reduction in infant mortality (Sandiford et al., 1995). In addition, women who attended literacy education increased their knowledge about health, also well handled the issues of family planning and health care such as immunization of their children (Bunchfield et al., 2002). A case study in Mexico has shown that literate women can communicate and explain better with medical staffs about their illness and health status than those who have low levels of literacy (Dexter et al., 1998). The acquisition of health knowledge through literacy education was not as effective as expected (Robinson-Pant, 2005), but the learners who became literate seemed like improving capacity to address health-related issues.

In the aspect of education, literate women were more likely to send their children to school than illiterate women, and the capacity to support their children's learning was increased (UNESCO, 2006). Literacy education promotes learners' abstract thinking ability (Bernardo, 1998), which contributes to comprehension of context and,

verbal and linguistic capacity building. Regarding to gender equality, it was not easy to find the researches which explored how literacy education affects the perceptions of both women and men because many of literacy education set women as their main learners. Most studies have shown that women who participated in adult literacy class have higher competence to access male-dominant societies and occupations (Fiedrich and Jellema, 2003). Also, some women enabled to control the finance of household which were previously dominated by men after participating literacy education (Maddox, 2005). It is not only the result of improvement of economic power of women. Rather it can be interpreted that women who have accumulated the experiences to make their voices in public places such as literacy classroom acquire the power to voice and to express their opinions even in the patriarchal family structure as a result.

The previous studies state that literacy is not simply acquisition of the ability to read and write, but it is also the foundation and impetus to provide opportunities to improve the quality of learners' life to changes in aspects of politics, society, economics, and individual level. The purpose of this study is to investigate the critical literacy education program of women 's literacy education. Thus, it is necessary to cover various and abovementioned sections that literacy contribute since Hinduism is not the only reason that women in Nepal are marginalized in mainstream society. They are the group of people who are persistently and complexly excluded due to factors such as history, politics, economy, and society.

2.2. Concepts of Literacy and Paulo Freire

After the Second World war, international community supported the drive to spread literacy to promote basic education. Acquisition of literacy as fundamental skill of individual and development was emphasized (UNESCO, 1947). In 1950s–1960s, literacy means 'the one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life according to UNESCO's statement (UNESCO, 2006). Basic literacy was the main concept of literacy in this period, thus to eradicate illiteracy and to promote autonomous literacy skills were supported. Mass literacy campaigns were launched to help individuals acquire the basic set of literacy skills (Jones 1990; Chabbott, 2003).

However, human capital models of education rushed the mass campaigns and functional literacy became focused in 1960's–1970's. In this perspective, literacy was seen as a necessary condition for economic growth and national development. Functional literacy highlights the usefulness of literacy as a way of preparing man for social and economic role beyond mere writing and reading (Yousif, 2003). Efficiency and productivity were of course emphasized under the human capital model. It is clearer in the definition of functional literacy. 'A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his won and the community's development' (UNESCO, 2006: 154). Functional literacy enables the learners be integrated into the socio-economic structure by accepting the ability to read and write, and to accept and practice the dominant values ??of society. In other words, it emphasizes the literacy as a means for social integration or national development mentioned above,

and emphasizes the practical and functional aspects of literacy.

However, some say that functional literacy has contributed to maintain the existing system and power structure by emphasizing only practicality, instrumentality, and functionality. The illiterate fall into merely a simple object or the instruments. In particular, though the illiterate learns to read and write through literacy education, their social positions do not change easily and still let them remain at the bottom of existing social structures (J. Kozol, 1985).

Among these criticisms, the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire brings a major turning point in the discourse on literacy. The concept of 'critical literacy' has emerged beyond basic literacy and functional literacy. Critical literacy education was seen as an alternative discourse on functional literacy education, but it has been recognized as effective as functional literacy education through various studies (Shin, 2010).

The definition of critical literacy education is not only the ability to read and write to the learner, but also to have the ability to critically read the world in which he or she is in, and also to have the ability to change the unequal and oppressive environment. It is called Critical Literacy, which is necessary to exist as a citizen of the nation and a member of society. The emergence of critical criticism proves that literacy is no longer limited to the acquisition of basic literacy skills such as reading, writing, and counting, but is a complex literacy ability for a human being to live as a member of society.

Because of the difference in viewpoints that do not see literacy as mere reading and writing skills, critical literacy takes on a different pedagogical perspective from previous literacy education. The previous

literacy education is supposed to be the process of depositing a lot of knowledge in the learner's mind through the class, assuming that the heads of the illiterate are empty. Freire calls this concept of education as a bank-saving education (Freire, 1970). On the other hand, critical literacy education plays a role as midwife so that new knowledge can be created by oneself through learners' valuable experience, rather than being injected into them. Critical literacy asserted that the illiterate does not have the ability to read and write, but has experiences many of suffering and repressions in their lives. From such experience, the illiterate is the one who knows well and emphasize how the reality of social structure is oppressive and discriminatory (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Therefore, critical literacy insists on the education of the learner as a process that enables them to realize that the knowledge gained through their experience in life is of great value and to express it in sentences and words. In addition, the process of generating new knowledge necessary for social change based on this process, which is another name of critical literacy. The knowledge thus generated never stays at the level of knowledge but is transferred to concrete action. Thus, it is a dialectical process of creation of knowledge out of the experiences through the action (Shin, 2010).

From the point of view of critical literacy and Freire, the literacy education should be able to develop the ability to read and write while at the same time help learners understand the environment given to them and challenge the existing power structure (Ira Shor & C. Pari, 1999). Moreover, critical literacy education ought to not only provide learners how to attain literacy skills but also lead them achieve the critical thinking necessary to grasp social inequality and injustice, as well as the insight to realize and competence to practice

supporting to create a better society (J. Kretovics, 1985).

From the viewpoint of critical literacy, *ReFLECT* program that Action Aid and Freire invented collaboratively was born in order to move the theory of critical literacy into implementation. *ReFLECT* stated that it is possible to improve both literacy and empowerment by using a practical language of context related to learners' everyday life.

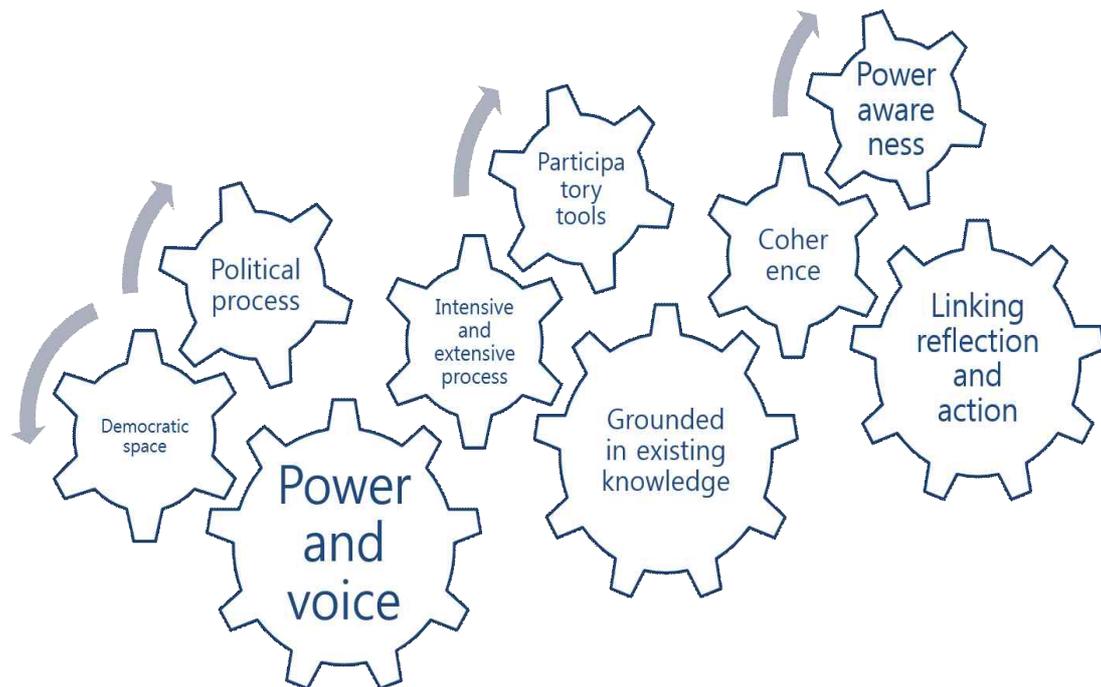
2.3. *ReFLECT* Program

In 1993, Action Aid launched a new study to utilize Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques. This became the starting point of the *ReFLECT* (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community) program. *ReFLECT* is a new approach to adult literacy. Based on the theory of the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire as practical methodology for implementing. Pilot projects of *ReFLECT* were conducted in over 100 villages in Uganda, El Salvador, and Bangladesh with about 1,550 women and 420 men. It was first introduced in Nepal through Action Aid Nepal (AAN) in 1995, emphasizing the empowerment of Nepalese and aiming to improve literacy. *ReFLECT* pursues changes at three dimensions: individual, institutional, and structure.

'Conscientization' is the main concept and core philosophy of *ReFLECT*. The term was developed Freire. Freire participated in the process of development of *ReFLECT* himself and directly contributed to Action Aid's *ReFLECT* program since 1993. Freire developed a

pedagogy that allowed the process of conscientization which can be connected to social transformation through literacy education, and he himself practiced his theory in the slums of Brazil (Freire, 1971). Conscientization can be understood as a process that people perceive the social, political, and economic oppressions and contradictions surrounding their lives, and move towards a transformation to be liberated from the oppressed situation (Freire, 1972). The process of conscientization includes 'Praxis', a cycle of *ReFLECT* and action. Praxis allows people to recognize and understand the social structure, how it functions and, furthermore, enable the people to consider how they can emancipate from the oppressive structure. Literacy education can be connected with the action for social transformation in this process, and it enables the learners participating in literacy class to become the main agents of social transformation beyond the mere change of recognition.

