Decolonizing Language in Education Policies of Nepal

Nirmala Dhami
Central Department of Education, Far Western University, Nepal
Email: dhaminiru@gmail.com

Abstract

Nepal has never been formally colonized; however it struggles with the intricate effects of both internal and foreign linguistic colonialism, which has resulted in the marginalization of several indigenous languages in the formal educational system. The present paper explores how language education policies are changing in Nepal, a country with a wide variety of languages. This qualitative study used phenomenology as a research method and purposively selected four government aided school teachers as participants. Tool for data collection was interview and the findings showed that English is a dominant language in education policy though the constitution of Nepal allows mother tongue or national language i.e. Nepali to be the medium of instruction in the government schools. The study explored the expanding decolonization movement in language in education policy, led by communities, educators, and grassroots activists. The goal of this movement is to establish a more fair and inclusive learning environment from supporting the acknowledgement and integration of indigenous languages in formal education. The paper explored the historical mechanisms of linguistic colonialism in the educational system, examining the prioritization of dominant languages over indigenous languages and the resultant exclusion of the latter. The study concludes by outlining the current changes being made to Nepal's language education regulations and highlighting the importance of linguistic inclusion as a driver of social cohesion and cultural preservation. By providing insights into the problems and possibilities of incorporating indigenous languages into formal educational systems, the research adds to the larger conversation on decolonizing education.

Keywords: Decolonization, language in education, medium of instruction, policy

Introduction

Decolonization refers to the process of ending colonialism, which involves powerful nations exerting political, economic, and cultural control over less powerful regions, often located overseas. The term was first introduced by German economist Moritz Julius Bonn in the 1930s to describe the efforts made to help former colonies achieve self-governance (Kennedy, 2016). Broadly speaking, decolonization involves dismantling and opposing the colonial structures and practices that have been imposed on these regions. Collins (2016) asserts that essentially, decolonization is the process through which colonies or territories under foreign rule gain independence and sovereignty. It is a process that is still being discussed in a variety of academic, political, and social contexts. These talks include initiatives to confront the legacy of colonialism and advance equity and inclusion. According to Hack (2022) there are some facets to decolonization, such as political dependence, cultural reclamation, economic transformation, social justice and equality, global shifts in power. So, this paper tries to explore the lived experiences of the government aided school teachers how language in education policy is decolonized and influencing the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy. Four community school teachers are purposively selected and in-depth interview was used as a tool for data collection.

Colonial influences have always influenced Nepal's educational practices, favoring certain languages over others and marginalizing indigenous languages and traditions. This has caused many communities to have restricted access to education, cultural eroding, and loss of linguistic variety. The multilingual and multicultural realities of Nepal are not sufficiently reflected in the educational language regulations now in place, which puts obstacles in the way of inclusive education and equal learning opportunities. Decolonizing language in Nepal's educational policy is therefore imperative. This can be achieved by encouraging mother tongues, guaranteeing linguistic representation, and creating an atmosphere in schools that honors and protects the country's rich cultural legacy. This would involve re-evaluating and restructuring language policies to better serve all communities and support historically marginalized groups' empowerment.

Understanding Decolonization and Diverse Aspects

Decolonization is a significant period in human history that represents the fight for independence, cultural revival, and the overthrow of colonial systems. The geopolitical landscape has been transformed by this complex process, which has given expression to the long-suppressed ambitions of once colonized states. According to Walsh (2023) understanding decolonization means travelling through the complex web of relationships between politics, culture, economy, and the never-ending pursuit of justice. To understand the decolonization, we have to go through the following historical mechanisms of linguis-

tic colonialism:

Political Transformation

Essentially, decolonization is the process by which areas bound by colonial authority become sovereign, independent nation-states through politics. As colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas attempted to break free from imperial dominance, the mid-20th century saw a surge of liberation (Murray, 2020). A major factor in giving self-determination a voice and validating the worldwide movement for political independence was the United Nations.

