

The Conceptualization of Indigenous Pedagogies and Practices in the Nepali Context

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Abstract

Indigenous peoples have their own ways of teaching and learning that empower and dignify them. The mainstream, Western, colonial, and imported pedagogies have been critiqued for their limited alignment with indigenous epistemologies. Thus, indigenous peoples developed their own pedagogies, which are collectively referred to as “Indigenous Pedagogies”. Educators and scholars theorized them in different ways based on different contexts. The people have confusion and a lack of competency in indigenous pedagogies due to a limited understanding of them. By critically reviewing the literature, this article attempted to conceptualize Indigenous Pedagogies and their practices in Nepal and similar contexts. This study conceptualized the indigenous pedagogies as a humanist, holistic, integrated, multi-modal, environment-friendly, and student-friendly teaching and learning process, which respects and values diversity regardless of human and non-human beings, culture and nature, physical and meta-physical entities. Based on the indigenous values: coexistence, relationality, harmony, compassion, humility, and respect, the practical, experiential, creative, active, reflexive, imaginative, and holistic teaching and learning approaches, group and hands-on activities, storytelling, songs, creative arts, observation, and active participation come in indigenous pedagogies. Although it preserves and promotes the indigenous history, culture, and language by respecting (without dominating, marginalizing, and destroying) diversity, the state and power holders may mis(use) it to promote and impose mainstream and imperialist values and ideologies. The empirical study could be conducted to support in-depth research and promote indigenous pedagogies for the well-being of humanity and environmental protection.

Keywords: indigeneity; pedagogies; Damphu model; environment; holistic education; humanity

Introduction

This study attempted to explore the meanings, importance, and conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies and analyze their practices in Nepal and similar contexts. The western, colonial, imported, and mainstream pedagogies have been criticized for their limited compatibility with the indigenous learners' learning styles, needs, interests, culture, imagination, history, and language (Jaiswal, 2025). The studies show that such pedagogies are even harmful and disruptive to the indigenous learners, people, and community because the indigenous learners became low-achieving learners, and it destroys the indigenous language, knowledge, and values (Jacob et al., 2025; Kickett-Tucker et al., 2026; Smith, 2016). Although indigenous learners face challenges to excel in Eurocentric pedagogy, they increased their academic engagement and could improve their learning achievements in culturally sensitive indigenous pedagogies in Canada (Persaud et al., 2025; Sumarno et al., 2026). Thus, by integrating culturally appropriate and modern research-based pedagogies, they can be utilized for better learning, empowering and dignifying both indigenous and non-indigenous learners (Cirkony et al., 2023). Moreover, the indigenous pedagogies can boost the indigenous learners' identity, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-image and self-respect and educate them for social harmony and environmental stewardship (Lees & Bang, 2023). Instead of enlightening, empowering, and dignifying, if pedagogies hurt and harm indigenous learners' feelings, imagination, and aspirations, how can they successfully support learners in reaching their potential (Kearns, 2020)?

Context of the Study

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multireligious country. (Constituent Assembly, 2015). Nepal is also a multinational country because many nations: Khasan, Tharuwan, Tamuwan, Magarat, Tamangsaling, Newa, Khambuwan, Limbuwan, and Kochila are located here. So, it depicts that Nepal is a multi-indigenous people/ national country. The Nepali indigenous people have their pedagogies/ ways of the teaching-learning process. Various studies (Amazan et al., 2024; Arevalo et al., 2025; Toulouse, 2016) have found that indigenous pedagogies play an important role in empowering learners and transforming communities by raising their consciousness. The indigenous

pedagogies have been conceptualized as culturally responsive pedagogies, which have the potential to empower and dignify both the indigenous and non-indigenous learners. (Thapa, 2025). It helps to preserve the indigenous culture and environment by decolonizing and combating climate change. Moreover, it contributes to constructing a harmonious and equitable society by fighting against all kinds of discrimination and injustices.

However, the stakeholders lack the awareness and proper understanding of indigenous pedagogies in Nepal. Indigenous pedagogies are a less-explored area of study in Nepal. It has a significant value and is relevant in Nepal because of the multiplicity and diversity of nationalities, cultures, civilizations, knowledge, and pedagogical systems. 59 indigenous nationalities living in Nepal, and they are searching and fighting for their rights and identities in Nepal (National Statistics Office, 2021). However, there are various misconceptions, misunderstandings, and contradictions in the indigenous pedagogies. So, this paper attempts to conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies and explore their rationale, need, and importance in Nepal and similar contexts. The following questions will be dealt with to have a proper and deeper understanding and conceptualization of the indigenous pedagogies:

- What is the concept of indigenous pedagogies in Nepal and similar contexts?
- How are the practices of indigenous pedagogies in Nepal?

Literature Review

In this section, Nepal-based literature will be reviewed to examine the practices of indigenous pedagogies, gain an in-depth contextual understanding, and lay the ground for analyzing the results and findings. Firstly, I found that indigenous pedagogies have been ignored, underrepresented, and even excluded from the Nepali education system, curriculum, textbooks, and teaching-learning process. Secondly, although the policies mandate the indigenous pedagogies through the local curriculum and mother-tongue-based education, teacher educators and teachers lack the awareness and competencies to practice in schools, colleges and universities in Nepal. Thirdly, the stakeholders: government authorities, bureaucrats, policy makers, parents and students misconceive and misunderstand the indigenous pedagogies as traditional, irrational, outdated, and incapable of making learning happen.

The books, book chapters, and research papers were reviewed through Smith (2021)'s decolonial, Kovach (2021)'s contextual, and Wilson (2008)'s relational Indigenous Research Paradigm, which provides a framework to review the literature by relating it to the cultural, historical, and ethical contexts.

