



Teaching Buddhist Cultural Heritage and Moral Values through the Hamro Devdaha Local Curriculum: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

Local curriculum is prepared as an educational program with the purpose of reflecting local specific identity, like cultural and historical significance. In this regard, Devdaha Municipality has prepared 'Hamro Devdaha' as a local curriculum. How does this local curriculum attempt to develop the integration of Buddhist principles and teachings? In what ways does this curriculum support enhancing the knowledge about Buddha's biography, Buddhist education, and philosophy? These queries are the main concern of this study. The study aims to explore teaching Buddhist cultural heritage and moral values through the Hamro Devdaha Local Curriculum. It also attempts to dig out the perceptions of the teachers and local people whose children are studying this course in the school credit hour. The study is of a qualitative nature. It follows a phenomenological research design that collects information through semi-structured interviews among the participants. The population of the study is school teachers, students, and local guardians. The findings of the study exhibit that 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum in Devdaha Municipality aims to impart knowledge about Buddha's biography, teachings, historical and religious significance of Devdaha, and integration of Buddhist principles. Besides this, it also assists in making the teachers, students, and guardians know about Buddhist education. As a whole, this curriculum introduces the historical importance of Devdaha as an ancient Koliya State, Gautam Buddha's life history, Buddhist education, and philosophy throughout the country.

Keywords: Buddhism, education, Gautam Buddha, Hamro Devdaha, local curriculum,

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Introduction

Local curriculum is designed in a purpose of reflecting local specific identity through the medium of education. It generally covers the local religious, cultural, political and historical significance (Sharma 162). In the context of Nepal, the concept of local curriculum was developed according to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2076 B.S. This is highly essential to every student who is unaware of their own locality specialties. This sort of curriculum gives true identity of the local level through the course to be taught in the school. Most of the educationist simply gives emphasis on local curriculum should be applied up to basic level so that the students can get to know about the genuine introduction of the local level specific importance (Evans and Savage 15). Similarly, it helps to conserve and transfer local traditions, rituals and history to upcoming generations. In the domain of education, local curriculum connects the students with practical acquaintance and knowledge associate to their daily lives and future possibilities (Brewer and Leask 244). It motivates the students to acquire knowledge by addressing local problems and it gives emphasis on the community development and sustainability.

This research study has potential significance on the effectiveness of the local curriculum 'Hamro Devdaha' in the schools of Devdaha Municipality. Both community and instructional schools' students are studying this course which encourages them to comprehend about the specialty of ancient Devdaha as the maternal place of Lord Gautam Buddha. They have learned that Devdaha has both historical as well as religious importance. After learning this, they have familiarized local level cultural heritages. With help of this curriculum, the information about the significance of Devdaha has transferred to future generations. Nowadays, every kid from grade 1 to 8 have learned about Gautam Buddha's teachings and principles which they talk to their parents. Ultimately, everybody is aquatinted about the Buddhist education and philosophy.

The study attempts to explore the effectiveness of 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the municipality area. It aims to dig out the perceptions of the teachers who are teaching this subject at school and the local people whose children are studying this course in the school. The qualitative study adopts phenomenological research design which obtains the information from the lived experiences of the participants (Morrison 20). The study is limited in Devdaha Municipality and its local curriculum on 'Hamro Devdaha'. The participants of the study are selected through a purposive sampling procedure. The study is based on the thematic analysis of the information that is gathered from the participants. In fact, the study is explored the effectiveness of local curriculum 'Hamro Devdaha' in the purpose of imparting education on Buddhist teachings, principles and philosophy among the students in Devdaha Municipality.

