UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGES AND LANGUAGE POLICIES ON CHILDREN'S LEARNING OUTCOMES IN NEPAL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study 'Understanding the Impact of Languages and Language Policies on Children's Learning Outcomes in Nepal' was undertaken in order to better understand the ways in which languages are used in schools in Nepal and how these impact - both positively and negatively – on students' learning and experiences of education. The study was interested in how Language in Education Policies (LIEPs), or the rules and advice set by the government, which influence what schools, teachers and students do in schools with language, have developed in Nepal and what some of the key trends have been with regard to the Medium of Instruction (MOI).

This ambitious study was commissioned by UNICEF Nepal in coordination with CEHRD, Language Commission, UNESCO and the British Council Nepal, with work carried out between January and June 2023. The study made use of a wide range of data collection methods: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, classroom observations and documentary analysis. We used these tools to collect data from key stakeholders in provinces across the country including, local government executives, head teachers, teachers and parents, Ministry officials and CEHRD officials.

Further to this, a series of consultation meetings were conducted with the project's steering committee members and language education experts in Nepal. In addition to the field-based data, we also conducted a review of LIEPs in Nepal focusing specifically on 1) the report of the National Language Policy Recommendation Commission-1994 and 2) the Medium of Instruction and Language for Education study (MILE) to understand previous policy commitments as well as to provide a backdrop against which to understand current policy goals and trajectories.

A key goal of this current study is to build on the significant work that has previously been done in Nepal in order to provide insights into the progress made in implementing multilingual education in the country. The study was guided by three interrelated questions which are:

1. What happens in schools and classrooms in Nepal with regard to MOI and how does this impact on students' participation in classes and their learning outcomes?
2. How have federal, provincial and local governments responded to meeting children's need for learning in a language they are most familiar with, especially in early grades?
3. What are the critical areas of intervention for implementing meaningful change with regard to delivering effective multilingual education in schools in Nepal and for raising the educational outcomes of all students?

These questions have shaped the ways in which we have designed and carried out the project and are necessary in understanding the findings and recommendations we put forward in this report.

Summary of the Context

As widely documented, Nepal is home to approximately 124 different languages which means that multilingualism and linguistic diversity is a key characteristic of everyday life (National Statistics Office [NSO], 2023). While linguistic diversity is enshrined within the Constitution, which recognizes all the native languages spoken in Nepal as national languages, Nepali, the native language of just under half of the total national population (approximately 45%), is prioritized as the official language. While not an indigenous language of Nepal, there is a long history of English in Nepal. Here, as elsewhere in the world, there has been a significant increase in the use of English particularly within the educational context. English Medium Instruction (EMI) is often considered to be a marker of educational quality and therefore exerts a unique set of pressures on schools, communities and individuals and often this language is seen as being more valuable for children and students to learn, often at the cost of the use of other indigenous languages.

Ensuring equitable access to education and equity of outcomes for all is fundamental to realising Nepal's goals of becoming a middle-income country by 2030 (Nepal Ministry of Education, 2016). Like many other countries Nepal has produced a range of different policy plans and initiatives that have sought to understand the role of language in schooling and to improve the learning outcomes for all learners regardless of socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic background. These policies have grappled with the challenge of finding ways to most effectively honour and nurture the national languages of Nepal, at the same time as ensuring that all learners are proficient in the official language as well as being able to meet the demands of the modern and increasingly international labour market.

Within schooling in Nepal, the multilingualism that characterises the country has often been framed as a 'challenge' or 'problem' to be addressed so as to ensure that all learners have access to and benefit from a high-quality education. Positioning multilingualism as a problem to be solved rather than as a resource for learning has real consequences for how it is approached in education. The most common approach that has been taken is through 'simplifying' and/or trying to manage the (linguistic) diversity that exists through the use of a selected MOI. These approaches tend not to position students' multilingualism as something that has a role in the class and/or which could be used to structure their learning, but rather something that has a role only outside of the classroom.

In the context of Nepal, as elsewhere internationally, changes in the stated MOI are likely to take place across different levels of schooling. For example, the MOI for early years education is often different to that of subsequent stages in primary and secondary education. The MOI in use at these different stages may be a language that children and teachers are familiar with, but they may also be languages that the students are learning new. Since 2015 schools in Nepal have had increased autonomy to select their MOIs and there has been an increase in the number of schools switching to and from EMI as their stated policy. Although there is much evidence to the contrary, EMI is often considered to be a marker of educational 'quality' and therefore exerts a unique set of pressures on schools, communities and individuals (Dearden 2015; Erling 2014, Erling et al 2014; Sah & Li 2017; Phyak 2016). Many government schools have felt pressurized to 'keep up' with private schools in the use of EMI. A key feature of these changes, as reported by our participants, is that change often takes place very quickly and often with few processes and procedures in place to support the changes.

What we found in our data collected from schools in Nepal, as in other multilingual contexts globally, is that decisions in relation to the MOI is that children are increasingly likely to be educated in a language that they are unfamiliar with. A recent study on National Assessment of Student Achievement report (NASA, 2020) showed significant differences in learning achievements between children speaking Nepali as their primary or most familiar language and students who were most familiar with languages other than Nepali (Khanal et al., 2020). Findings at the global level have also reported that children who mostly operate in language that is different to the language of instruction in schools are placed at a disadvantage and underachieve as a result (Dearden 2015; Erling 2014, Erling et al 2014; UNICEF 2019). By contrast, this also means that children who are taught in the familiar language are likely to have better learning outcomes in comparison.

An important counter to this is that data collected from multilingual classrooms (both in Nepal and internationally) increasingly shows that regardless of the stated MOI teachers and students regularly engage in multilingual classroom practices and much of the day-to-day practices of classrooms do not follow the stated MOI. In this sense there is a clear difference between the stated MOI policy and what is actually practiced. Evidence shows that in multilingual settings language practices are fluid and dynamic and exemplify translanguaging rather than monolingual practices (Bagwasi & Costley, 2022; García, 2009; García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Wei, 2014; McSwan, 2017; Pennycook, 2007).This means that when we talk about EMI or Nepali Medium Instruction (NMI) for example, we have to acknowledge that these practices are rarely (if ever) monolingual and referring to them in this way is likely to be inaccurate and misleading. Teachers and students in our study discussed these practices as being somewhat clandestine and presented them as things that they felt they should not really be doing. The only times that teachers said they did behave in strictly monolingual ways was if a senior colleague came to classes, or if they were being formally observed.

The monolingualism that underpins the design of most LIEPs globally and which shapes the school practices of millions of students and teachers around the world also dominates the ways in which research, particularly within the field of applied linguistics, has traditionally also gone about measuring and collecting data on languages (Costley & Reilly, 2022; May 2013; Reilly et al., 2023).

Acknowledging that schools and classrooms are often operating multilingually means that any monolingual measures of knowledge and practices, such as exam results, have to be treated with caution as they are likely to be only a partial reflection of what is taking place and/or what is possible.

Key Findings

We have a number of key findings from this work which are presented below. Further details and a fuller discussion are provided in the full report.

- When children, especially in early grades, are able to interact and learn in their mother tongue/familiar language/s they are more active participants in the class and are more engaged in their lessons. Parents, head-teachers, teachers, and other stakeholders repeatedly highlighted this in the interviews and this finding is also echoed in the wider literature. Many participants cited significant changes in their children's/students' attitudes and engagement in classes when shifts in the stated MOI were made. The most common views we received were in relation to students becoming less communicative and interactive in classes where there is a shift to EMI provision.

- When children, especially from early grades, learn in their mother tongue/familiar language/s they develop a stronger foundation for learning and their learning is more secure. Parents, head-teachers, teachers, and other stakeholders repeatedly highlighted quality of learning as a concern directly raised in relation to the use of EMI instruction. Many reported that English was not a language through which their children and/or students were able to learn and perform at their best. This was accompanied by concerns for the long-term impact on students' future achievement and learning outcomes. Additionally, many teachers reported that children grasped concepts better when explained in their own language and were able to express themselves better when allowed to speak in their mother tongue/familiar language.

- When children learn in their mother tongue/familiar language/s they achieve better in assessment and examinations. An analysis of school-based achievement results, although limited in scale, showed that children taught in Nepali medium (where Nepali was the most familiar language of the majority students) achieved better grades in Nepali, English and Science subjects compared to their achievement in English medium. A key point to note from this finding is that teaching and assessing young children in one particular language limits what they are able to show in terms of knowledge and understanding. Creating opportunities for students to be assessed multilingually (for example assessing knowledge by allowing children to speak and write in their mother tongue or a familiar language) is a necessary shift in practice and one that would allow students the opportunities to fully show what they know and understand.

- When monolingual practices are prioritised over multilingual ones, teachers, students and parents/families are disadvantaged and learning is impacted. The findings of this study challenge the monolingual understanding that underpins a specific and singular medium of instruction used for instructing multilingual classes – whether this is Nepali, Mother Tongue or English medium. Our data show that students taught through a language/s they are familiar with, and in many instances a mix of two or more languages, were found to have better learning and engagement in their classrooms.

- When teachers make full use of their own and their students' language/s, learning outcomes improve. Many teachers and students make use of a wide range of language practices in the classroom and teaching does not regularly fit a one-language only MOI. For example, in classes where the MOI was stated as EMI, we observed teachers/students making use of many languages other than English and this was the same in NMI and Mother-Tongue Based (MTB) classrooms where teachers and students made use of their different linguistic resources, language practices were fluid, dynamic and responsive to the needs of the classroom. MTB instruction does not mean that teachers are teaching a new language to students, but rather they using students' existing languages and knowledge about language to scaffold and support learning.

- When changes to a school's MOI are not made for pedagogical reasons, overall learning, engagement, and student outcomes decrease. We found that schools were under pressure, often for financial reasons, to change the MOI to EMI. Changes were often reported as needing to take place quickly, with little or no time to provide teacher training or to develop appropriate materials. The majority of our participants had very negative experiences in relation to such changes and particularly highlighted the impact on outcomes for students.

- When schools are given clear support, guidance and resources, they are better placed to provide students with quality education. We found that where access to resources were available (for example, curriculum materials, teacher training, advice, guidelines, and translation), schools, teachers and the wider community were more positive about how they were able to support their learners and how they were achieving good outcomes as a result. Other participants reported a lack of assistance and/or guidance, as well as a lack of knowledge about current policy and what this meant in terms of the resources and support that were available.This was particularly the case in relation to curriculum and materials translation, but many also said that there was little clarity around what they were entitled to and/or what should be made available to their schools, teachers, and students. Data also reflected that local governments and head teachers had limited knowledge of policies related to languages in education and little or no skills and guidance to translate these policies into practice.

Key Recommendations

Based on these findings, we put forward the following broad recommendations. These interrelated recommendations are directed not only at the policy level but also in terms of informing teaching training, resourcing, as well as attitudes towards how languages are understood and valued more broadly within the country. We outline these recommendations here and specific examples of how these recommendations can be taken up and put into practice are further detailed in the full report.

Advocate and create dialogue – The current constitution goes a long way in recognising and promoting the value of all languages but not all languages are positioned equally, particularly when it comes to schooling and education. Endorsing multilingualism at community level through expanding mother tongue awareness programs is necessary to reduce and remove pressures that schools, families, students, and citizens more generally are under to adopt particular language practices (i.e., a shift away from using indigenous languages in favour of English). Federal, provincial, and local level stakeholders should prioritize advocacy and awareness-raising activities regarding the benefits of multilingualism and how this should inform pedagogical practices for enhancing overall learning of all students. Keeping in mind the diversity within a single province or even a community, a paradigm shift from mother-tongue based education to multilingual education or education in a child's most familiar language is crucial. Effective implementation of this requires budgetary assurance from all levels of government. Evidence collected from this research, the MILE report and many other studies that have demonstrated the benefits multilingual learning need to be better disseminated and understood at local government, community, and school level, which can be done through showcasing successful instances of the 'practiced' multilingual education regulated by teachers in their respective classrooms. As also recommended in the MILE study, the establishment of multilingual education implementation units at the local government level would help to facilitate important dialogue between and across relevant stakeholders especially with regard to advocacy for multilingual education. Research to generate evidence of the benefits of teaching and learning and assessment in mother tongue/the language students understand the most, and community mobilization to develop contextualized multilingual materials would contribute to the sustainability of the multilingual education initiatives.

Use language/s of instruction that learners understand – Choosing the right medium of instruction that supports and helps children learn is the key factor in creating equitable learning conditions. All schools must aim to use a language of instruction that learners understand. Learning, both in terms of helping students achieve success in schooling as well as in lifelong learning must be the focus of any classroom intervention, not just a focus on the language in which it is supposed to be happening. Local governments should have a clear understanding and mapping of the language diversity in the community. Improvement of parents' and children's foundational literacy in their mother tongues, through municipal support, would ease teaching of mother tongues as subject or using them as media of instruction. This does not necessarily mean choosing one language for the classroom but rather it means creating an environment for teachers and children to use multiple languages, if needed, to process and facilitate learning. This perspective must also underpin assessment practices in order to move away from monolingual assessment practices in which students are ultimately assessed on what they can demonstrate in a particular language rather than what they actually know. Students particularly in early grades, should be provided with assessment opportunities that allow them to express their knowledge and understanding in their most familiar language. Further, effective teaching of English as a subject rather than unplanned shift to EMI will benefit children's learning in multilingual educational contexts.

Invest in piloting multilingual education programmes - Governments, development partners and donor communities should support teachers and schools with quality resources in implementing multilingual education programmes. These programmes can be effective in demonstrating the value of teaching in and teaching of local languages and how children benefit from this practice. Along with language/s of instruction, other features of quality education such as appropriate resources and teacher development should be prioritized. These programmes should, as far as possible, promote initiatives to recruit teachers who speak and understand the languages that children in the classroom understand. However, in Nepal's context this might not always be possible. In such cases, these pilot programmes should have components of teacher capacity development giving them the skills to effectively manage diverse and multilingual classrooms. This can be done through collaboration with pre-service and in-service teacher education institutions in enhancing their knowledge and skills in multilingual pedagogies. Further, development of a cadre of teacher trainers at provincial level to support effective implementation of multilingual pedagogies will promote sustainability of multilingual education programs. Research and evidence generation (for example randomized control trials, baseline and end line comparisons and/or longitudinal studies) should also be embedded in order to generate data that can show how language can have a positive impact on children's learning.