Ignorance and Underrepresentation of Indigenous Pedagogies

Indigenous pedagogies have been ignored and overlooked in Nepal because of a lack of proper understanding, the influence of the Western system, and the centralized education system. The culturally inappropriate curriculum has been developed and implemented in the name of English-medium education, excessive love for the English language, and the over-dominance of the official language: Nepali. Although the language and education policies mandate the practice of mother-tongue-based education (MTBE), it has been practiced ineffectively due to the indifference of the authorities and lack of awareness among indigenous people. The authorities view multiple languages, diverse cultures, and ethnicities/ people through a deficit perspective and take it as a liability rather than an asset. Nepali curricula and educational policies are largely centralized and heavily influenced by the Western/ colonial epistemologies and state ideologies. (Poudel et al., 2022). There is a lack of recognition, acknowledgment, inclusion, incorporation, and place of Indigenous knowledge in the national curricula and textbooks. In this regard, Rai and Gaire (2021) investigated that indigenous knowledge has been underrepresented in the curriculum, and the Western education system devalued the indigenous knowledge and lived experiences embedded in the local culture, environment, community, and institutions. Scholars investigated the indigenous people's rights, identity, culture, and knowledge in Nepal and laid down the foundation for it. However, few of these researchers explicitly talked about the indigenous pedagogies. It indicates that the indigenous scholars also might have overlooked indigenous education and pedagogies.

Lack of knowledge and skills of indigenous pedagogies

The stakeholders have limited knowledge and skills of indigenous pedagogies, which hinders their application in the classroom. In this regard, Rai and Gaire (2021) found that the educators lack the competencies to link the local cultural context with the pedagogies in Nepal. Similarly, Shyangtan et al. (2021) reported that Nepali scholars and educators have a lack of awareness and misconceptions about indigenous

knowledge and pedagogies due to Western hegemonization. It indicates that the Nepali stakeholders suffer from an inferiority complex because they view the indigenous knowledge and pedagogies as less rational, unscientific, and unable to lead the nation to development and modernity. Therefore, it can be synthesized that indigenous knowledge is absent in almost all the courses in Nepal.

Exclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogies from the Curriculum and Formal Education

Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies have been excluded from the curriculum and formal education in Nepal. In this context, Rai (2021) articulated that the diverse indigenous knowledge, pedagogies, and activities are less recognized, acknowledged, and prioritized in Nepal. He argued that although the indigenous people have their own knowledge and pedagogical system, the government has little interest in acknowledging it. It shows that the government is indifferent towards the indigenous people, knowledge system and pedagogy. In this context, the western Nepal-based study by Upadhyaya (2025) found that the cultural histories, languages and knowledge systems of local and excluded communities have been rarely reflected in the educational content in Nepal. Moreover, the indigenous pedagogies, such as oral traditions and community-based learning, are devalued and ignored. Additionally, the mainstream educational models are unable to acknowledge the indigenous pedagogies that disconnect formal and informal education, experiential, practical, and community-based learning practices of indigenous people. In this regard, Kandel (2025) explored that the centralized Nepali education system and curriculum underrepresented and neglected the diverse indigenous knowledge, culture, language, traditions, and little emphasized the local ways of teaching and learning. Regarding this, Pradhan et al. (2021) asserted that indigenous knowledge, skills, and capabilities have been undermined in the Nepali school curriculum. They reported that the government has less emphasized cultural knowledge, which negatively affects the educational development of the nation in Nepal. Moreover, Pradhan et al. (2021) articulated that Nepali curriculum developers are unaware of local socio-cultural contexts. It means they lack the proper understanding of indigenous knowledge and pedagogies and their importance. Nepali school pedagogy is alien and indifferent to the local knowledge and pedagogies. The study based on Tharu communities, Niure (2019), reported that the formal Nepali education system and

curricula rarely reflect and represent the diverse indigenous knowledge, culture, language, and ways of knowing and pedagogies. Moreover, the indigenous knowledge and traditional teaching strategies of the Tharu people are losing their contextual underpinnings and are devalued by the mainstream curriculum and pedagogy. Consequently, the curriculum became irrelevant and ineffective for the diverse indigenous Tharu learners. In this regard, Rai and Rai (2021) stated that the rigid, structured, modern, and teacher-centered education system devalued, ignored, and marginalized the indigenous knowledge and pedagogies. Moreover, the indigenous students have been marginalized and victimized in Nepal through symbolic violence and the perpetuation of dominant religious and cultural practices at schools (Rai & Rai, 2025). Thus, they showed the urgent need for educational reform to recognize the religious and cultural diversity in Nepal and promote equity and inclusion for all indigenous and non-indigenous students.

To synthesize the aforementioned discussion, the higher authorities, policy makers, curriculum developers, and teachers lack the proper understanding of the concepts and importance of indigenous knowledge and pedagogies in Nepal. By being influenced by the Western and centralized education system, Nepal neglects and undermines the rich cultural and linguistic heritage and takes the diverse indigenous knowledge system and pedagogies as the problem, deficit, inferior, and backward. (Poudel et al., 2022). The misconceptions and misunderstandings of indigenous knowledge and pedagogies will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Misconceptions and Misunderstandings of Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogies in Nepal