In Devdaha municipality, the local curriculum was prepared in 2075 B.S though the concept of local curriculum was developed according to National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2076 B.S. Initially, in 2075 B.S the local curriculum was named as "Buddha Shikshya and Devdaha Parichaye (Buddha Education and Introduction to Devdaha)". The text book was prepared only in grade 6 and grade 7 in both English and Nepali medium. According to National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2076, the local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality changed the name into 'Hamro Devdaha (Our Devdaha)' in

2078 B.S. Since then, the text book has been prepared from grade 1 to grade 8 only in Nepali medium. The text book of 'Hamro Devdaha' consists of seven units. The first unit is about the introduction of Devdaha and its natural heritages. Similarly, the second unit is about the cultural heritages of Devdaha Municipality. The third deals about the agricultural technology. Professional technology and life-based skills cover unit fourth of the local curriculum. The fifth unit of the book discusses about the historical significance and tourist areas of Devdaha. Buddhist education is highly given priority in unit six and the final unit is about the yoga and Ayurveda. As a whole, the curriculum is fully based on the Buddhist education, teachings and principles of Buddhist philosophy.

Local curriculum is one of the important courses that always specify the essential identity and significance of the local areas (Evans and Savage 15). It makes the students engage more intently when education displays their own culture, surrounding and religious importance (Autti and Hyry-Beihammaer 14). In the same way, this sort of curriculum takes the lived experiences and knowledge of local communities. In this regard, Devdaha Municipality develops an initiative step to transfigure basic level education by introducing a local curriculum which combines local cultural context and the potentiality Buddhist elements into early education. The present study attempts to explore the effectiveness of 'Hamro Devdaha local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the municipal area through the perceptions of the teachers, students and local people. It is inferred that the local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality has shown a great impact to spread buddha teachings and principles to every student who are learning this local curriculum.

Devdaha Municipality has prepared one of the effective local curriculums as 'Hamro Devdaha' as per National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2076 B.S. After implementing this curriculum in both community and institutional schools of Devdaha from grade 1 to grade 8, is a matter of concern about its effectiveness in the locality. The main purpose of this course is to make the students familiar about Gautam Buddha's biography, teachings and principles, Buddhist education and philosophy. In this regard, how does this local curriculum attempt to develop the integration of Buddhists principles and teachings? In what ways this curriculum supports to enhance the knowledge about Buddha's biography, Buddhist education and philosophy? Whether this curriculum is highly effective among the students as well as local people of the municipality or not. This study attempts to explore the effectiveness of 'Hamro Devdaha local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the municipality area through the perceptions of the teachers, students and local people.

The local curriculum 'Hamro Devdaha' has covered the content on Gautam Buddha's teachings and principles. It also vividly discusses about the Buddhist education. Capturing teaching principles of Buddhism in local curriculum is one of the genuine aspects of Devdaha

Municipality. Regarding this matter, Bhattraai (31) explored a study on integrating Buddhist philosophy into Formal education which concluded that the relevance of potential of contextualized Buddhist education to lead a society leading towards prosperity, calm and longevity progress through practical wisdom and scientific rationality. Similarly, Sharma (106) discussed an application of Buddhist Philosophy in Nepalese education focuses that Buddhism genuinely gives priority on reality, love compassion which

is implementable in different domains of humanity and instructional development. Neupane et al. (2) explored the knowledge and practices of Buddhist teachings and principles in high school students. The study marked out that Buddhist principles assist the students in their behavioural activities. Integrating Buddhist ethics in to multicultural instructional setting support to develop reflective learning approach. Similarly, the book by Mark Siderits (22) discussed the Buddha's Teachings as philosophy talks about how Buddhist educational teachings provide tranquil in the mind and spirit that makes every human be in etiquette and politeness in behaviour.

