



## **Indigenous Knowledge Responsive Education Policies for Marginalized Dalit Communities**

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### **Abstract**

Nepali society inhabited with distinct culture, identity, ideology, knowledge, skill and practice. Most of valuable cultural, technological and caste based knowledge and skill are related to Dalit communities that have been adapting and practicing from generation to generation, called indigenous and cultural knowledge. These knowledge are in disappearing stage because of the policy provision. The aims of this study to analyze the indigenous knowledge responsive policies for marginalized Dalit communities. I applied qualitative research design with systematic review of policy documents as thematic review process and reviewed data analyzed by the use of thematic analysis method as interpretive and analytical way. The study found that few issues are endorsed in the constitution, education policies and other supportive program to support the indigenous knowledge and skills of the marginalized communities however, these are not more specific and sufficient to preserve and promote the indigenous knowledge of Dalit. These are seemed being only for popularity, even to endorse the hidden interest of the development partners. Unfortunately, in the context of Nepal, every policy is limited in the formal documents for mass popularity and donorfare. This study will motivate the further researcher and academia to identify the indigenous knowledge, art and skills of Dalit communities and its importance of preserving. It will also for policy maker to integrating the local and cultural knowledge into present education policies and formal curricula.

**Keywords:** Indigenous knowledge, traditional knowledge, skill, policy, marginalized community

### **Introduction**

Nepal is a diversified country containing with racial, religious, social, cultural, lingual, political and ethnic background as what Toni Hagen (1961:59) calls "the ethnic turn-table of Asia" (Parajuli, 2012; Nepali, 2007; Constitution of Nepal, 2015). They have distinct culture, identity, ideology, charter, knowledge, skill and practice. They have been adapting and practicing different occupation, indigenous or cultural knowledge and identity based on their caste, race, tradition for

their livelihood where Brahman are related to pray or teaching, Kshatriya to security, Vaishya to business and agriculture, and Shudra (now is called Dalit) to different serviceable work of higher caste (Luintel, 2018; Acharya, 1986, 2010; Kotani, 1999 & Khanna, 2009). Thus, it argues that the caste and occupation were interrelated for centuries. Historically, the caste promoted to division of work or occupation and occupation is represented to caste, and categorizing people into different groups based on occupation and birth. (Kafle, 2024). The caste system creates an occupational injustice (Shetty et al., 2022) and primarily leads to social stratification and certain occupation, tradition and identity (Sonowal, 2020). Therefore, occupations were very commonly related with casteism.

The indigenous and cultural knowledge is a social and cultural capital of such communities however, it had been more popularly developed within Dalit communities like Lohar makes iron instruments, Kami are blacksmith, Sunar are goldsmith, Sarki are cobbler, and Damai are in tailoring and musician (Nepali, 2018; Koirala, 1996), Kumal make soil pot, Badi make musical instruments, smoking pot, fishing net etc. (Charmakar, 2021). Although, every cultural group has own knowledge and skill that were practicing since over centuries that called indigenous, traditional and cultural knowledge which are directly associated with culture and traditions of the people and it is stored in peoples' memories and activities (Lama, 2021). It is also known as local, folk, systematic and scientific knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences (Ocholla, 2007; Warren, 1987; Rajasekaran, 1993; Haverkort, 1991; Larka, 2021; Godfrey & Siraje, 2019). Indigenous knowledge is integral to cultural values, resources management practices of local people, the interaction of inhabitants with an organism of their environment, indigenous rituals, and spirituality for better survival (United Nation Education, Scientific Cooperative Organization {UNESCO}, n.d.). It is assumed that traditional knowledge and practices lie at the heart of a community's culture and identity.