The mainstream Nepali formal education system misconceptualises and misunderstands the Tharu/ indigenous knowledge and pedagogies as inferior, irrelevant, irrational, and weak, which has challenged improving the learning and performance of the learners (Niure, 2019). Moreover, the researcher found that the Tharu learners learn better through their hands-on experience, practical and trial-and-error approaches, rather than the abstract, lecture-based, and teacher-centered methods. It shows that the Tharu learners have their own learning styles and processes. It indicates that the indigenous learners learn better if the pedagogies are compatible with the indigenous learners' learning styles, needs, and interests. Regarding this, Phyak (2021) reported that the

higher authorities and stakeholders misconceptualize and misunderstand the indigenous history, language, culture, knowledge, and pedagogies, which resulted in the erosion of the indigenous history, language, culture, and consciousness. Although there is a provision of language inclusion in the policy, the perpetuation of erasure is still there. Similarly, the researcher found that the stakeholders, policymakers, and teachers misunderstand and misconceptualize the mother-tongue-based indigenous pedagogies in early childhood education (ECE) in Nepal (Chouhan, 2025). Moreover, they take the mother-tongue-based indigenous pedagogies as an unnecessary burden and ignore the indigenous local culture, language, history and pedagogies, even though the constitutional promises. Ethnographic analyses reveal that the Nepali policy makers and educators lack the proper understanding and conceptualization of the culture, history, and language of the Tharu indigenous people and overlook their experiential and multi-modal indigenous pedagogies by contradicting the formal education system (Chaudhary, 2021). Likewise, in a Nepal- and Kenya-based study, Nganga et al. (2024) found that the stakeholders misconceptualize, devalue, and reframe the indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies as inferior in early childhood education (ECE) due to the hegemonization of neocolonial and neoliberal ideologies.

So, the aforementioned studies can be summarised as showing that there are misconceptions and misunderstandings about indigenous knowledge and pedagogies and their importance in Nepal and similar contexts. Therefore, in the following section, the indigenous pedagogies will be conceptualized by exploring their contextual meanings and importance in Nepal and similar contexts.

Research Methods

Research as a Ceremony, Relational, Contextual, and Decolonial Process

This study employed the relational narrative literature review informed by Wilson (2008), Smith (2021), and Kovach (2021) that provides a framework to conceptualize indigenous pedagogies by reviewing the literature in a relational, decolonial, and contextual narrative perspective. By using the ceremony as a metaphor for research, Wilson (2008) argued that research needs to be conducted as a ceremony: a sacred process that highly values the relationship with self, others, community, land, ancestors, spirituality, and knowledge, which is considered the ethical process while interpreting the data. The books, book chapters, articles, and papers are treated and

reviewed considering that the literature exists within relationships, is produced through relationships, and is responsible for relationships. Thus, the secondary data were treated relationally with respect, not merely as isolated objective information. Considering the literature as a site of power relations, colonisation, and indigenous people's resistance, the secondary data has been analysed as a decolonial process (Smith, 2021). The synthesis of the literature review has been presented in a narrative way related to the contexts (Kovach, 2021). To prepare this conceptual/ theoretical article, the literature review was conducted as a relational rather than a technical process. As in a ceremony, the literature was searched, analyzed, and synthesized ethically, sensitively, and carefully.

Search Strategies

By utilising the keywords, Boolean string (Booth et al., 2016) ("Concept of Indigenous Pedagogies" OR "The Meaning of Indigenous Pedagogies" OR "Definitions of Indigenous Pedagogies" NOT "Mainstream Modern Pedagogies") AND ("Indigenous Pedagogies" OR "Nepal" OR "Canada" OR "New Zealand" OR "Australia"), the secondary data was searched in Google Scholar, Nepal Journal Online (NepJol), Taylor & Francis, Routledge, University and government data repositories. The qualitative data: books, book chapters, articles, papers, and government policy documents were collected and reviewed relationally, taking them as relations, products of relations, and sites of power struggles.

Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

This study included 87 relevant pieces of literature on concepts of indigenous pedagogies and reviewed peer-reviewed articles, research papers, books, and book chapters with DOI numbers. Irrelevant, non-peer-reviewed, decontextual conference proceedings and predatory data were excluded based on the exclusion and inclusion criteria. However, the excluded literature has also been treated relationally and respectfully as a part of the broader knowledge system and taken into account in the interpretation. The excluded (not discarded) literature has also influenced the interpretation in this study, and the irrelevant literature can be used in another study. The indigenous pedagogies have been conceptualised by reviewing the following major literature: Chaudhary (2021), Grande (2015), Kovach (2021), Lancy (2024), Lusted (1986), Nichol (2011), Phyak (2021), Shyangtan et al. (2021), Rai and Rai (2021),

Smith (2021), and Wilson (20008), which have the profound contextual and theoretical relevancy to the concepts of indigenous pedagogies.

Results and Discussion

In this section, I will analyze the concepts and meanings of indigenous pedagogies in different contexts: Nepal, Kenya, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. By categorizing into sixteen sub-sections, the concepts of indigenous pedagogies have been interpreted and synthesized into a Damphu Model/ Framework of Indigenous Pedagogies. Moreover, I will discuss the concepts of indigenous pedagogies: talking/healing circle, relationality, value-based teaching and learning process embedded with culture, land-based/ place-based, localized critical pedagogy, culturally sensitive and appropriate, holistic, red, environment-friendly, learner-friendly, 21st century, experiential, art-based, culturally grounded, practical and hands-on activity-based, collective and collaborative, and decolonial pedagogies, which will be discussed below in detail.