In addition to this, Warner (135) carried out a study on Buddhist Education integrating with the modern education, which marked that Buddhist education aids to develop the simplicity in the behaviour through its instructional subject matter that heals the positive vibes over the negatives one. Besides this, A study on Foundations of Buddhism by Dhakal (71) concludes morality is simply a good conduct through the analysis of the eight-fold path that helps to enhance meditation, mental development and insight. Similarly, Pokhrel et al. (136) discussed about the values-based curriculum and pedagogy to post-modernism learners. It attempted to find out integrating values through the range of curricular structures like culture-based curriculum that denotes the local curriculum significantly relies on Buddhist education. Nilima and Broyon (286) talked about the Buddhist education as a challenge to present day schooling in the book. It gives a focus on the moral behaviour and wise consciousness of the learner but the modern-day students are really distinct characteristics, so that culture-based curriculum is difficult to implement in their day-to- day life.

While going through these studies, it is revealed that Buddhist education provides the moral disciplinary as well as peace mindfulness aspect in the domain of education. The present study attempts to carry out the concept regarding the effectiveness of local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality, which helps to bring Buddhist teachings, principals, philosophy as well as Buddhist education in the school curriculum.

Generally, it is perceived that a local curriculum is designed with in the periphery of local environment, heritage, religious and historical significance. Regarding the matter of Devdaha Municipality, the local curriculum entitled as 'Hamro Devdaha' especially focuses on the Buddhist education, teaching s and principles. This makes the students familiar about the ancient historical events about Gautam Buddha's childhood anecdotes and how he has become from Siddhartha Gautam to 'Buddha'. Different studies have been conducted about the local curriculum in the national as well as international context. In Indonesian context, Andrian et al. (921) discussed the instrument development to evaluate local curriculum. They have explored that local curriculum is to conserve the speciality or cultural significance of the local area. Local curriculum diligently gives emphasis uniqueness of the region. Similarly, in the context of New Zealand, Lockley (20) talked about the local curriculum development in sustainability education in the Secondary schools of New Zealand. The study revealed that teachers are challenged by the holistic nature of sustainability in the development of local curriculum. That means, sociocultural backgrounds are influenced the perceptive of sustainability in the local level. Mishra (32) navigated the importance of local curriculum in school education of Nepal. The study pointed out that teachers positively accepted the local curriculum for conserving the local culture and knowledge.

Similarly, in the Nepalese context, Gyawali (79) investigated the study regarding the practice of local curriculum at basic level from the perceptions of the teachers. The study exhibited that local curriculum can help to develop the shape of own learning experiences in education and community development. In addition to this, Kandel (61) dug out the curriculum reform in federal Nepal from grass root to pedagogical aspect. It shows that local curriculum identifies the real scenario of educational, cultural, historical and religious phenomena of the region. In the same way, Gurung and Parajuli (9) urged on the status of local curriculum development and application of scientific knowledge in Palpa district. The finding of the study reveals that local curriculum has to be prepared on local heritages through the decentralization of curriculum progress which certainly helps to gear up the identity of the local region.

After analysing these studies, it is inferred that local curriculum is an asset of the local region because it introduces the true identity of the local area. It covers the wide ranges of local heritages and properties which may be culturally, historically and socially significant (Squire et al. 468). The present study looks to grasp the effectiveness of Hamro Devdaha, a local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality, which supports to scatter Buddhist education to the local dwellers.

While existing studies on Nepal's local curricula focus broadly on policy implementation, teacher perceptions, and general regional challenges, there remains a lack of empirical research on how localized frameworks specifically integrate Buddhist cultural heritage and moral values into basic education to help produce holistic citizens for the nation, which serves as a research gap for the study.

The study is related to the local curriculum. Devdaha Municipality has prepared a local curriculum entitled Hamro Devdaha, which includes Gautam Buddha's teachings and principles, biography, Buddhist education, religious and historical significance of Devdaha. This study attempts to find out the effectiveness of 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the municipality area through the perceptions of the teachers, students and local people. It navigates the significance of the local curriculum in order to make the students get knowledge regarding Buddha's biography, Buddhist education, and philosophy. This study is based on the Local Curriculum Theory and Cultural Responsiveness, which discusses about the educational subject matter should be engraved to the community's queer cultural, social and religious context. This theory also emphasizes how 'Hamro Devdaha Local Curriculum' supports enhancing knowledge of Buddhist education. The study is confined within the periphery of Devdaha Municipality. It analyses the perceptions of teachers, students, and local people about the effectiveness of the local curriculum and how it assists Buddhist education.