Cultural Reclamation and Identity Revitalization

The process of decolonization goes beyond achieving political independence and encompasses the domains of identity and legacy within culture (Seck, 2023). During this phase, Indigenous cultures that have been subjugated due to colonial rule have a resurgence.Once marginalized languages, customs, and knowledge systems emerge as keystones of resurrection, reiterating the inherent worth of varied worldviews.

Economic Restructuring

The riches of conquered territories went into the coffers of imperial powers, making economic exploitation a defining feature of colonialism (Manjapra, 2020). In order to address past injustices, decolonization requires a radical reorganisation of economic structures. As oppressive economic assumptions from the past are challenged, the quest of fair development and the return of resources become essential.

Social Justice and Equality

The goals of social justice and decolonization are inextricably intertwined. The determination to redress past injustices such as discrimination, land dispossession, and unfair resource distribution goes hand in hand with the demolition of colonial infrastructure (Murray,2020). The goal of the development of inclusive governance models is to address social injustices and encourage a sense of shared responsibility across various demographic groups.

Global Paradigm Shifts

The effects of decolonization go beyond national boundaries, leading to changes in the global balance of power. On the global scene, ex-colonies have an impact by contesting conventional wisdom and changing diplomatic ties. The idea of national self-determination takes centre stage and shapes the conversation about global governance and human rights.

Persistent Obstacles and Neo-Colonial Problems

Although decolonization is a symbol of victory, difficulties still exist. Post-colonial

complexity affects newly independent countries, causing obstacles to economic development and government (Ribeiro, 2023). In addition, the threat of neo-colonialism is present as outside influences try to sway policy and create economic dependency.

Legacy and Historical Consciousness

A thorough examination of the legacy of decolonization is necessary to comprehend it. Recall and historical knowledge are essential for forming modern identities and raising the consciousness of colonization's long-lasting effects (Kennedy, 2016). It becomes essential to accept the historical realities of decolonization in order to promote peace and progress.

To be specific, the historical process of decolonization is a symbol of the human spirit's tenacity and the quest of justice. Beyond the changes in geopolitics and the rise of new countries, it represents a deep search for identity, a resurgence of culture, and the righting of past wrongs. Appreciating the multifaceted character of decolonization, acknowledging the ongoing battles and the necessity of promoting a global awareness that respects the variety and agency of all peoples are necessary for gaining a true understanding of it.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study employed phenomenology as its research method, focusing on the lived experiences of individuals. Phenomenology, as a research approach, aims to explore and understand how people experience and perceive certain phenomena in their everyday lives. In this study I have purposively selected four government-aided school teachers as participants. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique often used in qualitative research to select individuals who are particularly knowledgeable or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. This ensures that the participants can provide deep insights into the topic being studied. The primary data collection tool used in the study was the interview. Interviews, especially in phenomenological research, allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words, providing rich, detailed data. This method helps researchers capture the essence of the participants' lived experiences, thoughts, and emotions related to the phenomenon under investigation. By combining phenomenology with purposive sampling and interviews, the study aims to generate in-depth insights into the experiences of government-aided school teachers, shedding light on specific aspects of their professional lives or challenges.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the results and discussion of the study are organized thematically to capture the essence of the lived experiences shared by the participants. Each theme represents a core area of focus that emerged from the interview data. Thematic presentation helps provide a clear and in-depth understanding of the key issues that government-aided

school teachers face, as well as how they navigate their professional environment. The discussion is intertwined with the findings to offer meaningful interpretations in light of existing literature and educational theory.

Nepal's Language in Education Policies (Medium of Instruction in the Schools): From Past to Present

There has been much discussion and disagreement about the long history of language use in education policy in Nepal, making it a delicate and complicated topic. In the past, Nepal's education policy has prioritized English and Nepali over native languages. This approach has its roots in the "one nation, one language" ideology that was promoted during the Panchayat era (1960–1990). During this period, the emphasis on Nepali as the national language and English as a language of global importance led to the marginalization of indigenous languages and cultures within the education system. Although the majority of schools teach Nepali as the official language, over 125 mother languages are spoken by the nation's many ethnic and indigenous tribes (Fillmore, 2020) Due to this approach; indigenous languages have been marginalized in the classroom and frequently have their use in public and educational settings suppressed.