Therefore, such IK and skill of Dalit communities need to protect through education policies and restructure of existing curriculum of the state because education is considered a critical foundation and important tools for socio-economic and cultural development, modernization of traditional technology, national identity and occupational gains (UNESCO, 2009, 2016). Education is also a paramount for respect of indigenous cultures, languages, traditions, and traditional knowledge (Lukong, 2016). But our formal curriculum enacted and rarely reflects ethnic knowledge and indigenous ways of knowing (Champange, 2009; Mamung, et al., 2022; Dahal et al., 2002). Indigenous knowledge is often neglected in the formal education system with obstacles to its introduction into the school environment (Silva et al., 2024). The challenge for universities is to orient their curriculum towards IK management (Magara, 2015). Thus, all traditional knowledge, skill and technology should be included in education policies for their preservation and promotion. Indigenous knowledge of every ethnic group has been denied and destroyed for centuries through the the western and modern education system (Stavenhagen, 2015). Consequently, formal education does not reflect distinctive cultures and knowledge systems of indigenous people (UNESCO, 2010). Skinner and Holland (2009) claims that "school did not only constitute a place for reading textbook and listening of teacher lecture, they constituted different sorts of relation and new identities" (p. 315). On the other hand, Malik (1979) stated that occupational prestige is highly correlated with income derived from occupation. The improved educational and occupational status

of schedule caste has not received adequate recognition in society. They feel that they were unable to earn social status because of their lower social origin and lower caste then they wanted to escape from their traditional caste based occupation. To raise their social status, they motivated to change their occupation and living standard. As a result, nowadays, their ethnic knowledge is continuously declining because of the high motivation of youths towards modern and scientific knowledge with an assumption of a utilitarian perspective (Niure, 2019).

From the above discussion, the IK and skill were more invaluable long life experiences of the human civilization, our identity, local engineering practice and cultural heritage as intergenerational transformation. Traditional knowledge offers valuable insights into community resilience, self-sufficiency, and holistic well-being (Seerangan & Ravi, 2023). Unfortunately, at present such indigenous knowledge and identity of every community has been disappearing gradually due to the dominant educational system, often prioritizes standardized curricula, western knowledge framework and culture, and lack of documentation (Seerangan & Ravi, 2023). The main problem in loss of our cultural knowledge by developing modern technology and western mindset where is given more focus on imported knowledge and culture or artificial technology rather than original. The other problem is of disappearing IK, accepting it as intellectual property and ownership of indigenous knowledge (Everitt 1994; Mead 1995; Abdullah & Stringer 1997). Moreover, the Dalit community is more affecting from this problem that was supporting their daily livelihood. Thus, to solve this problem, it is necessary to preserve and promote indigenous and cultural knowledge of marginalized Dalit communities by integrating into educational policies and contemporary curriculum for recognizing their value and promote intergenerational learning and to link with new technology and way of daily livelihood (Adhikary et al., 2024). On the other hand, there should be change on perception and understanding on traditional and/or cultural knowledge, skill and art. Therefore, this study will try to explore the education policies that integrating or not indigenous knowledge and skill of marginalized Dalit communities.

### **Conceptualizing the Indigenous, Cultural and Traditional Knowledge**

There we found some similarities and differences between IK and TK however, from literature as much as common knowledge, skill, meaning, understanding and common characteristics among them. According to Maden & et al. (2009), IK and TK some sense similarity and distinctively different and on the other, IK is often referred as TK. Where, IK refers to the point of origin and incorporate with local while TK may not be of local origin or TK is usually collective knowledge. TK does not represent not only old knowledge; it may be recently established knowledge which is based on existing knowledge. However, there are some difference among these knowledge but these are same practices, experiences, art, knowledge and skills within local communities. Thus, knowledge indigenous and traditional accumulated by ethnic communities about their habitat for centuries.