The Concepts of Indigenous Pedagogies

The term “indigenous pedagogy/ies” is constructed by two terms: “indigenous” and “pedagogy”. The term “indigenous” is derived from the Latin word “Indigenus/ Indigene”, which means the native or aborigine or born in a particular place (Etymonline, 2026). In this context, Funk and Woodroffe (2024) articulated that indigenous people, such as the First Nations and Aboriginal People, are in a particular territory. Consequently, tracing the history of Greek philosophy and the education system, Shah (2021) conceptualized pedagogy as the art, science, and applied science of teaching, with the relationship and interactions between students, teachers, learning environment and activities, which is shaped by the learning theories, beliefs, policies and values in a socio-cultural, political and historical context. Pedagogy is not merely a teaching approach and central activity of the education system; it is all about the process of production, reproduction and transmission of knowledge (Lusted, 1986). Moreover, Lusted redefines the appropriate pedagogy in which the teacher and students co-construct knowledge through meaningful interaction, valuing the students' identities and experiences. It values contextual learning, acknowledges power relations and differences, breaks down divisions, questions the status quo, raises learners' consciousness, and fosters meaningful engagement, aiming at cognitive and social

transformation. So, the indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as the art, science, and applied science of teaching of indigenous people. Depending on the context, it has different names, such as indigenous pedagogies, aboriginal pedagogies, local pedagogies, native pedagogies, place-based/land-based pedagogies, and red pedagogies. However, it is a complex phenomenon to be dealt with, and it demands an in-depth study to conceptualize based on multinational and diverse contexts, which will be discussed in the following sections:

Talking/ Healing Circle Pedagogy

The indigenous people practiced their pedagogies in their talking/healing circle. In a Canada-based study, Swan and Weenie (2024) explore the talking/ healing circle as an Indigenous pedagogy, which engages learners in gift/strength-exploring activities and enhances their talents and gifts, thereby developing relationships between learners and educators and fostering their learning. Moreover, it decolonizes and indigenizes deficit-focused pedagogical practices. It is the opposite of a deficit focus teaching-learning process of teaching and learning. It can be a transformative pedagogy which leads learners to enhance their self-image, self-concept, self-knowledge and self-esteem. Moreover, it emphasizes knowing and being oneself, one's own strengths, identity, language, and culture rather than the weaknesses, which is aligned with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Talking circles and storytelling have been taken and recommended as a pedagogical approach that focuses on respectful conversations and good listening skills. Thus, the talking/ healing circle can be replicated by contextualizing it, which would be useful to enhance the self-image, empower, and equip the Nepali students. It can be applied in schools with limited teaching materials and resources.

Indigenous value-based pedagogy

The indigenous people have their values: relationality, respect, responsibility, representation, relevance, and reciprocity. In this Australia-based research, Funk and Woodroffe (2024) point out that Indigenous peoples, or “the First Nations and Aboriginal People,” have different pedagogies grounded in their value system. They articulated that indigenous pedagogies use the “differentiated approach” according to diversity by engaging the participants in the 3R framework: Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation. It means that respect, relationships, and reconciliation are important, and

those things need to be dealt with. After the underrepresentation of indigenous people in Canada and the United States, the indigenous learners' low learning achievement, participation, and higher dropouts, the government, policymakers, and scholars worked to address this issue and conducted a program in higher study. Regarding this, in a Canada-based study, Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) reported that an educational program was launched with the 4R framework by respecting indigenous learners for who they are, making it relevant to their worldviews, providing reciprocity in their relationships with others, and supporting them to exercise responsibility in their lives. Consequently, the indigenous learners were empowered and strengthened through this 4R framework, which significantly improved their learning achievements and participation. Similarly, in a United States context study on Native American STEM faculty, Grant et al. (2022) discussed the 6R framework by adding two more Rs: Relationship and Representation. The researchers argued that effort needs to be made to build and maintain the relationship with the indigenous learners and their community. When relationships and trust are built at first, respect, responsibility, representation, relevance, and reciprocity can be managed and dealt with properly. In an Australia-based study, Bishop (2023) reported that indigenous pedagogies are not merely the teaching and learning process; these are the exercises and practices of indigenous values: humility, listening, and respect. In a Canada-based qualitative research, Menzies et al. (2024) argued that the practice of indigenous values would be a sustainable strategy to create a harmonious and equitable human society and preserve the environmental and ecological system because the cultivation of indigenous values would help to live a responsible life towards society and nature, build healthy relationships, and respect human beings and the environment. Thus, the indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as a process of cultivating the indigenous values at home and school, which Nepal can learn and practice.

Land-based/ place-based pedagogy

Indigenous people consider and treat the land as a mother because the land is crucial for them to survive and sustain life (Hatala et al., 2020). Indigenous people's lives are almost impossible without land, where they live, learn, unlearn, and relearn from the land. Moreover, they teach the learners about the land and in the land. The indigenous learners' and people's lives, worldview, culture, history, knowledge, and ways of teaching

and learning process are connected with the land. Without relating to land, the indigenous people's culture, knowledge, and pedagogies would be incomplete. The indigenous learners' learning styles and interests are also connected with their ancestral land. The land-based pedagogy views the land as a university or classroom where the learners can learn better (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006). A Canada-based study (Peltier, 2021) found that Indigenous learners learn better if they are engaged in the pedagogical practices grounded in the land. The Canada-based studies conceptualize indigenous pedagogies as a land/ place-based pedagogy and found that the learners' learning has been fostered if they are facilitated in relating with the land. (Mendes, 2023; Young, 2015). This discussion shows that indigenous pedagogies, as a land-based pedagogy, can be useful to improve the engagement and the learning achievement of Nepali students. By promoting contextual place/land-based learning, Friedel et al. (2012) found that indigenous pedagogies promote oral traditions, storytelling, revitalize the indigenous languages, and practice their own cultural values rather than Western values.