However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous languages. The 2019 National Education Policy acknowledges this by stating that the "mother tongue or Nepali language" should be used as the medium of instruction at the basic education level (Poudel & Choi, 2022). Additionally, the 2015 Nepalese Constitution safeguards the right to receive education in one's mother tongue. Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain in the widespread implementation of mother-tongue-based education (MTBE). All the respondents stated that many indigenous languages face a shortage of qualified teachers and educational materials, and socio-economic factors may discourage parents from enrolling their children in schools that offer instruction in their native language.

The first respondent teacher (T1) asserts "The prevalence of Nepali in educational policies may be detrimental to native languages. It can result in a decrease in their fluency and use, as well as contribute to the erasure of cultural practices and traditional knowledge". Similarly, the second teacher (T2) states "It is crucial to remember that supporting Nepali and indigenous languages do not always directly contradict one another. Using both the mother tongue and Nepali as the medium of teaching in a bilingual education paradigm can be an efficient strategy to make sure that kids learn both languages." Additionally, the third teacher (T3) and the fouth teacher (T4) also opine that the ultimate objective of Nepal's language education policies should be to establish an egalitarian, inclusive system that upholds the linguistic rights of all people. To achieve this, it would be necessary to maintain the development and implementation of MTBE programmes while

tackling the financial and social obstacles that keep many children from participating in them.

Language in education policy or medium of instruction (i.e. MoI) is a contentious topic that frequently touches on questions of social justice, power, and identity. The problem of delivering instruction in a multilingual setting cannot be solved in a one-size-fits-all (Dois & Lasagabaster, 2020) manner. All the participants insisted that communities should be involved in the creation and application of language education policy. From the focus group discussion, it is found that further investigation is required to determine the efficacy of various MTBE models as all the participants agreed on.

There is a growing focus on expanding educational opportunities by adopting English as the primary language of instruction (EMI) in various regions around the world. This trend is according to T2 and T4, primarily driven by policymakers' belief in the wide array of socio-economic advantages linked to improved proficiency in English and the perceived ability to tap into the global economy by using English as a universal means of communication. However, policymakers' emphasis on these benefits often overlooks the current local conditions and tends to underestimate the potential long-term downsides, some of which can lead to a series of complex issues that may negatively impact individuals, educational institutions, and society as a whole.

According to the Education Act of Nepal 1971 the government of Nepal has implemented various language policies, allowing schools to choose their medium of instruction, including Nepali, English, or a combination of both (Fillmore, 2020). On the contrary, while there is a commitment to promoting multilingual education, the practical implementation can vary, with some schools prioritizing English due to perceived economic advantages and global standards (Phyak, 2017; Shrestha, 2022). On the one hand, the constitution recognizes the right to education in the mother tongue; on the other hand, the influence of English remains significant (T1 and T2). Different stakeholders' perspectives of EMI vary (Jenkins, 2019). Although instructors in public schools in non-English speaking nations realize the importance of the English language considering its reputation around the world, it is challenging for them to effectively teach English since teachers lack the professional competence to embrace EMI.

The Education Act of 1971 underwent a significant amendment in 2007, known as The Education and Sports Related Some Nepal Acts Amendment Act 2007. This amendment introduced a policy that allows for a flexible choice of the MoI in schools, including the use of Nepali, English, or a combination of both languages. Specifically, it states that the mother tongue can be utilized as the medium of instruction up to the primary education level and permits the use of English as the medium of instruction for compulsory English subject teaching. As a result, public schools in Nepal are authorized to employ EMI for various academic subjects. In addition to the Education Act, the Multilingual Ed-

ucation Directive of 2010 provides guidelines for language use in education. It mandates that, at the pre-primary level and in classes 1-3, the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue for all subjects, except for Nepali and English. For classes 4-5, the medium of instruction can be either the mother tongue or the language of government officials. Furthermore, the Constitution of Nepal 2015n Article 31, sub-article 5, guarantees the right of every Nepali community residing in Nepal to receive education in their mother tongue up to the secondary level.