Indigenous knowledge is stored in peoples' memories and activities that is known as local knowledge, cultural and folk knowledge acquired by local people (Ocholla, 2007; Warren, 1987; Rajasekaran, 1993; Lama, 2021; Larka, 2021). TK, IK, LK and CK generally refer to knowledge systems embedded in the cultural traditions of regional, indigenous, or local communities has been orally passed for generations from person to person (Warren, 1991; Godfrey & Siraje, 2019). It is

assumed that traditional knowledge lies at the heart of a community's culture and identity and in the same perspective, IK and CK are both cultural knowledge and developed over time based on experience, often tested over long period of use, adopted to local culture and environment (Larka, 2021). Consequently, such knowledge and practice are their indigenous knowledge that were transmitted for years. Based on above literature my understanding toward IK, TK and CK are not so distinct in nature still, thought that IK can accommodate and represents the all knowledge. Therefore, I used the term 'indigenous knowledge to explore the indigenous knowledge responsive education policy for marginalized Dalit community.

### **Conceptualizing the Marginalized Dalit Community**

Generally, we supposed that the marginalized community is an oppressed, backward and deprived community from many more opportunities. Where, Dalit religiously, culturally, educationally, politically and economically oppressed, socially backward and most deprived and vulnerable social group as well as social justice in the society (Koirala, 1996; Kisan, 2009, p. 46; Tiwary, 2007; Bishwakarma, 2018; Chaurasiya et al., 2019). So, Dalit, politically coined word used to refer to a socially backward community and suffer from social hate since traditionally (Borale, 1980). For Dalit, specific terms use such as water polluting, untouchables, low caste, ignored, oppressed, exploited, poor, marginalized, disadvantaged, minorities, excluded (Bhattachan & Sunar, 2009). Thus, it is argued that Dalit lies in marginalized community. But, within marginalized community does not only lies Dalit community and also lies other communities (Madhesi, Janajati, Adivasi, Muslim and other ethnic minorities) which belong to marginalized characteristics. In this context, it is argued that Dalit also belong to backward and marginalized community so I used the word 'marginalized Dalit community' in my study.

### **Research Problem**

Indigenous knowledge is taken as an intangible heritage of numerous societies around the globe (UNESCO, 2010). IK is a social capital, intellectual property and milestone for the survival of the community as well as marginalized poor community that reflects the community's deep connection to their heritage, environment, and sustainable practices (Seerangan & Ravi, 2023; Adhikary et al., 2024; Senanayake, 2006). Every community had been adapting various indigenous knowledge that some are explored and some are still waiting for exploring. But, now, these types of knowledge have been gradually disappearing because of the lower social prestige, low value in father's occupation, high motivation of youths towards modern and scientific knowledge and difficulty in competing with the open market (Parajuli, 2012; Turin, 2014) and ownership toward Ik as intellectual property (Everitt 1994; Mead 1995; Abdullah & Stringer 1997). On the other hand, the modern technology and westernization replaced indigenous knowledge and culture (Niure, 2019; Charmakar, 2024) of Dalit. Likewise, they could not update and protect their knowledge and culture in one hand and other hand the government policy could not promote and conserve their culture, identity and knowledge (Lukong, 2016). Thus, this is a main issue of exploring educational policy for identifying, protecting and conserving the Dalit's IK and practice that motivated me to study on this issue.

The other problem, because of the giving low value and caste based discrimination, they demotivated toward their local cultural occupation, then shifted their profession, changed their role and norms for their survival. It has been a problematic issue for new generation to understand, recognize and appreciate the IK by developing the colonized mindset. As we supposed education is a backbone for all round of personal development and progress of society (Kour et al., 2025), fundamental right and needs (Constitution of Nepal, 2015), important tools of socio-cultural development of such ethnic group (Devendra, 2001), and main driving force of empowerment and leading in policy formulation (UNESCO, 2009; 2016). National education system and policies should be more responsible to protect and promote the indigenous knowledge of such communities. However, the education policies and formal curricula (school level and higher level) rarely reflect the ethnic knowledge (Champange, 2009). Unfortunately, in the Nepalese context, is more focused in imported policies, curricula, knowledge, culture and technology rather than in formulating the policies to promote own culture, identity, knowledge, skill, art and civilization. As a result, this is other problem of my research to explore the policies are addressing or not of marginalized Dalit communities with formal education system and curricula.

