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Provisions and Practices of Local Curriculum in Nepali Schools

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Abstract

This paper examines government initiatives to adopt a local curriculum in Nepal, integrating community knowledge, culture, and language into educational processes. The purpose of this research is to promote learning in the context by reinforcing knowledge indigenous to particular communities, especially those that are rural and poor. The methodology used to conduct this research was descriptive and qualitative. Primary data were obtained using these field methods, whereas secondary data were obtained from documents and literature. Data were collected using interviews, FGDs, and observations of classroom interactions by teachers, students, curriculum experts, and head teachers. Data analysis involved thematic analysis through the systematic sorting, coding, and categorization of data based on predetermined themes. The study identified major gaps in curriculum implementation, including inadequate teacher preparation, lack of standardized instructional materials, weak institutional support, and unclear policy directives. In urban colleges, parents' preference for enrolling their children in English and computer lessons has overshadowed the locally developed curriculum. Additional barriers include weak stakeholder participation, elite dominance in curriculum decisions, and persistent economic disparities.

Keywords: community participation, teaching experiences, implementation challenges, local curriculum, teacher training

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Nepal's transition to federalism has strengthened the focus on decentralization in education, highlighting the need for locally contextualized curricula that reflect the country's rich cultural, linguistic, and geographical diversity. Under Article 8 of the Education Act, 2001, the local government has been authorized to design up to 20 percent of the curriculum, incorporating local requirements related to local knowledge, local history, languages, the environment, and socio-economic activities.

Nevertheless, the local curriculum has been found to be quite effective in reality in numerous cases. In several cities, such as Kathmandu, there is a model that can be used to develop content related to disaster management, environment, health, and culture, using Hilda Taba's framework (Government of Nepal, 2019; Taba, 1962).

Key challenges include untrained teachers, a lack of quality learning materials, weak school management, and insufficient monitoring. In many schools, especially in urban and semi-urban areas such as Kathmandu, greater emphasis is placed on English and computer education than on local languages, due to their perceived importance for future opportunities. As an illustration, schools can be observed using time and other resources to teach in English-medium and computer lab classes, leaving little or no room for their indigenous language. The current classroom practice in Nepal still emphasizes book-centered pedagogy [(Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), 2021]

In addition, it was observed that teaching-learning practices are dominated mainly by teacher-led activities and rote learning rather than contextual knowledge (Veliganio & Galigao, 2024).). One specific example could be provided in which local culture, language, and indigenous knowledge are considered essential elements in designing school curricula (CDC Nepal, 2020; Government of Nepal, 2019).

Although some schools in Nepal have creatively integrated local culture and environmental topics into their curriculum and certain municipalities have developed local curriculum models, such practices remain rare, poorly documented, and inconsistently implemented across schools (Sunuwar, 2023).

Although decentralization gives schools autonomy and encourages community involvement, differences in local curriculum implementation, along with limited technical

expertise and weak capacity among educators, administrators, and local authorities, hinder its effective development, delivery, and monitoring in Nepal, further compounded by financial constraints, weak institutional mechanisms, and inadequate technical support at the local government level (Veliganio & Galigao, 2024)).

Studies have shown that schools emphasize courses that increase their students' chances of securing better jobs in the future, while neglecting courses grounded in the local context (Gurung & Parajuli, 2021). In such a situation, the goals of cultural preservation, contextual learning, and community empowerment are not achieved, as limited participation of teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in curriculum planning hinders the development process, and Nepal's ethnic and linguistic diversity further complicates the design of a nationally applicable curriculum (Rapacha, 2013).

This study aims to explore the experiences of learners, teachers, and community members regarding the implementation of local curriculum in Nepal, identify the factors influencing its development and implementation, and assess its relevance in schools, while also examining how economic, geographic, and cultural contexts shape curriculum practices and the opportunities and challenges of integrating local language, culture, and indigenous knowledge to promote a more inclusive, community-based, and relevant education system in Nepal.