[Figure 1] Core elements of *ReFLECT* program



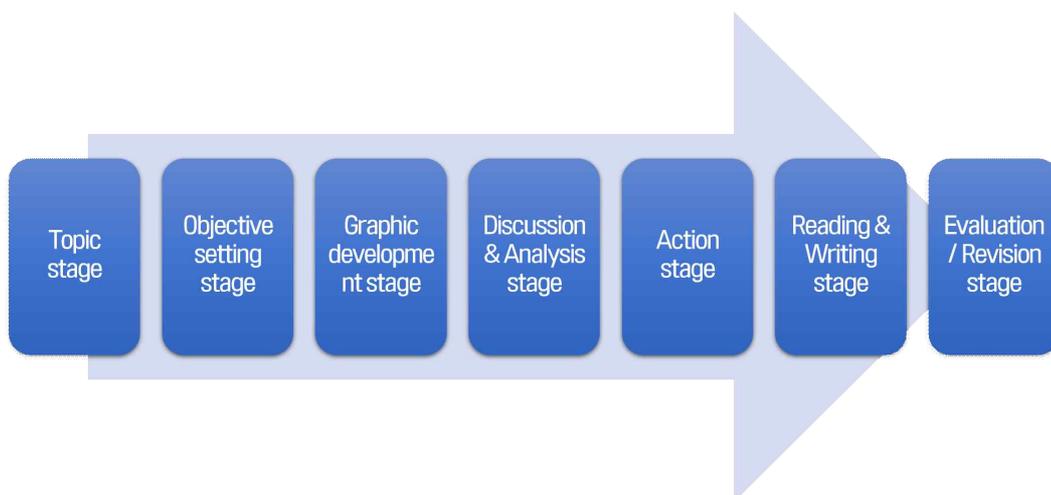
The aims of *ReFLECT* is to help people who are disadvantaged in society to become rights activists who can make their voices heard and resist the power structure that constitutes the very society (Archer et al., 1997). Most of participants of *ReFLECT* are the socially and culturally marginalized groups in the context of each society. The groups include people living in poor, people exposed to structural discrimination and poverty, minority groups and indigenous peoples, small tenant farmers, and Dalit, which is an untouchable minority of the caste¹). The groups vary with the context of each country. *ReFLECT* is a program that through literacy class learners recognize their rights and can change their perceptions of 'Awareness of rights', and enable to read their society critically and act to transform into emancipation. This process can also be seen as 'conscientization' through literacy. Disadvantaged groups often have not much awareness of their rights and less experience of collective action and power. ActionAid supports the excluded groups to become the main agents to transform their lives and social structure through literacy class and to experience collective action for social transformation. The cycle of this process is the core role of Action Aid, and it is the process of Praxis claim that Freire stated (Freire, 1970).

The *ReFLECT* program uses the methods of adult literacy differentiated from the basic literacy. The program does not use printed materials such as primers or textbooks. Instead, it utilizes teaching and learning materials that invented in the field of class. In *ReFLECT* class, the role of the facilitator is very significant. Each literacy circle (groups of literacy class) of *ReFLECT* allows the

1)

leaners and facilitators to develop teaching and learning materials that *ReFLECT* realities of the everyday, experiential, and community of the learners. Literacy class begins with discussion on the participants' experiences. Topics derive from at a glance of political and social analysis of problems related the participants' daily lives. At this time, through the discussion with other leaners, the participants realize the power structure of their society and gradually experience changes of cognitions. The class gives learners the opportunity to identify and analyze local issues by themselves. Teaching and learning materials include diverse contents such as maps, diagrams, and, calendars. These 'visual materials' contains very specific issues. The main words to be learned on each class are determined from the words the participants shared through discussion. The facilitator uses the words extracted from the previous discussion and helps the participants construct diverse materials such as social resource maps. On account of the way class are proceeded, the *ReFELCT* does not have a designated curriculum and class terms.

[Figure 2] Stages of *ReFLECT* program



Although all of ReFLECT program does not have the same manual or stages, most programs share the core stages of process of the program adjusting them into each local contexts.

One of unique features of ReFLECT program is emphasis on production, creation and action, not passivity, copying or absorption. Works of reading and writing of ReFLECT arises out of the graphics produced by participants. The techniques of graphic come from practitioners of Participatory Rural Appraisal (ActionAid London, 1996) as mentioned as one of the core theoretical background of ReFLECT. The maps and matrices produced by participants are not just ends in themselves, rather participatory process of understanding and producing. Putting stress on graphics makes the process of ReFLECT program differentiated from other literacy programs thus, learner generated writing and learner-centered process are given priority.

Also, the participants of the program are encouraged to produce their own texts for reading practice. This process of creating might give the participants chances to express their own thought and consciousness. Those activities enable the participants to recognized with written record of their socio-economic environment and let them act to take control of “the word and the world” in the process (Archer, 1996)

Below is the process how ReFLECT circle could contribute to acquisition of literacy (ActionAid, 1996). Through each stages of ReFLECT circle participants would obtain literacy and realization of their circumstance.

Topic and Objective Setting stage

Before getting started the ReFLECT class, pre-literacy survey stage is important step. During this stage the participants and the facilitator identify possible themes for the class. The topic or topical issue should be close to the heart of the community or literacy participants. Topics can be varied and identified by the local context such as income and expenditure pattern, health and sanitation, agriculture and so on.

Graphic development and Discussion/ Analysis stage

In this stage, participants develop or select suitable graphics such as maps or matrices. According to the identified topic, the participants can construct their graphics on their own knowledge. In most cases of graphic development stage, there will be lots of discussion in the process of constructing graphics. For example, in producing the calendar of agricultural workload, at least twelve months have different steps to be done. Participants will share and discuss about the workload reflecting their own experiences and comparative analysis with other months. Through the process, graphic becomes self-evident also stimulate the interaction between participants. Moreover, this opportunity to discuss and interact with other participants provide clear understanding of what the graphics represents. Graphics can include maps, calendars, matrices/ charts, diagrams and other techniques such as timelines or flow diagrams.

The steps of graphic development go in this way. First, local materials such as stones, beans, etc are used to create participants' code of representation. For instance, in constructing a household by map of the village the ReFLECT class may use stones to represent houses, wood sticks to represent the roads and paths, and beans to represent people. Secondly, the graphic on the ground translate into

paper. ActionAid(1991) emphasizes the shift from three to two dimensions as well as using pen and paper from local materials as the first essential step of literacy. This translation would work as a smooth bridge to introduction of literacy. Also, for the learners who are not familiar with pen and paper, drawing graphic can be good practice to hold a pen and control hands to write.

Finally, the completed graphic on paper should be on display in the class and used for discussion and works of literacy.

Reading and writing stage

This stage is creatively connected to the graphic stage above. From the simple graphic produced by participants is the first words can be introduced for the class. The participants choose the word and the facilitator write it on the board. The selected word is called as “generative word” which would be broken into syllables and used to introduce the relevant syllabic families. Thus, the choice of the first word needs particular attention. Explanation for the generative words is here. For example, if the word “koto” is chosen, the syllables “ko” and “to” would be introduced and placed with other vowel: ka ke ki ko ku / ta te ti to tu. And participants can actively change the syllables to make new words. In other word, the root-word from the graphic and topic can be used to find for further alphabet, spelling, reading and writing.

After passing the basic level of reading and writing, the focus should be moved onto whole words and phrases. In this point, each graphic would be used to generate a wide range of vocabulary around the topic. Independent writing by participants are mostly recommended. Also, facilitators should ask to participants about their motivation to involve the ReFLECT program and literacy class.

Participants can practice to write letters to local officials or agencies regarding the issues they discussed and requested in the class. This process can be easily linked to the action stage since every efforts to literacy was made to relate to the environment and daily lives of participants.

With abovementioned stages, learners have opportunities to discuss and analysis the reality and circumstance around them with their community members. The *ReFLECT* program ultimately aims at changing the awareness of participants and strengthening their collective power to lead action for community transformation. The learners of *ReFLECT* experience conscientization and organize collective activities with solidarity. They develop their own understanding on power structure of society through situational analysis and then lead their community to aware of their rights as well. These *ReFLECT* circle started by literacy class takes part in various movements by forming a forum for discussion with other civil organizations to identify community issues and practicing campaigns and movements together. For instance, women in Nepal who participated in *ReFLECT* programs not only acquired the ability to read and write but also could foster critical awareness of the structure around them, and strengthen their ability to express their opinions. In this way, they have advanced in their own dignity (ActionAid, 1998).

Chapter 3. Methodology

This study is a single case study of *ReFLECT* program conducted in one village in Nepal. The researcher carried out Focus group Interview (FGI) to explore the practical implementation of the program, the changes of participants who are mostly women in the village, and the social context surrounding them. In addition, the researcher repeatedly read qualitative data collected through FGI and participation observation and attempted to analyze the data according to the grounded theory method of Strauss & Corbin (2001). Main methodology of data collection in this study is FGI and participation observation, but statistical data published by Ministry of Education in Nepal and a number of reports and studies published by international organizations as secondary data.

3.1. Selection of Research Field

The data collection for this study was conducted in the field of Nepal, thus there were many limitations in terms of physical distance, time and budget. First, researchers should find the interpreter who can speak Nepali and Korean or Nepali and English since the researcher cannot speak Nepali. Secondly because of the budget, the data collection should be completed within 35 days which is short in Nepal, which means the researcher had to find the study participants who are willing to open their lives and share their stories to her. The B village could be the best field to collect the qualitative data in that respect.

The researcher has visited the B village in Nepal with a Korean civil organization in 2017, which is previous year of data collection. She visited B Village which is one of the implementing sites of ActionAid Nepal (NNA), an international NGO actively working in Nepal. Participants in *ReFLECT* in village B shared their case and shared experiences of life change and personal learning growth through the program. The researcher was greatly impressed by the vivid voices of women and came back to the field after finishing thesis proposal on the subject of *ReFLECT* program in B village where the theory of critical literacy of Paulo Prairie are realized and practiced.

Based on personal network in Nepal, the researcher was able to find an interpreter who could engage in the study and of course who could speak Korean and Nepali. The interpreter has lived in Nepal for 19 years and has had many experiences as interpreter. After signing the confidentiality agreement written according to 'Seoul National University Institutional Review Board'.

Based on the network of interpreter who is well aware of the local situation and the previous experience, the researcher was able to find and visit the Village B, about an hour away from Kathmandu, the capital and the great city in Nepal, by car. From the visit of 2017, the researcher knew a few women in the village. Especially, the chairperson of the women's group of the village welcomed the researcher will and was very willing to participate in the study. With her help, the data collection could be launched.

Village B is located in Godawari Municipality of Lalitpur District in Nepal (Nepal Census, 2001). The population of the village is approximately 55 households, 300 people. For three years from 2015, AAN and Home Net Nepal (HNN) collaborated on the *ReFLECT*

program. It was said that about 30 women participated in the program, and it was difficult to know the exact number of participants because the number was different in each time.