Develop guidelines and resources to support multilingual education - At present there is no coherent set of guidelines for local governments and schools to inform them what multilingual education-in-practice looks like in classrooms, workplaces, and society more broadly. This requires a development of a guidelines through collective engagement of communities, schools, teachers, language experts and development partners coordinated by government agencies. Establishment of a technical task group in each municipal unit and mobilization of this group to disseminate the guidelines and monitor its use can effectively streamline multilingual education. There is a need to promote the value of all languages and establish clear principles for their use in teacher training, curriculum design, material development and assessment at all levels of education and professional development. These guidelines and the premises of multilingual pedagogies need to be extended to all schools across Nepal and be grounded in the principle that multilingualism is a positive resource for learning rather than a barrier for learning. Given the differences in linguistic and cultural diversity in Nepal's micro social contexts, the responsibility for development of multilingual learning resources is to be delegated to municipal units, which can work on translation of learning resources as well as development of more contextualized and culturally responsive multilingual learning materials.

Implementing Recommendations

The findings and recommendations we have presented in this report represent a strong foundation upon which significant and substantive change can be made to improve the overall learning experiences and outcomes of all students in Nepal. For effective change to take place, and to build upon the work detailed in this study, the federal, provincial, and local governments of Nepal need to come together in creating a national framework for action that must minimally include the following:

- A clear definition of what multilingualism is and how it is beneficial not only to education but society more broadly. A national framework for action and/or clear coherent guideline needs to be developed that will help build shared understandings of the importance of languages as resources for learning and must demonstrate commitment to ensuring that all students have access to education in languages that they are familiar with. This commitment needs to extend to all levels of education, in particular for early years, and all schools.

- A clear and committed budget and schedule for the allocation of resources. A national framework for action needs to provide detailed plans for how changes will be funded and how resources will be allocated and by whom. This also requires a commitment to fund teacher training programmes that not only provide teachers with training on the use of multilingual pedagogies but also which fund the development of multilingual resources. Key to this work is the development of multilingual assessment practices. Such practices will not only help to ensure that students are offered the opportunity to fully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding but will also mean that for assessment outcomes and achievement data more accurately reflect what is taking place in classes.

- A commitment to monitoring and documenting good practices and sharing of successful practices. The proposed changes will take time to develop and implement and a significant point here is that any national framework for action needs to provide a clear timeline and mechanisms for developing good practice. A commitment is needed to documenting good practices and sharing this through teacher networks and professional associations. This means setting up processes and procedures for collecting data that can be compared across different schools and districts and which are easily accessible and available to all stakeholders. We believe in the key findings and recommendations in this report but as with any policy recommendations and research findings how they are taken up and put into practice is crucial to their overall success. We hope that they are received with the necessary courage and conviction needed to effect meaningful change within education within Nepal.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BC: British Council

CEHRD: Center for Education and Human Resource Development

ECE: Early Childhood Education

ECED: Early Childhood Education and Development

EME: English medium education

EMI: English as a medium of instruction

ERO: Education Review Office

LEOs: Local Education Officers

LIEPs: Language-in-education policies

MEOs: Municipal Education Officers

MOE: Ministry of Education

MILE: Medium of instruction and languages for education

MOI: Medium of instruction

MoEST: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MTB-MLE: Mother tongue based multilingual education

MTMOI: Mother tongue medium of instruction

NCF: National Curriculum Framework

NEGRP: National Early Grade Reading Program

NFE: Non-formal Education

NLPRC: National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission

NMI: Nepali as a medium of instruction

NSO: National Statistics Office

SESP: School Education Sector Plan

SSDP: School Sector Development Plan

SSRP: School Sector Reform Plan

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Bilingualism:** The knowledge and use of two languages to in social and educational contexts.
- **Dual language medium of instruction:** The use of two languages in a school for learning. Some classes and subjects will be taught and assessed in a specified language and others will be taught and assessed in a different language. For example, a school may use Nepali to teach and assess specified subjects and English for others. Many schools across Europe and North America adopt this approach to develop bilingualism.
- **Familiar Language:** The language/s that individuals are most comfortable using and which may be a key language in the home and in interaction with family and friends. A familiar language can be an ethnic language or the first language that child learns which might or might not be different from a language of ethnic identity. It is a language used for a variety of literacy practices and may or may not be the same as the language of schooling.
- **Language ideology:** The attitudes, beliefs and opinions we have about languages and what they do. This often includes attitudes about the value of particular languages and often therefore has implication for speakers of the languages. Language ideologies often shape how people view different accents and varieties of a language (Standard American English vs Nepali English, for example) and often circulate as 'truths' and 'facts' but really are simply people's thoughts and opinions.
- **Language minoritization:** The process (social and or political) in which particular languages are dominated by other languages and in which languages are placed in hierarchies often based on perceptions of value. This often results in the marginalization of minority languages and in a reduction and narrowing of their use.
- **Language policy:** The ways in which language is framed and understood. This can be at the national level where a country has a particular policy on what the national language/s is and how it should be used, as well as in other contexts such as schools and workplaces. Language policies usually set out the general expectations for what language/s should be used, how and for what purposes.
- **Language revitalization:** The process of reclaiming and resituating the previously marginalized languages in education and public spaces.
- **Linguistic diversity:** The situation in which multiple languages (and dialects) are used for defined purposes.
- **Medium of Instruction:** The language that is declared as being the language in which teachers and students will operate and which will be the language of instruction and assessment. The MOI can be at the level of a particular class and/or subject and can also be applied at the whole school level.
- **Mother tongue-based multilingualism:** The educational process in which the education begins with a mother tongue as a medium and that gradually transitions towards the use of other languages as media of instruction.
- **Multilingualism:** The use of more than two languages in a social and educational context.
- **Translanguaging:** A process of dynamic use of two or multiple languages simultaneously in a communicative event. It is a more fluid and naturalized use of languages for communication.

INTRODUCTION

This study on 'Understanding the impact of languages and language policies on children's learning outcomes' has been conducted to provide insight into the current language policy practices in classrooms across Nepal and to explore how language policies and practices impact students' learning, engagement, and achievements. The study also explores the extent to which previous policy commitments and recommendations on language education policy have or have not been implemented in Nepal.

The study was conducted from January-April 2023 and was commissioned by UNICEF in coordination with CEHRD, Language Commission, UNESCO and British Council Nepal. The team consisted of a national consultant Dr Prem Prasad Poudel and an international consultant Dr Tracey Costley. The study was closely monitored and supported by Ms. Vaishali Pradhan and advised regularly by the national level Steering Committee led by former Deputy Director General, Mr. Shree Prasad Bhattarai. The Steering Committee consisted of Mr Choodamani Paudel, Mr Rudra Prasad Adhikari, Dr Lava Deo Awasthi, Ms Sabita Dangal, Mr Tuka Raj Adhikari, Ms Kamala Pandey, Ms Vaishali Pradhan, Ms Prativa Shrestha and Mr Bhogendra Lamichhane. Dr Lava Deo Awasthi provided technical support to the Steering Committee. In addition, the study also obtained expert input from the members of a stakeholder committee coordinated by Dr Lava Deo Awasthi which included Dr Ganga Ram Gautam and Prof Dr Tara Datta Bhatta.

Rationale, Aims and Objectives

As widely documented, Nepal is home to approximately 124 different languages which means that multilingualism and linguistic diversity is a key characteristic of everyday life (NSO, 2023). It is common to see and hear different languages in use on a daily basis across the country and the linguistic landscape – shop-fronts, advertising signs, newspapers, radio and television for example- is similarly multilingual. While linguistic diversity is enshrined within the Constitution, which recognizes all the native languages spoken in Nepal as national languages, Nepali, the native language of just under half of the total national population (approximately 45%), is prioritized as the official language. There is a long history of English in Nepal, and here as elsewhere in the world, there has been a significant increase in the use of English, and this is particularly true within education. This has historically been more marked in the private school context where English is often the de facto Medium of Instruction (MOI), and the use of Nepali or other local languages has been largely discouraged. Interestingly, while not an indigenous language of Nepal, English is included as one of the national languages (Brown 2018). Changes to the Schools Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) in 2015 gave all Government/Community schools increased agency to select their MOI and this saw a rapid increase in the number of schools switching to English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI).

As a result of this policy context, what we find in Nepal, as in other multilingual contexts globally, is that children are increasingly likely to be educated in a language that they are unfamiliar with. A recent study on National Assessment of Student Achievement report (NASA, 2020) showed significant differences in learning achievements between children speaking Nepali as their primary or most familiar language [1]and students who were most familiar with languages other than Nepali (Khanal, et al., 2020). Findings at the global level have also reported that children who mostly operate in language that is different to the language of instruction in schools are placed at a disadvantage and underachieve as a result (Dearden 2015; Erling 2014, Erling et al 2014). By contrast, this also means that children who are taught in the familiar language are likely to have better learning outcomes in comparison.

Nepal has produced a range of different policy plans and initiatives that have sought to understand the role of language in the curriculum and to improve the learning outcomes for all learners, regardless of socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic background. The multilingualism that characterises the country has often been framed as a 'challenge' or 'problem' to be addressed to ensure that all learners have access to and benefit from a high-quality education. Positioning multilingualism as problem to be solved rather than a resource for learning has real consequences for how it is approached in education. Such perspectives on multilingualism are often in lockstep with discussions about the nation and national development in which a key job of the education system is to foster and develop the desired knowledge, values and skills deemed to be important at the national level. Presently, ensuring equitable access to education and equity of outcomes for all is fundamental to realising Nepal's goals of becoming a middle-income country by 2030 (Ministry of Education 2016) and this report highlights the central role that multilingual education plays in realising these goals.

A key goal of this current study is to build on the significant work that has previously been done in Nepal in order to provide insights into the progress made in implementing multilingual education in the country and the study has been guided by three interrelated questions which are:

- What happens in schools and classrooms in Nepal with regard to MOI, and how does this impact on students' participation in classes and their learning outcomes?

- How have federal, provincial and local governments responded to meeting children's need for learning in a language they are most familiar with, especially in early grades?

- What are the critical areas of intervention for implementing meaningful change with regard to delivering effective multilingual education in schools in Nepal and for raising the educational outcomes of all students?

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[1] In this study, we have introduced the term 'familiar language' to mean the language that children feel most comfortable with and have the highest level of proficiency. This term is therefore inclusive of children's mother tongues related to their ethnic community affiliation or a language they have a mastery of. Hence, we have used this term interchangeably with 'mother tongue' and is to be understood whichever is relevant to the children population in schools.

Structure of the Report

The report begins with an overview of current Language-in-Education Policy (LIEP) in Nepal as well as a discussion of the wider international context. This provides a backdrop for the discussion of the data collected within this study. We then present a summary discussion of the findings in which we draw out key themes and patterns that crosscut our data and situate these within the boarder context of previous research conducted in Nepal. We end with summary of our key findings and recommendations for future practice and policy provisions. We offer these as crucial next steps in realising educational success and equality of learning achievement for all students in Nepal (SESP, 2022).

Part 1: Context of Nepal

The purpose of this part of the report is to provide an overview of how the different languages of Nepal have been positioned within education. We look at what provisions are made for languages at the national level and how this shapes what happens in schools on a day-to-day basis. The discussion not only provides important context but also helps to explain the different attitudes and experiences that exit around language in Nepal. Throughout the text we provide summaries of the key points raised. Table 1 below from Poudel, Jackson and Choi (2022) provides a useful overview of the key legislative and educational policy changes that have taken place since 1947 and can be used as a reference for the discussion that follows.

Year	Policy	Features
1947	Constitutional Law of Government of Nepal	The first constitution that came out of agreement between the Rana regime and King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah. Designated Nepali as the national language, promoting Nepali nationalism.
1956	Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC)	The report of the first educational planning commission (also known as the Wood Commission) which worked in collaboration with the United States Co-operation Mission. All languages except for English and Nepali were banned.
1961	All-Round National Education Committee (ARNEC)	The education committee established by King Mahendra to develop a nationalist education policy in line with the political goals of the Panchayat system. Designated Nepali as the MOI.
1962	National Education System Plan (NESP)	The five-year education plan to modernise Nepal's education system under the Panchayat government. Confirmed the national language as the MOI, while English-medium schools were encouraged to turn to Nepali medium.
1990	Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal	The constitution after promulgation of multiparty democracy, which guaranteed basic human rights. It inherited Nepali as the national official language, recognised all languages spoken as mother tongues as languages of the nation and gave autonomy to communities to operate primary schools in their mother tongue.

1992	National Education Commission (NEC)	The education commission established after the promulgation of multiparty democracy in 1990. Mother tongues were encouraged as the MOI, but Nepali was also allowed and continued to be used as the primary MOI in schools. Policy initiatives were influenced by equity discourses.
1994	National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission (NLPRC)	An 11-member commission formed by His Majesty's Government in accordance with the Constitution of Nepal, recommended to continue earlier provisions in relation to Nepali and gave freedom for communities to operate schools in mother tongues up to lower or upper secondary level. Addressed linguistic human rights issues, especially recommending the use of community languages in education.
2007	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)	The first comprehensive curriculum framework for Nepal's school education. Mother tongue was designated as the MOI in elementary schools, and Nepali and English could be used afterwards. Influence of ethnic identity and nationalism, as well as a globalisation agenda in language-in-education policy decisions.
2007	Interim Constitution of Nepal	The constitution ensured the right to use mother tongues in official business and education.
2015	Constitution of Nepal	The constitution promulgated after Nepal transformed from a centralised system of governance to a federal democratic country. The local governments and schools were given autonomy in making language-in-education policy decisions as per the local contexts and as recommended by the Language Commission and ensured the right to preserve mother tongues.
2019	National Curriculum Framework (NCF)	The first curriculum framework after Nepal changed to a federal state. The MOI of basic education is to be mother tongue or Nepali. English can be used as the MOI, except for in subjects which concern national identity (for example, civic education).

TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF KEY LEGISLATIVE AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY CHANGES

1.1 Constitutional and Educational Language Policy Development

Although multilingualism in education has long been discussed in Nepal, a planned and systematic focus on how to include different languages in schooling was observed only after the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal (1990). This provided a solid legislative foundation for respecting linguistic diversity and multilingualism. Schooling in Nepal after the restoration of the multi-party system in 1990 celebrated the right of learners to access education in their mother tongue[2].