In the Nepalese context, there is a problem in formulating the policies to promote own culture, knowledge, skill, art and civilization. The question can be raised that what policies are formation? IK responsive policies are integrating or not within formal education. Are they sufficient for promoting IK and skill? But when reviewed literature there is a big gap in previous study. My study mainly centralized to explore the policy provision about indigenous knowledge for marginalized Dalit community and not in implementation practice for now.

### **Research Objective**

1. To explain the indigenous knowledge responsive education policies for marginalized Dalit community.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the policies developed for addressing the indigenous knowledge and skill of marginalized Dalit community?

### **Method**

This study was based on qualitative research design with systematic thematic review method of policy documents addressing indigenous knowledge and skill of marginalized Dalit communities. It was not covered the whole sector of the government policies of Nepal so it only delimited to indigenous knowledge responsive policies for marginalized Dalit communities. The documents reviewed as secondary data source in which national fifth year plans of Nepal, reports of education commission, national education policies, educational act, regulation, constitution of Nepal, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), School Education Reform Project (SERP), School Education Sector Plan (SESP), Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), National Curriculum Framework and other related policies to indigenous knowledge and skill.

First of all, I collected above documents through google scholar, website, web link of the authorized organization and reviewed thoroughly as I needed. Essential data was received from thematic review and content analysis then data was transcribed, coding and theme making as thematic model as their nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride & Stirling, 2001). These themes interpreted and analyzed in qualitative and hermeneutic interpretation way (Creswell, 2012; Myers & Avison, 2002)). Furthermore, to maintain its validity and quality standard triangulated with other data sources like previous research papers and other related literatures, peer debriefing and expert review method was used. Likewise, during the document analysis, editing, coding and analysis was considering essential ethical issues by using the authorized sources and documents.

### **Result and Discussion**

After reviewing the policies, artifacts launching by government and other authorities in different historical time-period that related to indigenous or cultural knowledge of marginalized Dalit communities is categorized in the distinct theme based on their nature. These themes are analyzed in detail as interpretive way.

#### ***Indigenous Knowledge Related Policies Before Democracy***

Before establishment of democracy, there was lack of formal education system and policies to endorse the indigenous knowledge and cultural knowledge of such ethnicity. Existing government launched some policies to govern state and to address the essential need of the citizens. Thus, in that period, the formal education institutions were not developed formally however, as per the need of the state specific policies and programs had been launching. The concept of indigenous knowledge was developed from Vedic era as an ethno-science that was indigenized spiritually, traditionally and culturally. The main aim of Gurukul education is to develop an ideal, original and cultural knowledge. Gurukul education is a discipline. At present, the words, learning by doing and child-friendly education that was focused in action, use of local material and interest based skill and knowledge (Adhikari, 2023). Farmers used forest plants and herbs to treat their animals even themselves as natural medicine and they had developed own natural treatment system, hunting and agricultural system and instruments, ethno-botany and ecological knowledge, navigation, ethno-astronomy (Godfrey & Siraje, 2019). They had own traditional customs, ornaments, cooking, decoration, dresses making and housekeeping knowledge, life story, songs, language and communication system (Rai, 2021 & Oguamanam, 2019). Thus, the concept of indigenous knowledge was developed in Vedic period knowingly or unknowingly which has been practicing informally and orally at present postmodern era. Whatever, there was no caste hierarchy as a formal structure in the Vedic period.

The Lichhavi period was considered as a period of renaissance in Nepalese arts, crafts, architecture, education and culture as well as singing and dancing. It is called a golden age in the history of Nepal where medical science, religious scriptures were also highly developed during this period (Shrestha & Singh, 1972). The education system was based on Gurukul and monasteries system where priests and monks imparted skills and values in various disciplines usually to Brahmins or the sons of the ruling elite (Subramanian, 2010). The main objective of education was to produce ideal citizen and human resource (Dhamala, 2022). The education was an optional, non-

formal and given more focus on function of state, however it is supposed a milestone period of education and indigenous knowledge, skill and occupation.