3.2. Data Collection

This study was conducted for about 35 days from February 5, 2017 to March 10 of the same year, in order to explore the *ReFLECT* program of B village in Nepal. In addition to the women who participated in the *ReFLECT* during the field study, Action Aid Nepal and Home Net Nepal practitioners, as well as research groups working on literacy education in Nepal and practitioners of other NGOs conducting literacy education were included as researchers.

Various data such as FGI, participation observation, related documents and reports, researches published by International Organizations was utilized as research methods. Validity of the study might be secure through the diversification of such data.

3.2.1. Focus Group Interview

The researcher had focus group interviews with participants of *ReFLECT* and other stakeholders related to the program such as staffs from AAN, HNN, and non-participants in the Village B to explore the reality of *ReFLECT* Program and the empowerment experienced by women through literacy.

FGI can be used to collect and generalize data based on the insight of interviewees, or to utilize the interactions of groups to gain insights on inaccessible data such as personal experiences (Morgan, 1998). Therefore, FGI was considered to be a suitable method to

reveal the experiences of women participated in the program since no documented reports was allowed about their experiences, and to gather more useful data from adults who shared their learning experiences together in one village.

Before the FGI, the researcher planned the questions in advance and at the same time, made the questions as the open type so that the participants could respond naturally. All the data of the interviews were recorded with the consent of all the research participants. The researcher wrote 'research note' to grasp all the interactions and atmosphere in the process of interview among participants, researchers, and interpreter as well. The reason to write the note is to preserve and reenact the natural "reality of experience" (Dilthey, 2005) expressed by the participants within the context and personal characteristics in the process of qualitative research. The researchers tried not to select or interpret the data by the purpose or prejudice of the research when analyzing the data through such process.

[Table 1] Characteristic of the research participants

Category	Name (assumed)	Age	Gender	Final level of education	note
Participants	Renu	30s	female	Primary 8th	
	Dalaku	20s	female	Primary 10th	Chairperson of women's group
	Sherpa	40s	female	not attending school	
	Puchare	60s	female	not attending school	
Staff from AAN	Munita	30s	female	bachelor 's degree	
Staff from HNN	Anna	30s	female	bachelor 's degree	
Non-participants in village	Lok	60s	male	not attending school	

The interviewees were recruited throughout the village and volunteered to participate in the study. The criteria of recruitment of participants were first, any women who have regularly participated in the *ReFLECT* program, and secondly who are still participating in women's meeting every Saturday.

Before the interview, all participants were given detailed explanations and shared the purpose and process of the research. Participants were heard that they can always withdraw their permission to participate in the study whenever they want and

request to delete any of information that they did not want to expose. For the sake of ethical considerations, researcher has tried to have warm and comfortable relationship with participants as quickly as possible in a short time. Every participant signed at the statement of consent for the research of their free will. Through this process, the ethical consideration of research was secured.

A total of 7 people (4 program participants, 2 staffs from implementing agencies and 1 non-participant in the village, see table 1.) participated in the interview. FGI included the following questions (see table 2.). At the beginning of the interview, unstructured interviews and open questions were conducted, and the final interviews proceeded with planned questions.

The researcher had 3 interview schedules with the women in total, and the translator was accompanied all the time. Each interview did not exceed two hours in total. There were five participants in the interviews held in the village, but more than 10 neighbors (all women) in the village came and sit together in the meeting place. In the case of staffs of the implementing agency, AAN and HNN, interview was carried out once in consideration of the staff's busy schedule. English was the main communicative language in this interview, which did not exceed an hour.

[Table 2] Questions for the Focus Group Interview

Section	Type	Questions
Personal Background	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How old are you? - Have you ever enrolled in School? - Have you ever learned literacy (or reading and writing) before this class?
Motivation and Environment	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of difficulties did you have during class? - Did you have any suggestion for the class? - Did you have any opposition to come to class from home, like husband or parents?
	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did you get to know this class? - Why did you decide to attend this class? - What do you like the most in attending this class?
Process	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of relationship do you have with other participants? - Are the classes suitable for your level of literacy?
	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could you explain the procedure of each class (in routine way)? - What is the special feature of this class? - What do you learn from the class except ability how to read and write?
Result	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What did you learn through literacy class? - Have you experienced any changes in your life after the class? - Did the literacy affect to your life? - Have you experienced any changes with the persons around you like family, neighbors? - To what extent can you read and write? - What would be the most important factor to improve this program and literacy for the women?

3.2.2. Participatory Observation

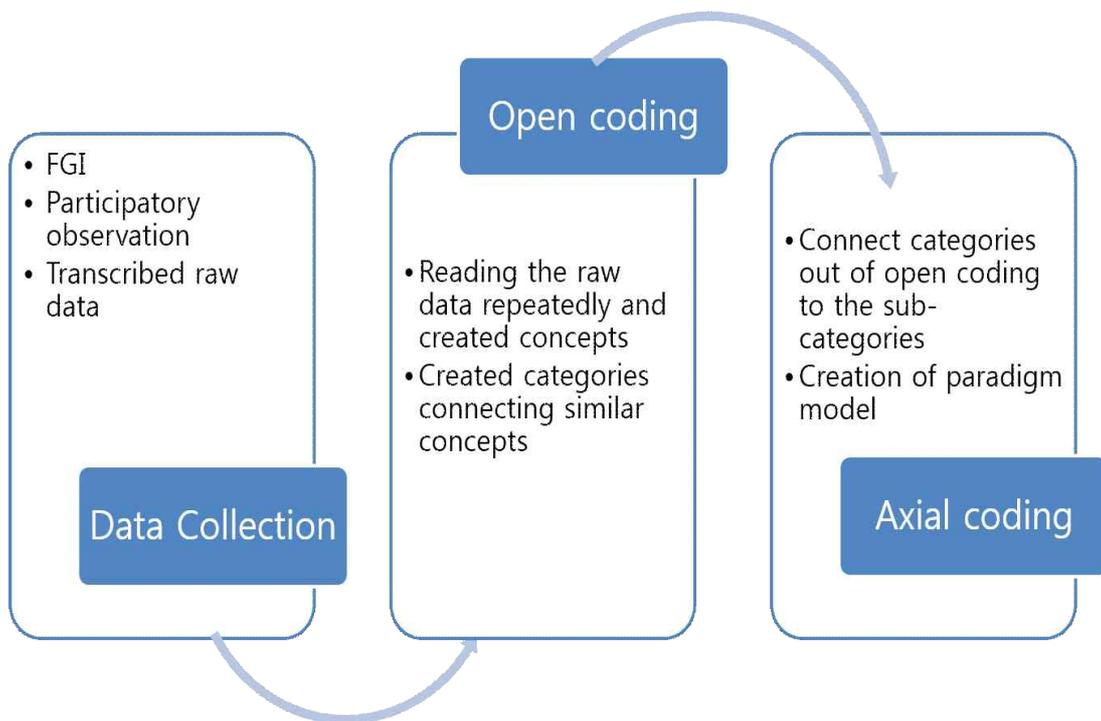
Participatory observation was the other method in this study. The researcher was to observe the women's group meeting in the B village. Participatory observation were conducted twice during the field research. When the researcher visited the village for the data collection, *ReFLECT* class had already finished. However, the women still kept meeting for the women's group resulted from the *ReFLECT* program. Thus, the researcher could attend and observe how the meetings were held and what issues emerged among the women. The researcher also asked the permission to attend the meeting from the women, and the participants for the meeting welcomed her. One of the purposes of this study was to reveal the reality of the *ReFLECT* program. Therefore, participatory observation focused on descriptive observation, which can expose the nature and routine of the women's group meetings (Spradley, 2006) rather than approaching with assumed questions.

3.3. Data Analysis and Writing

This study aims at exploring what the learner's experiences, the meaning of those, and the interaction between the learners and the social context surrounding them. Experience is hardly measure in quantitative way and the interpretation about the experience can be differentiated by the agents as researcher or participants. The researcher of this study grappled with finding out the most suitable qualitative research methodology to explore the interaction and the experience of the individual. As a result, this study adopted the

analysis methodology suggested by Strauss & Corbin (2001), which systematically analyzes the raw data through a series of research processes. Thus, this study follows after the most crucial procedure of analysis by Strauss & Corbin (2001). First, open coding was conducted to extract conceptualization and categorization of raw data, and then axial coding was proceeded, which find out logical relationship between categories. Finally, selective coding was to select and analyze the core category that penetrates the main idea.

[Figure 3] Process of data collection and analysis



Data analysis was carried out based on transcribed raw data, questionnaires, and research notes, and the researcher tried to compare the transcription and research note several times to catch and deliver the very atmosphere of the interviews. After each

interview, the recording of the interview was transcribed as it is. And open coding was performed.

In the open coding process, the author tried to derive the concepts embedded in sentences and to extract the data related to the *ReFLECT* program and participants' learning and change. Similar concepts were placed in the same categories, and the categories and features were named as of higher level of categories. The naming was done by the expression used by the research participants, or by the researcher herself taking into account the context.

The categories generated by open coding were created as a logical paradigm by composing of causal conditions, contextual conditions, central experience, interactions (helping factors/ disturbing factors), and consequence through axis coding (see Table 3). The paradigm model shows systematically what strategies and results are produced by the learners based on the actual data through various conditions that affect the experience of participation in *ReFLECT* program. Causal conditions refer to events that cause or develop the experience, and contextual conditions refer to specific conditions that enable causal conditions. The central experience are a central idea or event made through these conditions. Interaction can be divided into helping factors and obstruction factors involved in the experience. The consequence is an output of what happened by interaction (Strauss & Corbin, 2001).

