



**MOTHER TONGUE INCLUSION IN CURRICULUM AND
EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS**

Govinda Prasad Paudel

Undersecretary, Language Commission

paudelg41@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to explore the local stakeholders' experiences on local curriculum designing and implementing process at basic level school. For this purpose, interpretive paradigms are applied as research methodology. Research fields and participants were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling from Bhaktapur municipality. The primary and secondary information was collected and information was interpreted through interpretive inquiry as a tool of qualitative approach. This research goes on to argue that Local Curriculum (LC) is constructed as local subject or mother tongue as a subject or means of instruction through the participation of local stakeholders such as head teacher, teacher, and parents as well. In this line, the Government of Nepal has made a policy for preparing and implementing LC in each school accordingly as their local need. In spite of it, a few schools are practicing LC in the classrooms. Thus, there is a gap between policy and practice of LC making and implementing practice in basic level school. Thus, this research explores the actual practice of designing and executing LC at the classroom.

Keywords: *Local Curriculum, Mother Tongue, Local Stakeholder, Curriculum Making*
Introduction

Local curriculum incorporates the local needs, local knowledge and skills as well as mother tongue in curriculum. As discussed by CDC (2010), locality-based curriculum should be brought into action or need to be implemented to meet the different needs and interests of students. To give space for localization in the curriculum, the provision of local need-based studies should be introduced. It gives children opportunities to foster the abilities latent in them in a modified way. Thus, it is necessary to develop the technical and managerial aspect of schools so that they could make and implement LC in the frame of national curriculum (CDC, 2010).

In the reference to localization of education, Taylor (2014) states that schools and local stakeholders are free to make and implement the curriculum as their local context. He further mentions that teachers might teach localized contents by connecting contents mentioned in curriculum to the local environment.

According to the education policy 2019, "The local level will develop, distribute, and implement local subject curricula as national curriculum framework. Legal arrangements will be made for the schools to implement the local curriculum effectively" (MOE, 2019, p. 55). Local curriculum Guideline, 2019 has provisioned process making of local curriculum (Local subject or mother tongue or both): Need Identification, determination of objectives, selection of contents, determination of class-

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wise learning outcome, selection of teaching materials, decision on teaching method and process, student evaluation and determination of time.

In this context, the local stakeholders' views and experiences are explored on practice of developing the local curriculum. Additionally, the genuine concerns include: How do curriculum designers design the local curriculum? How do they address the local content, mother tongue in the curriculum? How does local level include the local diversities in local curriculum? These all questions urged to explore new knowledge on the practice of making and implementing local curriculum through this research.

Literature review

Nepal is considered a multilingual country. More than 124 languages are spoken in Nepal (Census, 2078 BS). The work related to mother tongue education in Nepal has started from 2054 BS. So far, the Curriculum Development Centre has published curriculum and textbooks in mother tongue for school level in 33 different languages. Curriculum development is a systematic and planned process. According to National curriculum Framework (CDC, 2020), each local government is free to develop, implement and revise the local curriculum as local subject or mother tongue. Similarly, Curriculum Development Centre has developed the guidelines for local curriculum development in 2019 in order to implement the provision of local curriculum in school. Now, one curriculum of local subject or mother tongue or both is being implemented at class one to eight. At class one to five, five teaching and 160 annual working hours holds for teaching LC. Similarly, four teaching hours and 128 annual working hours are provided for teaching LC as local subject or mother tongue at grade four to eight. Local Curriculum making Guidelines have clearly mentioned the process of local curriculum development and implementation (CDC, 2019). According to this guideline, schools are free to develop and revise the local curriculum as per their needs.

As discussed in the preceding literature review, it seems there is no question to design and implement the local curriculum. But the question may be raised as how the local stakeholders perceive and design the LC by addressing the research gap in the literature reviewed.