Beyond these legal provisions, various language planning documents, as noted by Phyak (2016), such as the Ministry of Education's policies and plans (including Education for All, Millennium Development Goals, School Sector Reform Plan, and National Curriculum Framework), underscore the promotion of multilingual education. These policies acknowledge the value of children's home and community languages as important assets for achieving inclusive and high-quality educational practices. The Government of Nepal has taken various policy initiatives to enhance the quality of education and promote equal access to quality education for all (Miles & Singal, 2010). These policies are aligned with the national goals of Education for All (EFA) and aim to address different facets of the education system. They emphasize school restructuring, mid-day meals, quality and relevance of education, supervision, and monitoring, and effective management to improve the education system and ultimately enhance student learning outcomes. Some specific policy efforts and regulations include The Educational Regulation, The Scholarship Act, the School Account Operational Manual, School Grant Operational Directives, the SMC Training Manual, the Continuous Assessment of Student Directive, School Merging and Down-sizing Directive, School Enrolment Campaign Guideline, and more. These policies prioritize free basic education, offer support to targeted students through scholarships, meals, and residential facilities, promote girls' education, enhance teacher development, and improve infrastructure. They also focus on management efficiency, skill development, local-level planning, and monitoring, all to ensure quality education and improve educational outcomes in Nepal.

Overall, the responses of the participants also shows that these legislative measures and policy documents collectively demonstrate Nepal's commitment to implementing multilingual education, aiming to leverage students' native languages as valuable resources in the pursuit of equitable and effective educational practices. Additionally, EMI is prevalent in private schools, and some public schools are also adopting this approach. The expansion of EMI in schools of Nepal has been significant, with schools and School Management Committees (SMCs) making decisions based on their considerations (Khanal et al. 2023). However, there is a lack of centralized data on the extent of this expansion, and the issue remains politically charged. Sah and Li (2018) claim that despite government efforts to improve education quality, challenges persist in teacher training,

curriculum development, and teaching methods. There is often a gap between policy implementation and real-life execution. However, a significant concern in Nepal's education system is the widespread use of EMI, which contradicts the constitutional provision granting the right to education in children's mother tongues. However, Gim (2020) asserts that the influence of the English language has led to a hegemonic effect, with parents seeking schools where English is the medium of instruction, even in subjects unrelated to English itself. This practice is driven by the belief that exposure to English in various subjects can enhance children's language skills. While Nepal has made considerable efforts to improve the quality of education and promote inclusive access, the issue of English as the medium of instruction remains a significant challenge and source of debate in the country's education system.

Although Nepal's legal framework contains provisions to safeguard linguistic minority rights, there is a lack of trust in the national legal system's ability to enforce these rights effectively (Awasthi, Turin &Yadava, 2022). In response to this, various linguistic communities in Nepal are taking initiative through language activism and innovative endeavors. Despite having some legal foundations in place, the practical implementation of language policies remains problematic due to vague and poorly articulated policies and legislation. To truly fulfill the promise of linguistic human rights (LHRs) in Nepal, the country needs clear and unequivocal language policies and well-funded programs, particularly in the realm of basic education in the mother tongue of each linguistic group. Without such clarity and effective programs, the divide between the rhetoric surrounding linguistic rights and their actual realization is likely to widen, leaving Nepal's linguistic minorities at a continued disadvantage.

Dominant Languages in Education

In Nepal, more than 125 languages are spoken, and each one is connected to a certain group of people and culture (Regmi, 2023). However, the majority are under-represented in instructional materials, teacher preparation, and curriculum development. These actions marginalise these languages and put them at risk of disappearing. Although the government policy permits pupils to complete their basic education in their home tongue, Nepali and English are the two most often used languages for instruction, according to Prashad (2019).