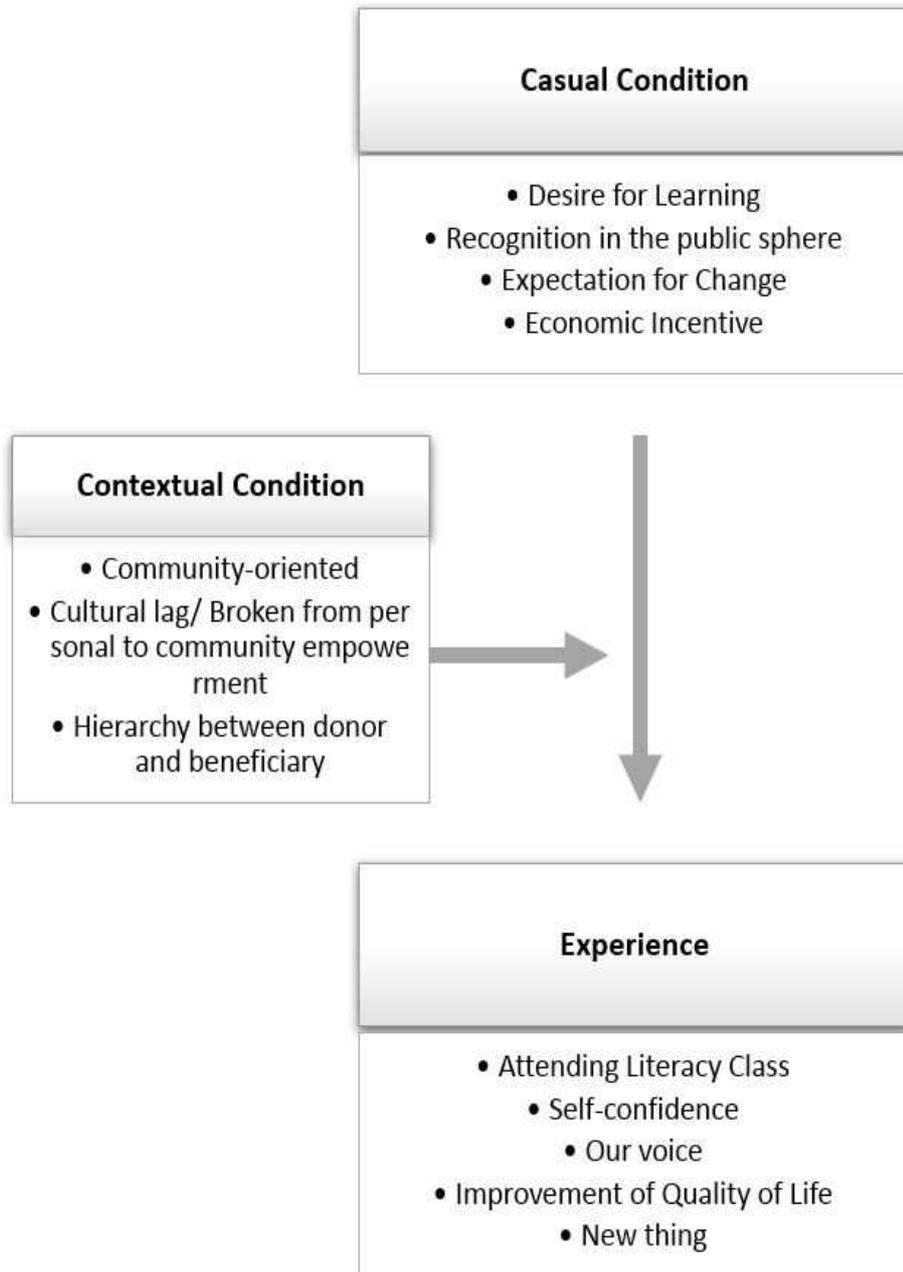
Selective coding is the process of conceptualizing the central experience and determining the core categories. This is a process of refining and integrating the dimension of analysis into theory.

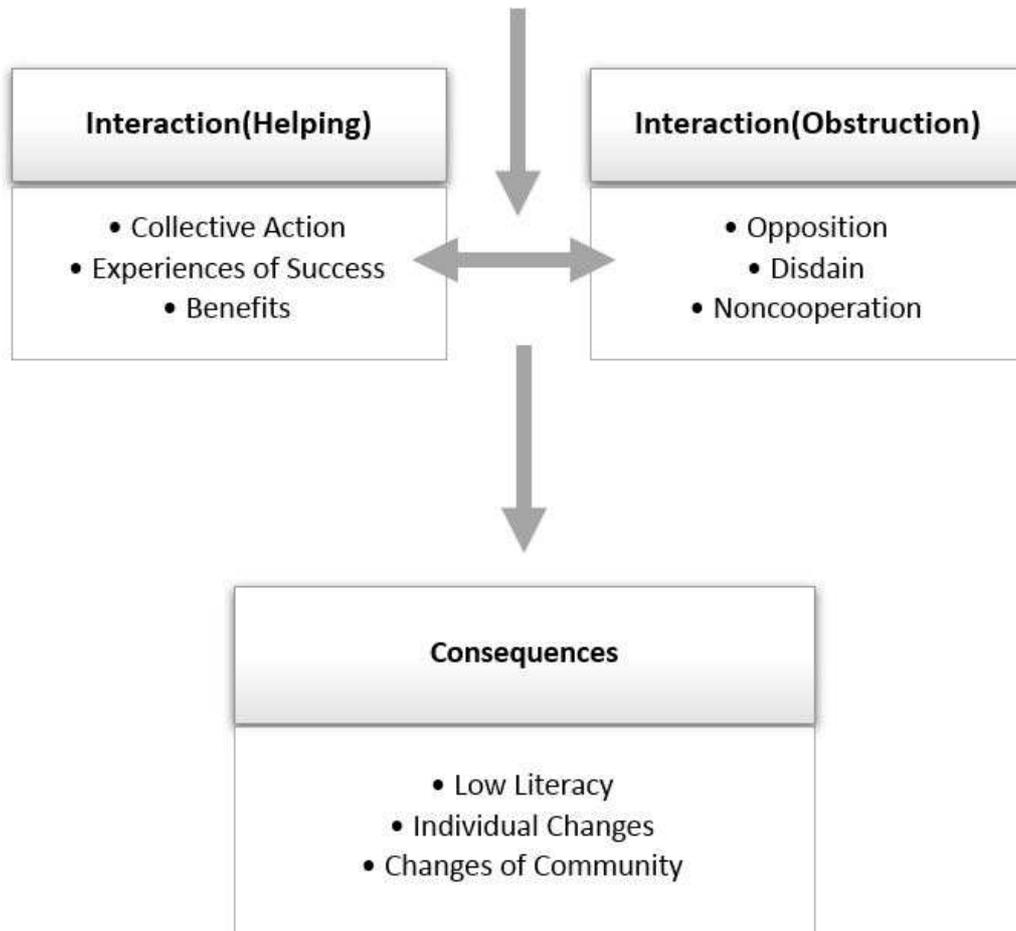
Through this methodology of analysis, this study tried to explore the reality of the *ReFLECT* program and the experiences and changes of participating women.

Chapter 4. Findings

In this chapter, we will explore the answers to the early mentioned research questions in Chapter 1 based on the field research of the researcher. The researcher tried to understand the changes in the empowerment of the women who participated in the *ReFLECT* program and the social context surrounding them. Through data analysis, paradigm of the women's experiences is shown as follows (see Table 4). This chapter seeks to figure out women's changes with the following the research questions and the paradigm.

[Figure 4] Paradigm model based on experience of women participated in *ReFLECT* program



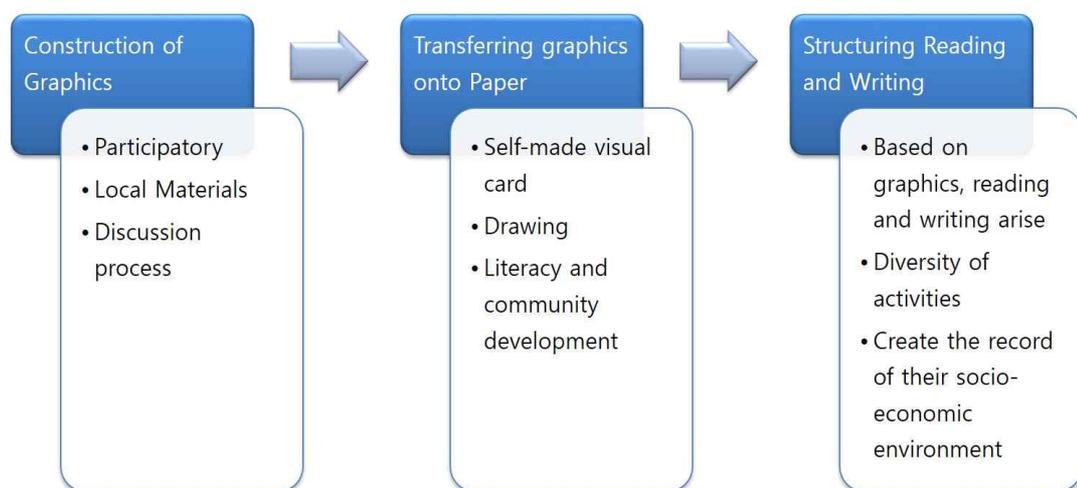


4.1. Original model and Implemented reality of ReFLECT

The first research question is about the feature and theoretical origins of ReFLECT program and the implemented result or realization in field. To discover the answer of this question, participation and observation of the class before the beginning to after the end are needed because pre-survey and discussion ahead of the program are

emphasized in this program. Also observation of on-going class is essential since ReFLECT has a series of literacy process including production of graphic and translation graphic onto paper.

[Figure 5] Process of translation graphics onto paper during literacy class of ReFLECT program



However the author could not attend during the class because the village B has already finished their literacy class but just continued on the ReFLECT circle meeting such as women's meeting and children's meeting. This will be mentioned in the next limitation part of this paper.

Nonetheless some scenes of ReFLECT class could be caught up with the interviews with participants. There are many parts of *ReFLECT* class that corresponding with the features of the literature review, but there are some parts that are applied differently from

Freire's theory. We will have this some paragraph to explore the reality and implementing of *ReFLECT* in the village B.

The classes were held once a week by facilitators from HNN. Home Net Nepal supported school supplies such as paper and pen. *ReFLECT* participants had a good relationship with the facilitator from HNN, and they told that it is good and comfortable to work with them because they are from village B as well.

Dalaku: At first (of each class), people gathered. And when the facilitator came, they greeted one another, and then they began the class by writing their own names on the note that were distributed from HNN.

Sherpa: HNN staff(facilitator) visited here once a week, and did something like a class with us. And we made some charts ... and I did it ... and ... They teach about women's rights and so on. ... We had discussions and drew pictures once a week.

One of the features of *ReFLECT* is that it is composed of discussions without textbooks. As ActionAid stated in *ReFLECT* manual, the learners had discussions on a variety of topics. But discussion topics were not selected by the learner, but it seemed like they had a kind of curriculum that was made by HNN, which were different from the original model of *ReFLECT*.

Dalaku: I've done a lot like that. For example, ... It's

like a broken jar. A pot filled with water. While drawing pictures ... (the facilitator explained why) we live difficult lives ... why we cannot get out of this situation.

Dalaku: When we had class, I learned, "There are only men and women in the class." Even in the case of class, there is no caste in Nepal legally, but there is still discrimination. Our town is not that bad. I also broke the caste and married. Even though I was in a low caste ... the more severe places, low caste people are told not to drink water together with other castes. Or high caste people are told not to drink the water given by the low caste. But now there is no such thing in Nepal.

