

Mother Tongue Education in Aathrai Rural Municipality: Policies and Practices

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Abstract

To get education in mother tongue is the rights of every individual secured by the constitution of Nepal. Provide Linguistics rights to all inhabitants is challenging for government because Nepal is linguistically diverse country where we can find one hundred and twenty-four native languages (Census, 2078). In Nepal, there are different policies to provide mother tongue based multilingual education specially in basic level education. To implement national policies, local government also made its own policies and planning to provide mother tongue education. In such a situation, this research aims to review the policies and practices and explore strategies made by school for mother tongue education. To fulfill it, different national and local policies regarding mother tongue education were reviewed and three head teacher were selected purposively for interview from different schools of Aathrai Rural Municipality of Terhathum district where mother tongue education is running around ten years ago. The qualitative data were analyzed descriptively and thematically. Document related to mother tongue education were analyzed in different parameters: policies of multilingual education in Nepal, significance of MLE, effectiveness of MLE and local level education act review. Strategies related findings made by school for mother tongue education are: initiation and operation of mother tongue based education, nominate language teacher, adequacy of language textbook, parent education and awareness program and managerial aspects of mother tongue based education.

Keywords: Mother Tongue Education, Policies, Practices and Multilingualism

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Introduction

Mother tongue education refers to first-language-first education that is, schooling which begins in the mother tongue and transitions to additional languages simply known as multilingual Education. Paudel (2010) states “Multilingualism refers to the condition in which more than two languages are used in the same setting for similar purposes”, (p. 221). Multilingual education refers to bilingual education; it employs the use of two or more languages as a medium of instruction in school education. In mother tongue based multilingual education the students’ home language, regional language and an international language are used for instruction.

The aim of this paper is to explore the strategies used by school for multilingual Education and to review the existing practices. Nepal is a linguistically and culturally diverse country, census report (2078) shows that 124 languages are used as a mother tongue in Nepal. In such a situation, it is difficult to teach all language equally in school and it is also challengeable to prepare textbook and other teaching materials. This study tries to find out how the school address those challenges to provide multilingual education to students and linguistic right of mother tongue based education. In this regard Shrestha (2018) explains the three dimensions: Linguistic Right-based perspectives; receiving education in students’ mother tongues, pedagogical perspective; teacher should be aware of this fact and use language supportive approach, and practical perspective; it is needed to consider the judicious use of mother tongues in the classroom.

Multilingual education refers to bilingual education; it indicates use of two or more languages as a medium of instruction in school education. Multilingual education in Nepal is a great problem, because of linguistic diversity. Although, government of Nepal has made a provision of mother tongue based multilingual education and to support this provision Curriculum Development Center (CDC) have prepared textbook and teaching materials in more than 28 different languages. This provision can address linguistic right of people in Nepal? Languages are the identity of the people who use it and to preserve the language is the responsibility of the nation. To preserve and promote languages, mother tongue based education should provide to all ethnic group.

Fillmore (2020) states that government of Nepal is presently dedicated to implementing mother tongue-based, multilingual education (MLE) previously, education in Nepal was only offered in the Nepali language, and more recently, in English. It shows that government of Nepal is dedicated to provide multilingual education and to preserve linguistics rights of all ethnicity. Again Fillmore (2020) presents the difficulty facing the budding democracy is putting these policy pledges into practice in over 120 languages across seven provinces and 753 municipalities. The next difficulty facing the budding democracy is putting these policy pledges into practice in over 120 languages across seven provinces and 753 municipalities. It shows that providing mother tongue based multilingual education is challenging to the government where 124 languages are used as mother tongue.

Central Bureau of Statistics (2078) shows that in Aathrai Rural Municipality among the total population 33.8% are Limbu and 16.3% are Brahman. It shows that majority of the ethnicity belong to Limbu community. Again in the case of mother tongue 45.4% people use Nepali language as mother tongue and 31.3% people use Limbu language as mother tongue. Based on this data mother tongue based education should be compulsorily implemented in Aathrai Rural Municipality. The aim of study are to review the existing policies and practices and explore the strategies used by school for mother tongue education.