Nepali: Since it is the official language of the country, education policy prioritises Nepali. From elementary school to university education, it is the principal medium of teaching, acting as a uniting factor and promoting communication throughout the nation.

English: As a language of prestige and upward mobility, English has a history stemming from British colonization. English is widely used in education, even though it is not the official language, especially in private and higher education institutions.

Internal Colonization and the Rise of Nepali

Before Nepal was formally united in the eighteenth century, several languages were spoken throughout the kingdom's various areas. But Nepali, the language of the conquering class, rose to prominence with the conquest of Gorkhali and the founding of the Shah dynasty (Whelpton, 2005). This process of internal colonization included:

i. The Shah rulers imposed Nepali as the official language, thereby excluding other languages from positions of authority and prestige and designating Nepali as the language of the military, courts, and government.

ii. Nepali language, lexicon, and writing system standardization and centralization: Attempts were made to harmonize these elements, sometimes at the price of acknowledging the natural diversity of Nepali dialects spoken throughout the nation.

iii. Limited availability of education in languages other than Nepali: Communities whose mother tongues were marginalized faced a linguistic hurdle as education, especially at higher levels, became more and more inaccessible in languages other than Nepali.

The Aftereffects of British Colonialism

Whelpton (2005) further states that the 19th century saw the introduction of the British Raj, which further confused the linguistic environment. Even though Nepal maintained its official independence, the British left their mark on many areas of life, including education. This led to:

i. English was introduced as a language of privilege and power. It was adopted by the colonial government and Westernized elites, solidifying a linguistic hierarchy in which English was the most advanced language.

ii. Devaluation of indigenous languages: Indigenous languages were further devalued and prevented from developing inside the educational system by British policies and attitudes that frequently depicted them as inferior and outdated.

iii. Dependency on English for higher education and job advancement: Students from non-English speaking backgrounds are further disadvantageous as access to esteemed colleges and profitable careers is increasingly dependent on English language competency.

Consequences of Linguistic Colonialism

The focus group discussion of interview with the participants showed the following historical methods of linguistic colonization that had a long-lasting effect on society and the educational system in Nepal:

i. Language loss and endangerment: Due to their limited usage in official domains and education, several indigenous languages are atrisk of going extinct, endangering the cultural legacy and identities of numerous groups.

ii. Unequal access to high-quality education: Disparities in academic success and social mobility are perpetuated by students from non-dominant language backgrounds finding it difficult to compete in an educational system where instruction is predominantly given in Nepali and English.

iii. Internalised linguistic inferiority: Groups whose languages have been marginalised may experience a devaluation of their own cultural history as well as sentiments of inferiority.

Towards Decolonization and Linguistic Justice

Nepal has made several recent efforts towards decolonization after realising the negative impacts of linguistic colonialism which is primarily focused by the participants:

i. All mother tongues are recognised as national languages under the 2015 Constitution. This signifies a substantial change in the recognition of the worth and significance of linguistic variation.

ii. By offering early instruction in children's native tongues, the Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) programme seeks to strengthen children's foundation for learning and promote cultural identification.

iii. In addition to actively pushing for legislative reforms and the revival of their languages, indigenous groups and grassroots organisations are also actively participating in the development of educational resources based on their mother tongues.

Achieving linguistic equity and decolonizing the Nepalese educational system is a difficult and drawn-out process. To promote the equitable recognition and usage of all languages, empower marginalized populations, and confront historical legacies, persistent efforts are needed. Through the acceptance of its multilingualism and the provision of fair and high-quality education in all languages, Nepal can help its people reach their full potential and create a society that is more inclusive and equitable at large.

In this article, I have examined the historical processes of linguistic colonialism in the Nepalese educational system, emphasizing both the ongoing effects of this system and the recent initiatives to remove it by the help of the participants' responses. Building a genuinely inclusive and equitable future for all depends on acknowledging the perspectives, experiences, and languages of marginalized populations as Nepal continues to negotiate this complicated terrain.