Literature Review

Local curriculum theory is concerned with applying education to students' daily lives by incorporating local knowledge, culture, language, and environment. Such a theory can be linked to place-based education and culturally responsive teaching approaches for enhancing the significance of education. The idea of local curriculum in Nepal concerns improving students' position in terms of their identity, engagement, and significance in education and society. As per the Nepalese education policy, local governments are expected to develop up to 20 percent of the curriculum based on local needs, thereby increasing relevance across different societies in Nepal (Adhikari et al., 2025 Subedi, 2018). However, such a policy is not implemented effectively across all areas because teachers and administrators lack the necessary skills and information to do so (Raut, 2025). Besides, other challenges to implementing this curriculum involve the lack of planning models, human and material resources, and supervision frameworks (Adhikari et al., 2025; Raut, 2025). Delivery mode of the curriculum will differ according to the mode of curriculum delivery within the class and other areas beyond Nepal.

This is evidenced by the inclusion of subject areas such as disaster management, environment, culture, and others in Kirtipur's curriculum (Sunuwar, 2023). There are individuals who will help implement the curriculum. They are the teachers, administrators, and government officers from that particular area. Yet despite recognizing the need to implement the curriculum, they seem unwilling to do so (Mishra, 2023).

Several problems can emerge during the implementation of the local curriculum, such as a lack of technical knowledge, poor management, monitoring issues, and issues with the publication of local materials (Adhikari et al., 2025; Raut, 2025). Local organizations also publish materials that fail to meet the required criteria. Inclusive education is another problem, as the curriculum fails to address the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities (Shrestha, 2024).

Parents emphasize areas that have some bearing on job prospects and place very little importance on curriculum-related areas (Mishra, 2023). Furthermore, Nepal's geographic and cultural diversity complicates curriculum implementation. The policy allowing 20 percent implementation of local curricula is rarely observed due to inadequate training, awareness, and institutional support (Raut, 2025; Subedi, 2018). Teaching at the national level remains book-oriented, with no focus on practical instruction (Wagle, 2023). Despite this, where local leaders play an active role, some positive outcomes have been achieved (Gyawali, 2023; Sunuwar, 2023).

Compared with other nations, Nepal struggles with more basic issues, such as a lack of monitoring, training, and community involvement. Thus, even though local curricula in Nepal have immense potential, their implementation is hindered by several issues in governance, pedagogy, capacity building, and inclusion, which this paper helps address by examining them through the lens of schools.

Methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted, along with interpretivist philosophy and constructivist learning theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study sought to understand the provisions and the implementation of Nepal's local curriculum. The research was carried out in two purposively selected schools located in Kirtipur Municipality and Teku that had easy access, were urban/semi-urban, and were involved in local curriculum implementation.

The study participants were the school principal, teachers, curriculum developers, and students selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was done using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and classroom observations. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, with coding and categorization. Ethical issues, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntariness, were strictly observed. However, due to time and financial constraints, this study was conducted only in two schools in Nepal.

Table 1

Interview Participants

S.N.	Participant Group	Number	Role
1	School Principals	2	School administration & curriculum supervision
2	Teachers	6–8	Classroom implementation of curriculum
3	Curriculum Developers	2	Local curriculum planning & design
4	Students	8–10	Learners experiencing the curriculum

The qualitative research used a descriptive approach and involved both primary and secondary sources. For eight months, data were collected using focus group discussions, observation, and interviews with curriculum planners, heads of schools, teachers, and pupils. The two research sites included Teku Secondary School and Kirtipur Secondary School. Both purposive sampling procedures were employed by the researcher in choosing the respondents and research sites. A semi-structured questionnaire was used in conducting the interview and focus groups. Interviews were conducted using Creswell's (2011) guidelines, which were clarified on the phone whenever necessary.