Methodology

The methodology section of research paper shows the process of how research paper is conducted, the research method used and reason for choosing those methods. The methodology is a step-by-step and systematic explanation of the research process. For the systematic completion of this research paper I have adopted qualitative research paradigms and mother tongue is its ontology where document analysis, field study and empirical study are methodological procedures.

Document analysis is a method of qualitative research. In document analysis different articles, policies etc. are interpreted by researcher to give meaning. Present studies show different policies and strategies in relation to multilingual education.

Field study is a general method for collecting data that involves observation and interviewing. Field work is the process of collecting raw data which is taken in real world. To collect the data for this study I took semi-structured interview with three head from the different school. In this school Limbu and Magar language is taught before more than ten years. Semi-structured interview is a kind of interview which is taken to extract required information from the participants to obtain the objectives of the research work. It gives interviewer greater flexibility and interviewee get control to make judgment about construct.

For the purpose of taking interview first of all I made a phone call and introduce my purpose of research study. They were selected purposely on the basis of their experiences, dedication to profession and tendencies towards mother tongue based multilingual education as well as unique characteristics. Then I conduct semi-structured interview with them by making phone call and face-to-face meeting and record and note down their opinions. Similarly, after taking note I, transcribed and generate theme according to the principle of thematic approach on the basis of the objectives and interpreted them systematically.

Findings and Discussion

Finding and discussion is the major part of any research paper it is also known as a result section of article. Findings of any research paper are based on the methodology which are

applied to gather information and those findings are discussed on the basis of reviewed literature. The main findings and their discussion of this research paper are presented in the following way:

Document Analysis

After analyzing the existing document related to multilingual education in Nepal the following discussion are made:

Policies of Multilingual Education in Nepal

Constitution of Nepal (2015) stimulate that every Nepalese people who are inhabitant of Nepal have the right to get education in its mother tongue and, for the purpose of mother tongue based education they have the right to open and operate schools and educational institutes, in conformation with law. Similarly, all the people and community lives in Nepal have the right to use their own languages.

Constitution of Nepal (2015) seems in the admiration of mother tongue based multilingual Education. It also seems flexible for mother tongue based education by allowing community and people to open and run mother tongue based school and educational institute. Similarly, every people have the right to use their language and they have the right to participate in the cultural life of their communities. This provisions made by the constitution of Nepal, to support, preserve and promote indigenous languages which are the identity of particular community and people.

School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016-2023) focus on mother tongue based multilingual education. It shows that medium of instruction in most school is Nepali; but there has been shift in two directions one hand many educationist and some political group have advocated that education should provide to children to their mother tongue and the other hand most private school use English as a medium of instruction and a number of community school have also started using English as a medium. The purpose of SSDP is to provide a framework for the effective teaching of language in school as the medium of instruction. The goal is for all students to develop their linguistic skills over time in their mother tongue as well as in Nepali and in English.

The provision of mother tongue based multilingual education also mention in School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016-2023). Nepal is a linguistically diverse country, in such a linguistic divergent country one language as a medium of instruction cannot address all language in this situation SSDP, makes clear about multilingual education and medium of instruction. SSDP also give the impression towards trilingual education policy, it seems positive to enhance student's linguistic accomplishment in their mother tongue as well as Nepali and in English.

Constitution of Nepal (2015) and SSDP (2016-2023) have made some similar and different provisions for multilingual education. Both are in favor of mother tongue based

multilingual education and preserving indigenous language, but in the constitution there is no any outline about medium of instruction. SSDP (2016-2023) also focus on trilingual education policy i.e. mother tongue, Nepali language and English language as medium of instruction.