Likewise, Malla period was also a golden time for art, architectural wonders and cultural heritage that were totally dominant in Hindu and Buddhist religious philosophies which are reflected by various kinds of painting images, temples, monasteries, old squares, and other monuments (Parajuli, 2019). In that time who were illiterate or half literate were to act as goldsmiths, carpenters, masons and other artisans. Besides it, "men of different castes gained mastery over, skill, and efficiency in their respective jobs, culminating in the production of masterpieces of different arts and architecture" (Shrestha & Singh, 1972, pp. 25-26). King Jayasthiti Malla legalized caste hierarchy based on occupation and believed in education as preparation for life ((Kafle, 2021; Boker, 1988; Lama et al., 2019; Upreti, 2010, Ghimire, n.d.; Sharma, 1990). Therefore, indigenous knowledge and skill was specified on the different caste groups. After then, the caste based occupation was legalized in Nepali context however every ethnic group of Nepal were practicing their cultural and local knowledge for centuries. Most of cultural knowledge, skill and practice are related to Dalit communities. But, there is main problem of their indigenous, local or cultural knowledge of protection and transformation as a written document.

During the unification process of Nepal by King Prithivi Narayan Shah gave little attention to education, art and architecture (Bhandari, 2021). The Ranas were against imparting education to the mass. After rise of Rana regime by Jung Bahadur Ran opened Durbar School, originally accessible for the Ranas and the elites. Later, Deb Shamsher and Chandra Shamsher opened Bhasha Pathsala and Shrestha Pathsala respectively, to produce clerks for official work (Bhandari, 2021). "Mohan Shamsher addressed the right of universal education, creation of adult education centers as called basic training centers to provide different life skills" (Sharma, 1990, p. 6). In sum, that period created a big gap for indigenous knowledge creating, sharing, continuing and promoting. In that period, not only marginalized Dalit community, all people out of Rana family deprived from formal education and other human right. Yet Dalit communities were hesitated due to their caste based occupation, job and behavior that fertilized to disappear their generational caste based knowledge and skill. After, Rana regime dethroned, the democratic government launched somewhat different plan, and programs that included indigenous knowledge oriented policies.

### ***Indigenous Knowledge in Fifth Year Plan***

After establishment of democracy, the government developed a policy of fifth year plan consisting the overall plan of the state. In that spirit, the first plan was prepared in 2013 that focused on economic development. The second, third and fourth plan had focused in economic development, productivity, social justice, employment, reduce social discrimination and social disparities (National Planning Commission of Nepal {NPC}, 1956-1961; 1962-1965; 1965-1970 & 1970-1975). Fifth plan (NPC, 1975-1980) for the first time, addressed the problem of poverty and provisioned to reduce poverty of marginalized communities by the income generational activities. Sixth and seventh plan focused on increase small industry and fulfill the basic need of low income rural people (NPC, 1980-1985 & 1985-1990). Eight plan for the first time, the policy adapted to develop science and technology, knowledge and technical skills by preserving and promoting the

glorious national culture, arts, music, national languages, integration of communities and groups that have lagged behind in society (NPC, 1992-1997). These policies seem back to response the special Dalit communities' knowledge and skill but in some context are able to address the voice of rural and backward communities.

Ninth and tenth plan focused economically and socially backward communities like laborers, Dalits, Adibasi, Janajatis and Madhesi to empower for the protecting and promoting such indigenous technologies. It provisioned to preserve and conserve language, literature, arts and culture of various castes and ethnic tribes (NPC, 1997-2002 & 2002-2007). On the other, eleventh and twelfth plan focused need based and entrepreneurship program for Dalit and other disadvantage groups (NPC, 2007-2010 & 2010-2013). Thirteenth plan has focused on preservation, promotion, modernization and industrialization of traditional skill and occupation (hand craft, small cottage, fishing, hunting etc.) of Dalit, janajati, Madhesi, Muslim, Badi and other marginalized communities (NPC, 2013-2016).