The Constitution of 1990 regarded all the languages spoken as mother tongues and therefore national languages of Nepal and attempts were made, at the policy level, to ensure that equal status was afforded to all of those languages in education and wider public domains. With specific regard to education there are a number of key articles within the Constitution that are important in terms of the implications they had for what happens in schools, and these are Articles 6, 18, 25 and 26 which state that:

Article 6: Language of the Nation
1. The Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the language of the nation of Nepal. The Nepali language shall be the official language.
2. All the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal.

Article 18: Cultural and Educational Rights
1. Each community residing within the Kingdom of Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, and culture.
2. Each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children.

Article 25(3): Directive Principles of the State
The social objective of the State shall be to establish and develop, on the foundation of justice and morality, a healthy social life, by eliminating all types of economic and social inequalities and by establishing harmony amongst the various castes, tribes, religions, languages, races and communities.

Article 26(2): State Policies
The State shall, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various religions, castes, tribes, communities and linguistic groups, and by helping in the promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures.

[2] In this report we use mother tongue to remain true to the terms being used in the policy documentation unless otherwise stated. Our preference is for 'familiar language/s' which we will be using where appropriate in the report instead, of mother tongue. For a critical discussion of the concept of mother tongue see Leung, Harris & Rampton's 1997 and Rampton 1990 for example.

All the provisions mentioned above place emphasis on protecting and promoting diversity, particularly linguistic diversity. However, Nepali remained the sole official language. Although this Constitution made some progress in recognising ethnic/indigenous languages and went some way in ensuring the right to access education in the mother tongue, continuing the Panchayat legacy of declaring Nepali as the national official language created a tension or hierarchy between the different languages, as well as a structural barrier preventing other languages from flourishing.

Interim Constitution of Nepal-2007

In a similar way the 2007 Constitution promoted Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multilingual, multireligious, multicultural nation, and made the following language-related provisions especially in Articles 5, 13, 17, 33, 34 and 35.

Article 5: Language of the Nation

1. All the languages spoken as mother tongues in Nepal are the national languages of Nepal.
2. The Nepali language in the Devanagari script shall be the language of official business.
3. Notwithstanding whatever is written in clause (2), the use of one's mother tongue in a local body or office shall not be barred. The state shall translate the language used for such purposes into the language of official business for the record.

Article 13: Right to Equality

2. There shall be no discrimination against any citizen in the application of general laws on grounds of religion, race, gender, caste, tribe, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these.
3. The State shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, gender, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these.

Article 17: Education and Cultural Rights

1. Each community shall have the right to receive basic education in their mother tongue as provided for in the law.
2. Every citizen shall have the right to receive free education from the State up to secondary level as provided for in the law.
3. Each community residing in Nepal has the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilisation and heritage.

Article 33(d): Responsibilities of the State

The State shall have the following responsibilities:

- To carry out an inclusive, democratic and progressive restructuring of the State by eliminating its existing form of centralized and unitary structure in order to address problems related to women, Dalits, indigenous tribes, Madhesis, oppressed and minority communities and other disadvantaged groups, by eliminating class, caste, language, gender, culture, religion and regional discriminations.

Article 34(5): Directive Principles of the State

The social objective of the State shall be to establish and develop a healthy social life on the foundation of justice and morality, by eliminating all types of economic and social inequalities and by establishing harmony among diverse caste, tribe, religion, language, race, community and religious groups.

Article 35: State Policies
(3) The State shall pursue a policy of strengthening the unity of the nation by maintaining the cultural diversity of the country through the promotion of healthy and harmonious social relations, on the basis of equality and coexistence, among people of various religions, cultures, castes, communities, sects, origins, languages and linguistic groups, and by assisting in the equal promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures.

As these selected Articles show, this Constitution does important work in celebrating linguistic diversity and shows how equality for all is linked to access to and use of the mother tongue. Although receiving basic education in the mother tongue is enshrined as a right in this Constitution, no definition as to how mother tongue is defined and/or to be decided for communities is provided. Nor does it say how much of the curriculum is to be delivered through the mother tongue. These are important points as the Constitution also continues to promote the Nepali language as the primary official language which means that there is an implicit tension between the use of Nepali in schools as the official language of the nation and mother tongue education as languages of the community.

Constitution of Nepal- 2015
This next Constitution continued to adapt the provisions of the earlier Interim Constitution and a key area of change here was the increased agency given to states within Nepal to make the language of the state an official language alongside Nepali. This process of officialization of languages (see Article 7) reflects a growing commitment to linguistic diversity which is also reflected in the commitment to pursue a multilingual policy. The key Articles to highlight within this Constitution are:

Article 6: Languages of the nation: All languages spoken as the mother tongues in Nepal are the languages of the nation.

Article 7: Official language:
  1. The Nepali language in the Devnagari script shall be the official language of Nepal.
  2. A State may, by a State law, determine one or more than one languages of the nation spoken by a majority of people within the State as its official language(s), in addition to the Nepali language.
  3. Other matters relating to language shall be as decided by the Government of Nepal, on recommendation of the Language Commission.

Article 18: Right to Equality
(2) No discrimination shall be made in the application of general laws on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, physical condition, condition of health, marital status, pregnancy, economic condition, language or region, ideology or on similar other grounds.

Article 31: Right Relating to Education
(5) Every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to get education in its mother tongue and, for that purpose, to open and operate schools and educational institutes, in accordance with law.

Article 32: Right to Language and Culture
(1) Every person and community shall have the right to use their languages.
(2) Every person and community shall have the right to participate in the cultural life of their communities.
(3) Every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilization, and heritage.

Article 51: Policies of the State

The State shall pursue the following policies:

(c)   Relating to social and cultural transformation:

(6) To protect and develop languages, scripts, culture, literature, arts, motion pictures and heritages of various castes, tribes, and communities on the basis of equality and co-existence, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country.

(7) To pursue a multi-lingual policy.

Article 287: Language Commission

(6) The functions, duties and powers of the Language Commission shall be as follows:

(a) To determine the criteria to be fulfilled for the recognition of the official language and make recommendations on languages to the Government of Nepal,

(b) To make recommendations to the Government of Nepal, on the measures to be adopted for the protection, promotion and development of languages,

(c) To measure the levels of development of mother tongues and make suggestions to the Government of Nepal, on the potentiality of their use in education.

(d) To study, research and monitor languages.

(9) The other functions, duties, powers, and rules of procedures of the Language Commission shall be as provided for in the Federal law.

Although the tension between the languages of Nepal is still evident in this Constitution there is significant focus on and commitment to support, protect and promote multilingualism within the Nepali education system. A key mechanism for this is the establishment of the Language Commission which importantly as a constitutionally recognized body has created more space for ethnic/indigenous languages to be used in education and governance.

In the pretext of the state embracing multilingual policy, not only in education but also in governance, the Language Commission recently recommended 11 languages to be used for official purposes which is an important consequence of the state adopting a Federal Democratic Republic political structure. The list of languages recommended for province-level official use, alongside of Nepali, are shown below in Table 2.

Province	Official language	Official language for specific purpose and specific domains
Koshi	Maithili, Limbu	Tharu, Tamang, Magar, Bantawa, Urdu, Rajbanshi, Rai, Newar (Nepal Bhasa), Chamling, Sherpa, Santhali
Madhesh	Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bajjika	Urdu, Tharu, Tamang

Bagmati	Tamang, Newar (Nepal Bhasa)	Magar, Tharu, Maithili
Gandaki	Magar, Gurung, Bhojpuri	Tharu, Newar (Nepal Bhasa), Tamang
Lumbini	Tharu, Awadhi	Bhojpuri, Urdu, Magar, Maithili
Karnali	Magar	
Sudurpaschim	Doteli, Tharu	Baitadeli, Achhami, Bajhani

(Himalayan News Service, 2021)

TABLE 2: LANGUAGES RECOMMENDED FOR OFFICIAL USE AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL IN NEPAL

The 2015 Constitution of Nepal, which recognizes all languages spoken as MTs in Nepal, as being the languages of the nation. Nepali language having Devanagari script continues to have special official status. Apart from the Nepali language, provincial governments can choose one or more of the languages spoken by the majority population (not the minority) of that province to be used for government work. The 2015 Constitution further guarantees school level education in MT as a fundamental right for all children and gives the right to every community to use, promote and protect their language, culture and cultural artefacts.

Following the spirit of the Constitution of Nepal (2015) and other legal evidence, the Curriculum Development Center, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) has prepared curriculum materials in 26 languages to promote MT education and learning. While this demonstrates that there is policy commitment in place to protect linguistic diversity and to promote different languages in education in Nepal, factors such as resource limitations, lack of stakeholder engagement and ideological constraints have caused delays in the implementation of these well-intended policies (Awasthi, 2011; Phyak, 2016; Poudel & Choi, 2021).

A significant obstacle or 'threat' to the protection and promotion of regional and ethnic languages is the increasing use of English and Nepali in schooling and public governance. While not an indigenous language of Nepal, there is a long history of English in Nepal. Here, as elsewhere in the world, there has been a significant increase in the use of English particularly within the educational context. This has historically been more marked in the private school context where English is often the de facto MOI, and the use of Nepali or other local languages has been largely discouraged. Interestingly, while not an indigenous language of Nepal, English is included as one of the national languages (Brown 2018).

Changes to the Schools Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) in 2015 gave all Government/Community schools increased agency to select their MOI and this saw a rapid increase in the number of schools switching to English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI). Although there is much evidence to the contrary EMI is often considered to be a marker of educational 'quality' and therefore exerts a unique set of pressures on schools, communities and individuals (Dearden 2015; Erling 2014, Erling et al 2014; Sah & Li 2017; Phyak 2016). Many government schools have felt pressurized to 'keep up' with private schools in the use of EMI and many schools have reported a significant increase in students as a result of changing to EMI. Changes such as these have clear implications for the ways in which indigenous languages are valued as languages for learning and education.

1.2 The National Language Policy Recommendations Commission

While the focus so far has been on Constitutional changes and the different ways in which language and language in education and society has been framed within these texts, we now turn to discuss some of the work of the National Language Policy Recommendations Commission (NLPRC). This was established in 1994 and, much like the later Language Commission, the NLPRC has been responsible for interpreting different Constitutional recommendations and turning these into operationalizable policy to be enacted.

Since 1994 the NLPRC has made several recommendations regarding the preservation and protection of the languages of Nepal. Some of the provisions relevant to education are worth noting here as they help to show how the notion of Mother Tongue Medium of Instruction (MTMOI) has been conceptualised at the policy level. Most of the recommendations made by the NLPRC have been more practical in nature and are still very much shaping the ways in which LIEP management is taking place today.

The NLPRC has played a significant role in advising schools and different stakeholders on how to design and develop curriculum materials and how to phase in the use of different MOIs. They have been heavily involved in recommendations for teacher training and development and in funding and resourcing the development of different approaches for teaching and learning. Among other things, they have provided guidelines on how MT schools should be opened and resourced, and on how school districts and communities should organise their provision according to their own needs and community practices.

In their advice on the opening of MT schools the NLPRC categorized schools in to three main groups which were based on languages spoken in the local area. The three groups were:
- Mother tongue primary schools
- Bilingual primary schools
- National language primary schools

Mother tongue primary schools were classified as schools in which the student population would be largely monolingual, and the school could therefore choose a local MT as the main MOI. In bilingual schools there would be an option of operating in a national language as well as the national language (Nepali). National language primary schools applied to schools in areas with high levels of multilingualism and where the use of Nepali as the MOI would operate as a lingua franca or shared language. The use of Nepali was to overcome perceived challenges posed by multiple different languages in use.

1.3 The MILE study

As discussed above, there have been many attempts to improve language provision in schools but educational outcomes for students remain low. In 2015 the Ministry of Education commissioned a report into the MOI and Language for Education (MILE).A key goal for the report was to provide a review of policies and practices in order to form the basis of a comprehensive language policy for Nepal. A specific focus of the work was on the different MOIs and what support and provision was needed to support children's learning and achievement. The MILE study explored the status and issues around the implementation of MOI in Nepal's public schools, and suggested ways forward for education policy, planning and practices. The report gathered data through a literature review, consultation meetings, and field visits to sample districts and schools.

The MILE study identified key factors for successful MILE policy and practice. It highlighted the need for a clear sequencing of languages across the different grades of schooling, and made suggestions for effective pedagogy, curriculum materials, and technical and institutional support to realize Nepal's agenda of implementing a multilingual policy. The study argued that a multilingual approach would contribute towards ensuring children's access to Nepali and English as languages of power and opportunity. In addition, the report cautioned against the possibility of children being disadvantaged as a result of not being taught in their mother tongue or the most familiar language and argued that educational provision in the mother tongue/familiar language in the early years was an essential. The report also found that the Mother Tongue based- Multilingual education (MTB-MLE) initiatives and projects conducted across several schooling contexts had a significant positive impact on children's learning and enjoyment in schools.

The MILE report also identified issues with regard to how changes in the MOI impacted outcomes for learners and cautioned against the unplanned transition of public schools to English medium as:

The transition of many schools to English MOI seems to have been largely as a response to parent's demands and the need to keep enrolment numbers high. The lack of books and materials, or even of teachers who speak English, does not seem to have cautioned schools away from embarking on the change. In reality, most 'English medium' schools would seem to be using Nepali quite extensively alongside English, but without the benefits of a planned approach to bilingual teaching. Training and resourcing for English falls vastly short of what is required, even to achieve effective teaching of English as a subject. (Seel et al., 2017, p. x).

Some of the key recommendations made by the MILE study were the need to:
- Develop a comprehensive MILE policy in accordance with the aspiration of Federalism, and to ensure a consistent multilingual policy in Nepal.
- Provide a framework to cover the teaching of mother tongues, Nepali and English in multilingual education.
- Offer guidance to schools on whether mother tongue, Nepali, English and heritage/religious languages should be taken up as MOIs or as subjects, to ensure technical capacity of the schools to implement them properly.

The MILE report also highlighted the importance of the need to:
- identify key elements of good practice in teaching mother tongue, Nepali, English and heritage/religious languages.
- provide direct support to schools in relation the selection of languages curriculum, textbooks, materials and technologies, and teacher education.
- explore the role of MOE, development partners and other actors to complement and strengthen implementation of multilingual policy and strategies.

