

## **Teachers' Perception on Local Curriculum in Basic Education of Nepal**

**Nirmal Mishra**

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research paper aims at exploring the teachers' perception and their conceptual understanding on local curriculum, importance of local curriculum and local curriculum development process in school education of Nepal. For this, the interpretive paradigm was adopted to explore the subjective realities concerned with the central phenomenon. Within this process, this qualitative phenomenological study collected intense information through in-depth interviews with the selected community schools' basic level teachers. Based on the information, three themes have been developed for presenting the results and discussion. The major finding of this study is that teachers positively perceived the local curriculum for preserving the local knowledge, cultures as well as the tourism areas of a community. The teachers also perceived that teachers, parents and community participation is essential during the local curriculum development process as well as selection of local subject matter. Apart from these shining areas, the finding shows that the curriculum development situation is in the initial phase and local governments and schools are not yet developing the local curriculum. As part of instated local curriculum development, the schools autonomously select the subjects viz. English and Computer. These English and computer subjects were implemented in the name of optional subjects in grade one to five and six to eight respectively.*

**Keywords:** local curriculum, school-based curriculum, curriculum decentralization, curriculum development

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Curriculum development policy has been changing due to the historical progression, national realization, and contextualization of education. In the changing times, the centralized and decentralized educational authorities are responsible for making curriculum development policy. The centralized curriculum development policy encourages the development of the national standard curriculum whereas the decentralized policy promotes the local standard curriculum (Cui et al., 2018). The centralized curriculum follows the top-down procedures and central authority makes the nationwide curriculum (Print, 1993; Onyeme & Okoli, 2018). It focuses on high academic achievement due to globalized impact on education (So & Kang, 2014). France, Russia, Australia, Japan, Korea and Singapore have applied this national standard curriculum development approach (Cui et al., 2018; Creese et al., 2016; So & Kang, 2014; Lewy,

1991). The national standard curriculum is remarkable because it prepares the nation's future economy, fixing the education system, constructing the vision of the nation, setting the rules and providing the education services to the teachers and students (Jang, 2017). Contrary to the dark side, centralized curriculum does not represent community participation and fails to incorporate the local content during the curriculum making process (Onyeme & Okoli, 2018). Similarly, it is also unable to promote the professional development of teachers and does not inspire the creativity of teachers. The teachers are far from the curriculum development related activities in the centralized curriculum. The teachers' participation in curriculum development related activities are directly and indirectly associated with their professional development (Akrom, 2015). But the centralized curriculum development approach does not provide any room to participate in curriculum development activities for teachers, parents, and community members. The limited persons especially experts/elite have got the chance to participate in the curriculum planning and development process.

Conversely, the decentralized curriculum counteracts to solve the limitations of centralized curriculum. It follows the bottom-up procedures in the curriculum developing process (Print, 1993). The teachers and local authorities are major responsible agents in curricular decisions (Print, 1993; Onyeme & Okoli, 2018). The United States, Canada, Hong Kong is practicing this form of curriculum (Cui et al., 2018; Creese et al., 2016; Lewy, 1991). The decentralized curriculum emerged to address the local people's needs, values and their voices. This decentralized curriculum enables the local people and their participation in the curriculum development process (Onyeme & Okoli, 2018). Similarly, the decentralized curriculum also focuses on the school-based curriculum development approach and follows the local standard as well as contextual standard. The schools are free to determine the curriculum independently (Cui et al., 2018). The United Kingdom, (Cui et al., 2018), Singapore (Chen et al., 2015), Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China (Wang & Hsieh, 2017) have adopted this approach of curriculum development. Similarly, the three national, local and school level curriculum administration practices have been adopted by the People Republic of China (Cui et al., 2018). The weightage in curriculum development of these three national, local and school level's responsibilities are 80, 15 and 5 percent respectively.