Significance of MLE

Rai (2018) states that native language should be used as a medium of instruction to furthering the competency in secondary or tertiary language. He argues that mother tongue based multilingual education enhance the competency and proficiency in other languages. He also states that conventional practice of monolingualism should deconstruct by promoting multilingualism in school and medium of instruction should be mother tongue in Nepalese curricula. He further argues that, parents think competency in English language make their children's better career but this understanding create challenges for implementing multilingual education

Multilingual education refers to use of two or more than two languages as a medium of instruction especially mother tongue as a medium of instruction rather than Nepali language or English language. To develop the capability of students in other language, first they should have taught in their own native language i.e. mother tongue. In the context of Nepal, exiting system of teaching and learning, one language as a medium should dismantle and multilingualism should advocate in all school as a medium of instruction and parents' awareness program should be conduct for arouse passion to mother tongue based multilingual education.

Effectiveness of MLE

Rai, Rai, Phyak, and Rai, (2011) show the exiting Multilingual Education (MLE) programs being practiced in seven school in six different district. Its main aim is to explore and analyze the realities of MLE. This research study found that MLE program may not be sustainable. Parents are unaware about mother tongue. The research team also found that teacher need support to run the MLE program effectively and they feel that support provided by the state is not adequate. The research team suggest that commitments made by policy development should be practiced effectively.

Multilingual education in Nepal is being practice only after 1990, when Constitution of Kingdome of Nepal designate Nepal is a multilingual country. After the designation of Nepal as a multilingual country different policies, acts and regulations advocate about multilingual education. Policies regarding multilingual education were good in principle but its implementation seem very weak. Parents as well as children are unaware about mother tongue based multilingual education, they all are interested to learn second language i.e. English and Nepali which may cause linguistic elision. All the stake holder should be conscious to practice the commitments made in policies, acts and regulation for multilingual education productively. For the successful implementation

of multilingual education, positive environment for learning, both at home and school should create. When effective multilingual education is implemented, dropout rate of students will decrease.

Local Level Education Act Review

In section 7, sub-section 2 (Ka) of Basic and Secondary Education Act of Myanglung Municipality, Phedap Rural Municipality and Atharai Rural Municipality have made same provisions regarding the medium of instruction in basic level. In such education act it was clearly mentioned that, “basic education can be provided in mother tongue”. The local level’s education acts seem to try to ensure the right of children to get education in their mother tongue implementing mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Field Study and Empirical Study

In qualitative research writing, field study and report writing goes side by side. In this research work discussion made by field study and empirical study were thematically presented here.

Initiation and Operation of Mother Tongue Based Education

When I interviewed with participant ‘B’ he said that “*selection criterion of language for mother tongue based multilingual education in linguistically diverse community is based on the majority of the students and desire of the parents*”. Participants ‘B’ and ‘C’ have similar opinion about linguist rights. They said that,

I feel that the right of students from other linguistic backgrounds to receive education in their mother tongue has been violated when only one language is taught in schools as mother tongue.

Again participants ‘C’ said that

Education in the mother tongue was started with the financial support of the village development committee and until now mother tongue education has been provided from class one to three, but due to the lack of monitoring, it has been difficult to conduct it effectively.

With the regard of participant ‘B’ views, I understood that Nepal is a linguistically diverse country. In such a country providing mother tongue based education is really challenging for all. To provide mother tongue based multilingual education every school, college, university, institution should follow some rules and regulations. At School level they adopt theselection criterion to initiate mother tongue based education is majority of students and desire of parents.

Use of one language as mother tongue in the schools can violate the rights of all inhabitants to get education in their mother tongue. Constitution of Nepal (2015), mention that every individual have right to get mother tongue based multilingual education.

In Compulsory and Free Education Act (2075), it was clearly mentioned that every citizen has the rights to get basic and secondary education in mother tongue. But the data shows that mother tongue based education is provided only up to class three.

Nominate Language Teacher

When I conduct interview with participant 'A' he said that

Nomination of expert language teacher is really difficult and challenging. In our school we are running Limbu language classes from class one to three. For this purpose, we need expert Limbu language teacher it is very difficult to find out. We announce vacancy for fifteen days hardly one applicant contacts us and we conduct examination and nominate him.