Local curriculum: National policies and practice

Constitution of Nepal, article 31, mentions that every Nepali community living in Nepal shall have the right to education in their mother tongue in accordance with the law and to open and operate schools and educational institutions for that purpose (GON, 2015). Moreover, education act has also provisioned to manage the primary education in mother tongue. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) of 2020 has provided for the teaching of local subjects, mother-tongue subjects, or both within the local curriculum. At class one to five, five teaching and 160 annual working hours holds for teaching LC. Similarly, four teaching hours and 128 annual working hour is provided for teaching LC at grade four to eight (NCF, 2020). Now each local government is free to develop and implement the local curriculum as per their needs. According to this provision, some local levels have implemented mother tongue education as a curriculum content or teaching medium. Almost all local levels have made local curricula as per the local need-based contents. Similarly, the 2082 B.S. report of the Language Commission recommended that at the basic level, local subjects and mother-tongue subjects should be maintained separately, each assigned a full score of 50, allowing both subjects to be taught independently (Language Commission, 2026).

Methodology

Purposefully, for carrying out this study, two schools from Bhaktapur district were selected with different features to explore the existing practice of local curriculum from different perspectives. Then two head teachers, two local subject teachers and two parents were selected. Purposively, participants selected having knowledge about the

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local curriculum representing institutional school and community school. Interpretative inquiry was applied as a qualitative approach of research. The information was collected through open ended interview and literature study. Moreover, *Khwopa ko Pahichan*, the local curriculum made by Bhaktapur Municipality was reviewed, which is made for class one to eight. After executing the local government operation act, 2074 BS, Bhaktapur municipality designed the local curriculum and implemented from 2075 BS. Now, *Khwopa ko Pahichan* is being implemented from class one to class eight. Some portion of contents relating *Tamang language and Nepal Bhasa* is also incorporated in the curriculum.

The participants of this research were as follows:

- a) Local Subject Teachers: *T1, T2*:
- b) Head teachers: *H1, H2*
- c) Parents : *P1, P2*:

Discussion and Result

Curriculum making process: practice

Existing policy of local curriculum directs to each school or local government pertaining to local curriculum making. Regarding the involvement of local stakeholder in curriculum making process, I interacted with the participants. In this context, *H1* shared his experience, explaining that they held numerous discussions with stakeholders and gathered extensive feedbacks and suggestions. They maintained continuous consultations with professors from various universities, carefully considering their opinions and recommendations. Based on these expert inputs, the curriculum was developed and refined.

Similarly, *H2* stated that multiple discussions were conducted with teachers, headteachers, and local intellectuals to identify local needs. By following all required procedures for curriculum development, they finalized the local curriculum and implemented it simultaneously in ninety-two schools, including both institutional and community schools. *H2* further emphasized the importance of preserving the culture of Bhaktapur, noting that people from around the world are interested in learning about its cultural heritage.

In the same vein, *P2* explained that efforts were made to incorporate different aspects of local identity across various units of the curriculum. The curriculum included local history, traditional games, indigenous health practices, local tourism, and other locally relevant content organized under eleven themes. He particularly focused on highlighting and strengthening local identity (Paudel, 2021).

So, as per their views, all subject teachers need to participate in making the local curriculum. In this regard, the local curriculum made by Bhaktapur was reviewed and explored that only fifty-one teachers participated in an interaction program organized by the municipality, whereas ninety-two schools including institutional and community were all together implemented the LC.

From above sharing of the participants, it was revealed that the local curriculum was made in the participation of local stakeholders. It shows that the discussion was launched in a big forum where most of the stakeholders of the locality participated except the students from the local schools. Local curriculum guideline has also focused on local participation and experts in making LC (CDC, 2019).

Participatory Approach in Local Based Curriculum Designing

Curriculum making is a joint effort that demands the participation of stakeholders. The locality-based curriculum seeks the roles of various parties in curriculum making process (Marsh, 1997). So, a number of participants were interacted to explore their involvement in the curriculum-making process. In this regard, *H1*, who actively participated in the entire process of local curriculum development and implementation,

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was interviewed (Paudel, 2021). *H1* explained that parents, teachers, politicians, and subject experts were involved in developing the curriculum. Similarly, *H2* stated that, as a headteacher, he actively participated in interaction programs organized by the curriculum development taskforce (Paudel, 2021). He engaged in discussions with other headteachers and teachers regarding the need for a local curriculum, existing policies and practices, and the content dimensions to be included. He emphasized that he was directly involved in drafting the curriculum documents.

In contrast, *T1* presented a different perspective. She reported that she was not directly involved in the curriculum development process and was not informed about opportunities to participate. She became aware of the process only when she was invited to attend an orientation program, which took place during the final stage of curriculum development. *T1* stated that she was not invited to contribute to curriculum development for any basic-level classes. Although she attended one orientation session, she felt that it was insufficient to support effective teaching.