Both the centralized and decentralized curriculum development policy have been adopted in school education of Nepal. The primary education curriculum (2062 BS; 2065 BS) and basic education curriculum (2069 BS) were the first local curriculum developed and implemented at local level. Similarly, even after the country went into a federal structure, the local curriculum development policy and provision continued giving the main responsibility to the local governments. After the federalism, the national curriculum framework-2019 provided the curricular structure and curriculum development principles and approaches for school education (grade one to twelve). This framework prescribed the national standard core curriculum as well as local standard context specific curriculum (CDC, 2019a). For addressing diversified needs of local people, the basic level (grade one to eight) curriculum structure organized local curriculum or mother tongue curriculum as a separate subject at school or each local government level (CDC, 2019a; CDC, 2019b). The local curriculum development policy documents clearly stated that the local governments are to be responsible in developing the local curriculum for the individual school. But, if local governments realize that local people have common local needs, the common local curriculum could be developed for all schools within one local government territory (CDC, 2019b).

### **Conceptualizing the Local Curriculum**

The decentralized curriculum is interrelated with local curriculum, school-based curriculum as well as place-based curriculum (Lewy, 1991; Wither, 2000; Evans & Savage, 2015). All of these allocate the curricular decision power to the local people. Local curriculum emphasizes local flexibility and teachers' autonomy in curriculum development. This form of curriculum connects the external links with parents and community members in curricular decisions (Chen et al., 2015).

The local curriculum helps to increase the students' performance and solve the diversified needs of local, ethnic and language groups of people. For this, teachers need to have the knowledge and skills on local teaching methods, techniques, cultural knowledge as well as instructional materials (Egcas et al., 2017). The teachers and parents realize that this form of curriculum preserves the regional characteristics and their cultural identity (Andria et al., 2018). This bottom-up curriculum development approach empowers the teachers in integrating learners' needs, flourishing their creativity, presenting their artistry and applying the local pedagogy (Yuen et al., 2018). If they apply the local culture and wisdom in their teaching, they feel more satisfaction. This study claims that local content helps to improve the communication between the teachers and students. Apart from this, the local curriculum helps to preserve the diversified cultures and values of people. It also promotes students' attraction toward schools (Laeen et al., 2019). In line with these findings, the local curriculum is essential to preserve the cultures and values of students. Through the curriculum localization, it creates the motivational teaching learning environment in schools (Laeen et al., 2019). This form of curriculum is appropriate to the school-based teaching. The school promotes the learners' experiences through instructional activities. By this process, learning could be meaningful as well as relevant and it connects the students with their surroundings as well (Autti & Bæck, 2019). The discussion clearly establishes that if the teacher gets an opportunity to develop the local curriculum, it will be useful for their professional development at grassroots level. It creates a discourse of how diversities are managed through curricular plan and activities in school education. It proved that teachers are not only the implementer but also the developer of curricular plans according to their local context.

### **Local Curriculum Development Process**

The curricular decision policy is varied in a global context. The centralized and decentralized curriculum development practices have been applied in different countries in the world. The schools and teachers are responsible for developing the local curriculum in Finland. The school teachers are autonomous to handle the local curriculum. They can develop the pedagogical tools for effective implementation of national standard curriculum (Mølstad, 2015). Similarly, the local stakeholders' such as teachers, principals, parents, school management committee members and official members are involved in school-based curriculum development and implementation in Indonesia (Akrom, 2015). During the local curricular decision, they incorporated a variety of areas such as replica of village, needle work, carpet weaving, attending local rituals and ceremony, visiting remarkable places of village as well as productive centers (Laeen et al., 2019). In this process, teachers have autonomy to design, plan, implement and evaluate the school-based curriculum development in Singapore (Chen et al., 2015). This school-based bottom-up curriculum development approach empowers the teachers for developing and implementing the curriculum in Hong Kong. Through this process, teachers get the chance to demonstrate their creativity, knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy for curricular planning to implementation (Yuen et al., 2018). On the other hand, teachers perceived that the local curriculum development tasks provided an extra burden for them as it added extra responsibilities alongside their regular duties. Their personal history, residential place, career experiences and commitments to the community also affected the use of the local knowledge and values in curriculum (Autti & Bæck, 2019).