Similarly, participant 'C' state that,

Nomination of Limbu language teacher is really difficult for us. We have appointed a language teacher by following general selection process. Government of Nepal and other education related policies should pay attention to develop expert in different language”.

Participants 'B' states that,

There is a problem in providing quality education related to language as the language teacher has to conduct teaching and learning activities based on the knowledge of learning language in his own family environment without taking formal education related to his/ her mother tongue.

From the above statement I understood that, selection of right person in right place is really difficult. In the case of selection of teacher for language teaching different processes should have followed such as vacancy announcement, form collection, conducting examination, result publication, providing appointment letter and so on. In this process ministry of education, department of education, central, province and local government should play vital roles to develop and appoint expert language teacher.

Teacher is the model for students every behavior. Because of the lack of expert teacher, we cannot predict the future of student. Produce expert extrusive person is the duty of every educational institute which helps to nominate right person in right place. School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) (2016-2023) mention that production of professionally qualified teacher is the responsibility of government of Nepal ministry of education. But, here this paper shows that there is no availability of qualified language teacher. Because of the lack of qualified language teacher every institute cannot run multilingual education.

Adequacy of Language Textbook

Regarding the adequacy of language textbook participant 'A' and 'B' states similar opinions. They state that,

Language related textbooks have been in short supply since the language classes were started and till now there has been no improvement in the adequacy of the textbooks. Textbook development process is not an easy process in local level. Technical support provided from ministry of education is not sufficient and parents as well SMC members are also unaware about multilingual education. Another great problem is lack of expert person in related language. In spite of these problem we are trying to run mother tongue based multilingual education.

In this concern participants 'C' opines that,

In the past, KiratYakthumChumlung brought some Limbu language textbooks and distributed them in schools. Since KiratYakthumChumlung has not distributed textbooks for the past few years, there is a shortage of textbooks in schools. Atharai Rural Municipality is planning to distribute language textbooks prepared by National Curriculum Development Center from the current academic session

From this statement I came to understood that there is a shortage of language textbook in schools where mother tongue is used. Developing textbook is long process which involves different step wise procedures. Constitutions of Nepal (2015) gives right to develop textbook in the basis of local needs. To develop such a textbook government of Nepal, provide technical support with the collaboration of local government. A textbook is a manual of instruction in any branch of study. Textbooks are produced according to the demands of educational institutions and community. In the context of Nepal without textbook it is difficult to teach in any level.

Textbook is an important material for everyday classroom teaching learning activities, each and every teaching items with example and exercise are presented beautifully in the textbook. Textbook development is not a short and easy process, it is long and rigorous process and one who wants to develop local textbook have to face different problems and challenges. Curriculum Development Center (CDC) have been developing language textbook in 28 different mother tongue. Nepal is a linguistically diverse country census report (2078) shows that 124 languages are used as a mother tongue in such a country developing limited language textbook is just a drop in sea.

Parent Education and Awareness Program

Regarding parent's education and awareness participant 'A' and 'C' have similar opinions as:

Parents are aware that children should receive education in their mother tongue. Parents have requested the school to provide education in mother tongue and accordingly, we have started mother tongue based education on the basis of the majority of student's mother tongue.

In this regard participants 'B' have different opinions. He said that,

It seems that English language was used to be taught in schools instead of mother tongue because parents are more interested in English language than mother tongue. As the parents themselves are

increasingly displeased with their mother tongue, it is becoming a challenge to provide education based on mother tongue.

Again, participant 'C' said that

It seems necessary for the local government and concerned bodies to conduct public awareness programs related to education in the mother tongue. Due to the lack of awareness among the parents, it seems that the fascination towards English language has increased more than the mother tongue. To introduce new course in any institution awareness program is necessary it helps to make familiar about the new course and program.