This study adopted an interpretive and descriptive research methodology, using thematic and qualitative content analysis to examine audio-recorded interviews that were conducted in Nepali, translated, and transcribed after obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant anonymity, while also drawing on government policy documents and curriculum guidelines to support the findings; within this context, local curriculum is understood as an approach to educational decentralization that integrates local knowledge, culture, language, environment, and community needs, with key focus areas including local history, indigenous knowledge, environmental education, and life skills.

Results and Discussion

The research has been developed against the background of Nepal's policy on introducing a local curriculum, which aims to include local knowledge, culture, language, and community learning in the school education system; however, there are deficiencies in its actual application in the classroom. To address this issue, the research seeks to understand what the local curriculum entails and how it operates in schools using a qualitative methodology, including interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and classroom observations.

Perceptions of Curriculum Developers

Participants were interrogated using semi-structured questions with regard to (i) their opinion about the local curriculum, (ii) their experience in implementing the local curriculum in schools, (iii) their instructional methods used in teaching pupils, (iv) any challenges experienced when implementing the local curriculum and, finally, (v) the importance of the local curriculum to the education of the pupils and the whole community. Such an investigation enabled an examination of the respondents' policies and experiences. Data analysis entailed grouping participants' opinions on certain themes, including the curriculum, teaching methods used, stakeholders' experiences, and challenges in implementing the policy. These findings were based on the actual experiences of the stakeholders, not on the academic literature. According to curriculum developers, the local curriculum is a policy designed to foster the preservation of indigenous knowledge, promote cultural identity, and address community challenges, such as disaster risk reduction and environmental protection (Mishra, 2023; Sunuwar, 2023).

Based on the experiences of curriculum developers, the implementation of curriculum integration suffers from a lack of teacher training, poor professional development programs, ineffective implementation processes, and inadequate institutional coordination with regional education authorities.

Additionally, they argue that the repetitive production and distribution of local content are being undermined by several mechanisms, including cultural diversity, socio-economic inequalities, and geographic distance (Adhikari et al, 2025; Dhami, 2024). Equally, many schools have to focus on teaching students subjects according to their national syllabus rather than offering locally oriented education (Ojha, 2023; Wagle, 2023). Unless efforts are made to train teachers properly and involve the participation of communities as well as integrate local

content into the national assessment system, any dreams of a real, inclusive, and contextualized education remain unattainable for educators of Nepal.

The local curriculum was seen by the curriculum developer as a good move intended to contextualize learning and maintain cultural identity, but its application is fraught with difficulties. According to a curriculum developer said,

The local curriculum was introduced with good intentions to reflect local culture and context. However, its implementation has been very difficult due to limited technical capacity and a lack of trained personnel. Many local governments and schools do not have curriculum experts, adequate financial resources, or sufficient training to develop quality local curriculum materials. As a result, although the policy is promising, its implementation has remained inconsistent across different local levels

Participants further emphasized that for effective and sustainable implementation, stronger institutional support is necessary. As one respondent reported, “We need better municipal facilitation, proper teacher training, active stakeholder participation, and meaningful integration of indigenous knowledge to make the local curriculum truly effective (Gyawali, 2023).

The study, supported by the curriculum developer in Nepal, suggests that it is essential to incorporate local knowledge into learning and to increase community participation. Nevertheless, the successful implementation process is accompanied by a number of difficulties, such as inadequate institutional capacity, limited financial resources, a lack of professional skills, insufficient stakeholder involvement, a lack of willingness among publishers to promote local materials, and a lack of institutional commitment. The implementation process requires increased municipality assistance, appropriate training of curriculum developers and teachers, as well as community participation. There have been some improvements in Jhapa district.

Head Teachers’ Perceptions of the Local Curriculum

The head teachers view the local curriculum as an important educational effort that not only helps build community and school connections but also helps preserve local culture, language, and indigenous knowledge systems and ensures greater relevance for learners. They know how this curriculum can help contextualize learning and incorporate learning. In particular, the inclusion of native languages, indigenous cultures, and heritage into the curriculum can help a lot (Lal, 2025; MOEST, 2022).