Localized critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy aims to empower and awaken the learners by encouraging them to reclaim humanity by questioning the power relations, challenging the social inequalities, and increasing their critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Freire, 2021). However, in an Asia-based study, Chan (2023) criticizes critical pedagogy for its limitations, which overgeneralize and overlook the complexities of discrimination. Critical pedagogy may not address the issues of indigenous, minority, and marginalized groups, and women. Thus, Chan talks about the hybrid model as the localization of critical pedagogy, which promotes place-based education and problem-posing education. Moreover, it restores the local-specific geography, history, and society and raises the awareness level of learners. Likewise, it envisions the teachers as opportunity providers and students as critical thinkers who identify, analyze, and solve their issues. So that the indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as a localized form of critical pedagogy which fosters the place-based and problem-posed pedagogy. It can be suggested to be applied in Nepal because it has the potential to empower the learners to reclaim humanity by challenging the social hierarchies, inequalities, discrimination, and status quo.

Transformative Pedagogy

The indigenous pedagogies have been conceptualized as a transformative pedagogy, which helps to recognize the learners' inherent talents and educate them while respecting and integrating their cultural knowledge, values, language, spirituality, and identity (Swan & Weenie, 2024). In a Navajo, United States-based, culturally grounded qualitative study (Shirley, 2017), it is asserted that indigenous pedagogies as transformative pedagogy function to promote social justice and inclusion by deconstructing the colonial education system, uncovering the historical injustice and trauma, and revitalizing the indigenous culture, languages, and knowledge system. So, to summarise it, the indigenous pedagogies, as a transformative pedagogy, can be applied in Nepal to restructure the educational/ pedagogical system by promoting social justice and inclusion, respecting and integrating the indigenous culture, values, language, and knowledge system, and minimizing the social hierarchy and discrimination.

Culturally sensitive and appropriate pedagogy

Indigenous learners learn better and foster their learning when they are engaged in the teaching and learning activities grounded in their culture, prior knowledge, and worldviews. In a Canada-based study, Friedel et al. (2012) define indigenous pedagogies as the teaching and learning process embedded in their culture, knowledge, being, and perspectives. Moreover, it aims to maintain, restore, and revitalize the traditional ways of teaching and learning. The indigenous pedagogies aim to decolonize the pedagogical system from the dominant colonial narratives, and they reclaim and reconceptualize their own knowledge and pedagogical system. Regarding this, in an Arizona, United States-based study, Singh and Reyhner (2013) articulated the academic failure of indigenous students in the colonial, Western, and mainstream knowledge and pedagogical system due to the culturally inappropriate curriculum and pedagogies. They emphasized the indigenous pedagogies through which the indigenous students can foster their knowledge because it is compatible with the indigenous students' ways of learning. Moreover, they conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies as a teaching and learning process transferred from the past experiences of communities. It emphasizes the relationship, interconnectivity, place/land-based literacy, holistic wellbeing of the students, indigenous language as the foundation, adaptive, non-linear, complex and

evolving knowledge and pedagogical system embedded in their cultures, heritages, history and values. To summarise this discussion, the culturally sensitive and appropriate pedagogy, as indigenous pedagogies, would be quite useful in multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-national countries such as Nepal and similar contexts.

Holistic pedagogy

The mainstream modern and colonial pedagogies are quite compartmentalized, which may not contribute to the learners' holistic development (Jayawickrama & Chakraborty, 2024). However, the indigenous pedagogies contribute to the learners' overall development; emotional, ethical, and self-awareness and development, including cognitive development, and help the learners to reach their full potential. (Saranya et al., 2026). Similarly, Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006) conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies as a holistic pedagogical system that takes the people, culture, heritage, land, and environment into consideration and prepares the learners to build relationships with them and respect and care for them. Regarding this, Leddy and Miller (2023) conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies as a holistic teaching-learning process that integrates the indigenous people's ways of teaching and learning and modern pedagogical practices. In a Canada-based study, Friedel et al. (2012) also conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies that enhance the learner's holistic development and holistic learning rather than merely academic skills. So, it is synthesized that indigenous pedagogies emphasize the holistic development of the learners. Likewise, authors take indigenous pedagogies as the teaching-learning methods and practices that focus on relationality, experiential learning, place-based learning, inter-generational learning, oral storytelling, and revitalizing the indigenous knowledge by integrating the Western knowledge system (Mason et al., 2018).

Red pedagogy

Indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as a red pedagogy, which questions the mainstream, modern, and colonial pedagogies. Regarding this, Grande (2015) defines the indigenous pedagogies as the red pedagogy and explains it as the intersection of indigenous knowledge and critical theory. Moreover, Grande criticizes the critical pedagogy and values relationality, land-based learning, circularity of time, narratives/ storytelling as the method of teaching and learning, critical thinking (not rote learning), and holism. In the United States-based study, Garcia et al. (2016) explored

the red pedagogy as an Indigenous pedagogy that questions the colonial, dominant modern and white-stream pedagogies and views education as activism of decolonization, self-determinism and social transformation. Moreover, the red pedagogy supports the indigenous communities and people to protect and revitalize the indigenous languages, cultures, knowledge, lands, political and pedagogical systems. To sum up, indigenous pedagogies can be practiced as a red pedagogy in Nepal by empowering the learners and reclaiming and reviving the suppressed indigenous languages, culture and knowledge system.

Environment-centered pedagogy

The indigenous people take the environment as an inevitable part of their lives, build relationships with it, and respect nature. Considering the limitations of colonial, industrial, and mainstream pedagogy, the indigenous pedagogies prepare the learners to preserve the environment and combat climate change caused by the industrial exploitation of modern people (Jimenez & Kabachnik, 2023; Sacco, 2022). In this Australia and Melanesia-based study, Nichol (2011) articulates that the indigenous pedagogies contribute to preserving the ecosystem and environmental sustainability by preparing the learners to love and take care of the environment. So, to synthesise it, the indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualised as environment-centered and friendly pedagogy, which prepares the learners to respect, protect, and take care of nature.