The objective of the study is to explore teaching Buddhist cultural heritage and moral values through the Hamro Devdaha Local Curriculum. The study digs out the effectiveness of 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the municipality area through the perceptions of the teachers, students, and local people. The study also aims to navigate the significance of the local curriculum in order to help students gain knowledge regarding Buddha's biography, Buddhist education, and philosophy. This study attempts to explore the effectiveness of the 'Hamro Devdaha local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the locality of Devdaha Municipality. It is qualitative in nature and follows the phenomenological research design, which focuses on the lived experiences of the participants and

informants. The study adopts 15 participants, among them 6 are teachers, 5 are students, and 4 are local people who have studied the local curriculum. The study attempted to obtain the lived experiences and sharing of the participants associated to ‘Hamro Devdaha’ local curriculum. The researcher uses semi-structured interviews through some research questions about the local curriculum. The participants are interviewed adopting the guidelines of the interview. While collecting information from the participants, rapport building, consent and ethical considerations are done sincerely. After getting the information, it is transcribed for further discussion. The following table-1 summarized the participants’ names that are replaced by pseudonyms.

Table 1. Participants

Names (Pseudonyms)	Professions	Gender	Ward No.
Sabina	Teacher	Female	1
Ramesh	Teacher	Male	3
Lil Bdr.	Teacher	Male	5
Gori	Teacher	Female	7
Lila Ram	Teacher	Male	9
Basuki	Teacher	Female	11
Ramu	Local Person	Male	2
Mansi	Local person	Female	4
Daya Ram	Local Person	Male	6
Indra	Local person	Female	8
Sakuntala	Student (Class-4)	Female	10
Losina	Student (Class-5)	Female	12
Awaran	Student (Class-6)	Male	5
Laxman	Student (Class-7)	Male	6
Sarif	Student (Class-8)	Male	4

The study adopts a thematic analysis approach to manage the collected information into different themes. After receiving information from the participants, the researcher transcribed audio recordings and pinpointed the specific content of the participants.

After getting the information, it is transcribed for further discussion. While analyzing it, the information has been coded in different aspects. The study follows a thematic analysis approach to manage the collected information into different themes.

Hamro Devdaha Integrates Buddhist Philosophy and Values in the Curriculum

The local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality entitled to Hamro Devdaha has integrated Buddhist Philosophy, moral and ethical values in the curriculum. Regarding this matter, many participants have opined that Buddhist teachings and values are highly significant to form moral consciousness. It makes the students learn about the ethical values through the book 'Hamro Devdaha' which tells the learners about the religious teachings and principles of Buddhist education. Similarly, teachers are also acquainted to philosophical doctrines of Buddhism while teaching this local curriculum. For instance, Sabina, a teacher from Ward Number 1 asserted:

Actually, I have found 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum very useful in order to spread moral and ethical values among the students. Students learn eight-fold paths and assimilate themselves which definitely assist them keep their mind peaceful and tranquility. I think the local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality integrates Buddhist philosophy and values in the classroom.

Her perception indicates that the local curriculum 'Hamro Devdaha' covers the areas of discipline associated with the concept of Buddhist philosophy, teachings and values. Teaching the students about these aspects of the principles of Buddhism surely shape the good learning atmosphere in day-to-day classroom pedagogy. In addition to this, one of the participants Ranesh from Ward Number 3 expressed:

While teaching 'Hamro Devdaha', I have considered that students are encouraged to comprehend deeper meaning of life rather than just reciting. This is because students learn through meditation sessions, mindfulness activities and conversation on peace and coexistence. This curriculum incorporated self-awareness and resilience which support to develop emotional intelligence among the learners.