1.3.1 MILE study recommendations and some reflection on current status

The MILE study has played an important role in shaping current provision in schools in Nepal and as outlined above the report put forward several clear recommendations for policy and practice. Part of the work we have done in this current study is to evaluate the progress made on the MILE recommendations. We have done this through consulting relevant implementing agencies, i.e., MOEST officials, and CEHRD officials who were (in)directly involved in putting the language-in-education policy into practice, as well as reviewing available literature.

Based on our review of policies, plans and interviews with officials from the Ministry and CEHRD, the MILE report has been influential in several different and important ways. From our perspective the MILE report has:
- Inspired the relevant agencies, e.g., the CEHRD to make decisions on providing funding support to schools that have adopted language supportive approaches to education, especially through the implementation of flexible mother tongue based multilingual education in the schools located in mother tongue majority contexts.
- Helped the design and implementation of local curriculum in several local areas and fostered a growing commitment to develop and implement local curriculum and highlighted the need to teach the cultural content and community languages as part of the curriculum.
- Assisted in the implementation of the project on National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP).
- Helped to delegate authority for language of education related decision-making to the local government.
- Promoted flexible language support for students' learning in the classroom in which teachers are encouraged to flexibly use Nepali and mother tongues to support students' content comprehension.

While the recommendations from the MILE report have been taken seriously by the MOE and the wider agencies and stakeholders involved, full implementation of all the recommendations still has a long way to go. There are several recommendations that we identify as having yet to be realised and these are:
- Although the study called for the development of a comprehensive multilingual language policy, as yet no such specific policy exists.
- While the study recommended the formation of technical implementation units and committees to support a multilingual approach to education, there is no such infrastructure in place and many schools and local governments have reported difficulties in having decisions approved and policies implemented.

- The study highlighted the need to identify and disseminate good practice in relation to the use of multilingual approaches in schools and the development of teacher training, curriculum materials, and resources. This remains very much a work in progress and while some schools and districts have received curriculum materials, many have not.
- There is similarly no evidence that pre-service education programmes have included or addressed multilingual approaches in their curricula and pedagogy and where programmes on capacity building for in-service teachers do exist these are largely reported as being inadequate in most cases.

Summary Points

Reflecting on the different constitutional and policy trajectories is important in terms of providing a picture of how language has been conceptualised at the policy level and how this in turn may help us to understand what has happened in practice. What we can see from this overview is that there are many positives in the way that the successive Constitutions have sought to engage in a meaningful way with the linguistic diversity and multilingualism that is a key characteristic of Nepalese society and everyday life. There has been a clear commitment to the use of different languages in the classroom and a commitment to ensuring equality and equality of access to education for all learners (e.g., in School Sector Reform Plan [SSRP]- 2009-15), School Sector Development Plan [SSDP]-2016-23, and School Education Sector Plan [SESP] – 2022/23-2031/32). The SSRP and SSDP have sought to ensure equity in learning opportunities for all children irrespective of the caste, ethnic, linguistic, territorial, gender and other contextual backgrounds. The SESP has similarly promoted inclusive access to quality education and lifelong learning by 2030 (MOEST, 2022). The SESP is aiming at moving towards enhancing quality and relevance of overall school education by ensuring foundational learning and quality learning achievements for every child, through providing basic educational resources and tools to create inclusive and diversified learning environments, developing more standardized, relevant and inclusive curricula and encouraging the use of effective pedagogies to enhance the quality of learning of all students.

To realize these objectives and strategies in practice, focus is on capacity building at the three levels of government (i.e., Federal, Provincial, and Municipal) and educational institutions to strengthen planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (MOEST, 2022). This plan provides a clear commitment towards addressing the needs to minimize language barriers for learning, especially those whose home language is different from the language of instruction in schools. Among several other peripheral strategies, one of the core strategies to ensure equitable learning in early grades is to:
Develop resources in mother tongues and/or local languages to facilitate the use of language that children are familiar with as a medium of instruction in ECED centres to promote the linguistic development of and communication of students, as per the need. (MOEST, 2022, p. 32)
While there is much to applaud in the steps that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and other policy makers have taken, and our survey of recent policy provision and approaches has identified some peripheral changes in both macro policies and micro practices, the school systems in general seems largely unaffected and remains unchanged. There is still widespread concern about the lack of progress being made overall by children in public schools across the country and this is reflected in the Education Development plan 2021-2030 published by the MOEST. The report highlights concerns of underachievement across the education cycle and among specific socioeconomic and ethnolinguistic minority background students. Although exploration of the reasons for underachievement in learning and school dropout is beyond the scope of this study, the MOI is likely to have played a significant role as

children from the minority language background are often educated in Nepali, the defacto official language. Reducing drop-out rates among specific groups of students and the overall provision of quality education supported by effective teacher training and continuing professional development programmes remain key concerns for the Government.

Key Points

- The importance of Nepal's rich diverse population, caste/ethnic groups and local/indigenous languages have been a consistent feature of successive Constitutions.
- Nepal's indigenous/mother-tongue languages are provided with Constitutional support and attempts have been made to promote and protect these languages.
- All the languages of Nepal have been given Constitutional support, but Nepali has a higher status than the other indigenous/mother-tongue languages.
- 11 of Nepal's indigenous languages have been given special status and states can choose a majority local language for use in Government business alongside Nepali.
- Nepali and English are often more highly valued in educational contexts and EMI instruction has increased significantly in recent years, often without proper planning.
- A coherent guideline for implementing multilingual education is missing.
- Underachievement is still high and is linked to the MOI and use of languages in schools

1.4 International context: Alternative approaches to multilingualism in schools

What much of the literature shows (García, 2009; García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Wei, 2014; McSwan, 2017; Pennycook, 2007) is that while multilingualism is the norm and everyday lived reality for most of the world's people, policy, and more specifically language policy, tends to be inherently monolingual in its design, and delivery. In practice this means that teachers and students often find themselves being asked to teach and learn through a specified MOI which may not reflect language practices that they are used to or most comfortable with and which do not support learning. A key consequence of such policy traditions and perspectives is that they often position multilingualism as a barrier to learning and something which needs to be overcome for children to be successful in their schooling, rather than as a positive resource for the classroom. An example of these ideologies being played out in the context of schooling is powerfully illustrated in the image below which is a photograph of a poster displayed outside a classroom in a secondary school in Kathmandu.
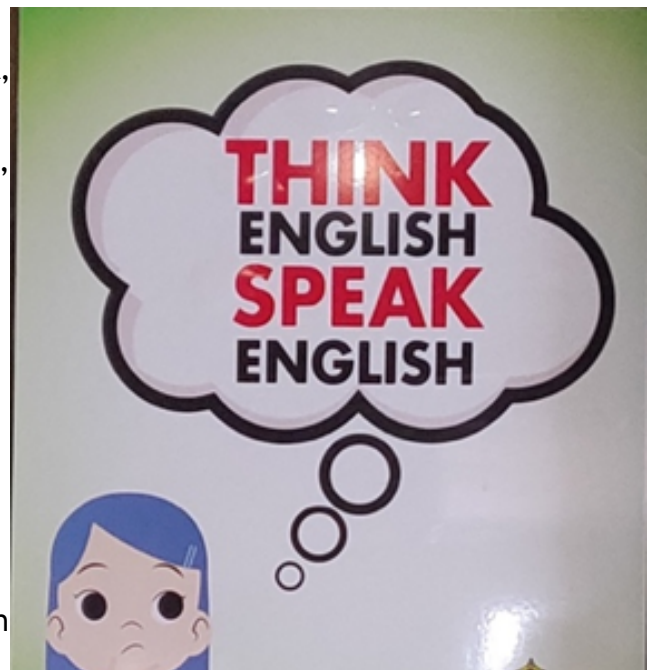

FIGURE 1: LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN AN ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOL IN KATHMANDU

Such posters are not unique to Nepal and are found in schools and classrooms around the world and serve to reinforce the dominant language ideologies (e.g., English-only monolingual ideologies) and the implementation of language policies and practices. They also send a clear message to students and teachers that some languages are deemed to be inappropriate for the classroom context and others are not and serve to police language use (Cushing 2020; Makalela, 2015; 2016, 2017; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007, 2012; Pennycook, 2007, 2017). Such policy traditions are steeped in colonial thinking and legacy and as much of the literature has shown have been built on what we might call a monolingual mindset or 'monolingual habitus' (Gogolin, 1997).

At the centre of such practices is the view that learning and teaching is best done monolingually, i.e., the target language is best acquired in and through the target language. For decades, this perspective has underpinned much of the literature on English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies and means that teachers and students are asked (as the poster highlights) to operate monolingually.In many contexts teachers and students are 'punished' for mixing languages or using a language that is not the target language or the specified language of the school. This practice is not only monolingual but also 'exclusionary' from a social justice perspective and means that fluid, dynamic and successful language practices that are in use on a day-to-day basis outside of the classroom are vilified and stigmatised inside the classroom.

A striking consequence of this type of thinking and practice in LIEPs is that 40% of children globally do not access education in a language they understand (UNESCO, 2016). This means that teachers and students are required to try and work in languages that may or may not be the language they are most familiar with and/or comfortable in using. It also means that the full range of linguistic resources that students and teachers bring with them to the classroom are not being used effectively and appropriately and individuals are forced to operate in much narrower more constrictive ways. An important and much needed counter to this is the work that is happening in the field of translanguaging and multilingual pedagogies. The work of scholars such as Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012), García (2009), García and Wei (2014), García and Kleyn (2016), McSwan (2017), Pennycook (2007) has been crucial in highlighting the fluid and flexible nature of language use in practice, i.e., translanguaging.

Translanguaging starts from the view that conceptualising languages as separate bounded entities is problematic and argues instead for a view of language that is closer to capturing the day to day lived experience of language users, i.e., how we use language and what it does. Translanguaging scholars begin from the perspective that language is not experienced as separate entities in our minds but rather language exists as an unbounded resource. Language therefore does not naturally occur under categories such as 'English' or 'Nepali' rather these are social constructs and tools linked directly to the work of nation building. Viewed from a translanguaging perspective, LIEPs and school and classroom practices that are monolingual in their design and delivery and which mandate the use of a specific MOI over another are problematic in that they are ultimately asking language and its users to be and do in ways that runs counter to what language is and does. A translanguaging perspective then argues that asking people to 'think' monolingually goes against the very idea of how language and multilingualism works.

Much positive work is happening in and across a range of educational contexts in relation to such things as pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; García, 2009; García & Kleyn, 2016, García & Wei, 2014; Guzula, 2021). Such work is helping to promote better understanding of multilingualism in schools and is helping to design training which allows teachers and students to draw on all of their linguistic repertoires in classrooms to deliver, construct and demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Rather than restricting and punishing students and teachers for working multilingually, pedagogical translanguaging, as well as other multilingual approaches to education (language supportive pedagogies Erling et al., 2021, for example) free participants to be able to draw on whatever language and literacy practices they need to access and participate in learning. Such approaches are important not only with regard to social justice but also in terms of decolonising the curriculum by ensuring that educational practices promote equal access to educational success for all students regardless of language backgrounds and practices.

Increasing empirical evidence from classrooms show that multilingual approaches such a pedagogical translanguaging are most often the natural default/response of teachers and students and is what actually regularly happens in classrooms around the world, even when a different specific MOI is stated (Bagwasi & Costley, 2022). Most of the data collected from classrooms where there is a fixed MOI show that teachers and students regularly engage in behaviours and practices that run counter to, and often in contradiction to the stated policy. This means that when we talk about English Medium Instruction or Nepali Medium Instruction for example, we have to acknowledge that these practices are rarely (if ever) monolingual and that the moments when these monolingual practices are actually forced or implemented is when the least effective learning is likely to take place.

A translanguaging perspective is important not only in terms of how we understand what language is and does but also in terms of the significant implications it has for how we study and research language, and how proficiency in language is tested and assessed. The monolingualism that underpins the design of most LIEPs globally and which shapes the school practices of millions of students and teachers around the world also dominates the ways in which research, particularly within the field of applied linguistics, has traditionally also gone about measuring and collecting data on languages (Costley & Reilly, 2022; May 2013; Reilly et al., 2023). Acknowledging that schools and classrooms are often operating multilingually means that any monolingual measures of knowledge and practices (such as exam scores and assessment results) have to be treated with caution as they are likely to be only but a partial reflection of what is taking place and or what is possible.

Key Points

- Much current research and thinking is based on the view that language is fluid and dynamic and boundaries do not exist between languages for their speakers.
- Asking multilingual individuals to behave monolingually – e.g., 'think in English, speak in English' is problematic. Multilingual individuals do not think and behave monolingually, they think and behave multilingually.
- Languages do not have to be learned and used monolingually.
- Languages are resources for making meaning and can be used flexibly in classrooms.
- In multilingual classrooms there is a need to operate multilingually in terms of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The concept of MOI needs to be expanded to include multilingual practices and we need to shift our thinking away from instruction towards learning.

Part 2: Methodology- Data Collection and Analysis

The overall study discussed here was guided key three key questions and these are:

1. What happens in schools and classrooms in Nepal with regard to MOI and how does this impact on students' participation in classes and their learning outcomes?
2. How have federal, provincial, and local governments responded to meeting children's need for learning in a language they are most familiar with, especially in early grades?
3. What are the critical areas of intervention for implementing meaningful change with regard to delivering effective multilingual education in schools in Nepal and for raising the educational outcomes of all students?

To address these questions, the study adopted a mixed methodology in which data were gathered through both quantitative and quantitative data collection methods and made use of data gathered from surveys, interviews, and classroom observations as well as school data (e.g., achievement results). We collected data from all seven provinces in Nepal and the specific research sites were purposively selected based on the language clusters across the three ecological belts in Nepal. Given our interested in the role of language in education, we wanted to collect data on as many different language groups as possible. Table 3 provides an overview of the languages covered in this study and their geographical context.