In the process of decentralizing power to local governments, the head teachers become important facilitators in coordinating the work on incorporating the local practice, local knowledge, and culture into the educational process.

Successful implementation of the local curriculum will be contingent upon the engagement and cooperation of the local authorities, teachers, and communities, who hold an essential role in integrating local practices, language, and traditional wisdom into the curriculum, thus providing contextually appropriate education to learners.

Despite recognizing the importance of the local curriculum for preserving culture and promoting context-specific learning, head teachers noted challenges in implementing it. Such challenges include a lack of guidance, inadequate capacity building, insufficient resources, and a lack of support from local education officials (CDC Nepal, 2020; MOEST, 2021).

Some head teachers help facilitate community involvement in the local curriculum, encourage the use of local knowledge in classroom teaching, and increase student motivation and ownership of the learning process. In Nepal, the head teachers of the federal education system possess the inherent qualities of leaders who can effectively make use of locally produced goods for local consumption, local culture, and the local environment.

This means that head teachers are responsible for ensuring that the curriculum plans are implemented, monitoring teachers, and ensuring that local culture, history, language, and practices are incorporated into the curriculum.

The task of identifying training needs, staff development, and planning is among the most important roles they play in the course of their duty. They also mobilize resources such as subject-matter expertise and the provision of materials or funds by the community and government agencies. However, head teachers encounter certain difficulties, including fear of delivering lessons and providing learning materials, inadequate technical support and training, poor coordination with local authorities, and limited availability of culturally acceptable teaching materials. Head teachers are nonetheless able to carry out certain locally relevant learning activities despite the numerous challenges. Illustrating the school's efforts to connect classroom learning with the local context, one head teacher remarked, “Last year, I organized school trips and invited local resource persons so that students could learn from authentic community experiences. For example, we visited local farms, historical and religious sites, and cottage

industries. We also invited local farmers, community forests, and cultural experts to share their knowledge and practical skills with the students."

Another respondent noted that

Cultural events and local activities enable students to connect with their culture and create an interesting way of learning. Last year, we had some cultural activities where the students took part in celebrations of the local festivals, dances and exhibits of the local culture. We had the local elders and artists coming in to explain the importance of these cultural activities. Through such activities, the students not only enjoyed learning but respected their cultural heritage and understood its importance.

These comments indicate that the strategic-thinking head teachers are using locally contextualized approaches, such as educational tours, guest speakers from local communities, and cultural activities, to enhance learning despite resource constraints. They have brought motivation, community engagement, and contextual learning. In summary, it is left to the head teachers to make the curriculum a success story in Nepal. With initiative from stakeholders, sound leadership, and ownership, education can be relevant and meaningful. Regarding the concerns of the head teachers, the lack of standardized textbooks for teachers and the lack of information on the policy framework have made it challenging for schools and teachers to understand how to prepare for and teach the local curriculum. Implementation of the local curriculum has been inconsistent due to inadequate preparation by teachers.

Implementation Experiences and Challenges

The head teachers and teachers have diverse experiences regarding the implementation of the local curriculum. Though they know that there is a need for the local curriculum for relevant education, and issues affect their process of implementing the curriculum, despite the above challenges, the analysis of data also reveals certain positive aspects of implementing the curriculum by some institutions. There were those head teachers who admitted that they had engaged in community-based/experiential learning via educational trips, cultural exhibitions, community classes, and lectures by resource persons from the local community. In this context, one of the head teachers stated, "We try to organize school trips and invite local people so students can learn from real-life experiences." Another head teacher added, "Cultural events in school help students connect learning with their own community (Dhungana, 2020).