The main contents covered were women's rights, Nepalese citizenship, Nepalese caste and class. It is guessed that they have dealt with savings and the farming season necessary for real life. It was also referred that class about the situation of poor and unequal social structures and learners. Although the researcher asked many questions repeatedly to hear more about the topics covered in the actual lesson, she could not receive detailed information about the lesson.

Also, the start of ReFLECT in village B was not like pre-surveyed or led by the community. *ReFLECT* program in the village B seemed that it could start thanks to good timing of

Nepalese local government, international NGO Action Aid Nepal, and local NGO Home Net Nepal. Before Action Aid Nepal came in, civil servant in that area were already gathering women for the projects of the local government. At that time, the government was conducting the project of creating identity cards for women.

Dalaku: Originally, I was a little bit interested in the situation of society now ... since I was little ... I was interested in (social inequality and justice) and I wanted to be such a person but I had no chance. But after attending the class, and I got to understand the society, now ... I mean injustice. In the case of that woman, this is a case like this. Her husband had double marriage but she couldn't do anything. If she had identification. or the certificate of marriage was declared first, she would not have received such a disadvantage. So, I gathered other people together.

Dalaku: ... Civil servants also cared in their result. This is the first time that many of the people in our village have been taught by government officials who came from the very beginning. At first, the official came directly. And then he met me (the chairperson of the women's group) and I talked to the people in the neighborhood about it. And they spread about it again and again. So eventually we gathered about 15 people together at first.

The local public official introduced the project of issuing the identification, certificate of marriage, and certificate of birth for their children. The women realized, that after the above education, 'learning' could be useful to their lives. Furthermore, women recognized the meaning of being recognized as citizens in the public sphere, and most of the women who participated in this project also involved in *ReFLECT* literacy program.

On the other hand, the causes of attracting learners who participated in *ReFLECT* to participate in the program were classified into four categories: 'aspiration for learning', 'recognition in public domain', 'expectation of change', and 'economic incentive'.

The researcher met about 20 participants in the village B, and 5 participants took part in the interview. The participants consisted of women of various ages from the 20s to the 60s. The household and the educational background of the participants were similar, but the motivation for participating in the *ReFLECT* program varied.

Renu: If you stay at home, you keep going back ... If I knew how to write my own name, I thought it would be a little better (participated). So, learning. Some learning, I want to know something.

Sherpa: The first 10 people who came and joined understood the importance of education and wanted to learn something. I'm here now to get more people involved ... for example, like school supplies. ... Even after giving the relief items here after the earthquake,

only the people who come here at the meeting will do

so.

Mrs. Renu, who was the oldest, said she had joined the *ReFLECT* program with her aspiration for learning and her desire for better growth. The lady, who has never attended formal education, thought that her life would be better if she can read and write, or just the ability to write down her name by herself. It seems that the individual's desire for growth and the expectation for change in life are motivated.

In addition, economic incentives such as stationaries given to participating women in the program or relief items after earthquake seem to have affected the motivation of participating. However, *ReFLECT* program did not provide economic or material incentives for individuals not that much comparing other projects. Thus, economic incentive was likely not to have great impact on the motivation of the participants.

4.2. Learning of the Participated Adult Women

Participants in this study were learning various experience that could be classified into the categories of 'participation in literacy class', 'self-confidence', 'our voice', 'improvement of quality of life', 'learning of new'.

One of the key pillars of *ReFLECT* is on acquisition literacy. However, in the case of village B, the participants mentioned more about the change of perception than about the literacy. In fact, even

though the researcher asked how the learning process to read and write progressed, the participants did not give detailed answers on it. Certainly the participants had and attended literacy class but it was uncertain whether they learned and acquired the ability to read and write.

Self-confidence was one of the categories in learning. Stromquist (2002) suggested that psychological empowerment enhances self-esteem and changes individuals into self-awareness. Participants in the interviews said that the biggest change before and after participating in the *ReFLECT* program was that they now became to sit and talk with foreigners (researcher and interpreter), which can be express in a word 'self-confidence'.

Dalaku: At first, we did not even talk like this. If you come from outside, we worried why they come here, why greet us, and then we were busy hiding and running away, but now you know ... Since we know new facts, we also have confidence in these things, so we can meet and talk. Then the more I have confidence, the more I want to learn new things.

Sherpa: My husbands did not understand me to come to the class at first, and didn't allow us to go. But we somehow kept on saying, 'We'll keep going,' no matter what they said, we just constantly came. ... At first, I was afraid of my husband. I was afraid to be hit by him if I came to a meeting. But now we talk

confidently to our husbands. I am not scared. We are good at speaking up our voice at home.

Some women seem to be convinced that despite their husband's opposition, they are able to achieve what they want. They attained self-esteem that will not to be shaken by the will of others.

The most mentioned from the participants is the political empowerment of women's meeting as a group and the strengthening of individual political capacity. They said that in the past they were unable to talk to others only tried to hide from people. However, after participating in the *ReFLECT* program, they stated that they had the ability to confront even politicians not only their husbands. This shows that women have experienced political empowerment that can encourage them to stand in public venues through literacy education (Stromquist, 2015).

Renu: In the past, I just stayed at home. It was natural because I spend whole day only within house. Since what I know is just house chores, I had only talked about on domestic issues when I met other women in village. But now, I know that if we voice up, they will listen to it. Unlike the past ... we can go to politicians and, we can make your voice aloud. We can make a request.

Women's political empowerment was also affecting their everyday life, where they had not been able to resist. Violence in the home is

the most prevalent of male domination against women (Stromquist, 2015). Women who gather for *ReFLECT* class share their everyday lives and oppression they experienced in their daily lives. The women voiced together and showed a collective action against the environment surrounding them.

Improve of quality of life and learning new thing can be related to Knowledge. It is a major vehicle for expanding the psychological realm of people and enabling people to understand the wider world and social experience. Because attaining knowledge is not a process of filling the mere instrumental functions, but rather plays a very important role in understanding social structure and controls over them in multiple ways. In this context Stromquist (2015) emphasizes the importance of intellectual empowerment. Knowledge of women's empowerment, especially gender awareness, is essential. It is directly connected to better quality of life.

Dalaku: I just followed what I heard from at the grandparents' house (about the caste) in the past. But after coming the ReFLECT Lecture, I heard a lot of stories ... not only here (ReFLECT) but also government taught the issues of class such as caste. ... Now I deny discrimination in public sphere though sometime it(discrimination) happens in domestic area.

ReFLECT classes provide new perspectives on the power and oppression that make up the learner 's society. It is to be able to critically recognize the structure of our society through the experience

that occur in the participants' everyday life. In the case of Nepal, caste system derived from Hinduism has served as a powerful mechanism for suppressing women and the lower classes. Women who participated in *ReFLECT* had a new perspective on society through the knowledge empowerment against this structure. Literacy education, which consists of open questions and discussions, can be effective for women's empowerment (Nabi, 2014).

Dalaku: So now that I'm getting better, I can learn new facts because I work at the government office. Marriage certificate or something like that, I mean like double marriage issue. If you report your marriage within 35 days, the fee will be exempted. And we have to send our children school, for that we need certificate of birth registration. We are getting to know all these things one by one. I did not know before.

Literacy class played a role as a safe learning space to exchange the information for everyday life. The shared information can be related to the opportunity to develop oneself. The *ReFLECT* class, which can promote critical *ReFLECT* on the social structure that oppresses women, seems to be in line with the literature review, which asserted that literacy environment enables women to pursue political empowerment and knowledge empowerment (Eldred, 2013 Nabi 2014).

4.3. Experiences of Participated Women with Others and Community

Social structures form very important contexts in the process of change of women participating in *ReFLECT* program. We could find out that the context in the macroscopic dimension influenced the life of participants. In this study, we categorized 'the context' as 'cultural lag' or 'broken connection from personal empowerment to community empowerment', and 'hierarchy of donors and beneficiaries'.

Mrs. Renu stated that now she is more confident in the relationship with her husband as other women agreed. However, in order to participate in the *ReFLECT* class or Women's Meeting, the participants had to finish all the house chores such as cooking and cleaning. This showed the perception about house work of the community and also of women themselves. Domestic and unpaid works were still regarded as the portion of entirely female.

Renu: We bring infants with us. And kids come to youth club that said before. my husband left alone like a bully at home(laugh).

In the same way as the distribution of housework, care work was still perceived as women's responsibility. Even if husbands remain at home, young children who need care are brought to the meeting with women in the role of mother. Most of the women in their 20s and 30s brought the young infants in the interview with researcher. Participants of the research did not seem to have any doubt or critical view of care work recognized as a woman's role.

Through a short conversation with one of male participant, the researcher was able to get a glimpse of the cultural lag on women's

responsibility.

Lok: Women learn something here and they will clean better, to clean the house in a better way. They also teach children hygiene. It is good to do such things and keep the village better. Learning of women is recommended.

The only male participant of this research positively assessed the 'women's literacy learning' because it improved the quality of housework and helped them to educate and care for their children. Even as the women's voices grow and the village changes, the unpaid work, such as housework and caring, traditionally recognized as women's roles, was still one of the factors that instrumentalize women's literacy class.

The participants and HNN staff all agreed that the collaboration between the implementing agency and the village was well done. The women in the village did not know much about the ActionAid, but they had a deep bond with the staffs from HNN who implemented the actual program. Also, the harmonious relationship of learners and the implementing agency seemed very positive.

Renu: If only one stakeholder work hard to help ... this is a women's meeting. So, it cannot be well functioned if women do not come. On the contrary to this, if we participate well, gather all the time, but the facilitator doesn't have interest, the program cannot go on. But our village seems to have both of them.

Especially, the women from village come here (ReFLECT class) aiming to actively learn something and new out of class. Also, Home Net Nepal is working hard, we gather a lot ...

The good interaction between the learners and the implementing staff seems to have mutually influenced.

Renu: Home Net Nepal is a local NGO here. It has been eight years. Now there is an office near by the entrance of the village. Around Bus park (the bus stop on the biggest road before entering the town on a mountain). They do not have a sign board now.

Anna: (When hiring staff) It is most important to be able to integrate as a village resident more than anything else. It is not only ending with a task, but also sharing the heart with villagers and making real progress on their own. So, it takes a long time to recruit the facilitators and staffs.

One interesting point, however, was that the attitudes and responses of women were different depending on whether or not the HNN staffs were accompanied at the meeting. At the last interview out of the three ones, one HNN staff joined the interview together. I was not noticed that she would appear beforehand. When I arrived at the village and started the interview, I found out that the atmosphere

of the very interview was different from the previous ones. The chairperson of the women 's group, Mrs. Dalaku was away from the center, though she was always sitting at the same place which is the center of the place.