S.N.	Languages Covered	Districts
1	Bantawa Rai	Panchthar
2	Meche, Rajbanshi	Jhapa
3	Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bajjika	Saptari, Rautahat, Bara
4	Kham Magar, Gurung, Magar	Lamjung, Syangja East Rukum, Surkhet, Palpa
5	Khas Nepali	Kalikot
6	Rana Tharu	Kanchanpur
7	Tamang, Newar, Chepang	Dhading, Kathmandu, Kavre

TABLE 3: LANGUAGES AND THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTS

2.1. Survey Design

Online surveys (see Appendix 1) were administered to education officers from all local level government units. It was circulated through online meetings with municipal level education officers who were directly involved in the development and implementation of education policies in schools in all 7 provinces of Nepal (Koshi, Madhesh, Bagmati, Gandaki, Karnali, Lumbini and Sudurpaschim).Of the 753 officers working in local level units a total of 163 fully responded to our online survey. All the responses to the questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed, and variables were explored to understand the officers' perceptions of and involvement in the implementation of mother tongue/multilingual education across Nepal.

2.2. Interviews: Individual and group

The field-based data were obtained from 30 schools from 7 provinces of Nepal. The schools were selected purposively while also considering the language clusters (see Table 3). Semi-structured Interviews with teachers and head teachers were conducted along with group discussions with parents. Interviews were the key methods for collection of qualitative field-based data for this study.Although the survey was also developed for the municipal level elected officials, wherever possible, they were also approached for interviews which helped us to understand their commitments and future policy and plan goals. Group interviews were conducted with parents in each of the selected contexts and numbers of participants varied across groups, ranging from 3-6. Guidelines (See Appendix 2) were developed for use in conducting the group interviews and interviewers asked interviewees to use their preferred languages for the interviews which were audio-recorded and transcribed as required.

2.3. Classroom Observation

We also observed one class taught by each teacher we interviewed which helped us understand the general patterns of language use in Nepali medium, English medium and mother tongue medium classrooms. A classroom observation form was prepared in English and translated into Nepali to ease the collection of data (See Appendix 3). With permission from the relevant teachers, parts of classes were audio and video recorded.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a rigorous process in which all the data were initially coded. At first, the online survey data were migrated to and converted to SPSS data for a quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis included the calculation of means and standard deviations (SD). The survey data helped us to develop a birds' eye view of the current status of language policies in place across the municipal levels.

Before the data was processed, the interviews and group discussions were transcribed and translated into English. The data were coded jointly by the authors and discussed thoroughly. The authors worked together in handling the codes and collectively settling the thematic categories and findings.

As per the scope of the study and the interrelated research questions, the following were the core concerns consistently analysed and discussed.
-Rationale for using mother tongue or the most familiar language/s in teaching and learning.
-Language policy responses at three levels of government
-Barriers to learning
-Enabling conditions for improving learning outcomes
-Government responses to implementation of mother tongue MOI/multilingual education
-Critical areas of intervention
-Stakeholders and agency and involvement in responding to multilingual education policies in Nepal.

Key Points

- Data was gathered from all provinces across Nepal.
- Data was collected from a variety of stakeholders and individuals involved in teaching and learning.
- Data was collected from a survey, interviews, observations as well as analysis of schools data.
- Data was collected from schools with different stated MOIs.

Part 3: Findings and Discussion

In order to address the key questions driving this study, the following discussion is organized around the three interrelated research questions that have shaped and informed the data collection and analysis for this study. We begin with a discussion of our first research question which provides insights into what is happening in schools and classrooms and how language is being used on a day-to-day basis by teachers and students. The second research question moves to a discussion of the different roles played by external stakeholders such as local government officials and educational officers. The data show who is involved in implementing and managing policy and how their engagement shapes and determines what happens in schools. Our final research question focuses on identifying key areas for intervention for the effective delivery of multilingual education in schools.

3.1. What happens in schools and classrooms in Nepal with regard to MOI and how does this impact on students' participation in classes and their learning outcomes?

MOI and learning outcomes
A key theme that came out from our interview data (both individual and group) is that the choice of MOI for a school is an important one and one which has a significant impact on the day-to-day experiences of children and teachers and their overall learning outcomes. Within the data there was a clear sense from all the participants that the MOI posed specific problems for schools, students, teachers, and parents. Participants felt that changes to a school's MOI were often not made on pedagogical grounds but rather on more pragmatic grounds (often to do with student recruitment and finance) and this was particularly the case with respect to English.

Participants reported that they felt that changes to a school's MOI were often implemented quickly and were typically not well-planned. In many cases where schools had changed their school MOI the decision was often not carefully planned and orchestrated but rather it was a mandatory condition for keeping the students from moving to private schools in the local community which were offering EMI instruction. Our data strongly showed that where schools had changed their MOI to English the decision to do this had been motivated by the need to generate income rather than grounded in sound pedagogy and/or evidence of better learning outcomes. Many of the participants in this study felt that these changes were designed to

try to make schools more attractive to parents and students, rather than being based on the ability to provide a better or more effective learning experience through English. This is expressed very well by one of our participants, Dambar a teacher from a school in Nawalpur who said:

"The sole cause of following English medium classroom and English as a medium of instruction was to impress the community and check the number of students leaving public schools and going to private schools. The public schools had no other options to check their students from leaving the schools. This dramatically not only held their students in the school but also attracted students from private schools".

Dambar's opinion was reported as a shared reality across all the public EMI schools. It was also felt that public schools were not fully prepared for a successful shift to EMI from the earlier NMI and this caused several problems for teachers and students. Regarding the problems faced, Dambar further stated that:

"Teachers felt very difficult to run classes in English with English as a medium of instruction. The teachers felt it was very difficult to make students understand the task and check students' understanding of the instructions they gave in the classroom".

Other teachers also reported that the number of students not doing or not completing tasks in class increased after the change from NMI to EMI and the main explanations they gave for this was that after the change to EMI students often did not understand the task and/or instructions their teachers provided in English. In most of the schools where there had been an attempt to change the MOI teachers reported that the changes tended to be unplanned and that the school was unprepared in terms of resources and teacher training. One mathematics teachers who had experience of such changes said:

"In the beginning it was so tough for me, as there was a sudden shift to EMI. I had been teaching in Nepali. I did not have strong English background, so that I had a hard time shifting to English. I used both Nepali and English to handle my classroom and to deliver the mathematics content".

Facing similar issues, a school in Lamjung realised that the shift from NMI to EMI was more problematic than imagined in terms of students' learning and this pushed the school to rethink their earlier decision and they subsequently reverted back to NMI. Once NMI was restored, students' performance and participation in learning improved significantly. As all the students from the community understood Nepali well, Nepali instruction yielded better learning outcomes than that of earlier English medium. The head teacher at a school from Lamjung said:

"We implemented English medium before, but what we found is that except some bright ones, majority of the students could not do better neither in English nor in Nepali. Especially in early grades, their comprehension of the concept was also negatively affected. So, we revoked the earlier practice and taught in Nepali medium".

Whereas many previous studies have found that parents and other stakeholders across Nepal want English and only English for their children as a marker of educational success, the data from this study presents a much more nuanced picture. The majority of the participants in our study felt very strongly that in EMI and also NMI classes where little to no use of students' other languages was encouraged, any learning would be superficial. Overall, our participants felt strongly that an increase in English instruction did not lead to increased learning. Underpinning this concern was the view that when students are not able to use a language that they are familiar with they do not develop a deep and sustained understanding of the curriculum content and knowledge, but instead a rather superficial insight.

In our discussions with parents, although they wanted their children to speak and have access to English they did not want this at the cost of the other languages in their repertoires and certainly not at the cost of developing their foundational knowledge and skills for learning. A standout theme in the data and which signals a shift in the overall attitudes was that multilingualism and children's familiar languages were a source of immense pride for parents and communities and were seen as resources to be nurtured. Instead of languages of the home and community being seen a potentially inferior or something limited, parents, head teachers and other stakeholders very much saw these as immensely important and valuable resources for learning. There was general agreement that the more familiar the language of instruction, the greater the possibility of participatory and meaningful learning and the overwhelming view was that multilingual instruction was needed in classrooms in order for children to develop a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

In addition to comments and experiences of teachers and other stakeholders on achievement and the influence of the MOI, we have also been able to analyse students' results and achievement data. Figure 3 below is an example which shows that students studying in NMI contexts had better learning outcomes in subjects such as Nepali, English and science than those studying in EMI contexts.The results in mathematics and social studies showed that students did better in EMI in earlier grades but the overall achievement gap in these subjects is small compared to the results for Nepali, English and Science. This indicates that the NMI context had a more positive impact in enhancing students learning compared to those in EMI.
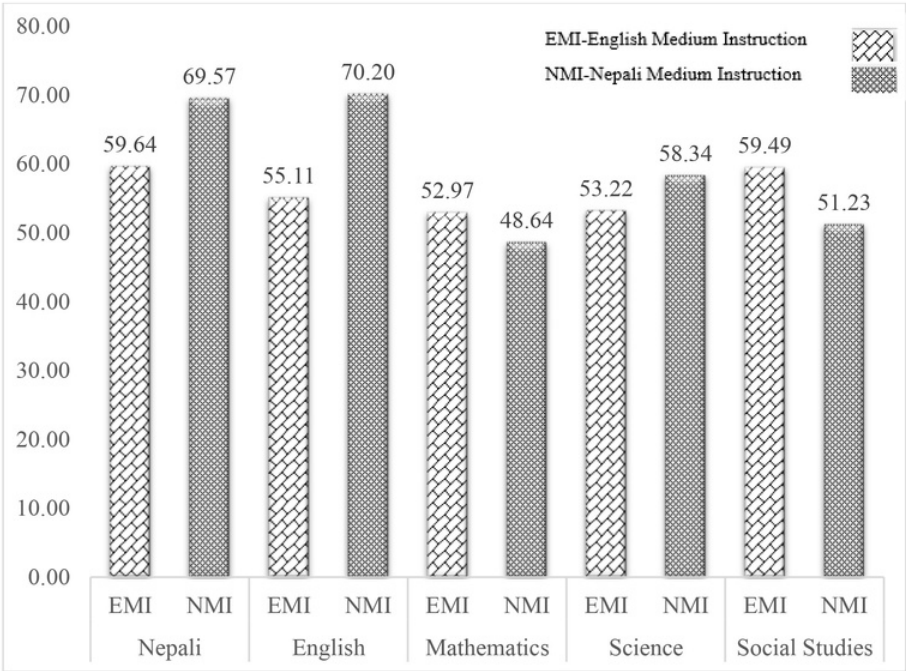
FIGURE 3: COMPARISON OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN EMI AND NMI

MOI and actual language practices

In our interviews with teachers, they frequently mentioned that irrespective of the chosen MOI at the school level, they used English, Nepali and students' other familiar languages very flexibly in communicating in the classroom. While in some cases such fluid language use happened spontaneously, in others it was planned in order to address communication gaps. Similarly, our observations of classes in EMI/NMI schools showed that more than 80% of the teachers frequently shifted languages during their classes. The reasons they gave for doing so were varied but mostly the switches occurred when the teacher needed to give and clarify information. Table 4 below provides an overview of the main reasons teachers gave for when, how and why they made use of multilingual/translanguaging practices in their classrooms.

Reasons for multilingual/translanguaging practices in classes
To explain something in the middle of class
To clarify the subject in between class teaching
To explain something
To settle fights in class
To explain the content
To explain the subject matter and give important instructions
To help them understand the subject
To make teaching effective and increase student participation
To make the subject clear to the students
When difficult subjects are hard to understand
When presenting the material to the class
When students do not understand the content

TABLE 4: REASONS FOR MULTILINGUAL/TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICES IN CLASSES

In our observations, we noted the ways in which different languages were used in the classes and what languages teachers used to carry out different tasks. Table 5 below shows patterns we identified in relation to how teachers opened lessons and greeted students. As shown in the table more than 50 % of the greetings by teachers were in English, and almost 67% of student responses were in English. This was followed by 14.3% of English responses by teachers. The students had the lowest Nepali or mother tongue responses to teacher greetings. Interestingly, teachers' responses in other local languages were a little higher (28.6%) than that of the students (22.2%).

	% in English	% in Nepali	% in English and Nepali	% in local languages
Teacher greeting the class	50	20	20	10
Student responses to the teacher	67	11	-	22
Teacher responses to the students	14	57	-	29

TABLE 5: LANGUAGES USED AT THE START OF CLASSES

Similar to the teachers' language use in the beginning of the lesson, there was a multilingual focus in closing the lessons. Table 6 presents an overview the types of interactions and activities that characterized the end of the classes but in contrast to the opening of the classes which tended to be done in English, the closing/end stages of the classes and assessment were mostly done in Nepali followed by other local languages.

	% in English	% in Nepali	% in English and Nepali	% in local languages
Summarizing	10	50	20	20
Explaining assessment	-	60	-	40
Providing assignments	10	70	10	10
Clarifying assignments	-	70	20	10

TABLE 6: TEACHERS' LANGUAGE USE AT THE END OF CLASSES AND ASSESSMENT

Table 7 below provides more insight into other phases of lessons and what happens at different times in the classes. As we can see for tasks such as writing on the board and providing clarifications, Nepali was observed far more frequently than English. The data shows some of the main patterns of language use we observed and confirms what teachers had told us in interviews which is that they often needed to use multiple languages to help students understand complex ideas or moments in the classes, and that English was much less helpful for these purposes.

	% in English	% in Nepali	% in English and Nepali	% in local languages
Writing on board	20	60	10	10
Explaining content	10	40	30	10
Giving instructions	10	40	10	-
Giving Explanations	40	-	60	-
Asking questions	10	50	30	10
Doing pair work	10	60	30	-
Discussing materials	-	60	20	20
Providing clarifications	-	70	-	30

TABLE 7: TEACHERS' LANGUAGE USE IN CLASSES

Overall, these data go some way in capturing the multilingual and fluid nature of the classes and reflect the teachers' dynamic use of language, especially between English, Nepali and students' other familiar languages. An important point here is that we observed these practices and these uses of language irrespective of the officially stated MOI. We did not observe classes which were only English, or only Nepali and for these classes the actual MOI was multilingual and characterised by fluid practices. It is also important to note that while teachers openly discussed the different ways in which they used their languages in the classroom, there was also a sense that for many these practices ran in contradiction to the idealised or desired practices of the schools. While teachers were not 'hiding' their multilingual practices in classrooms, there was a sense that if they were being formally observed or assessed, or if there were visitors in the schools then the language practices would likely change, becoming less natural, more monolingual in nature and more in line with the stated MOI.