Accordingly, fourteenth plan was positive to conserve and promote of traditional culture, occupation, knowledge, skill and modernization of traditional occupation for marginalized (NPC, 2016-2019). The national goal of the fifteenth plan was “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali” and focused on social justice, protection and promotion of socio-cultural diversities, entrepreneurship development, and preserving, modernizing and upgrading traditional and local knowledge, skills. Beside it student who are economically and socially backward and deprived from formal education and special program for marginalized and ethnic groups (Raute, Kusunda, Chepang, Rajbanshi, Chamar, Mushar, Badi, Raji, etc.) was other goal (NPC, 2019-2024). Likewise, sixteenth plan has focused on to modify the curriculum, conservation of traditional occupation, knowledge, skill, art of Dalit, learning and earning program (NPC, 2024-2029).

From the eye of the fifth year plan, we found indigenous knowledge responsive plans to protect and promote the indigenous knowledge of the backward communities. These plans somewhat are addressing the Dalit community. But, unfortunately, these plan and programs are only limited as a policy level. Few contents are incorporated within the plan but there seems a gap in programmatic step for promoting of indigenous knowledge of marginalized Dalit community. It is need to form permanent mechanism to explore what type of indigenous knowledge are in the Dalit communities, and how to conserve and protect? How to add modern technology? And how to link in the daily livelihood and what programs should be launched?

### ***Indigenous Knowledge Responsive Education Commission Report***

The first democratic government had formed a Nepal National Education Plan Commission (NNEPC) in the leadership of Saradar Rudra Raj Pande, to suggest government regarding education policies in the changing context. The commission accepted the diversity and decentralization character of the country for the first time. This policy recommended the free, vocational, practical and need based basic education. It disliked imported schemes and curriculum must be designed to address learning and earning program such as art, culture, music, dance, folklore, agriculture, carpentry, masonry, brick work, cloth making, dying, printing and other small-industry (NNEPC, 1954). All Round National Education Commission (1961) focused to technical and vocational education. The National Education System Plan (1971) had adopted



centralized system but focused on technical and vocational education, preserve, develop and propagate the national culture and arts of different ethnic groups. National Education Commission (1992) focused on different non-formal courses for those who are deprived of the class-room education, special education and training for the tribal and backward communities, geographically disadvantage groups, disabled children and orphans, and so as poly-technical and skill-based higher education and job-oriented adult literacy program. High Level National Education Commission (1998) focused on special and non-formal education, special treatment for socially, economically and geographically backward people.

Although, different education commission reports have advocated for technical and vocational education, adult literacy, short term skill development training and protecting art, culture, ethnic identity and local knowledge however, these courses and content are oriented by the western knowledge and philosophy not for promoting IK. Therefore, these report does not speak about how to identify, conserve and promote the IK and skill? How to link it with formal education system and school level curriculum? What types of specific plan and program should be developed to impart the program in practical field especially for marginalized community like Dalit?

### ***IK in Educational Supportive Program***

School Sector Development Plan (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2016–2023) had endorsed to promote life skills, income generation program, value-based education, socio-cultural diversity, school-based technical and vocational program and lifelong learning programs. The Second Higher Education Project (University Grants Commission, 1997–2002) implemented focusing on curriculum reform. Higher Education Reform Project (UGC, 2015-2020) had initiated to support the government's national programs in higher education focusing on equity, inclusion, entrepreneurship and self-employment. School Sector Reform Plan (MoEST, 2009-2015) had focused on lifelong, vocational and technical education, entrepreneurship skill, cultural knowledge and sustainable way of life. School Education Sector Plan (MoEST, 2022-2032) program has endorsed on identification, preservation, promotion, modernization and transfer of indigenous and traditional knowledge and skills of the local community especially marginalized community. It has also focused to improve, modify, and revise school-level curriculum to make more relevant, qualitative, inclusive, up-to-date knowledge and skill to link formal education and lifelong learning.