Most of all, the responses of the women in that meeting were significantly lower than the previous two interviews. Before the participants answered to my questions, they looked at the HNN staff first. A more rigid atmosphere than before was somewhat distant from the equally plausible, 'speak-able' learning space that *ReFLECT* claims (ActionAid, 2008).

The social structured context as described above were found to be underpinning as the limitation of the *ReFLECT* program.

The participants also experiences various interactions with others in community regarding to ReFLECT program. Interaction is divided into the spheres of 'help' which contributes positively to women's experience and the area of 'obstacle' which acts as a constraint factor or conflict experienced by the research participants. First, 'Help' is categorized of 'group behavior', 'success experience', and 'profit'.

All participants in the interviews emphasized the importance of 'collective action' in common.

Sherpa: If we personally plan something and ask the government agency, no one will listen. But when we are a group and request as a group (they will listen) ... Especially we talked with the person elected in this

election, 'We demanded these things before the election and you promised to accept it. Thus, we voted to you. But if you do not keep your promise, we will blame you and object you. '

Dalaku: If we just want to live normally, we just live. But something more ... To solve a problem that individuals cannot solve, there must be a meeting in order to achieve a bigger thing.

Dalaku: In the past, we only did what we were asked. When I asked to cook, I cooked. But here (ReFLECT program), we talk about such things as our rights, women's rights, and so on. As we learn a little bit, we realize that we can do something more, not only cooking. As we begin to volume up our voices, not just as one person but as a group, people are starting to get accepted.

Dalaku: Things have changed. In the past, we just had gossip and jokes each other so nothing was changed ... When women talked about something, the men and people in village responded ignoring us very much. But now, after we have gathered here and studied, the men do not even talk as the way they did like saying bad words. ... So now, if we talk about something here (in the meeting), the solution appears though not 100%

solved

Women who participated in the *ReFLECT* program were clearly aware of the potential for change and power of collective action in common. This seems to be the result of positive cycle of success experiences through continued performance of women's collective action, as well as learning Freire's emphasis on Praxis.

As stated, women's collective action is also associated with their experiences of collective actions. They have been positively influenced by repeated experiences that their voices heard through collective action in their everyday lives.

Violence in the home is the most prevalent of male domination of women (Stromquist, 2015). Women who gather for *ReFLECT* class freely discuss their everyday lives in class and share oppression. We can see the example of experiencing success from the following. The women voiced together and showed a collective opposition to the oppressive environment surrounding them. This was the first successful experience of women's group.

Dalaku: The meeting here is really free. One day, ... a lady told us that her husband hit her like this and that. After listening to the story, all the women who were taking classes here came in the lady's house and told her husband not to do, and after that, he doesn't hit his wife ... We said to him that if he hits her again, we will gather and come back again. He never beat his wife since then.

In addition to these domestic problems, the experience of successes in interaction with governmental institute also seems to have had a great impact on women's experience and personal change.

Dalaku: ... I have not done anything like that before, but now I have projects that the government provided to us(women's group) about 250,000 rupee and we did reconstruction of the road in our village ... There behind ... (pointing the road). We talked to the elected politician ... (that we need the reconstruction of the road). Although it is unpaved road, it is wider than the past road which was originally narrow ...

Women were very proud of their own voice as a great success story when they were able to repair broken roads at the entrance of the village. Through these experiences of collective action, women were aware that they could implement their opinions through collective action. However, the collective action of women's group seemed to play the role of negotiation card to request and get what they wanted, rather than demanding structural change of society.

'Profit' was one of the big strategies for women to communicate with the non-participants of the class in the village. Women who did not participate in the *ReFLECT* programs and other villagers come and visit the women's groups when problems arise in the public sphere.

Renu: No matter what good things are, there is the

opposite. There is also a road (reconstructed road with the consent of the government at a women's meeting), but the villagers say, 'Why do we rebuild our roads? It takes away our lands' If there's an opposition like that, we gather as a group and visit the person. Then we try to persuade them like 'there is a better way to develop, and there are many good things to do' . Sometimes it works but the other time we fight with them. ...

Dalaku: Some people do not want to come to the women's meeting. They are not interested in here and do not like the meeting. But they still need it, and if there is anything necessary, they come to us again. For example, the road to come here, that road (the little road behind CAC) has a lot of broken-down sides. We can walk down now, but when it's rainy season no one cannot use that road. The road collapses. But people ask to us to deal the issue with the government. We interact in that way. So it can be said that they're not completely ignoring us, but that doesn't mean that they work with us ...

According to their opinions, the women who participated in *ReFLECT* are clearly communication in public sphere with village leaders, non-participants in *ReFLECT*, men who oppose them, and local government agencies as well as local politicians. Vakis et al. (2011) stated that active social interaction enhances communication

among women, community and leaders in non-formal education programs. This communication promotes the exchange of knowledge and creates significant changes in behavior and attitudes.

On the other hand, the interactions that act as 'obstacles' are gathered in the category of 'opposition' and 'noncooperation'. Conflicts with the spouses were very common for the participants. They mentioned that they were very obedient and passive wife who could not even disagree with their husband and take back to them before participating in the *ReFLECT* program.

Sherpa: When I started to come the class, my husband was very annoyed and said, 'What are you going to do and will you learn something?' But as time goes by, my husband changed and now let me go. Because I learned from the class and issued the certificate of birth registration for my children, and then I went to the government office to ask for something, made a proposal, succeeded and so on.

In the early stage of the program, it was difficult to participate in classes because of husband 's objections and conflicts, but with positive changes for their children and village through women' s meetings, husbands "allowed" their wives to participate in *ReFLECT* meetings. This change in attitude of the husbands seems positive, but it is not possible to state that it is ultimately the result of recognizing the equal rights and positions of men and women.

4.4. Empowerment of Individual and Community

The changes in the participants' experience and interactions were visible and positive. In the process of analyzing the experiences of the participants, the codes and concepts corresponding to the consequence were classified into three categories: "low literacy", "personal life change", and "community change".

First, although *ReFLECT* is a practical implementation of critical literacy, it is still questionable whether the participants can be seen as 'being literate'.

One of the great advantages of *ReFLECT* program is that it can have the success of two pillars of literacy, reading and writing skill and conscientization. The illiterate learner can be learned not only how to read the words, but also to read the world with a critical view of reality. Furthermore, they can be the main agents of social change and development through collective action (ActionAid, 1996). However, the *ReFLECT* program in the village B did not seem to have achieved great results in literacy.

Dalaku: Someone still cannot write. Even if I had a meeting, there were two people here ... and others. I always get a sick job and I cannot even get a pencil.

Renu: We now write ... We can write to a certain name, so we do not have classes anymore and we gather together once a week and talk about something

we can do in the village.

In the case of Dalaku, who has the highest level of education in the village, she seemed to be able to read and write without difficulty. However, Renu, who is one of the participants, seemed to remain at the level of "writing own name". Despite the three-year program, the extent of level to write only own name cannot be seen as successful acquisition of literacy.

However, the learners had desire to keep going their literacy learning to acquire the ability to read and write. Further classes or even plan was not promised.

Renu: I need more class. I need it, but I do not know where to get it. It would cost me. We have to pay to learn.

On the other hand, illiterate women in B village often asked for help from women who could write whenever they needed. In the village of Nepal, where the community spirit is strong, asking for help to read and write did not seem shameful.

Researcher: So, what do the illiterate do? Sometimes you need to read and write.

Dalaku: People who are illiterate can ask what they do not understand (words or letters) orally.

Researcher: Would not it be uncomfortable then?

Dalaku: Well, even if it's a little uncomfortable, we

teach each other well. It is good to be together.

Women in B village seemed to cooperate with each other to create a 'literate environment'. There were a lot of women who did not write and read in the women's group. But they were able to talk in the same loud voice with the literate and act together. On the basis of this, there seemed to be a common conviction that women who participated in women's meetings, experienced political empowerment, and learned the successful cases of collective action could build a better society by joining forces with women.

Stromquist (2002) divides empowerment into four aspects based on Freire's conscientization. The four aspects are the psychological, intellectual, economic, and political empowerment. Intellectual empowerment means the power to recognize reality in critical perspective and recognize the unevenly social structure of unequal reality. In political terms, it is the ability to recognize the inequality of power and to organize and mobilize collective action. Psychological empowerment means raising self-esteem and self-confidence that can improve individual's quality of lives, and finally, economic empowerment means the ability to hold independent income with the subjectivity of economic power (Stromquist, 2015).

The experience of women in the categories of 'experince' in the paradigm seems to relate to the four aspects of empowerment, as claimed by Stromquist (2002).

Not only personal changes, but also the community also transformed. The village B has about 53 to 55 households, with about 300 inhabitants. Of the population, up to 35 women is considerable

number of participations in the meeting. When the participants were asked about changes of community after meetings were held and women's group activities became active, the women first spoke about the change in attitudes of men.

Dalaku: So now my husband did not say not to go, but he just does not let me go out, that's an opposition. 'What are you going to learn there? Rather, why don' t you making some bamboo handicrafts? '

At the beginning season of the *ReFLECT* program, men showed very negative attitude toward women's participation in the meeting and sometimes opposed by "not letting them go out".

Renu: In the past ... uh ... In the old days, men always played cards. There was a gambling called 'carum'. They played games like that all the time but it becomes less nowadays. Women keep expressing our opinion. men go to work a little bit more than before... The village has changed a bit more than before.

Dalaku: There are two male participants in our meeting. Sometimes they join us. The man did not come in the early stage and also told his wife not to go. But now they are here and inspire other villagers. Because they are elders in our community, we

*sometimes ask them to deliver our public
announcement. People listen to them since they are the
elder.*

However, as the women continued to voice their thoughts, the negative attitude by men against the *ReFLECT* program was gradually reduced. Furthermore, as women's voices grew, men's behavior changes were observed. Particularly, it seemed that the attending of two old males who are the elders of the village seems a great encouragement for the women in the meeting.

Chapter 5. Discussion

So far, we have examined the experience and social interactions of the participating women in *ReFLECT* program conducted in the village B in Nepal through a paradigm model. In this chapter, we will discuss three issues discovered from the previous chapter. The issues are followed; 'Low Literacy', 'Cultural lag or broken connection from personal empowerment to community empowerment', and 'Hierarchy between facilitator and learners'.