The following example is from a pre-school classroom we observed within a minority language community in eastern Nepal. This school (partially) teaches mother tongue as a subject and officially declares itself to be an EMI primary school. It is also a school where a decision has been taken to support multilingualism and multilingual approaches. Figure 2 below is a photo taken from one of these classrooms and shows that the majority of the displays in the were in English followed by Nepali with no displays in the local language. However, in the classroom, the majority of the children were found speaking the local language and Nepali. The teacher's language use was fluid between Nepali and the local language, with a peripheral use of English while teaching mathematics and social studies.

FIGURE 2: CLASSROOM DISPLAYS AND LANGUAGE USE IN AN EARLY GRADE CLASSROOM

Classroom Extract 1 below is an illustration of what actually happened in the classroom in terms of language use and shows how the teacher scaffolds learning by moving fluidly within and across the different languages of the classroom.

Teacher: आज हामी के पढ्दै छौ? [What are we studying today?]

Students: शब्द [Word] (many students say 'sabda' (शब्द)

Teacher: शब्दहरु है [Words, okay].

Student: Madam एक एककरके उठाएके पढाबौ [Madam, ask each one to stand and read]

Teacher: ho, एक एक गरेर पढ्ने हो है [okay, we will study asking each one to stand and read].
        जा का हये? [what is this] (Teacher shows a word card which writes 'थपडी')

Students: (read it out seemingly having difficulty to complete reading it) say: 'थ-प-डी' [clap]

Teacher: ho, के होयो [okay, what is this?]

Students: थपडी [clap]

Teacher: सब सिखलय? जा का हये?

Students: थपडी (all students reply correctly, and it seems they have learnt it well)

Teacher: मा जसलाईसोध्छु उसले मात्र भन्ने हो है [please answer as per my question to a particular student]

Student: मै जानतहाओं [I know correctly] (one student excitedly speaks raising her hand)

Teacherल निर्मन (calls the name of a student and shows the card 'चुचुरो').

Nirman: 'चुचुरो' [mountain]

Teacher: के होयो? [what is this] (teacher asks the question to the whole class showing the same word card)

Student: all students say 'Chuchuro' [mountain]

Teacher: चु-चु-रो. (all students repeat after her).

Teacher: चुचुरो भनेकोके हुन्छ?

Students: पहाड (mountain) (many students say).

Teacher: हो, पहाडकोचुचुरो है [the top of the mountain, okay]. सप्पैले ध्यानदिनु होला, मा जसलाई सोध्छु उसले मात्र भन्ने हो है [All of you pay attention. Only the one whom I ask the question shall answer]

Teacher: Ruth, जा काहये? [Ruth, what is this?] (teacher asks a student Ruth what was the word written on the card)

Ruth: (stands and tries to read the word, but could not do immediately).

Teacher: जा का? [what is this?] (shows the word and asks how it is read.) (The student cannot read, and other students read it. Some read the word 'Mohor' as Mohada, and the teacher corrects it as 'Mohor'. She says 'मोहोर कोअर्थ के हो हाम्रो?' (moves around the class).

Classroom Extract 1: Classroom language use in a multilingual school

The extract is a good example of the teacher using their linguistic resources in Nepali and Rana Tharu to support student learning in her classroom. The observation showed that the teacher started her lesson in Nepali, the students responded in their mother tongue, and while using the mother tongue without any fear, the students seemed excited in learning. There was good participation of the students in the classroom process, as they replied to the teacher's questions both in Nepali and in the language, they were familiar with. The teacher also used their languages fluidly for example, when she was teaching Nepali subject words, she used both Nepali and the familiar language of the students. When she translated the meaning of the words into the local, familiar language, the students' comprehension was enhanced. This practice of supporting children's learning through use of familiar languages was valued by the parents and community leaders who believed that the use of the children's familiar languages was positively shaping their overall learning and confidence.

Key Points

- Classrooms in Nepal are rarely monolingual and do not conform to a single MOI.
- Teachers and students use a range of languages in classes to enhance participation, learning and understanding.
- Use of familiar languages is a necessary part of building foundational knowledge and provides students with opportunities to demonstrate and show their learning.
- Students are more effective participants in classes where they can freely use languages that are familiar to them.
- Use of multilingual and multimodal assessment would allow students the scope to show their learning.
- Decisions about a school's MOI needs to be based on what is beneficial for learning and achievement rather than income.
- English Medium Instruction is not an automatic sign of quality or educational success/improved outcomes for students.

3.2. How have federal, provincial and local government responded to meeting children's need for learning in a language they are most familiar with, especially in early grades?

As discussed earlier in this report, Nepal's current governance system has three layers of administration and governance- federal, provincial, and municipal. Although the municipal level government has increased responsibility for managing education, the three levels of governments are interlinked in terms of policy directions and resource management. In addition to the experiences of teachers and parents we also wanted to get the views and experiences of education officers and other stakeholders at the different levels of government to better understand their level of involvement in policy implementation.

The data reported below are taken from the survey we conducted with a range of educational officers. In total we collected 155 responses in which we asked the Municipal Education Officers (MEOs) to comment on their involvement in implementing mother tongue multilingual education. Our findings indicate that around one-third (31.3%) of MEOs said that they were not involved in the implementation of current policy with very few (12.3%) indicating that they were involved in implementing policy (see are Figures 4 and 5 below). This data suggests that familiarity with and involvement in implementing current language policy by MEOs is limited, which is problematic. Our data show that there are inconsistencies in the involvement of policy makers and MEOs and these varying levels of engagement has had a material impact on how the policy has been both understood and implemented.

Figure 4: Familiarity with policy on mother tongue education

Figure 5: Involvement in implementing mother tongue education policy
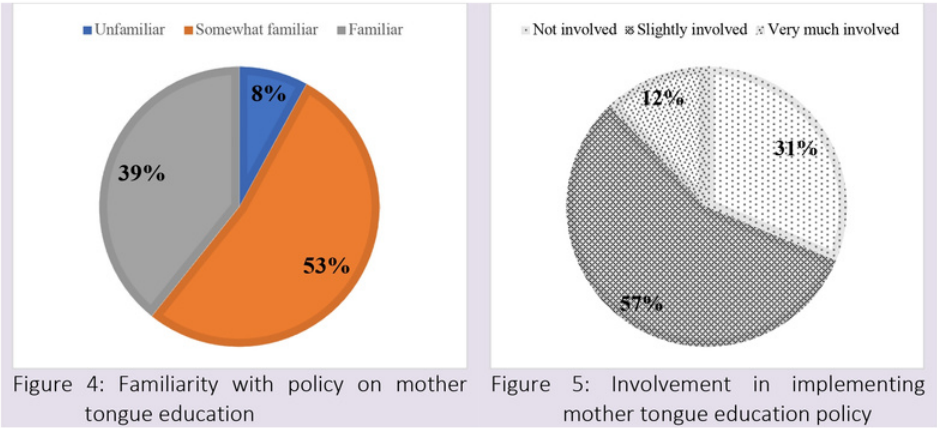
Our study further explored MEOs' contribution in addressing the needs of children whose first languages are different from those used in schools as MOIs. The majority of MEOs reported that they were involved in a number of crucial implementation tasks and Table 8 below provides a detailed list of the types of activities MEOs said they had been involved in and how often they were involved in these activities.

MEO Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Initiated development of curriculum at the local level	85	54.84
Visited schools to explore children's learning needs	68	43.87
Helped to develop school actions in addressing learning needs	56	36.13
Disseminated information on the benefits of educating children in their home or the most familiar language	55	35.48
Trained teachers to improve their instructional practices as per the language need of the student population in their respective classes	35	22.58
Prioritized the recruitment of mother tongue teachers from local communities using municipal funds	24	15.48

Conducted surveys to map languages in use in the municipal area	21	13.55
Allocated funds for resource management for implementing education in mother tongue	16	10.32
Facilitated schools to form parent groups in supporting mother tongue education	11	7.10

TABLE 8: MEO INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS TO SUPPORT MOTHER TONGUE MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION.

The findings reported in Table 8 show that the majority of MEOs have contributed towards the development of local level curriculum (54.84%) followed by school visits to explore the children's learning needs (43.87%). However, very few of them reported that they helped schools to form parents' groups for supporting mother tongue or multilingual education (7.10%). Another equally important finding is that the MEOs made a minimum contribution towards the management of funds for the recruitment of mother tongue/multilingual teachers (15.48%) and resource management (10.32%) for mother tongue education. This reveals that additional focused efforts need to be made in these areas alongside proactive support and engagement of the local level government, i.e., at the Palika (municipal) level.

Within our interview data many participants (parents, head teachers and other community members) said that they felt that more support was needed in terms of developing multilingual practices in schools, particularly when it came to resourcing classroom practices in the local languages. Many highlighted that although there was a lot of good will and enthusiasm for use of local languages in schools, this was often hampered by a lack of curriculum documents and teacher training programmes. Head teachers in schools felt that they were neither monitored or directed in their implementation of multilingual education and that more guidance would be helpful.

The survey also captured the actions or activities of different agencies with regard to mother tongue and multilingual medium education in Nepal. 133 out of our 150 participants reported on the different activities they were involved in and these are detailed in Figure 6 and are based on the frequency with which the answers were given.
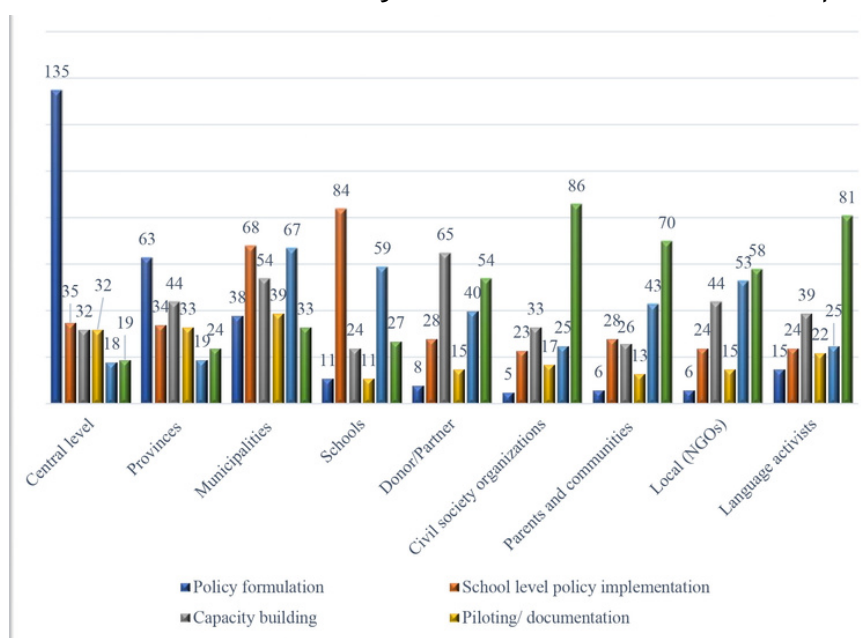
FIGURE 6: ACTIVITIES OF DIFFERENT AGENCIES TOWARDS MOTHER TONGUE MEDIUM EDUCATION

Figure 6 shows the involvement of Education Review Offices (EROs) at the federal (n=135), provincial (n=63), and municipal (n=27) level was found to be high in terms of policy formulation whereas the involvement of donor/partner agencies (n=8), civil society organizations (n=5), parents and communities (n=6) and local agencies (n=6) was found to be lower for the same activity. With regard to school level policy implementation, the involvement of municipality (n=68) and school (n=84) was found to be higher than the other agencies and the role of donor/development partners was higher in capacity building activities. With respect to piloting/documentation, very few MEOs reported the involvement of all agencies however the involvement of schools (n=11) found to be lowest in comparison to the involvement of the remaining agencies. In relation to resource mobilization, the involvement of municipality (n=67), school (n=59), and local agencies (n=53) was more than the remaining agencies and the involvement of civil society organization (n=86), language activists (n=81), and parents and community (n=70) found to be high and the role of central (n=19), provinces (n=24) and school (n=27) found to be lower in advocacy. These results, overall show that the minimum engagement of all other agencies except the central government in policy formulation might have led to the ineffective implementation of mother tongue education.

The final survey data we present here is on the MEOs' responses to a question that asked them to report on what specific actions they thought were necessary for successful implementation of mother tongue or multilingual education in the future. Their responses were measured by frequency and percentage and Table 9 presents a summary of the responses.

Necessary actions for future policy success	Frequency	Percentage
Develop municipal policies for enabling schools to implement mother tongue education	118	72.39
Engage parents in policymaking and implementation	108	66.26
Allow schools to teach mother tongues as separate language subjects	77	47.24
Encourage both private and public schools to implement multilingual education	102	62.58
Encourage schools to allow teachers and students simultaneously use their multilingual resources during classroom instruction and learning	105	64.42

TABLE 9: NECESSARY ACTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Table 9 shows that the around two-thirds of the respondents reported that the development of municipal policies for enabling schools to implement mother tongue education (72.39%) is the most significant action that could be carried out for the effective implementation of mother tongue or multilingual education in the future. This was followed by the engagement of parents in policymaking and implementation (66.26%). The other action they identified as being important was related to encouraging both private and public schools to implement multilingual education (62.58%) and encouraging schools to allow teachers and students to simultaneously use their multilingual resources during classroom instruction and learning (64.42%).

Key Points

- Policies need to be successfully supported at all levels of government in order to be successfully implemented in practice.
- Clear channels of communication and responsibility are needed between federal, provincial, and municipal levels.
- Municipal governments have an essential role to play in policy development and implementation.
- Effective communication between all agencies and stakeholders is necessary for effective policy implementation.
- Parents, community members and wider stakeholders need to be involved in policy decisions and implementation.
- Ensuring that regulations and requirements are consistent for all schools regardless of their public/private status.
- Multilingual policies need to be applied to all schools and levels of schooling, particularly at early grades.

3.3. What are the critical areas of intervention for implementing meaningful change with regard to delivering effective multilingual education in schools in Nepal and for raising the educational outcomes of all students?

In the process of collecting and analysing the data collected as part of this study, we have been able to identify key areas where we believe change is needed in order for the take up of multilingual education in Nepal to be more effective, and for it to have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes and achievements. While some of these changes are structural in nature others operate at a more philosophical or abstract level and require important changes in the way that language and multilingualism are understood.