Century Pedagogy

To live a quality life in the 21st century, learners need 21st-century skills. Without 21st-century pedagogy, it is almost impossible to cultivate 21st-century skills. In a Canada-based qualitative study, Papp (2020) compares the Aboriginal traditional (indigenous) pedagogy and 21st-century pedagogy and found that both can develop the 21st-century skills of learners by addressing the needs and interests of the students and preparing them to be competent citizens with soft skills, ICT skills, leadership skills, and cultural skills. It means that the Aboriginal or indigenous pedagogies are not confined only to the traditional ways of teaching and learning processes, but they also contribute to inculcating the transversal or soft skills (Eady et al., 2021). Hence, it can be summarised that the indigenous pedagogies emphasize social justice, plurality and integration of traditional ways of teaching and learning with modern pedagogies. The indigenous ways of teaching and learning system also incorporates and respects the

modern research-based approaches without losing its indigenous culture, values and epistemologies (Mason et al., 2018). So, it can be synthesized that indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as 21st-century pedagogy which contributes to developing the 21st-century or soft or transversal skills of learners, not only academic knowledge and skills.

Learner-centered pedagogy

The indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as student-centered pedagogies because they value the learners and their identity, learning styles, needs, interests, worldviews, culture, and history (Nganga & Kambutu, 2026). Lancy (2024) conceptualizes indigenous pedagogies as against the WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) pedagogic practices, emphasizing learners' autonomy and self-directed learning, observation, listening and imitation, informal practices, continuous natural support, and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) rather than teacher-centered, formal and structured practices. Thus, indigenous pedagogies are learner-centered, active learning approaches that emphasize traditional knowledge and ways of teaching and learning, in contrast to modern pedagogies.

Experiential pedagogy

Indigenous people constructed and transferred their culture and knowledge through the collection of experiences and learning rather than the lecture method and reading books. The pioneer of experiential learning theory (ELT), Kolb (1984) showed that learners learn better through experiential approaches (David Kolb). The Western, centralized, colonial lecture-based method is not compatible with indigenous learners. In this Canada-based qualitative case study, O'Connor (2009) articulated that the indigenous learners engage and learn better through experiential pedagogy, which highlights the importance of place and its cultural knowledge. In this regard, in a Taiwan-based qualitative participatory research, Lee (2009) reported that the indigenous learners learn better in an experiential approach with reflection

Art-based pedagogy

Indigenous learners teach and learn better through the culturally grounded arts and crafts activities (Mills & Doyle, 2019). The indigenous community highly values the culturally appropriate and sensitive arts and crafts, which are part of their lives. The indigenous elders transferred their knowledge through the arts and crafts activities with

natural resources: clay work, modeling, music, dance, media arts, storytelling with the visual arts, drawing, paintings, and mural arts (Barajas-López & Bang, 2018; McMaster, 2020; Rowley & Munday, 2022). Thus, indigenous pedagogies can be defined as art-based pedagogy, which would be useful for indigenous and non-indigenous learners.

Culturally grounded practical hands-on activity-based pedagogy

The indigenous community constructed and transferred the knowledge through practical hands-on activities. Although they have the oral traditions of transferring the knowledge, they also engaged their children and young learners in practical hands-on activities. In an Arizona, United States-based study, Singh and Reyhner (2013) discuss indigenous culturally appropriate pedagogical practices: oratory, storytelling, songs, close observation and modeling from elders and experienced community members, community participation, and practical, empirical hands-on activities, and found that learners learn better by engaging in such practical and hands-on activities rather than the abstract lecture methods. Hence, the indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as a culturally grounded, practical, hands-on activity-based pedagogy.

Collective and collaborative pedagogy

Collectivism is one of the values of the indigenous community, and the indigenous people live, work, solve issues, plan, teach, and learn collectively and collaboratively (Tassell et al., 2010). The indigenous learners learn better through collaborative and collective activities: shared inquiry, co-construction, community participation, pair and group work, rather than individual activities (Yee, 2020). Thus, indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as a community-centered collective and collaborative pedagogy which can be useful for indigenous and non-indigenous learners (Nganga et al., 2025).

Decolonial pedagogy

Various studies showed that the indigenous people were colonized and suffered at the hands of the colonizers. They are still suffering from the historical and intergenerational trauma, which needs to be healed as soon as possible. Otherwise, it would be quite harmful and counterproductive to both colonized indigenous people and colonizers. If they are taught through colonial mindsets and pedagogical systems, the indigenous learners would suffer more; they may not learn effectively, resulting in

educational investment being wasted. Thus, if the indigenous learners are taught in their mother tongue, based on their learning styles, needs, interests, culture, knowledge, and pedagogical system. Many researchers call this the decolonial process of education. So, to dignify the indigenous learners and make learning better, decolonized pedagogies are needed, which are considered the indigenous pedagogies. The implementation of indigenous pedagogies is regarded as the process of revitalization of the suppressed history, knowledge, and Pedagogy. Leddy and Miller (2023) conceptualize the indigenous pedagogies as a decolonial teaching-learning process that integrates the indigenous people's ways of teaching and learning and modern pedagogical practices. Similarly, the author conceptualizes the indigenous pedagogies as a set of tools of decolonization, resistance against state violence and cultural genocide, reclaiming the real history, social justice by cooperating with oppressed groups, and treating the indigenous people as agents, not just as victims, and countering the apartheid pedagogy, which takes discrimination and injustice as the normal process (Giroux, 2022). Indigenous pedagogies are the integration of community tasks and traditional wisdom into the teaching and learning process, by opposing the colonial and neoliberal pedagogical process (Ann Rahman & Cochrane, 2023). Moreover, it focuses on the relationship between the teachers and students, holistic learning, plural knowledge systems, agency of the child, bio-social and land-based pedagogy, and cultural competencies of the learners.