Mismatch in Educational Policies: A Further Examination

The policy and implementation gaps in Nepal's education system, especially with regard to language instruction, have intricate and wide-ranging ramifications. A closer look at certain particular instances and possible fixes is provided below:

Policy Gaps and Implementation Issues

The existing policy leaves room for interpretation over what constitutes a "mother tongue," which makes it difficult to determine which languages are eligible for MTBE opportunities. Smaller societies with fewer shared languages may suffer from this uncertainty (Giri, 2011). Similarly, lack of resources is another gap. The creation of curricula, teacher preparation, and improved infrastructure for various languages are hampered by insufficient financing. By ignoring the requirements of isolated places and languages that are less common, this creates an unfair playing field. The policy does not include a thorough plan for educating educators in a range of native tongues (Hornberger, 2002). As a result, the quality of instruction is compromised in many MTBE programmes by understaffed or untrained teachers.

Evaluation inequity is another gap where standardized exams frequently give preference to Nepali, which disadvantages students whose MTBE programmes haven't yet established culturally relevant and suitable evaluation techniques (Joshi & James, 2023). Inaccurate assessments and the maintenance of inequity may result from this. Disconnection from the community is one more gap. Especially in rural regions, policy-making frequently occurs without sufficient community involvement. This mismatch may result in programmes that are ineffective because they fail to take into account particular requirements and cultural circumstances.

Consequences of Decolonization in Language in Education and Solutions

Decolonizing language in education can lead to the revitalization of indigenous cultures, improved educational outcomes, and greater social inclusion by recognizing linguistic diversity. However, challenges such as resistance to change, lack of resources, and socio-economic barriers must be addressed. Solutions include developing educational materials in indigenous languages, training and recruiting qualified teachers, engaging communities, and gradually implementing policies with strong support and monitoring. These steps can help ensure that mother-tongue-based education is both effective and sustainable, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and culturally rich educational environment. The data driven from the participants showed the following challenges and solutions:

Marginalisation

The data reveals that cultural legacy, traditional knowledge, and community identities are at risk due to the ongoing decrease of indigenous languages. In order to combat this, it is essential to encourage intergenerational language transmission and community-based language revitalization initiatives.

Unequal Opportunities

The participants of the focus group state that due to restricted access to high-quality education in their mother tongue, children from indigenous communities are at a disadvantage. Important first steps towards equity include funding strong MTBE programmes, providing scholarships, and removing societal barriers to education.

Ineffective Learning

Similarly, the participants asserted that children find it difficult to understand ideas and lag behind when they don't have access to trained teachers and sufficient learning resources in their mother language. Developing pertinent curricular materials, educating teachers in a variety of languages, and encouraging collaboration with linguists and communities are all required to solve issue.

Lost Potential

One of the respondent claimed that accurate evaluation of students' progress and potential is hampered by standardized examinations that do not take into account the unique characteristics of MTBE programmes. Fairer assessments depend on creating culturally appropriate assessment techniques and appreciating the importance of different knowledge systems.

Lack of Trust

All the participants insisted that resentment and mistrust of the policies increase when communities perceive themselves as being left out of decision-making processes. To foster trust and achieve long-term growth, it is essential to guarantee that the community is actively involved in the creation of policies and the execution of programmes.

To resolve these discrepancies, the discussion with the participants shows the following multifaceted strategy is needed.

Policy Review and Revision

Clearly define "mother tongue," provide sufficient funding, give teacher preparation first priority, provide culturally appropriate evaluation techniques, and actively include communities in the formulation of policies.

Resource Mobilisation

Obtain extra funds from domestic and foreign sources, solicit donations from the business community, and support effective resource distribution for MTBE initiatives.

Building Capacity

Invest in MTBE-specific training programmes that guarantee cultural sensitivity and efficacy for educators, curriculum designers, and administrators.

Community Empowerment

Establish channels for community involvement in planning, designing, and overseeing programmes in order to promote cultural relevance and a sense of ownership in MTBE projects.