The first and perhaps most important area we identify as being in need of change is the way in which language and more specifically the concept of MOI is conceptualized at the policy level. As we have seen in the review of previous policies as well as in the data collected during this project, the traditional concept of MOI is based on a monolingual perspective and is grounded in the idea that it is possible and desirable for teaching and learning to take place only through one language. What we have shown in this study is that in multilingual contexts such as Nepal, this is not what happens on the ground, and nor is it not the basis of successful practice. What this means is that there is also a need for the development of a clear and well-articulated definition of what multilingualism is and what a multilingual medium of instruction refers to.

This study has shown that in classrooms across Nepal, teachers and students are engaging in complex and highly successful multilingual practices, where languages are being used fluidly to scaffold and support learning. A clearer framework for multilingual approaches and pedagogies needs to be developed and made available to schools in the form of teacher training and continuing professional development. Such structural changes would also create space for the development of locally produced materials to promote and support language learning in different the regions of Nepal. This would help foster parental and community awareness and provide schools and communities with clear strategies for developing and engaging with multilingual approaches.

This is linked to a second key area of intervention which we believe is necessary and which is the need to tackle misconceptions about the value of English Medium Education and or English Medium Instruction. The purpose here is not to say that students should not be taught English, or that it has no role in education but rather the focus is on reducing the negative impact that English often has on the perceived value and role of other languages in education. While English is still a valuable commodity in schools across Nepal, our data clearly shows that there is not only pride in local languages/mother tongues, but that these are better vehicles for learning and engagement. There is a need to ensure that local languages are clearly positioned as resources for learning on par with English and that local languages are used to create more equitable learning conditions for all students.

The final point to raise here is linked to previous studies, in particular the MILE study, and the need for foundational work to be done at the level of developing a coherent and consistent language in education policy framework for federal, provincial, and municipal governments to follow. It is important to develop policy guidelines through a participatory, inclusive, and consultative approach in order to bring provincial and municipal levels of government on board and to make informed and context-specific choices about languages in schools. It is also essential to have clear operational guidelines for policy implementation in order to ensure that the specific roles played by federal, provincial and municipal governments is clear and easy to monitor and assess.

Key Points

- There is a need to develop consensus on what multilingualism is and what a multilingual MOI looks like.
- There is a need to develop teaching and learning practices that also allow for multilingual and multimodal assessment.
- There is a need to develop a language in education policy that is built on the linguistic practices of the students they seek to serve.
- There is a need for a clear set of policy guidelines and implementational strategies to be developed and for all stakeholders to be aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Part 4: Recommendations for policy and practice

To conclude this study, we have drawn together the main points and findings from the previous parts of the report and present them here as our main overall findings. These findings are important and have implications for all stakeholders but in particular they constitute important points of reference for policy developers (e.g., Ministries, CEHRD, Development partners), as well as key policy implementers (schools, school heads, teachers). We then move on to present three overarching recommendations from this study which we again feel are important for all stakeholders to engage with. These interrelated recommendations are directed not only at the policy level but also in terms of informing teaching training, resourcing, as well as attitudes towards how languages are understood and valued more broadly within the country.

4.1. Key findings

Based on these findings, we put forward the following broad recommendations. These interrelated recommendations are directed not only at the policy level but also in terms of informing teaching training, resourcing, as well as attitudes towards how languages are understood and valued more broadly within the country.

- **When children, especially in early grades, are able to interact and learn in their mother tongue/familiar language/s they are more active participants in the class and are more engaged in their lessons.** Parents, head-teachers, teachers, and other stakeholders repeatedly highlighted this in the interviews and this finding is also echoed in the wider literature. Many participants cited significant changes in their children's/students' attitudes and engagement in classes when shifts in the stated MOI were made. The most common views we received were in relation to students becoming less communicative and interactive in classes where there is a shift to EMI provision.

- **When children, especially from early grades, learn in their mother tongue/familiar language/s they develop a stronger foundation for learning and their learning is more secure.** Parents, head-teachers, teachers, and other stakeholders repeatedly highlighted quality of learning as a concern directly raised in relation to the use of EMI instruction. Many reported that English was not a language through which their children and/or students were able to learn and perform at their best. This was accompanied by concerns for the long-term impact on students' future achievement and learning outcomes. Additionally, many teachers reported that children grasped concepts better when explained in their own language and were able to express themselves better when allowed to speak in their familiar language.

- **When children learn in their mother tongue/familiar language/s they achieve better in assessment and examinations.** An analysis of school-based achievement results, although limited in scale, showed that children taught in Nepali medium (where Nepali was the most familiar language of the majority students) achieved better grades in Nepali, English and Science subjects compared to their achievement in English medium. A key point to note from this finding is that teaching and assessing young children in one particular language limits what they are able to show in terms of knowledge and understanding. Creating opportunities for students to be assessed multilingually (for example assessing knowledge by allowing children to speak and write in their mother tongue or a familiar language) is a necessary shift in practice and one that would allow students the opportunities to fully show what they know and understand.

- **When monolingual practices are prioritised over multilingual ones, teachers, students and parents/families are disadvantaged and learning is impacted**. The findings of this study challenge the monolingual understanding that underpins a specific and singular medium of instruction used for instructing multilingual classes – whether this is Nepali, Mother Tongue or English medium. Our data show that students taught through a language/s they are familiar with, and in many instances a mix of two or more languages, were found to have better learning and engagement in their classrooms.

1

- **When teachers make full use of their own and their students' language/s, learning outcomes improve.** Many teachers and students make use of a wide range of language practices in the classroom and teaching does not regularly fit a one-language only MOI. For example, in classes where the MOI was stated as EMI, we observed teachers/students making use of many languages other than English and this was the same in NMI and Mother-Tongue Based (MTB) classrooms. Where teachers and students made use of their different linguistic resources, language practices were fluid, dynamic and responsive to the needs of the classroom. MTB instruction does not mean that teachers are teaching a new language to students, but rather they are using students' existing languages and knowledge about language to scaffold and support learning.

- **When changes to a school's MOI are not made for pedagogical reasons, overall learning, engagement, and student outcomes decrease.** We found that schools were under pressure, often for financial reasons, to change the MOI to EMI. Changes were often reported as needing to take place quickly, with little or no time to provide teacher training or to develop appropriate materials. The majority of our participants had very negative experiences in relation to such changes and particularly highlighted the impact on outcomes for students.

- **When schools are given clear support, guidance and resources, they are better placed to provide students with quality education.** We found that where access to resources were available (for example, curriculum materials, teacher training, advice, guidelines, and translation), schools, teachers and the wider community were more positive about how they were able to support their learners and how they were achieving good outcomes as a result. Other participants reported a lack of assistance and/or guidance, as well as a lack of knowledge about current policy and what this meant in terms of the resources and support that were available. This was particularly the case in relation to curriculum and materials translation, but many also said that there was little clarity around what they were entitled to and/or what should be made available to their schools, teachers, and students. Data also reflected that local governments and head teachers had limited knowledge of policies related to languages in education and little or no skills and guidance to translate these policies into practice.

4.2. Key recommendations

Based on these findings, we put forward the following broad recommendations. These interrelated recommendations are directed not only at the policy level but also in terms of informing teaching training, resourcing, as well as attitudes towards how languages are understood and valued more broadly within the country.

- **Advocate and create dialogue-** The current constitution goes a long way in recognising and promoting the value of all languages but not all languages are positioned equally, particularly when it comes to schooling and education. Endorsing multilingualism is necessary to reduce and remove pressures that schools, families, students, and citizens more generally are under to adopt particular language practices (i.e., a shift away from using indigenous languages in favour of English). Federal, provincial, and local level stakeholders should prioritize advocacy and awareness-raising activities regarding the benefits of multilingualism and how this should inform pedagogical practices. All of Nepal's languages need to be seen and valued in policies and practices and this is an important measure of social justice and equity. Keeping in mind the diversity within a single province or even a community, a paradigm shift from mother-tongue based education to multilingual education or education in a child's most familiar language is crucial. Evidence collected from this research, the MILE report and many other studies that have demonstrated the benefits multilingual learning need to be better disseminated and understood at local government, community, and school level. As also recommended in the MILE study, the establishment of multilingual education implementation units at the local government level would help to facilitate important dialogue between and across relevant stakeholders especially with regard to advocacy for multilingual education.

Specific actions-
- Conduct mother tongue awareness programs in several language communities in each municipality. This can be to promote mother tongue as the medium of instruction and also the teaching of the local language as a subject on order to support overall learning.
- Allocate budget for the promotion of mother tongue in schools on a regular basis to ensure the sustainability of multilingual education in practice.
- Showcase successful instances of the 'practised' multilingual education drawing on Nepal's good performing schools or teachers' self-initiated good practices, so that parents' and the relevant stakeholders' current pro-English ideologies can be changed, and motivation towards multilingual education improves.
- Mobilize respective communities to develop more contextualized multilingual materials to be used in schools. Collaborate with technical groups to do so.
- Conduct comprehensive research to document and generate evidence to showcase the benefit of teaching and learning in the mother tongue/the language children understand the best.
- Conduct research on how the assessment practices can best fit to what happens in the instructional process in the classroom, for example, recognizing students' Translanguaging in assessing their content comprehension.
- Establish a coherent and efficient channel for dialogue and advocacy in implementing multilingual education

- **Use language/s of instruction that learners understand** – Choosing the right medium of instruction that supports and helps children learn is the key factor in creating equitable learning conditions. All schools must aim to use a language of instruction that learners understand. Learning, both in terms of helping students achieve success in schooling as well as in lifelong learning must be the focus of any classroom intervention, not just a focus on the language in which it is supposed to be happening. Local governments should have a clear understanding and mapping of the language diversity in the community and among students and classroom practices should be based on this evidence. This does not necessarily mean choosing one language for the classroom but rather it means creating an environment for teachers and children to use multiple languages, if needed, to process and facilitate learning and understanding. This perspective must also underpin assessment practices in order to move away from monolingual assessment practices in which students are ultimately assessed on what they can demonstrate in a particular language rather than what they actually know. Students particularly in early grades, should be provided with assessment opportunities that allow them to express their knowledge and understanding in their most familiar language.

Specific actions-
- Support the municipal governments to conduct foundational literacy programs in each linguistic community to develop parent's as well as children's literacy in their mother tongue/community languages. Support the municipal government units and/or individual schools to do so.
- Improve the teaching of English as a subject and discourage the unplanned shift to English medium in public schools.

- **Invest in piloting multilingual education programmes -** Governments, development partners and donor communities should support the implementation of multilingual education programmes that generate evidence of what works in different contexts. These programmes can be effective in demonstrating the value of languages and how children benefit from a multilingual setting in the classroom. Along with language/s of instruction, other features of quality education such as appropriate resources and teacher development is important and should be prioritized. These programmes should, as far as possible, promote initiatives to recruit teachers who speak and understand the languages that children in the classroom understand. However, in Nepal's context this might not always be possible. In such cases, these pilot programmes should have components of teacher capacity development giving them the skills to effectively manage diverse and multilingual classrooms. Research and evidence generation (for example randomized control trials, baseline and end line comparisons and/or longitudinal studies) should also be embedded in order to generate data that can show how language can have a positive impact on children's learning.

Specific actions -
- Support teachers and schools with quality resources that helps improve the teaching of English as a subject.
- Support pre-service teacher education to produce competent teachers of English for school education.
- Prepare comprehensive instructional guidelines for implementing multilingual education and train teachers to enact it in their respective classroom contexts.
- Develop a cadre of teacher trainers at the provincial level to engage and support teachers with multilingual pedagogies.
- Establish multilingual pedagogy as a mandatory continuous in-service teacher training component to ensure the sustainability of multilingual education programs.

- **Develop guidelines and resources to support multilingual education -** At present there is no coherent set of guidelines for local governments and schools to support them in implementing multilingual education in schools. These guidelines need to have clear and accessible information on existing policies that support multilingualism and what guidance is available for different stakeholders to translate this into practice. The guidelines should also talk about what multilingualism is, and what this looks like in classrooms, workplaces and society more broadly. They need to promote the value of all languages and must set out clear principles for teacher training, curriculum design and assessment at all levels of education and professional development. These guidelines need to be extended to all schools across Nepal and be grounded in the principle that multilingualism is a positive resource for learning rather than a barrier for learning.

Specific actions –
- Develop guidelines that elaborate what multilingual education looks like in practice and detail out pre-requisites for any decisions related to choosing a medium of instruction in schools.
- Establish a technical task group in each municipal unit to support communities and schools in implementing MLE, coordinated by education units consisting of language experts, teachers and parents.
- Use this task force to disseminate the guidelines and monitor the use of it.
- Prepare generic guidelines for the preparation of materials, such as their quality and content coverage.
- Develop multilingual learning materials such as textbooks, and supplementary language learning materials, especially for early grades (e.g., pre-school to grade 3). This can be done through the translation of existing materials as well as writing new ones (as per the need of the local contexts of schooling).
- Delegate the resource management responsibility to the local levels, ensuring sufficient funds.
- Encourage and support material writers to utilize community knowledge in developing multilingual content.

4.3. Implementing recommendations and next steps

The findings and recommendations we have presented in this report represent a strong foundation upon which significant and substantive change can be made to improve the overall learning experiences and outcomes of all students in Nepal. For effective change to take place, and to build upon the work detailed in this study, the federal, provincial, and local governments of Nepal need to come together in creating a national framework for action that must minimally include the following:

- A clear definition of what multilingualism is and how it is beneficial not only to education but society more broadly. A national framework for action and/or clear coherent guideline needs to be developed that will help build shared understandings of the importance of languages as resources for learning and must demonstrate commitment to ensuring that all students have access to education in languages that they are familiar with. This commitment needs to extend to all levels of education, in particular for early years, and all schools.

- A clear and committed budget and schedule for the allocation of resources. A national framework for action needs to provide detailed plans for how changes will be funded and how resources will be allocated and by whom. This also requires a commitment to fund teacher training programmes that not only provide teachers with training on the use of multilingual pedagogies but also which fund the development of multilingual resources. Key to this work is the development of multilingual assessment practices. Such practices will not only help to ensure that students are offered the

opportunity to fully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding but will also mean that for assessment outcomes and achievement data more accurately reflect what is taking place in classes.