Regarding teacher participation, *T2* explained that he was not involved in the interaction programs organized by the curriculum development taskforce. Nevertheless, he repeatedly provided suggestions to the monitoring committee to improve the curriculum. His recommendations focused on the content areas to be included, advocating for greater emphasis on local content and reduced focus on language-based material.

From the parents' perspective, *P2* described her involvement in the curriculum development process (Paudel, 2021). She mentioned that she was given the opportunity to participate in a curriculum development workshop. During the workshop, she suggested that children in Bhaktapur Municipality should learn about local art, culture, language, games, and temples.

Concerning the overall participation of local stakeholders, *H1* stated that most stakeholders were involved in the curriculum-making process. He emphasized the importance of addressing local culture and community needs within the curriculum. Likewise, *H2* participated throughout the entire development process and encouraged other headteachers to contribute their time and support.

P2 also took part in the interaction program organized by the curriculum development taskforce and expressed satisfaction at being invited. She advocated for a curriculum that prioritized locally relevant content over language-focused material. However, her perspective appears to contrast with the existing policy that promotes basic-level education in the mother tongue.

As the policy was reviewed, it emphasized the right to elementary education in the mother tongue. It is argued that one kind of mother tongue speaking children have difficulty learning in another type of language. Thus, it seems to analyze the multilingual nature of society while making the policy. From my understanding, while making a curriculum in one language, children from another language community are deprived of studying in their mother tongue. In such cases, learning cannot be effective. In such conditions, multilingual teaching method might be applied.

Teacher Management

In school, teachers are the key components for implementing the curriculum. The teachers have a crucial role in the phase of curriculum implementation (Bhusal, 2015). Now, the responsibility for teacher management is under the right of the local level. In this regard, DOE (2009) mentions that the school should manage mother tongue teachers on the basis of the mother tongue taught at school. The school management committee will appoint one teacher who can speak, write and use the mother tongue or the local mother tongue well among the teachers working to teach in the mother tongue in the schools. If the teacher cannot be managed from school, arrangements can be made by

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transferring a teacher from another school. If teachers are not managed through this method, the school will demand the necessary financial resources from local bodies.

Pertaining to this issue, a discussion was held with participants. *H1* emphasized the importance of recruiting local personnel as teachers. However, he argued that appointing teachers specifically for local subjects can create an additional administrative and financial burden for institutional schools, as they are required to manage extra teaching staff. Similarly, *H2* asserted that the shortage of qualified local subject teachers can be addressed through systematic teacher training programs. According to him, professional development initiatives can equip existing teachers with the necessary competencies to teach local subjects effectively. In this context, *P1* stated that local governments should manage human resources by recruiting locally educated individuals. Furthermore, he emphasized that if challenges arise in this process, local authorities should take appropriate responsibility to resolve them.

In response to the inquiry, *P2* stated that teachers play a crucial role in the effective implementation of the local curriculum (Paudel, 2021). She emphasized that teachers need to continuously develop their own knowledge and competencies. According to her, the responsibility of teaching the local curriculum does not rest solely with local teachers; subject teachers from other backgrounds can also teach it effectively, provided they receive appropriate training. She further explained that the community represents a rich source of lived experiences and diverse expertise, which schools can utilize by inviting community members to serve as resource persons. Since teacher management falls primarily under the responsibility of school administration, teachers were not further questioned on this issue.

Similarly, *P1* stated that a new generation has entered the teaching profession through an inclusive recruitment system, bringing individuals from diverse castes and regions. In this context, he suggested that teacher training is one of the most effective strategies for managing and supporting teachers. He also emphasized that the local government bears responsibility for addressing such challenges. *P2*'s perspective closely aligns with that of *H2*. She maintained that both local and non-local teachers are capable of teaching the local curriculum. Additionally, she highlighted the supportive role of community resource persons in facilitating classroom instruction (Paudel, 2021). In this regard, EC (2015) mentions that in the classroom, linguistic and cultural diversity poses a significant challenge for educators. To be able to teach pupils who are studying the language of instruction, teachers need a clear development and learning program. Practitioners agree that when admitted and once immersed, teachers need to undergo training to meet the language needs of migrant children and develop cultural competencies. Again, the government policy has focused on providing education at the elementary level in the mother tongue. The existing education act of Nepal has clearly mentioned that primary education will be available in the mother tongue. Similarly, the Constitution of Nepal has also mentioned the provision of providing education in the mother tongue (GON, 2015). Additionally, SSDP Nepal has clearly set the policy and strategy for providing education in the mother tongue. It mentioned that education should be given in the mother tongue managing the multilingual teachers, providing mother tongue instruction-based training to the teachers, promoting mother tongue-based multilingual learning, etc. (MOE, 2016). Thus, it is necessary to manage the teachers for teaching the local subjects through teacher development as well as training approach. For this, the government at different levels (federals, state, and local levels) and other responsible agencies such as school and community need to play an important role.