Proactive schools can integrate local curriculum content into their education system through experiential learning, despite any limitations. Additionally, the head teachers recognize that the local curriculum serves as an intermediary connecting the national education policy and the community's aspirations, and that its implementation depends on how local authorities and teachers respond to it. Schools within municipalities that offer support for integration are more likely to implement the content than those in distant municipalities due to difficulties such as lack of training, resources, and coordination (Gurung et al., 2019).

These comments suggest that cultural diversity brings both opportunities and challenges in implementing the plan. Although educational institutions attempt to integrate students' cultures into the learning experience, principals in diverse settings often face difficulties accommodating multiple cultural practices and languages without appearing to favor any particular group.

Prospects and Recommendations

This is typical of how the local curriculum can serve as an effective instrument for relevant and meaningful education when adequately financed. In the same way, the head teachers recognize the importance of a coherent national framework, initiatives aimed at building teachers' capacities, and the design of teaching-learning materials relevant to the local context to ensure sustainability and equality in implementing the curriculum. It is also considered imperative to establish cooperation among educational institutions, the local government, and cultural organizations to ensure the systematic and pedagogically sound integration of local knowledge into the educational process (MOEST, 2022; Gurung & Parajuli, 2021).

Nepali head teachers view the local curriculum as a valuable tool for increasing student engagement, preserving culture, strengthening community connections, promoting local knowledge and languages, and fostering student identity and community pride. However, its effective implementation is hindered by unclear policies, inadequate facilities, insufficient teacher preparation, poor documentation of local knowledge, limited financial and organizational capacity, and cultural diversity challenges, highlighting the need for a national framework, continuous teacher training, adequate resources, and strong collaboration among schools, local governments, and cultural stakeholders.

Teachers' Perception of the Local Curriculum

The findings show that teachers generally perceive the local curriculum as a progressive and culturally responsive initiative that makes learning more relevant, contextualized, and

connected to students' local environment and community. They consider this initiative as effective in promoting students' interest in education while preserving local indigenous knowledge, culture, and identity, especially in marginal and rural settings where the connection between learning and students' local community becomes stronger (Mishra, 2023; Sunuwar, 2023).

Furthermore, the influence of external factors should be considered significant when dealing with classroom activities. As indicated by the teachers, examination-related processes, along with parents' demands, especially in urban and semi-urban areas, lead them to focus on mainstream courses, such as English, computer, and science, while ignoring local courses (Dhami, 2024; Gurung et al, 2019). Consequently, the time devoted to curricular implementation is further reduced. In addition, the study demonstrates that cultural and geographical diversity may lead to difficulties in curricular implementation. For teachers living in multicultural and multi-ethnic communities, it is challenging to include different cultures equally, considering the limitations set by the curriculum (Adhikari et al., 2025). The problem of socio-economic diversity is also apparent, since some schools can be proud of high community participation and abundant resources, while others cannot implement curricula due to a lack of proper facilities (Dhami, 2024).

Based on the discussion above, there is a significant difference between teachers' views on the local curriculum and its implementation in schools. While the curriculum has been highly regarded for its value, some problems have been observed during its implementation.

Students' Perception of the Local Curriculum

Nepalese students in Grades 5 to 8 generally enjoy the local curriculum when it includes topics close to local culture, such as local holidays, nature conservation, and community stories, particularly in rural and indigenous communities, where such topics enhance interest and identity construction (Mishra, 2023; Sunuwar, 2023). The lesson is interesting; depending on how well the teacher is prepared for the class. The learners will participate in cultural and agricultural practices, depending on how they are taught by teachers outside classroom sessions (Raut, 2024; Sunuwar, 2023).

The findings reveal that students face difficulties due to ambiguity between locally delivered curriculum and end-of-course examinations, as the absence of a clear link between curriculum content and evaluation creates confusion and demotivation, ultimately discouraging

students from engaging with content not included in assessments. As a result, a gap exists between the curriculum policy and its implementation. Cultural diversity is another crucial point, as members of minority communities experience a sense of inclusion in the cultural aspects of education, even though apprehension of exclusion arises when many cultures coexist, and one culture becomes dominant (Adhikari et al., 2025).