Sustainable Development Goal has focused in employment, entrepreneurship, to ensure equal access to education, vocational training for the vulnerable, disables and indigenous peoples. It has focused in sustainable lifestyles, promoting cultural diversity, livelihood skills, indigenous knowledge, promoting secondary education with specialization in science, music, sports, Ayurveda, herbs and provide local skill training through community learning centers (Government of Nepal, 2016-2030). Likewise, Millennium Development Goals (United Nation, 2000-2015) has focused in global information networks to address the local and indigenous content on the internet for globally exposers, universal access and connected to local knowledge with global knowledge system (Holmner, 2011). It has also focused to preserve the IK for future generations, respect for cultural heritage and diversity, to solve local problems, support infrastructure, eradicate poverty

and hunger, maintain local biodiversity, environmental sustainability (Smith 2010), and shifting cultivation technique.

Above mentioned national programs have more focused in school level education by addressing technical and vocational education, life skill and other entrepreneurship courses in their curriculum. On the other hand, international supportive programs like MDGs and SDGs are more motivated to sustainable development by promoting indigenous knowledge related programs. Such program has a lacking of identify the caste specific indigenous knowledge and skill, specific institutions for promoting and conserving the IK, implementing plan, program and methodology in the field level.

### ***IK in Constitution of Nepal***

The first legal policy, civil code legalized caste hierarchy and caste based occupation in the history of Nepal (Kafle, 2021; Boker, 1988; Lama et al., 2019; Upreti, 2010 & Ghimire, n.d.). But, the constitution of the kingdom of Nepal (1959) and the constitution of Nepal (1990) eliminated all type of discrimination based on caste, race, religion. They were liberal to preserve and promote culture, art, local technology, cultural civilization and heritage of Dalits, indigenous ethnic groups, Madhesi, and other ethnicity and modernizing the traditional knowledge, skills and practices.

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has focused on the right based education and protecting and promoting of the traditional knowledge, skill, practices and local technology of the Dalit, Adivasi Janajati and other backward and local communities and also focused to incorporate with new technology by providing necessary skill and resources. Furthermore, there is special provision for Dalits to pursue higher education in technical and professional subjects. On the other, it has secured the opportunity for conducting studies, research, archaeological excavations and dissemination, protecting and promoting traditional medicinal system such as the Ayurveda, natural medicines and homeopathy (pp., 11-23)

### ***IK in Educational Act and other policies***

Education act 1971 and regulation 2002 has endorsed to provide various life skill and income generation program to the adults through non-formal and literacy class and community learning centers. Likewise, free education to the Dalit, oppressed, indigenous and disadvantage groups. The national education policy 2019 (MOEST, 2019) has focused on the conservation and promotion of traditional knowledge, skill and also link with modern technology for national development. Likewise, it has also targeted to ensure the eastern philosophy, culture and tradition like natural Aaurveda, medicine, art, music, dance, song and drawing in the present curriculum. To provide the subsidy and loan for the technical and vocational education to the backward community has recommended.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy (2012) has focused for promoting the backward communities' previous knowledge and skill, financial support and also prepare curricula composing with occupational skill. Inclusive Education Policy (2017) has focused in need-based, life skill, employment and lifelong based education (Acharya & Sigdel, 2023). Non-formal education policy (2007) has ensured the occupational and vocational courses including skill training programs to be considered as non-credit courses in order to increase access to education

for socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged or marginalized community and has also focused in literacy skills and income generation program. National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2019) has focused on value-driven education consisting life skills, employment and competency-based curriculum. Likewise, it incorporates local content, art, culture, indigenous subjects and technical streams in secondary education to address the diversified communities' demand and need. Likewise, National Education Policy (2019) has purposed to prepare competitive, productive and technical manpower by accommodated with the traditional and modern technology. This policy has focused to eastern knowledge, philosophy, civilization and culture by which it assumed that it helps to promote and conservation of traditional knowledge, skill and technology.