Study of Local Curriculum (Khwopa ko Pahichan): From Researcher's perspective

Within the framework of curriculum development, it is a widely accepted norm that curricular documents should be reviewed after five years and undergo substantial revision after ten years. The local curriculum titled "*Khwopa ko Pahichan*" (Identity of Khwopa), formulated by Bhaktapur Municipality, commenced in 2075 B.S. During its inaugural year, curricula for Grades 1 and 6 were developed. In 2076 B.S., the curriculum was expanded to include Grades 2 and 7; in 2077 B.S., Grades 3 and 8 were incorporated; and in 2078 B.S., curricula for Grades 4 and 5 were completed. By the fourth year of its development cycle, the curriculum had been comprehensively implemented across Grades 1 to 8. If measured from the initial year of development (2075 B.S.), seven years have passed since the curriculum's introduction. However, when calculated from 2078 B.S., the year in which full implementation across all grades was achieved—four years have elapsed.

The curriculum addresses the historical origin of Khwopa, the reasons underlying its naming, the diverse clans within the Newar community, and notable local personalities. It further includes contemporary and cultural themes such as cybercrime, the "One School, One Heritage" program, local traditions, spoken language and the Newar script, Tamang script as well as significant heritage sites including temples, viharas (Buddhist monasteries), ponds, and stone water spouts. Moreover, it covers traditional artistic expressions—painting, architecture, and sculpture—together with both agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoods, including the renowned indigenous technique of curd preparation.

Additionally, the curriculum aims to disseminate knowledge related to local medicinal plants and traditional healing systems, selected indigenous games, and environmental awareness essential for fostering and sustaining tourism development. In 2082 B.S., Bhaktapur Municipality revised the local curriculum for Grades 1-8. The revised curriculum includes a unit for Grades Six to Eight that aims to support students in acquiring basic conversational skills in both the Tamang and Nepal Bhasa languages. To achieve this, teaching and learning activities are conducted in Tamang and Newar languages. Other units continue to cover various local subject matters. Considering the fact that Bagmati Province has already granted official working language status to Nepal Bhasa and the Tamang language, and acknowledging the increasing number of Tamang-speaking students in schools and colleges in Khwopa, the curriculum has incorporated the Tamang language alongside Nepal Bhasa in the fourth unit for Grades 6 to 8. This inclusion aims to enable local students to acquire basic conversational words and sentences in the Tamang language also (Bhaktapur Municipality, 2025). From my perspective, it is essential for local governments to incorporate locally relevant content when developing local curricula. The mother tongue can serve as the medium of instruction to teach these local topics effectively. This approach facilitates students' understanding of local content and enhances the attainment of learning outcomes. To support this, multilingual instructional materials need to be developed, and teachers should be provided multilingual training. During teaching-learning activities, and assessment, employing a mother-tongue-based multilingual approach is considered appropriate.

Conclusion

Through the discussion, it was concluded that local curriculum making is a collaborative process. It is a product of joint effort. But it was not realized that the municipality has addressed the issue of inclusiveness in the curriculum making taskforce. Moreover, it was explored that students are a major source of curriculum making. It seems that the LC is made to meet the needs of a local place. Similarly, it was also realized that curriculum making task force has adopted almost entire process for developing local

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curriculum as mentioned by the related policies. It is concluded that all local subject teachers were not included in the curriculum-making process that was also the main source for curriculum development. Teachers are actual curriculum implementers in the classroom. Moreover, it might be good to make local curricula by including the local contents and implement the local curriculum through multilingual instruction.

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