Ramesh, the participant of the study perceived that the local curriculum motivates the students to display, question and moral instruction in order to practice ethical consciousness activities. Regarding this matter, Lil Bdr from Ward Number 5 opined:

I perceive full of bliss myself when I commence to teach 'Hamro Devdaha', a local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality. This curriculum contains bountiful knowledge about the Buddhism, teachings and principles which are highly essential to the students of digital era. I think integrating Buddhist education fosters an honour for all life forms and inner harmony among the learners. The teachings of it assist to develop harmonious society where etiquette and responsibility commences from an early age.

His views propel towards the concept that Hamro Devdaha curriculum of Devdaha Municipality has been effectively pursuing the knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and teaching principles to develop tolerance and responsible citizenship from a young age.

Make Everyone know about Historical and Religious Significance of Devdaha

Many people even in the Nepalese context and Buddhist scenario, are still unaware of Devdaha's highly importance. Most of the participants perceived that Hamro Devdaha local curriculum is prepared by covering the importance of local region. Devdaha is famous for the maternal place of Lord Gautam

Buddha. Besides it, historically ancient Koliya State was there. For example, one of the local persons and the journalist, Ramu, a dweller of Ward number 2 opined:

After preparing local curriculum in Devdaha Municipality, many educated people aware about the Devdaha's unique place in history and religion. It helps to forward wider recognition, conservation of the sites so that the world can show value to Devdaha as Buddhist heritage. Now, this local curriculum spreads Buddhist education and promote Devdaha as a precious spiritual and historical region.

His opinion marked that the local curriculum makes an awareness to all the people regarding the historical and cultural significance of Devdaha. Similarly, one of the participants, Laxman, student of grade 7 from Ward Number 6, expressed:

Hamro Devdaha Local curriculum is very good for those who are unknown about historical and religious significance of Devdaha region. The curriculum vividly provides the information about Gautam Buddha's religious teachings and principles. As a novice

learner and new inhabitant of Devdaha Municipality, I have known distinct aspects of Buddhist philosophy and cultural heritages of the municipality.

His views reflect that Hamro Devdaha local curriculum of Devdaha Municipality makes every learner about the Buddha's teachings and principles, and also everyone aware about how Devdaha is famous for historically and culturally. In addition to this, Lila Ram, the teacher from Ward Number 9 perceived:

I think Hamro Devdaha local curriculum is preparing the student to know about an important part of Buddhist lineage and history, the Koliyans, Buddha's maternal clan and life. Teaching this thing to the students assist to enhance the knowledge to Buddhist education and the significance of Devdaha to entire world.

From this perception, it is inferred that the local curriculum is playing effective contribution to make the people aware about the importance of Devdaha for wider preservation, identification and education.

Student Participation and Learning Outcomes Related to Buddhist Education

Learning the course based on own dwelling area always supports behavioural participation of the learner (Hernandez 676). The students from grade 1 to grade 8 are learning 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum which is prepared on the baseline of religious and historical significance of Devdaha. While learning the course, students have responded distinctly regarding student participation and learning outcomes associated to Buddhist Education. Their perceptions are pointed as follow:

When we are learning the lesson meditation and Yoga, our teacher makes us sit in penance position. This is really useful to cultivate our mind and spirit. All of our friends actively participate to stay in the position of sitting like Lord Gautam Buddha (Awaran, grade 6 student from Ward no.6).

Hamro Devdaha local curriculum is interesting subject that teaches us the education about Gautam Buddha's biography from childhood. It also provides religious teachings that support positive vibes

in the process of learning. All of my friends give concentration in the study after studying this local curriculum (Sakuntala, grade 4 student from Ward no 10).

Hamro Devdaha Local curriculum makes me aware about the local heritages of Devdaha. Many of my friends are unknown about the historical and cultural significance of Devdaha. Last year, when our teacher conducted a tour to different cultural sites of Devdaha, we knew much more about Devdaha by preparing the visiting places report (Sarif, grade 8 student from Ward no 4).