5.1. Low literacy

The *ReFLECT* Program means 'Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community' that clearly states the word 'Literacy'. Freire says, "To acquire the ability to read and write is not to memorize sentences, words, and syllables that are inanimate, irrelevant to the real world. It is the attitude of creating and recreating their own situation, the transformation of self"(Elias, 2008: 44), emphasizing that learners are as important as literacy as conscientization. In addition, several previous studies have recognized that critical literacy, such as *ReFLECT*, is as effective as functional literacy (Shin, 2010).

Women in village B seemed to have failed to improve literacy through the *ReFLECT* program. Of course, through *ReFLECT*, women experienced positive and meaningful changes, such as psychological empowerment, such as improved self-esteem, and political empowerment, which can be acquired through a number of

successful experiences. However, it is doubtful whether it can be regarded as the *ReFLECT* program or literacy program in view of the fact that it does not contribute greatly to the improvement of the literacy, the essential goal of *ReFLECT* program. Rather, does it not have the characteristics of rural women's capacity building projects? It is doubtful whether *ReFLECT* is being implemented in a different features or different ways depending on various social or institutional contexts in the process of being realized in the field.

5.2. Cultural lag or broken connection from personal to community empowerment

Stromquist (2015) notes that when dealing with women's political empowerment, it is very important to look at the microscopic dimensions such as the family. In particular, he repeatedly emphasizes studying the dynamics of unpaid work at household level. The domination of men over women is most prevalent in domestic repression and violence. The unpaid housework makes women economically and psychologically dependent on male spouses because they cannot do economic activities at the same time. Also, when a large part of women's absolute time is used for housework, women are constrained to organize activities for the development and change of oneself and society. Cohen (2004) also points out that segmentation of labor by gender is a major factor in gender inequality. Women are in the private realm of the family, and men in the more public realm of work are not only economic inequality but also inequality in social structures that constitute gender identity.

In B village women, it is clear that there was a clear political empowerment for the leaners in various political activities through the

program and to be able to raise their voice at home, at village level, and even at the extent to local government level. However, it seems that the culture of village B could catch up with new gender power of the community, and which considers housework and the care work of children as women's responsibility. The perception of the elders of the village and the perception of the husbands in the family, and the women themselves who participated in the *ReFLECT*, still put 'women' in the place for domestic and caring work. The political empowerment of women in *ReFLECT* appears not to have reached to the transformation of the culture of gender power of housework and care work, which most closely associated with them.

We can also consider the possibility that the main agents of the *ReFLECT* program and the women's meeting could be the reason. All of women only. In a study by Sara et al. (1998), men and women participated in the *ReFLECT* program together and sharply discussed labor in housework, which concluded to increase the participation in house chore of men. What if the *ReFLECT* program would be able to contain men and women and discuss newly gender perspectives and equality?

5.3. Hierarchy between facilitator and learners

Freire requires the equality in class situation that everyone can be able to do the same kind of questions and debate regardless of the position as the teacher and the learners (Elias, 2008). As the teacher speaks unilaterally, the learners fall into mere subjects not as the main agent of social transformation.

Participants in *ReFLECT* clearly recognized the power and discrimination caused by the caste system deeply rooted in Nepalese

society under the influence of Hinduism. They also had the perception that 'everyone is equal' and some of them asserted the elimination of the caste system in society as well. However, there was still a hierarchical society in the women's meeting in the village B though the caste system disappeared legally. The researcher was able to observe the hierarchy between the donors who are the staffs and facilitators of the organizations and learners, the village women. Absence of reciprocalness of the ReFLECT group could be one of the reason which caused unequal power. Otherwise, AAN and HNN in Nepal, which provide *ReFLECT* program and support the village women to do activities, were more educated than the participant who had no education. Many of the employees from the organizations speak English very fluently of course literacy skills. It was not clear where the hierarchy was derived whether the different social status and backgrounds or a tension between the donor group and beneficiary group receiving the budget. But one thing was clear that it did not seem to be 'the literacy circle' where everyone could speak equally in the papers of Freire, nor in any document from *ReFLECT*. It can be guessable that the tension might be one of the limitations of realization of the theory of Freire since the power inequality between teacher-learner relationship cannot be covered easily.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of the Study

Today, literacy education is not as popular as primary education or vocational education all over the world. But still, about 800 million people in the world remain illiterate, and two-thirds of them are women. Literacy education is not only about people who cannot read and write, but also from the perspective of the emancipation of women who are structurally discriminated and excluded (Tagoe, 2008). From this point of view, much attention is paid to the critical literacy education presented by the Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire in the 1970s. Critical literacy education does not only reach the ability to read and write to the illiterate, but also to have the ability to critically read the world in which they are in. As well as providing to empower of people to change the unequal and oppressive environment surrounding them.

In this context, this study focused on women 's experience and empowerment change through the case of *ReFLECT* program in a village in Nepal and tried to find out how the critical literacy education are practiced in the field. Also, it tried to understand the meaning of empowerment and change of women who participated in *ReFLECT* program in the village B. Below are the summary of this research.

The first research question was 'What features and theoretical orgin does the ReFELCT program has?'. Critical literacy education

introduced by Freire aims at conscientization of learners through literacy learning. It has purpose of social transformation through the the class based on dialogue, cooperation and communication, and as well as the conscientization of learners within the equal relationship of instructor and learner.

How does the *ReFLECT* program work? First, the class was conducted in the form of dialogue and discussion, and also created various visual materials such as graphs and maps. It also appeared that there were topics on which participants could critically view reality, including women's rights. Those facts correspond to what AAD and Freire stated. However, there were some points that differed from the theories.

The hierarchy was clearly seen between the AAN and the HNN's staff, who was mostly facilitator, and learners. Facilitator plays very important role in critical literacy education. The class processed having discussions, but it was found that the topics were selected by the facilitators and proceeded in the classroom rather than finding and extracting in the classroom.

In addition, critical literacy focuses on learner 's conscientization and change of perception, but it does not mean less importance on literacy itself. The difference between critical literacy and civic education is that the process of consceintization takes place in the course of learning literacy, the ability to read and write. However, the program implemented in village B showed that it seemed that the program did not contribute that much to improve literacy. Literacy has stopped at the level of 'knowing how to write one's own name', and there was no further class or advancement.

On the other hand, there was a very positive change in collective action and solidarity through critical literacy. Women in the program

continued to maintain the 'Women's group' even after the *ReFLECT* program was over, dealing with the issues of the public sphere of the village community beyond the individual matters. They shared information and discussed on such as forest management, road renovation, and government support, and also try to support the active participation of women into public venue. It is believed that this is well acting as the role of 'circle' in critical literacy and seemed to be implemented and applied in the right way in the field.

Next, the second research question was about the learning of the women who participated in the *ReFLECT* program in village B. As a result of analyzing qualitative analysis methods introduced by Strauss & Corbin (1998), women experienced changes such as 'getting self-confidence', 'our voice out', 'improving the quality of life'. Research participants are challenging the social structure of Nepal, which is a male-centered society, through collective action and solidarity, rather than individual power, to express their opinions. It is also observed that the women's meeting and the power of women are gradually expanding through the repeated success experiences with collective action. The participants also testified that the benefits that were previously unavailable due to lack of information could be enjoyed through the activation of women's groups and the expansion of political power.

In addition, as mentioned above, the literacy of women is also improved. Women who did not know 'even how to hold a pencil' now became to the level of 'being able to write their own names', and some women showed their desire to continue to learn literacy. Their self-esteem has improved greatly as well.

According to the last research question, the results of exploring how women's experiences in *ReFLECT* programs affect empowerment can be explained as follows. Changes such as 'self-confidence', 'our voice out', 'improving the quality of life', and 'acquiring new things' were seen as 'Low literacy', 'Change of personal life', and 'Change in the community'.

Women seemed to have gained political empowerment through repeated success experiences, which inspired their voices. Stromquist (2002) viewed political empowerment as the power to recognize inequality and to organize and mobilize collective action. From this point of view, it can be said that women have been able to gain political power out of gendered-oppression that were pressing them down. It is also seen that women who were 'busy to hide before strangers' in the past, but now have a strong sense of self-esteem and are proud of their activities, which can be said they have improved their psychological empowerment.

On the other hand, women are not the only ones who have experienced change. The women's family, especially husband and the whole community are also experiencing great changes. In particular, men in the village naturally recognize the growing role of women in the area of public decision-making. This was very different from previous attitudes of husbands of the participant who were against participating in the *ReFLECT* program while ignoring women. The changes in villagers and men seem to have been caused by the fact that women created visible and political results that helped the village in the public sphere, for instance road renovation, and witnessed the process of increasing recognition and exercise of rights as citizens of the country.

However, it is worth noting that, despite improvements in

women's empowerment, labor in household, such as house chore and caring work, is still perceived as women's responsibility. This shows that some of the knowledge empowerment, which is the ability to critically recognize the unevenly structured reality, has not improved (Lee, 2012; Stromquist, 2002).

At the same time, questions remain about improving literacy. The majority of the women who participated in the program stayed at the level of literacy at the 'writing their own name'. This seems to be only half success of critical literacy which has two main pillars, empowerment and literacy acquisition.

6.2. Significant and Limitation of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the implementation of critical literacy education through *ReFLECT* program, which actualizes the theory of critical literacy, and to try to explore the women's experiences in the process with qualitative methodology.

However, limit of time and expenditure disrupted to collect more research materials to discover the reality of ReFLECT program. As abovementioned from chapter 4, the researcher could not observe the program from the beginning and also could not attend the literacy class. As one of the research question was to identify the implementation of the process of ReFLECT in field, this paper has its limitations here.

Language is also a very big constraint. It is very important that qualitative research reveals the expressions of the lives of research participants as itself (van Manen, 1990). This study was complete with languages mixture and transferring. The interview was proceed in Nepali and translated into Korean. The reason Korean interpreter was

invited was that the researcher wanted to approach the shared experiences revealed by the research participants risking as little gap of language as possible thus, chose to use Korean which is the researcher's mother tongue. However, since this study should be published in English, the researcher had to take another translation from Korean into English. In the process, she looked again and again the raw data several times, worried that the vivid testimony of the participants would be undermined. However, the researcher spent time with the participants in the field, had little glimpse of their lives, and tried to open their hearts. Also she did her best to bring the stories about their experiences and changes in writing.

Nevertheless, the implications of this study are as follows. First, this study contributes to figure out the critical literacy with various perspectives using the analysis method of grounded theory by Strauss & Corbin (1998). Through the actual materials collected in the field, new approaches and empirical lessons for critical literacy were obtained. This research has looked at how the programs and theories of Action Aid, including Freire, are implemented in the reality, and what parts should be involved for development.