As the constitution and other educational policies, are addressing the traditional knowledge, skill, art and culture, the education act and regulation seem silent to address these knowledge and skill clearly. All reviewed policies are touched the indigenous knowledge and practice of the backward, marginalized and local communities as a policy framework but could not specify them that what and how policies may be applicable for how? And how can be implemented? How to localize these types of indigenous or cultural knowledge? How to adjust the indigenous and cultural knowledge of Dalit and other every ethnic groups in the curriculum? Therefore, the main weakness of every policy is, not to be addressing the program as implementing process. The other permanent problem in Nepalese context is that every policies are prepared for only popularity maintain or to endorse the hidden interest of the development partners and not to be target groups. The traditional and cultural knowledge often transmitted orally and through hands-on practice (Shee, n.d.) that reflects ethno scientific knowledge and skills of the local communities that playing a critical role in sustaining livelihoods. The problem is that on the one hand the indigenous knowledge oriented policies cannot formulate academically for promoting and implementing the marginalized Dalit communities and on the other hand, the traditional knowledge and skill cannot modify, transfer and compete with the new innovative technology. Their traditional occupation could not fulfill their daily needs and/or hand to mouth problem, as a result, they compelled to avoid. At present, traditional knowledge has been facing significant threats. Thus, it is necessary to address in the educational policies and curriculum to implement it successfully.

### **Conclusion**

Traditional knowledge is the vast repository of skills, wisdom, and practices developed by marginalized Dalit communities since over generations that reflect their real culture, tradition, ethno knowledge, skill and innovation. Such practicing knowledge of the Dalit community is supposed as a community identity and sustaining livelihoods but the modern technology and modernization challenges their indigenous and cultural knowledge. Consequently, the preservation of traditional knowledge has become an urgent and vital endeavor, not only to safeguard cultural diversity but also to harness the invaluable insights and sustainability practices (Shee, n.d.). From the review of policies, I found indigenous knowledge and cultural related issues are addressed in the constitution of Nepal, fifth year plan, education commission report and other education related policies addressing backward, marginalized, oppressed, rural and poor communities. In few case I found that the indigenous and cultural knowledge of Dalit, Madheshi, Adibashi Janajati and

minority ethnic groups should be conserved and promoted by addressing in formal and informal education system. However, these are not more specific and sufficient to preserve and promote the indigenous knowledge of marginalized disadvantage groups like Dalit and these are seemed being only for popularity or even to endorse the hidden interest of the development partners. Unfortunately, in the context of Nepal, every policies are limited in the formal documents for mass popularity and donorfare. Thus, there is problem of specific program, curriculum and pedagogical practices in school and higher level education. The other problem is the implementation of local curriculum to conserve, protect and promote of every ethnic groups knowledge, skill, practices, culture, identity and daily way of life. Thus, the implementation practice seems very weak. There is necessary to promote the Dalit communities' traditional and cultural knowledge, skill, art and practices that had been a milestone for their livelihood.

### **Implication**

This study will help to explore and analyze indigenous knowledge and skill responsive policies for addressing the Dalit communities. It will motivate the further researcher and academia to identify the indigenous knowledge, cultural knowledge, art and skills of Dalit communities and its importance of preserving. This will support to researcher itself, to dig out the indigenous knowledge and practice, and such knowledge is integrating or not in our education policies. It will also for policy maker to integrating the local and cultural knowledge into present education policy and formal curriculum. It will also help the fulfill the research gap. It will contribute to the broader discourse on decolonizing education system by challenging dominant education policies, curriculum and pedagogical practices and advocating for culturally responsive policies.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

I hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study. The research was conducted independently, ensuring the objectivity and integrity of the findings. Data will be made available upon reasonable request.

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