From the above mentioned views I came to understand that parent education and awareness program really transforms every parent to arouse the responsibility of upbringing their children in the most desired manner. In the community people are from different background and personal thought so parent education and awareness program helps them to transform their thought positively. Parent education and awareness program make them conscious about present situation and future plan. Awareness program support people to understand about new thing which will be introduce in near future. Lack of education and awareness different programs are removed in this regard Rai, Rai, Phyak, and Rai, (2011) says that multilingual education in Nepal is not effective because of lack of parent education and awareness. It shows that, before introducing new course or program awareness program should conduct to make familiar about new discipline and the objectives of the program.

Managerial Aspects of Mother Tongue Based Education

In the process of conducting interview participant 'A' said that

In the starting years of conducting education in mother tongue, different problems were encountered, the main ones being classroom, time and student management. Recently, when the local government created the local curriculum, the use of the local curriculum and mother tongue according to the wishes of the students has made student management easier.

Participant 'B' and 'C' have similar opinions about the managerial aspect of mother tongue based education. They state that.

Managing appropriate time and class for mother tongue based language teaching is really challenging for us. We face so many problems in case of managing time and class although, we continue towards our goal. At last we are able to start multilingual classroom with the financial help of VDC, parents, teacher and so on.

Through the above views I understood that, only introducing new course and designing of textbook is not important, another important aspect is proper management. Every institute, college, school and University are running in their own way, when we add something new there is a great challenge to manage class and time. Everything should be managed physically as well as mentally.

Management is a vital aspect to run everyday activities in any institution or anywhere. School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) (2009-2015) mention that management of physical infrastructure and institutional base as opportunity and challenges. It shows that, management of physical infrastructure and time is challenges as well as opportunity. To manage properly every authorized person, face some obstacle. In case of teaching learning activities introducing new course and manage it is really challenging. To manage properly the authorized person should consult with other institution and organization as well as he/she collaborate with community and local inhabitant.

Conclusion

Nepal is linguistically and culturally diverse country. It consists of altogether 124 mother tongues (according to the census report 2078 BS) it shows that Nepal is a multilingual country. It has been perceived as a mega problem not only in single school but in the whole nation. Multilingualism creates socio-cultural and socio-political conflict regarding linguistic rights. Multilingual education refers to bilingual education; it indicates use of two or more languages as a medium of instruction in school education. Multilingual education in Nepal is a great problem, because it is linguistically diverse country. Although, different policies are made regarding multilingual education, such as constitution of Nepal (2015), SSDP (2016-2023) etc. in the same way different research have been conducted for the effective implementation of multilingual education. Rai (2018) argues the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the classroom teaching-learning activities promotes meaningful learning. In this regard, mother tongue based multilingual education helps students to understand 2nd or 3rd language meaningfully.

Introducing mother tongue based multilingual education in any institution is itself challenging for all. They have to face challenges in every steps. Policies regarding multilingual education is in one way and practices is in another way. It seems that there is no co-ordination and inter-relationship between policy and practice. This report shows different school have been practices mother tongue based education in Aathrai Rural Municipality. Striking problems to these schools are lack of language textbook, regional linguistic diversity, lack of awareness, minimum salary allowances for language teacher, lack of training for language teacher, lack of expert language teacher and so on. To employ the policy appropriately made by national level and local level monitoring program should have organized by local government.

Preserving linguistics rights is the duty of the government. For this, different policies have been made and they clearly mention that every people have linguistics right to use their mother tongue and get basic education but implementation seems weak. In order to ensure the rights of getting education in the mother tongue, it seems that special attention should be given to the implementation side of the policy and rules made at the national as well as local level. Ensuring the availability of skilled language teachers and provide appropriate remuneration is also the responsibility of the local and central governments.

This study will be supportive for those school who are preparing to provide mother tongue based multilingual education. It also beneficial for policy maker, stake holders and future researcher. Similarly, it also provides basic insights to the curriculum developer, policy makers, textbook writers and materials designers being concerned with multilingual education.

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