Students find it interesting to learn cultural subjects and knowledge in their curriculum since that will make learning relevant to them and their surroundings; but in the case of most of the students, they understand that the subjects which should have been taught through local curriculum are studied only superficially or replaced by other subjects such as computers and English, which have lowest level of interests as well as lack of any relevant perception regarding the issues of their locality. They even mention that their teachers lack the expertise required to implement local content in the curriculum. Interviews and FGD analyses show similarities and differences in respondents' perceptions of local curriculum implementation. Across all groups of participants—teachers, head teachers, and students—the prevailing perception is that local curriculum content in urban schools is not considered important due to parents' demands and exam pressure. As reported by teachers and head teachers, they prioritize mainstream subjects, and students agree that they pay more attention to those subjects that are examined at the end of the term/year.

On the other hand, differences arise in how participants perceive their implementation experiences. Teachers spoke of the challenges posed by a lack of preparedness, inadequate training, and limited institutional support, leading to varying quality in delivering the curriculum. On the other hand, learners expressed concerns about engagement and relevance, suggesting a desire for experiential learning that would involve them in real-life situations where they could develop social responsibility. Participants also noted that cultural diversity presents a challenge and an opportunity for the curriculum. While the curriculum strives to address diverse cultures, teachers noted challenges with representation, leading to the omission of some groups. Furthermore, head teachers and teachers from areas far from city centers noted that poverty and isolation posed challenges to implementing localized learning.

However, discrepancies are noted in how participants view the implementation experience. The teachers were concerned about the difficulties caused by a lack of preparation, insufficient training, and minimal institutional support, which led to differences in the quality of

curriculum delivery. However, the learners were concerned with the difficulty in terms of engagement and relevance. The learners recognized the need to engage in experiential learning to develop their sense of social responsibility. The participants also mentioned a problem with cultural diversity within the curriculum. Although the curriculum tries to integrate all the cultures, there are difficulties in representation, resulting in some cultures being left out. Moreover, head teachers and teachers who reside outside the urban center cited poverty and isolation as barriers to implementing localized learning.

The findings discussed above may be justified by the theory of constructivist learning, which emphasizes connecting learning to learners' lives, and by culturally responsive pedagogy, which highlights the need for an inclusive approach to representing diverse cultures in the educational process. Thus, the discrepancy between what was supposed to happen according to policy statements and what happened in practice stems from a disconnect between theory and practice. In conclusion, the analysis showed that, despite the recognition of the significance of developing a local curriculum by all stakeholders involved, its successful implementation.

Conclusion

The local curriculum in Nepal represents an important policy effort to make education more relevant by connecting it with the country's diverse cultural, geographical, and socio-economic contexts. Thus, elements of the local knowledge system can be introduced, culture can be preserved, and problems like the environment, disasters, and livelihoods can be solved. In other words, there are significant opportunities to improve teaching-learning processes, motivation, culture, and local community involvement in this case. Although it is evident that the local curriculum is an effective educational strategy in Nepal, numerous challenges to its successful implementation stem from insufficient support, poorly trained teachers, a shortage of textbooks, and ineffective cooperation among schools.

Contextual differences make the issue even more complex. Schools in rural areas, particularly those with relatively homogeneous communities, tend to engage more effectively with the curriculum content. Urban schools are more concerned with teaching mainstream subjects owing to examination pressure and parental expectation, thus sidelining curriculum content from the local environment. There are reforms that can solve this problem. There must be improvements in teacher capability, context-specific learning materials, community involvement, and the assessment system, among other measures. These efforts are required to

realize an integrated educational curriculum. Ultimately, meaningful transformation requires coordinated action to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

The local curriculum can be highly effective if supported by inclusive policies, well-prepared teachers, and active community–school partnerships, with stakeholders playing a crucial role in its success.

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