I have found the local curriculum 'Hamro Devdaha' adapts Buddhist values or philosophy which helps to develop mindfulness in schools through Buddhist ethics classes. It has made me a good impact in the process of learning. This course also assists to enhance compassion and ethical sensitivity (Losina, grade 5 student from Ward No 12).

While going through these utterances, it can be implied that the local curriculum 'Hamro Devdaha' aids to improve classroom discipline and behaviour of the students. Student participation and learning outcomes has become an improvement due to the morality increment through Buddhist ethics classes and enhance self-awareness.

Teacher preparedness and Pedagogical Approaches in Teaching Buddhism

Pedagogical approach plays significant role to deliver knowledge in front of the students in an expected manner (Ramya 17). That means, while teaching Hamro Devdaha course teacher preparedness is essential aspect. Most of the participants viewed that to teach Buddhist education in local curriculum, teachers have to adopt learner-cantered activities. For example, Gori, a teacher from Ward Number 7 revealed:

Teaching Hamro Devdaha local curriculum is fascinating the students towards the subject matter. Generally, I have the students through life stories of Lord Buddha and Jataka tales which propel the student engagement in learning that support to foster ethical thinking and solidarity.

Her views notified that the pedagogical approach to teach Buddhist education is highly based on student-cantered activity in the classroom. It makes the learning interesting when the

teacher uses storytelling and life-based instances. In addition to this, Basuki, a teacher from Ward Number 11 uttered:

In the class of local curriculum, I focus on experimental learning to the students. I make the students visit local Buddhist sites such as Bhawanipur, Pakaria and others, which make the students learn contextually. Sometimes, involving the learners in mediation practices that enhance critical thinking and the discussion-based learning process.

Her deliverance reveals that teaching the local curriculum, 'Hamro Devdaha,' encourages the learners to display Buddhist teachings and principles. Buddhist education is highly useful for students in shaping good behaviour and developing empathy and ethical thinking skills. This local curriculum assists to identify buddhist cultural identity to the learners at different grades.

Conclusion

The present study attempts to explore the effectiveness of the 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum to spread Buddhist education in the municipality area through the perceptions of the teachers, students, and local people. It navigates the significance of the local curriculum in order to make the students gain knowledge regarding Buddha's biography, Buddhist education and philosophy. While going through the findings of the study, it can be inferred that 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum supports the spread of Buddhist education. The curriculum contains courses related to Gautam Buddha's childhood stories, teachings, and principles of Buddhism. Most of the participants perceived that the curriculum is fully based on the Buddhist education, teachings, and principles of Buddhist philosophy. Some of the informants believed that teaching 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum is fascinating the students towards the subject matter, and it focuses the students through life stories of Lord Buddha and Jataka tales, which propel the student engagement in learning that support to foster ethical thinking and solidarity.

In addition to this, 'Hamro Devdaha' local curriculum has integrated Buddhist Philosophy, moral and ethical values in the curriculum. Most of the participants have asserted that Buddhist teachings and values are highly significant to form moral consciousness. It makes the students learn about the ethical values which tells the learners about the religious teachings and principles of Buddhist education. While teaching teachers are also acquainted to philosophical doctrines of Buddhism while teaching this local curriculum. Some of the learners reacted that Hamro Devdaha

Local curriculum makes them aware about the local heritages of Devdaha. Many of them are unknown about the historical and cultural significance of Devdaha. As a whole, it is concluded that Hamro Devdaha curriculum is significantly effective to impart Buddhist education to the local level. The study can be implemented about the success of the preparation of local curriculum in Devdaha by addressing the historical and religious importance of the region. Further research can be conducted on the comparative analysis of Community schools and Institutional schools about the effective implementation of local curriculum based on Buddhist education in Devdaha.

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