Secondly, this paper reconsidered the importance of literacy education. According to UNESCO (2006), international attention and financial investment in literacy continue to decline. As we have seen from above, literacy education is not a necessary skill to read and write, but a necessary foundation for improving the quality of life and empowerment of human beings. In particular, critical literacy can provide the possibility of escaping the oppressive structure of the marginalized such as women or ethnic minorities who are oppressed socially and culturally. This study provided an opportunity to

reconsider the importance of literacy education through the opinions and experiences of vivid people in Nepal.

As a beginner researcher, it was a difficult to produce a paper through field research. First of all, the author of this study has asked herself several times whether or not 'I am manipulating or tearing the stories of the participants who were willing open their lives to this small foreigner', because of my personal desire to finish my degree. Through this process, the researcher learned that the way to contribute as a researcher to a huge academic world is to deliver and reveal vividly and meaningfully about the experiences of the ladies who joyfully shared with me, and to write the thesis with ethical conscience as a researcher.

The professor who advised on this paper said, "Even if it looks small, there is a society in it." B village that the researcher countered was not very big towns. But she witnessed the changes happening in it are gigantic. The women were speaking out. They were proud of the change in their lives. They had the belief that women could change the society as better one if they joined together in solidarity. This research attempted to systematically reveal the wonderful changes through the academic framework. This paper is a study to explore the personal and social transformations that can be seen when we see as meaningful, like the confession of a poet, 'It is beautiful when you see with a close look.'

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국문초록

본 연구의 목적은 비판적 문해교육의 실천인 리플렉트 프로그램에 참여한 여성들의 경험을 통해 문해교육과 여성들의 임파워먼트를 둘러싼 다양한 관계 요인들이 어떠한 방식으로 연관되는가를 포착하는데에 있다. 이를 위해 ‘리플렉트 프로그램에 참여하는 여성들의 경험은 무엇이며, 이 경험들은 여성들의 임파워먼트 변화와 어떻게 연결되는가?’ 라는 연구 질문을 가지고 네팔의 고다와리 지역에 소재한 B마을을 대상으로 단일사례 및 현장 연구를 실시하였다. 구체적으로 분석에는 B 마을에서 리플렉트 프로그램에 참여했던 여성들과의 인터뷰 자료, 리플렉트 수업의 후속인 여성 모임에의 참여관찰 자료, 네팔 교육부 및 국제기구 등의 보고서와 같은 2차 자료가 활용되었으며, 이를 바탕으로 비판적 문해교육에 참여하는 여성들의 경험을 드러내고, 이들의 경험이 어떠한 관계요인들을 통해 임파워먼트에 관여하는지 이해하고자 하였다.

연구자는 네팔 현장에 머물면서 포커스 그룹 면담(Focus Group Interview)를 통해 면담 자료 등을 수집하였다. 또한 수집된 자료는 상징적 상호작용에 입각하여 개인의 경험과 그러한 경험을 형성하는 상호작용과 과정을 탐색하는데 적합한 질적연구방법을 고민하였다. 그 결과, Strauss & Corbin(1998)의 질적자료 분석 방법론에 따라 개방코딩, 축코딩의 과정을 거쳐 분석되었으며, 이를 바탕으로 네팔 리플렉트 프로그램 참여 여성들의 경험과 임파워먼트의 패러타임 모형을 만들 수 있었다.

연구 결과, B 마을에서 진행된 리플렉트 프로그램에 참여한 여성들이 경험한 현상은 ‘문해수업참여’, ‘자신감의 향상’, ‘우리 목소리의 고취’, ‘삶의 질 향상’, ‘새로운 것의 습득’으로 나타났다. 여성들은 공통적으로 리플렉트 참여 이전보다 자신들의 삶에 자신감과 공적인 영역에서의 인정을 누릴 수 있게 되었다고 증언하였다. 여성들은 리플렉트 프로그램을 통해 문해수업에 참여하였고, 수업에서 배운 내용들과 토론을 통해 자신들의 목소리를 내는 것이 가능해졌다고 했다. 가정

안에서의 자신감 뿐 아니라, 정부 기관을 대상으로 하는 공적 영역에서의 의견 표출도 가능해진 것이다. 여성들은 리플렉트를 통해 새로운 정보와 지식들을 습득하고, 이것은 그들의 직접적인 삶의 질 향상으로 이어졌다. 이전에 지식이 없어 누릴 수 없었던 권리 등을 되찾은 것이다.

이것을 가능하게 하는 인과적 조건으로는 ‘배움에의 열망’, ‘공적 영역의 인정’, ‘변화의 기대’, ‘경제적 유인’ 등의 조건이 작용하였다. 리플렉트 프로그램에 참여한 여성들은 주민등록증 발급 사업 등을 통해 자신들의 존재가 नेपाल 시민으로서 인정 받는 것이 얼마나 중요한 일인지를 경험하며, 더 나은 삶에 대한 기대와 배움에의 열망을 통해 프로그램에 참여하게 되었다.

여성들의 현상에 관여하는 맥락적 조건으로는 ‘공동체성’, ‘가사노동과 돌봄노동에 대한 분절화 된 인식’, ‘공여자와 수혜자의 위계’가 발견되었다. नेपाल B마을에서 여성들이 적극적으로 리플렉트에 참여하고 계속해서 후속 모임을 이어갈 수 있었던 것은 강력한 공동체성 때문이었다. 이 공동체성은 정보의 공유에도 영향을 미쳐 보다 많은 여성들의 참여를 이끌었으며, 다수의 성공 경험을 함께 나누어 다음 활동에 힘을 실어주는 선순환을 이끌었다. 한편, 여성들의 정치적 임파워먼트와 변화에도 불구하고 여전히 가정 내 무보수 노동에 대한 인식은 성(性)분절화 되어있는 것으로 나타났다. 이러한 맥락은 여성들이 리플렉트에 참여하기 위해서 더 많은 가사노동을 담당해야 하며, 마을의 남성들 역시 비판적 문해교육의 의미를 더 좋은 ‘아내’ 혹은 ‘엄마’로서의 역할을 기대하는 것으로 전락시켰다. 세 번째로, नेपाल 사회가 가지고 있는 사회적 위계관계가 리플렉트 프로그램 안에서도 작용하는 것으로 나타났다. 비판적 문해교육의 실천인 리플렉트는 교수자와 학습자가 평등한 권력 관계 속에서 대화를 통해 사회에 대한 비판적 의식을 고취해가는데 의미가 있다. 그러나 실제 현장에서는 수업을 진행하는 촉진자(facilitator), 시행기관인 ActionAid Nepal과 HomeNet Nepal의 직원들과 학습자인 연구참여자들 사이의 위계와 사회적 긴장이 발견되었다. 연구참여자들은 직원들이 동석하지 않은 자리에서 보다 활발한 토론과 솔직

한 답변을 주는 모습을 보였다.

리플렉트 프로그램에 참여한 여성들과 그들을 둘러싼 사회 간의 상호작용은 긍정적인 상호작용과 갈등의 상호작용으로 구분하여 분석하였다. 긍정적인 상호작용은 ‘집단행동’, ‘성공경험’, ‘이익’으로 범주화 되었다. 여성들의 성공경험은 마을 전체의 변화에 영향을 주었다. 리플렉트 모임을 무시하거나 반대하던 마을 사람들도 여성들의 정치적 임파워먼트를 통해 마을의 도로 보수, 삼림 관리 등이 긍정적인 이익을 얻게 되면서 모임에 대한 인식이 변화하고, 여성들을 존중하게 되었다. 또한 여성들은 ‘혼자서는 할 수 없지만, 함께하면 가능하다’는 집단행동의 힘에 대해 매우 강력한 신념을 보였다. 이는 비판적 문해교육이 지향하는 의식화를 통한 집단 행동으로의 연결과 상응하는 부분으로 볼 수 있다. 한편, 여전히 마을에서는 리플렉트 후속인 여성 모임을 무시하거나 비협조하는 사람들도 있었다. 여성들은 이러한 반대에 대해 ‘이익’이라는 전략을 취하여 실제적인 마을의 발전에 기여하는 경험들을 반복하여 보여주었다.

프로그램에 참여한 여성들은 결과적으로 ‘문해력의 습득’, ‘개인적 삶의 변화’, ‘공동체의 변화’를 경험하였다. 이를 Stromquist(2002)의 임파워먼트 정의 및 분류에 따라 분석하였다. Stroquist(2002)는 프레이리의 의식화를 기반으로 여성들의 임파워먼트를 연구하였다. 연구참여자들은 자신들을 둘러싼 권력의 불평등을 인식하고 집단행동을 조직하고 동원할 수 있는 정치적 임파워먼트를 형성하였고, 자신들의 존재와 활동을 자랑스럽게 여기는 존재로서, 심리적 임파워먼트를 향상한 것으로 보였다.

그러나 문해력 향상과 관련해서는 일말의 발전은 있었으나, 비판적 문해교육에서 주장하는 수준까지는 도달하지 못하였다. 비판적 문해교육은 의식화 교육이나 인문학 교육과는 현저히 구분되는 ‘문해교육’이다. 프로그램에 참여하는 학습자는 의식화 뿐 아니라 글을 읽고 쓸 수 있는 능력을 함양할 수 있어야 할 것이다. 또한 여성들의 가사 내 노동의 불평등함을 인식하지 못하는 것으로 나타났다. 이는 여성들의 변화에

도 불구하고 남성과 마을 공동체의 문화적 인식이 여성들의 위치 및 권력변화에 발맞추지 못하는 지체 현상으로 해석될 수 있다. 여성들의 임파워먼트가 남성을 포함한 공동체의 임파워먼트까지 이어지지 못한 한계로도 볼 수 있다. 마지막으로 프레이리의 이론과 리플렉트 프로그램에 따르면 리플렉트 문해교육은 촉진자와 학습자 간의 위계가 없는, 모두가 이야기할 수 있는 안전한 배움의 공간이 되어야 하지만 B마을의 여성들과 리플렉스 수행기관 직원들 사이에서는 불평등한 권력의 위계 관계를 관찰할 수 있었다. 이는 마을 여성들과 직원들이 공여자와 수혜자의 관계를 벗어나지 못하였음을 보여주며, 리플렉트 문해 그룹이 상호 호혜적인 관계를 만들어내지 못해 리플렉트 이론이 실제 현장의 한계에 부딪힌 것으로 볼 수 있다.

주요어: 비판적 문해, 여성 임파워먼트, 리플렉트 프로그램

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