Theoretically, the national curriculum framework-2019 offers the participation of teachers in curriculum development related activities. But practically, the curriculum development process of school education is impractical and centrally dominated in Nepal. The central authority has not provided the prominent role to the teachers for developing the curriculum at local level (Bhusal, 2015). The small groups of subject experts developed the curriculum where most of the teachers were deprived from participating in curriculum development related activities. It is clear that the bureaucratic top-down process of curriculum development model is being practiced in Nepalese school education. In my experience, the chief of the education division of local governments is playing the leadership role in curricular decisions. To support my experience, Subedi (2018) claimed that the grassroots stakeholder teachers and head teachers were not

familiar with the local curriculum development policy and guideline for school education. They perceived that the curriculum development process demanded extra competencies, so these tasks can be handled by the experts efficiently.

The local curriculum development and implementation guideline of Nepal (2019) prescribed seven definite components for designing the local curriculum. The components are objective/competency, subject matter, grade wise learning achievement, teaching method and process, student evaluation, time determination/weightage and elaboration of curriculum. This guideline also suggests that the prescribed components are not mandatory for designing the local curriculum. Apart from these elements, the local curriculum development team can add or change the prescribed curricular components for designing the local curriculum. Similarly, the school or local authority can determine the components of local curriculum as per their needs and expectations. Though, both the rigid as well as flexible curriculum development approaches might be used for local curriculum development at the local level. Additionally, there are several policy paradoxes in the local curriculum from development to implementation in Nepal. The central agency such as the curriculum development center only focuses on the theoretical positions of the local curriculum development process rather than how local agencies can coordinate the local people like parents, teachers and principals. Another paradox is that the central agencies are unable to shift the local curriculum development related responsibilities to the local agencies. The people are highly concerned over the globalized subject matter rather than their context specific subject matter (Sharma et al., 2019). Similarly, Subedi (2018) also shows the gap between the policy of local curriculum development and its implementation in primary schools of Nepal. The teachers and head teachers/principals are not informed with the local curriculum development policy and guideline. They perceive that curriculum development is the duty of experts. Moreover, Sharma et al., (2019) also supported this finding and added that teachers were taking the local curriculum development as an extra task in their regular teaching schedule. But, the community people said, it is essential to incorporate the local culture and heritage within the local curriculum. The local curriculum helps to promote the feeling of ownership in people and provide opportunities to integrate the local resources, content as well as pedagogy. I got opportunities to participate in local curriculum related workshops and discussion forums. Similarly, I also got opportunities to interact with school teachers, local government officials and head teachers directly and indirectly about the local curriculum related policies and practices. Through the research evidence and my experiences, I felt that teachers have not taken interest in accountability and meaningful participation in the selection of local subjects and local curriculum development processes. The local governments leaderships or decision makers are selecting the local subject as only a subject to be taught in school. After the informal interaction with local stakeholders and review of the literature, I drew the insight that there is a problem in conceptualizing the local curriculum and local curriculum development process in school education of Nepal. Based on this research gap, this research paper has addressed the striking aspects of how community school teachers perceived the local curriculum in terms of concept, importance as well as development process in basic education of Nepal.

### **Research Questions**

This research paper emphasizes the analysis of the teachers' perception on local curriculum and its development process. For this, I developed the following questions to know the realities of local curriculum development at basic level school education in Nepal.

1. How do teachers conceptualize the local curriculum in school education?
2. How do teachers perceive the local curriculum in terms of necessity and importance for basic level school education students?
3. How do teachers perceive the local curriculum development process in terms of participation, development process and coverage areas at school or local level?