Research and Innovation

To overcome resource constraints, produce culturally relevant learning materials, support research on successful MTBE models, and investigate cutting-edge technology.

Nepal can advance towards a truly inclusive and equitable education system that empowers all of its kids, regardless of their language origin, by admitting the inconsistencies, taking proactive measures towards remedies, and encouraging ongoing development.

Decolonization in Nepal's Education Policies

Despite Nepal's history of never being formally colonized by external powers, the nation has encountered intricate challenges related to internal and external linguistic colonialism. These challenges have been reflected in the marginalization of indigenous languages, particularly within the education system, where Nepali and English have traditionally held central positions. However, a burgeoning movement is advocating for the decolonization of language education policies, striving to establish a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

The dynamics of the educational system demonstrate that formal education curriculum frequently omitted indigenous languages, which limited the educational opportunities available to speakers of these languages (Kandel,2021). Students whose native language was different from the prevailing language faced obstacles due to rules that were centred upon Nepali and English. Decolonization was becoming more popular from two directions.

i. Grassroots Activism: Communities, educators, and activists are pushing for the official recognition and teaching of indigenous languages in schools.

ii. Decolonizing Pedagogy: The movement incorporates indigenous languages into curriculum and instructional materials in an effort to decolonize pedagogical methods.

The learning atmosphere was egalitarian, inclusive, and respected language diversity. Advocates emphasise how important it is to recognise and respect linguistic diversity as a vital part of Nepal's cultural heritage (Gautam, 2022). The development of policies that give priority to the use of indigenous languages in formal education is an attempt to establish more fair and inclusive learning environments.

The decolonization movement in language education is in line with larger initiatives to protect and advance a variety of cultural identities, as language is fundamental

to cultural identity. Integrating indigenous languages promotes community pride by strengthening linkages to the past and maintaining cultural continuity.

The decolonization of language education policy in Nepal is a continuous process that recognises, values, and incorporates linguistic variety within the official education system (Poudel, Jackson & Choi, 2022). As linguistic inclusion is essential to maintaining cultural identities and promoting a sense of pride and belonging among all cultures, the movement seeks to provide a more equal and inclusive learning environment.

Embracing Linguistic Variety as a Cultural Asset and Weaving Indigenous Languages into the Curriculum

Imagine a society in which several languages blend together to form a complex tapestry of cultural identity, much like colourful threads. When we accept linguistic diversity as a cultural asset, we live in a society where each voice contributes uniquely to the symphony of human expression. This is the world we celebrate. However, this tapestry is in danger. Indigenous languages are frequently marginalised by colonial legacies and dominant languages, which silences their narrative and diminishes their knowledge. To combat this, we need to advocate for inclusive policies that restore these essential strands to the curriculum, establishing an educational framework that respects diversity and gives all students the tools they need to succeed.

Linguistic Variety: A Tapestry of Cultural Wealth

Every language serves as a portal to a distinct worldview and a storehouse of customs, history, and knowledge bases that have been passed down through the ages. It influences our worldview, emotional expression, and interpersonal relationships. By accepting language diversity, we also accept these cultural riches, deepening our comprehension of the human condition and promoting tolerance for other modes of cognition and existence.

The Threat of Silencing Threads: Marginalization and Loss

However, there's a chance that this tapestry may come apart. Indigenous languages are typically marginalized and pushed to the margins of public life and education due to colonial legacies and competing languages. Severing communities from their cultural origins, marginalization results in language loss, and silences voices that are invaluable.

Weaving Indigenous Languages Back into the Curriculum: Inclusive Policies for a Vibrant Tapestry

Indigenous languages must be aggressively reintegrated into the curriculum in order to stop this silence and recover their rich cultural heritage. For this, inclusive policies that:

i. Appreciate and acknowledge native languages as acceptable teaching languages: Regmi (2021) states that early mother language instruction builds children's aca-

demic foundations and promotes cultural identification.

ii. Create instructional resources based on mother tongues: The development of cur-riculum, textbooks, and other materials in native tongues strengthens communities and guarantees that everyone has access to high-quality education.

iii. Educators should get training in multilingual education: The proper execution of inclusive policies depends on instructors having the abilities and knowledge to instruct in various languages.

iv. Encourage community-driven projects: To ensure accurate portrayal and respect for indigenous cultures' traditional values and knowledge systems, partnerships with these groups are essential.