In this regard, a United States-based study by Friedel et al. (2012) conceptualizes the indigenous pedagogies as a form of “collective healing” from the historical traumas, reclaim, reconceptualize, and revitalize their history, civilization, knowledge, and pedagogies. Since the indigenous people were/ are in historical and intergenerational trauma that affects their health, wellbeing, and future generations, caused by colonization, forceful detachment from the family, community, identity, country, language, and culture, racial discrimination, and marginalization (Cole et al., 2025; Joo-Castro & Emerson, 2021; Willmot et al., 2024). It shows that the indigenous learners and people are really in need of healing, support, and care to heal from the deeper trauma and health issues. Indigenous pedagogies would be the solution to heal them and support them to live healthy lives. In an Arizona, United States-based study, Singh and Reyhner (2013) found that it can be a healing tool for the indigenous students

and communities. It means indigenous pedagogies are the tools of healing rather than the teaching-learning process. To synthesize the above analysis, indigenous pedagogies are not merely ways of teaching and learning, but ways/processes of healing from intergenerational traumas and revitalization of the suppressed history, knowledge, and pedagogical system.

Papp (2020) stated that indigenous pedagogies and 21st-century pedagogies are similar and effective in addressing the issues in the 21st century and beyond. The indigenous pedagogies are more effective and stronger in preparing competent citizens because they address the issues of all beings and things: indigenous and non-indigenous, living and non-living things, human and non-human beings, culture and nature, physical and meta-physical entities. Based on the indigenous values: coexistence, relationality, harmony, compassion, humility and respect, the practical, experiential, creative, active, reflexive, imaginative, and holistic teaching and learning approaches, group and hands-on activities, storytelling, songs, creative arts, observation, and active participation come in indigenous pedagogies. Although it preserves and promotes the indigenous history, culture, and language by respecting (without dominating, marginalizing, and destroying) diversity, the state and power holders may mis(use) it to promote and impose the mainstream and imperialist values and ideologies.

Discussion

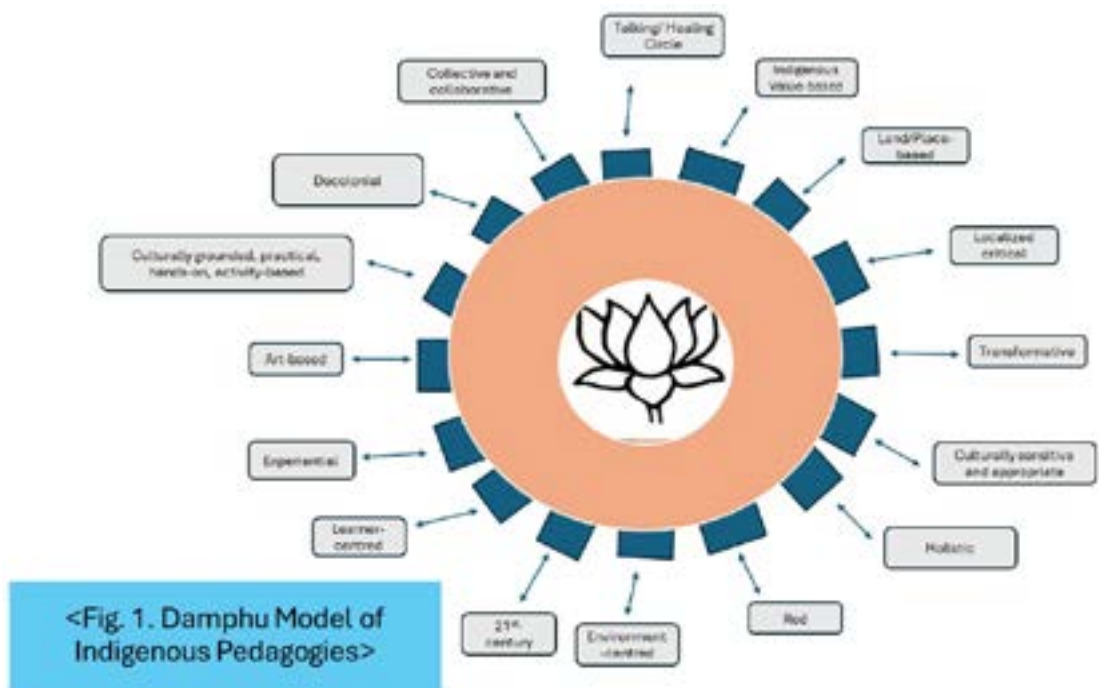
In this section, the findings and analysis about the concepts of indigenous pedagogies will be synthesized into a comprehensive model/ framework of indigenous pedagogies called the Damphu Model/ Framework. The Damphu Model/ Framework of Indigenous Pedagogies is grounded, particularly, in the eastern Tamba philosophy, the Tamang people's culture, history, knowledge, and pedagogical system. The Damphu, a musical instrument, stays at the center of the indigenous Tamang culture, aesthetics, knowledge, and pedagogical system (Lama, 2023). It was made by collecting materials: leather of ghoral/ goral (wild goat- antelope), wood of Koiralo tree, and bamboo from the mountain, hill, and plain areas, respectively (Lama (Pakhrin), 2014). It indicates that it represents and connects all the people, cultures, and identities from all the geographical locations. Thus, Damphu has found an appropriate symbol/ metaphor to synthesize the concepts of indigenous pedagogies. At the center of the Damphu model/ framework, the indigenous values: relationality, respect, responsibility, representation,

relevance, and reciprocity have been placed with the lotus flower. The lotus flower has crucial philosophical, cultural, religious, ecological, nutraceutical, and medicinal value in the East, which symbolizes nobility, purity, immaculateness, awakening, transformation, and compassion (Trinh, 2023; Yang et al., 2024).