### **Research Methods**

Methodology refers to the perspectives and strategies for the particular research problem. It prescribes only one or various methods for inquiry (Potter, 1996). It clears the plan for how research proceeds and what researcher does in a particular research work (Leavy, 2017). There are several research approaches which emerged viz. post positivism, pragmatism, critical, constructive, or interpretive as well as transformative paradigms (Creswell, 2018). This study adopted the interpretive paradigm. This worldview emphasizes the social construction of reality through daily interactions. I assigned the meaning of curricular phenomena through the interpretive process (Leavy, 2017). Regarding this worldview, I used the qualitative approach to explore the realities about the educational phenomena such as teachers' perception on local curriculum and analyze peoples' subjective experiences (Leavy, 2017) and build in-depth understanding of the local curriculum development in basic level school education of Nepal (Best & Kahn, 2006; Leavy, 2017). It provides an in-depth description of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The nature of this qualitative design is more flexible and naturalistic (Best & Khan, 2006; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Regarding the qualitative approach, I have chosen the phenomenological design to describe the subjective experiences of individuals (Mertens, 2010). It describes how individuals/people experience particular phenomena (Creswell, 2007; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009; Leavy, 2017). Basically, two approaches to phenomenology have been highlighted in the literature viz. hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental or empirical or psychological phenomenology. The hermeneutic interprets the lived experiences of an individual through the texts of life. Another approach transcendental phenomenology focuses on the experiences of participants as central phenomena. Among these approaches, I have chosen transcendental phenomenology for a fresh description of participants' experiences. This approach is not only applied in a descriptive process, but it is also an interpretive process. Through this process, it explores the personal experiences, feelings, perceptions and beliefs of teachers (Creswell, 2007). Based on this design, I asked community school teachers what and how they are experiencing the local curriculum and curriculum development process at local level.

In the phenomenological study, participants who are selected are those who have experienced the particular phenomena (Creswell, 2007). Before selecting the participants, I have confined the study area within the five local governments of Dhankuta, Bhojpur and Sankhuwasabha districts in the eastern part of Nepal. From these five local governments, I have purposely chosen five informants. About the participants, I believe that the community teachers have good experience on the local curriculum because the national curriculum policy has incorporated the local curriculum in the school structure of basic education in Nepal (CDC, 2019a). For selecting teachers as research participants, I informally contacted teachers at first who are accessible for me and asked if they could manage the time to interact with me or not for the topic 'local curriculum'? Those teachers who said yes, I listed their name and phone number. From this list, I selected five basic level teachers as research participants through purposive sampling. These five teachers were from each selected five local governments purposely. I decided two major selection criteria viz. those teachers who have at least ten years of teaching experience in community school and those who can interact through Microsoft teams. Considering these criteria, I have selected five teachers purposely. Similarly, I collected the information from these selected research participants. The phenomenological design stresses the in-depth interview for collecting the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2007). Due to this reason, I have taken in-depth interviews with the selected teachers for first-hand information through the interview guideline. I developed an in-depth interview guideline considering the research questions (Creswell, 2007). These questions helped to achieve the breadth and depth of information from the community school teachers (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Based on this guideline, I conducted the interviews with the teachers formally and informally. Before the interview, I informed them about my purpose for this research and ensured their privacy of information. In qualitative research, the data collection, analysis, and report writing go simultaneously and interrelated with each other (Creswell, 2007). From the beginning of the information collection process, I coded, categorized, and used theme building for analyzing and interpreting information.

I generated themes from the informants' narratives in a reductionist way (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). The information was analyzed in a thematic way supporting the informants' direct narratives. For this, I developed the textual description of teachers' experiences or how they experienced the local curriculum in their instructional journey. Similarly, I also developed the structural description of teachers' experiences on how they experienced the local curriculum in the local context (Creswell, 2007).

## **Results**

The results have been presented in the three themes according to the research questions. These themes have been presented on the basis of participants' direct narratives with regard to conceptual understanding on local curriculum, importance of local curriculum and local curriculum development process.

### **Conceptual understanding on local curriculum**

All the teachers were familiar with the concept of local curriculum. They perceived that the local curriculum needed to cover the local content and ensure the participation of local people in the development process. They believed that it integrates the local contents such as languages, cultures, occupation, and lifestyle of people. The P-2 teacher viewed that local curriculum or subject has separate aspects of subject matter than national core curriculum courses. Similarly, another P-1 teacher believed that it addresses the needs of a diversified community. This subject needs to prioritize the cultures, wisdom, occupation, geographical areas, agricultural activities as well as tourism areas of a local community. Likewise, the thirteen-year work experienced P-3 teacher perceived that the local curriculum covers the local content and resources. The content and resources might be about peoples' cultures, historical and religious places, occupations, and economic activities of a community. Another P-5 teacher also supported this perception and added that the local curriculum should cover the community people's expectations as well as socio-cultural and geographical context. It should emphasize the community peoples' needs and interests which is not possible to address through the centralized core curriculum courses. Abiding by these ideas, the P-4 teacher perceived in a different way that the local curriculum is an occupation and production-oriented curriculum. So, this local curriculum is only appropriate for the small geographical areas or community people. In his opinion, the centralized curriculum only covers theoretical knowledge in our school education. Due to this reason, the local curriculum needs to cover the practical as well as behavioral activities which are related with our day-to-day practices or life activities. He only put the value of production or occupation based on local subjects for sustaining their traditional occupation related knowledge and skills. He expected that this form of curriculum helps to create job opportunities in a community.