By reintroducing languages into the educational fabric, these policies serve as threads and needles. In addition to celebrating cultural variety and empowering indige-nous people, they also make learning richer and more engaging for all students.

Navigating Towards Decolonized Education in Nepal: Positive Trends Amidst Chal-lenges

More inclusiveness and diversity in education are possible because new policies ac-knowledge the value of multilingualism and indigenous knowledge systems.The decolo-nization movement is gaining traction because of the strong support of indigenous groups for the use of their languages and traditions in the classroom. Similarly, academic study in the field of language in education policy is serving positively. As decolonization in Nepal receives more attention from scholars, it offers insightful information that influences policy talks.

Overcoming Hurdles to Decolonize Nepalese Education: Strategies for Effective Transformation

Creating resources, educating educators, and fostering community involvement all require a sufficient amount of funds by increasing additional resources. Similarly, con-text specific methods and strategies for decolonization must be customized to the distinct language and cultural contexts of each population. Furthermore, it requires cooperation. For long-lasting change, there must be strong alliances between researchers, educators, communities, and legislators. In addition to this, long-term commitment is a must: The process of decolonization is intricate and continual, requiring perseverance, never-ending learning, and adaptability.Through addressing these challenges and advancing the fight for a more fair and inclusive educational system, Nepal may get closer to achieving its goal of decolonizing its educational system.

Decolonizing language in education can revitalize indigenous cultures, enhance learning outcomes, and promote social inclusion. However, challenges such as resistance, resource shortages, and socio-economic barriers must be tackled. Effective solutions in-

clude creating educational materials in indigenous languages, training teachers, engaging communities, and implementing policies gradually with ongoing support and monitoring. These strategies can lead to a more inclusive and culturally diverse educational system.

Data on decolonizing language in education reveals significant insights into its impact on student performance, cultural preservation, and social inclusion. Studies show that students taught in their mother tongue often perform better academically, highlighting the benefits of mother-tongue-based education (MTBE) in improving literacy and comprehension (Sah & Li, 2018; Fillmore, 2020; Joshi, 2020). Additionally, schools offering MTBE tend to have higher enrollment and retention rates among indigenous students, indicating that education in a familiar language encourages greater participation (Phyak, 2021; Gim, 2020; Joshi, 2020) . However, challenges remain, such as a shortage of qualified teachers and instructional resources in indigenous languages. While data suggests progress in preserving linguistic diversity, disparities in implementation still exist (Awasthi, 2008). Furthermore, community and parental attitudes play a crucial role in the success of these programs, with some resistance due to concerns about future opportunities. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring that decolonization efforts lead to a more inclusive and effective educational system.

Conclusion

To conclude, Nepal's endeavour to decolonize language education is a result of a multifaceted interaction between past influences and present-day obstacles. Though mother-tongue based education (MTBE) is being promoted as a way to conserve linguistic variety in the 2015 Constitution and 2019 National Education Policy, there are still significant operational challenges and policy gaps that must be addressed. Define "mother tongue," provide enough funding, and actively include communities in policymaking if we are to genuinely empower all groups. To close the implementation gaps, it is imperative that teacher shortages be addressed and that curriculum development be improved, as well as evaluation techniques revised. In order to create an inclusive education system that respects and cherishes Nepal's unique linguistic tapestry and, in the end, ensures equitable opportunity for all of its kids, it will be essential to embrace community participation and stimulate creativity via research on successful MTBE models. The removal of obstacles that support linguistic marginalisation and a persistent, group commitment to ongoing progress is necessary to achieve this transformational objective.

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