The lotus flower blooms, growing and rising from the dirty mud, which symbolizes the journey of transformation and enlightenment of human beings in this world. Moreover, the lotus symbolizes nature and Mother Earth, in which human civilization, culture, and existence lie. To summarise, the indigenous values have been placed at the center with the lotus flower to highlight the indigenous values.

Figure 1

Damphu Model of Indigenous Pedagogies



This study identified and analyzed sixteen concepts of indigenous pedagogies practiced in various contexts worldwide. These concepts have been placed in the sixteen bamboo pegs of Damphu. However, Damphu has thirty-two pegs, which symbolize the thirty-two Bodhisattvas, or enlightened beings, or Buddhas. So, the sixteen concepts

have been reappropriated by dissecting them as theoretical understanding and practices of compassion, wisdom, selfless action, generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, and meditative stability. Without integrating the knowledge and practice with reflection, it seems quite challenging to be enlightened beings (Bodhisattvas) (Samuels, 1997; Yuan, 2005). Hence, analysis of the concepts of indigenous pedagogies has been summarised as follows, with the implications for Nepal and similar contexts:

Since talking circle/ healing circle as a strength-based pedagogy includes all the learners and empowers the learners, which makes their better self-image and boosts their self-confidence, similarly, indigenous values-based pedagogy contributes to cultivating the indigenous values: relationality, respect, responsibility, representation, relevance, and reciprocity, which can contribute to preparing a harmonious and peaceful society. Indigenous learners engage and learn better if they are facilitated in land/place-based pedagogy, because their learning styles, interests, and experiences are connected with their ancestral land. Likewise, indigenous pedagogies, such as localized critical pedagogy and transformative pedagogy, help to understand the local context and power relations, and they enhance the learners' critical consciousness, empowering them to challenge injustice, hierarchy, and inequality and reclaim their humanity. Since Nepal is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-national country, culturally sensitive and appropriate pedagogy could be applied to improve the learners' meaningful engagement, learning, and ownership towards the education system. The learners learn better if the pedagogical practices are compatible with their culture, experiences, learning styles, needs, and interests, which is possible with culturally sensitive and appropriate pedagogy. The fragmented colonial and imperialist modern pedagogy contributes to preparing the learners as workers, but may not help the learners to reach their full potential. However, the learners have the opportunity to grow and develop holistically: cognitively, socially, emotionally, creatively, spiritually, and physically in holistic pedagogy.

The red pedagogy and decolonial pedagogy contribute to healing the learners from the historical and intergenerational trauma. By opposing the colonial and neo-liberal pedagogy, it reclaims and revitalizes the indigenous learners' language, culture, history, knowledge, and pedagogical system. By combating environmental degradation, global warming, climate change, and preventing natural disasters, the learners will

respect and care for the environment as their mother if they are meaningfully engaged in the indigenous pedagogies. Since the indigenous people have an intimate relationship with nature, the environment, and the ecosystem, they respect and preserve the environment. Subsequently, indigenous pedagogies can be conceptualized as the 21st-century, learner-centered, experiential, art-based, culturally grounded, practical hands-on, activity-based, and collective and collaborative pedagogies, which can enhance the learners' soft skills and professional skills and prepare competent and confident citizens. Thus, the learners get opportunities to grow and learn, and become culturally competent through the culturally appropriate, land-based, art-based, value-based, experiential, practical, decolonial, red, holistic, localized, critical, transformative, collective and collaborative indigenous pedagogies. The indigenous pedagogies can be applied in Nepal and similar multi-cultural, multi-national, and multi-lingual diverse contexts to transform the mainstream, colonial, Eurocentric, and imported culturally and contextually inappropriate pedagogies.

Conclusion and Implications

The indigenous pedagogies are regarded as a context and culturally sensitive, appropriate, responsive, experiential, culturally grounded practical hands-on activity-based, holistic, localized critical, transformative, indigenous value-based, art-based, land/place-based, collaborative and collective, 21st-century, talking/ healing circle, and decolonial set of pedagogies, which heal, empower and dignify the learners and prepare them for challenge the status quo, all forms of inequality, unjust systems and suppression. It is student-friendly and environment-friendly pedagogies that prepare the citizens who care for the environment and fight climate change. It is compatible for all the indigenous and non-indigenous learners, which addresses their learning styles, needs, interests, and experiences. The learners learn better and improve their learning achievement if the teachers and stakeholders conduct the teaching-learning process by utilizing the indigenous pedagogies.

The stakeholders' awareness, understanding, and practices could be enhanced through intensive training, workshops, seminars, and conferences on the indigenous pedagogies. For the enhancement and promotion of the indigenous pedagogies and pedagogical practices, an indigenous education and pedagogy policy and the national indigenous pedagogical framework could be formulated and enacted in Nepal and

similar contexts. By using the Damphu Model of indigenous pedagogies, a large-scale empirical study could be carried out in the future for in-depth research, and suggestions could be made for further improvement.

Limitations

This article is solely based on secondary data.

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