- A commitment to monitoring and documenting good practices and sharing of successful practices. The proposed changes will take time to develop and implement and a significant point here is that any national framework for action needs to provide a clear timeline and mechanisms for developing good practice. A commitment is needed to documenting good practices and sharing this through teacher networks and professional associations. This means setting up processes and procedures for collecting data that can be compared across different schools and districts and which are easily accessible and available to all stakeholders. We believe in the key findings and recommendations in this report but as with any policy recommendations and research findings how they are taken up and put into practice is crucial to their overall success. We hope that they are received with the necessary courage and conviction needed to effect meaningful change within education within Nepal.

The End

Appendix 1: Survey

**Impact of Languages and Language Policies on Children's Learning Outcomes
(Survey questionnaire for local education officers)**

Dear participant,

The UNICEF Nepal in association with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), Language Commission, UNESCO and British Council has aimed to investigate the impact of languages and language policies on children learning outcomes in Nepal.

You are cordially invited to participate in this survey. All personal information of yours and data provided by you will be kept strictly confidential and used only for the purpose of this research. Please note that the completion and submission of the survey questionnaire confirms agreement to participate in this study. Thank you for your support and participation.

Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female ☐ Other
Age: ☐ 20-29   ☐ 30-39   ☐ 40-49   ☐ 50 or above

Mother tongue background: ………………….....................
Your current working unit:☐ Metropolitan/ Sub-metropolitan/Municipality ☐ Rural Municipality

B: Impact of languages and language policies in children's learning outcomes
1. How familiar are you with policy on mother tongue education?
     ☐ Unfamiliar   ☐ Familiar   ☐ Somehow familiar   ☐ Very familiar

2. How involved are you with implementing mother tongue education policy?
     ☐ Very much involved   ☐ Slightly involved   ☐ Not involved

3. How have you contributed to addressing the needs of the children whose mother tongues are different from the language of instruction in your municipal area? (Please tick (√) multiple options as relevant).
☐ Visited schools to explore children's learning needs and school actions in addressing such needs
☐ Initiated development of curriculum at local level
☐ Trained teachers at ECE level to improve their instructional practices as per the language need of the student population in their respective classes
☐ Prioritized the recruitment of mother tongue teachers from local communities using   municipal funds
☐ Disseminated information on the benefits of educating children in their home or the most familiar language
☐ Facilitated schools to form parent groups in supporting mother tongue education
☐ Allocated funds for resource management for implementing education in mother tongue
☐ Conducted surveys to map out languages in the municipal area
☐ Any other activities and actions you have been involved (please elaborate them)
………
……..

4. In your observation, what has been the federal, provincial and local level policy response to the following? Please tick (the appropriate box in the table below.

Very good = Strong and mandatory policy provision; Good = Favourable policies with implementational guidelines; Average = Favourable polices but lacking implementational strategies; Poor = peripherally stated policies; Very poor = lack of policies

Policy response	Levels of government	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Policy on mother tongue education[3]	Federal Provincial Local					
Policy on mother tongue curricula	Federal Provincial Local					
Policy on mother tongue teacher	Local					
Policy on mother tongue - based evaluation						
Policy on incentives for mother tongue initiatives						

[3] In this study, we understand the notion of mother tongue more inclusively, including the most familiar language of learners who might have a different heritage or ethnic language.

5. Please tick (√) in the appropriate box to rate the barriers in obtaining high levels of learning outcomes of children who speak a different language at home than the language of instruction in school.
SA= strongly agree; A= agree; DNK= do not know; D= disagree SD= Strongly disagree

Barriers	SA	A	DNK	D	SD
Nepali as medium of instruction					
English as medium of instruction					
Inappropriate teaching method					
Unfamiliar content in curriculum					
Non-native school environment for children speaking language other than Nepali					
Teachers' unfamiliarity to learners' mother tongues					
Unavailability of learning resources in children's mother tongues					
Schools' restriction on the use of languages other than Nepali and English					
Parental disengagement in implementing education in children's mother tongue					
Others: (Please specify)……… ……………………..					

6. How important are the following factors implementing successful mother tongue education programmes? Please tick (√) one and only one in each row. (VI= very important; I= important; A= average; SI= slightly important; NI= not important)

Priorities	VI	I	A	SI	NI
Recruiting local facilitators/teachers who speak children's mother tongues					
Training of ECED facilitators and early grade teachers to enable them to deal with curricular contents in children's mother tongues					
Development of local curriculum based on local content and language for pre-primary to grade 3					
Allowing children to use their mother tongues in assessment practices					
Allocating adequate resources to mother- tongue based multilingual early childhood education					
Improving home-school relation through collaboration with parents					
Exploring children's language-related needs with the engagement of experts					
Others (please specify): ……………………………………………………..					

7. How important are the following interventions for implementing education in children's mother tongue? Please tick (√) the appropriate box.

VI= Very important; I= Important; A= average; SI= Slightly important; NI= Not important

Interventions	VI	I	A	SI	NI
Local level policy					
School commitment					
Evidence-based advocacy					
Collaboration with parents					
Development of multilingual teachers					
Development of mother-tongue based multilingual curriculum					
Improvement of teachers' instructional practices					
Allowing students to use their home languages in responding to assessment questions					
Research and innovation on mother tongue use in relation to children's cognitive development					
Allocation of funds for learning resource management and language revitalization					
Provision of incentives to schools which adopt mother tongue education					
Other (please specify): …………………………………………………………					

8. What have different agencies (actors) been doing regarding mother tongue medium education in Nepal?

Agencies	Policy formulation	School level policy implementation	Capacity building	Piloting/ documentation	Resource mobilization	Advocacy	Others (Please specify)
Central level agencies including the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology							
Provinces							
Municipalities							
Schools							
Donor/Partner agencies							
Civil society organizations							
Parents and communities							
Local agencies (NGOs)							
Language activists							

9. How can the government and other stakeholders in Nepal advance their work for using children's first language(s) at the early grades (pre-primary to grade 3) education?

Action Areas	Federal Government	Province	Municipality	School	Parents	Partner agencies
Policy development on mother tongue medium (MTM) education						
Implementation of MTM education						
Enhancing curricular provisions						
Teacher development and recruitment						
Building local level capacity						
Piloting MTM education						
Use of/ encouragement to use mother tongue at home						
Providing incentives for MTM initiatives						

Establishing mutual sharing on MTM experiences and interventions						
Promoting MTM agenda through digital and social media						
Others (please specify)						

10. List the languages used as medium of instruction and/or languages taught as subjects up to grade 3 in schools within your municipal area.

....
....

11. What languages have been taught as part of the local curriculum in the schools within your municipal area?

....
....

12. In your observation, what aspects of students learning have been affected by the implementation of mother tongue based multilingual education in basic schools in your municipal area?
- developed student motivation in learning
- scaffolded students' content comprehension
- reduced student dropout in early grades
- promoted their identity and values
- caused a feeling of inferiority and sense of weakness compared to students educated in English and/or Nepali
- Others (please specify): ....

13. In your opinion, what specific actions do you think are to be taken regarding successful implementation of mother tongue education in Nepal? (Please tick (√) multiple options as relevant)
- Develop municipal policies for enabling schools to implement mother tongue education
- Engage parents in policymaking and execution
- Allow schools to teach mother tongues as separate language subjects
- Encourage both private and public schools
- Encourage translanguaging pedagogy in schools
- Other (please specify):...

14. If you have received a grant from CEHRD to implement MTMLE, in which activities have schools received the grant?:

....

....

15. Besides, if you have any other comments regarding mother tongue education and multilingual education programmes, please feel free to put down your opinion and observation here.

....

....

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Impact of Languages and Language Policies on Children's Learning Outcomes

(Interview with Teachers)

Time: 30-45 mins

General information:
Could you please briefly introduce yourself? (Your name, ethnic and language background, educational background and experience, etc.

Name: (optional)	Teaching experience	Mother tongue background	Languages known	Subject(s) taught	Remarks

a. **Rationale** for using first or the most familiar language in Early Childhood Education and early grades of basic education (especially up to grade 3)
1. What medium of instruction has been used in your school?
2. What medium of instruction do you use in your class?
3. What percentage of students in your classroom understand and feel comfortable in the language of instruction?
4. In what ways does the use of the children's mother tongue/s in teaching subjects such as languages, math and social studies (Serophero) impact on their learning?
5. Do you allow the use of the children's mother tongue/s in classroom communication? Why, why not?
6. What positive/negative impacts have you noticed in children's learning due to your choice of language of instruction in the class?
7. Is implementation of mother tongue based multilingual education appropriate in this school? why or why not?
8. What differences in learning outcomes might we get if children's mother tongues or the most familiar languages are used in classroom instruction?

b. **Barriers** in learning
1. How does teachers' language of instruction in school affect students' learning?
2. What factors hinder the use of children's mother tongue/s or the most familiar language/s in your classroom?
3. What are the language related challenges experienced by students in your classroom?
4. What happens if we teach the content subjects such as Math and Serophero in languages that learners are unfamiliar with?
5. What happens if content subjects such as Math and Serophero are taught in mother tongues or the most familiar language?

c. Areas of intervention

1. How do you support learners' learning needs in your classroom?
2. Do you allow your students to use their mother tongues or native languages in classroom interaction?
3. Do you use children's mother tongues or the community languages during your classroom instruction?
4. Do you know the native language/s of   your students?
5. Have you had   any training   or professional development opportunities regarding the implementation of multilingual education in your school?
6. Has there been any other support from governmental and non-governmental organizations in implementing multilingual education in your school? If yes, what support did you get ?

d. Future strategies

1. Which language/s do you think should be used in teaching and learning in basic level schools, especially up to grade 3?
2. Many schools are shifting from Nepali medium to English medium. How do you feel about that?
3. What do you think the language of instruction in schools should be in your context?
4. What do governments need to do to prepare for effective implementation of learners' mother tongues or the most familiar language in education?
5. As a teacher, what strategies   do you use in implementing multilingual education in your classroom?
6. If you have any further observations and issues related to mother tongue and multilingual education in early grades, please share.

Appendix 3: Observation Guide

Impact of Languages and Language Policies on Children's Learning Outcomes

(Classroom Observation Form)

A. General information:

A1. School background:

- Name:
- Palika:
- Type (basic/secondary):
- Medium of Instruction:

A2. Class background data:

School:

Date:

Total number of students in the class:

Subject taught:

B. Pre-observation discussion

B1. Language and ethnic profile of students in the class: (this will be filled out consulting classroom teachers)

B1.1. The ethnic background of students:

o What ethnic groups do the majority of students belong to by birth?:

▪ ....

o What ethnic group do the minority of students belong to by birth?:

▪ ....

o Percentage of students belonging to different groups: (estimated)

▪ Bahuns/Chhetries:

▪ Madhesis:

▪ Indigenous communities (such as Newars, Gurungs, Tamangs, etc.):

▪ Others:

o Which of these statements do you think is most accurate in your class?

▪ The students strongest languages[4] are ethnic/indigenous.

▪ The students strongest language is Nepali.

▪ The students strongest language is other than their ethnic language and Nepali (e.g., Hindi in some contexts).

B2. Language profile of the teacher:

Ethnic background:

Subject taught:

Languages known: Self-rated perception of language proficiency (Ask the teacher before orafter the class)

---

[4] The language that teacher thinks students use the most in the class.

Languages	Fluent	Average	Limited	Not known
English				
Nepali				
Native language (if applicable)				
Additional languages known (if any)				

B3. Language use situation in the classroom:

B3.1. What languages do you use most often when teaching this class?
☐ students' native language   ☐ Nepali   ☐ English   ☐Others (please specify):...

B3.2. What languages do the students use most often in class?
☐ their native languages   ☐ Nepali   ☐ English   ☐Others (please specify):...

B3.3. Do you sometimes change the languages you use?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

  If yes, can you think of examples of when and why you do so?

  When: ....

  Why: ....

  ....

B3.4. Do you think the students learn better through a particular language, if so, which ones and why?

  ....

Additional   notes (if any)

C. Observation
C1. Materials used in the classroom:

  Language of the textbook(s):

  Nature of the textbook: a) translated from Nepali to English

                          b) Written originally in English

c) Written in other languages

  Textbooks published by: ☐ Government agency ☐ Nepal's private companies

☐ Teacher made   ☐Foreign publication company

Other reference materials (Please specify): ....

Medium of the reference materials:..

 Language of classroom display materials (please specify the number):

☐ Nepali (.......) ☐ English (..............)☐ Mother tongue (.......)

C2. Classroom observation (Activities in the classroom)
Language use in lesson structures.

Activities		
i. Beginning of the lesson		
Languages used in greeting the pupils	English	
	Nepali	
	Students' native languages	
	Both English and Nepali	
	Other	
Languages used by students in response	English	
	Nepali	
	Students' native languages	
	Both English and Nepali	
	Other	
Language of teacher's response		

ii. During the lesson

Aspects/Activities

Teacher Focus		Student focus	
Language/s written on the board	....	Language/s used by students when asking general questions	....
Language/s used to explain the contents	....	Language/s of students' peer interactions	....
Language/s used by teacher when giving instructions	....	Language/s used by students asking content questions	....
Language/s used by teacher for explanation	....	Language/s used by students while talking about non-content matters	....
Teachers' language use in questioning	....	Students' language use in pair/group work	....
Teachers' language use in dealing with group or pair work activities in the class	....	Language/s used by students in seeking permissions	....
Language of the materials used in lesson delivery	....	Language/s students used for taking notes	....
Language/s used by teacher when students do not understand	....	Other emerging notes. (Specify)....................................	....
Languages used for clarification	....	Other emerging notes. (Specify)....................................	....

iii. Closing of the lesson

Aspects/Activities

Teacher Focus		Student focus	
Language/s used in summarizing	....	Students' language use in asking for clarification of assignments	....
Language/s used in the explanation of the assignments	....	Others (if any):	....
Language/s in which teacher provides the assignment	....		

Other observations (please briefly note anything of interest that has not been captured above)

....

D. Observer impression on the classroom observation

D1. Does the teacher encourage students to use different languages in class? If so, how?
....
D2. Which languages do students' seem most comfortable using in the classroom?
....
D3. Which languages does the teacher seem to use the most   in the classroom?
....
D4. What languages do students use for what purposes?

Languages	Purpose
Nepali	
English	
Local/native languages	
Others (please specify)	

D5. Students' level of understanding (based on classroom evaluation done by the teacher)
- All students seemed to understand the content well
- Few students understood the content
- Very few students understood the content

Additional notes (if any)

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