It is clear that teachers used the term local curriculum and local subject synonymously. The teachers' perception shows that they conceptualized the local curriculum in a rudimentary way where the curriculum is defined as a list of subjects or subject matter. Fundamentally, it needs to cover the local cultures, occupation, languages, geographical areas, tourism areas as well as religious places related to the subject matter. All the teachers believed that the separate local subject needs to address these areas of content available in the local community. They did not deny the integration of local content within the national core curriculum. In their experiences, they tried to illustrate the local knowledge, culture as well as knowledge construction process into their core curriculum teaching. Thus, they believed that both national and local curricular practices are essential for ensuring the quality of education. Both practices might bridge up the local knowledge into the global world and vice versa.

### **Necessity and importance of local curriculum in school education**

Local curriculum has several benefits for the community, people and students. The teachers argued that the local curriculum needs to preserve the identity of community people in the sense of their cultural, occupational, and geographical as well as language identity. Supporting this idea, the P-1 teacher said, "through the local curriculum, the student may be able to understand the local culture as well as be aware to engage in locally adopted occupation". She added that this local curriculum helps to solve the societal problems for functioning of the social order. By supporting this viewpoint, another P-2 teacher perceived

that “the local curriculum or subject is essential because it preserves the local knowledge and occupation of community people”. It also might cover the cultural diversity of people and their needs as well as interests through the process of selecting and organizing content. Through this curricular practice, it tied up the learners with different cultural practices, occupation, historical places, and tourism areas of a community. Similarly, it is necessary to promote respect culturally among the diversified people/ learners within the same society. It helps to encourage participation in other’s cultural festivals as well. The P-3 teacher argued on the importance of local curriculum as following:

Through the local curriculum, students will inform with local content, and if they inform with local historical and tourism places, they can advertise this information outside the local places like district, province and national level. The national core curriculum does not provide the knowledge and information about the local tourism areas, historical places, occupation, caste and ethnic people's culture and so on. Due to this reason, it should develop the local curriculum at school or local level.

Similarly, the P-4 teacher viewed that students easily understand their historical traditions, religious beliefs as well as cultural practices of different ethnic group's people through this curriculum. Apart from this, students can develop positive attitudes towards the agricultural as well as indigenous occupational practices from their early age. He argued that students who have got the certificate of any degree, feel hesitant to do such types of agricultural and occupational activities. For this, the society also discourages the educated people and says, "after getting such higher education, cultivating in the field (YETRO PADHERA PANI KHETI GARNE)". This has deep rooted understanding in community people. Due to this fact, the community people were not encouraged to incorporate the local content and resources in a local subject. Supporting this perception, the P-5 teacher also focused on promoting the local agricultural activities in the local curriculum. He added:

The theoretical knowledge could not help to sustain life and not provide job opportunities in the community or nation. Due to this reason, the locally adopted agricultural and occupational activities should be promoted through the local curriculum. If we develop these skills in students associating with modern technology, they can easily earn the money for their life sustain. For this purpose, the local government should take the initiation to develop the local curriculum from grade one to twelve.

Based on the teachers' perception, the local curriculum is important to preserve the cultural identities of local people as well as develop the harmonious relationship among the people in society. All of the teachers agreed that this form of curriculum should be included at the secondary level too. They added, if we want to develop this local subject properly, the local government should include this subject from grade one to twelve. The P-3 teacher suggested that the basic level (grade one to five) local curriculum could cover the community level content and resources and the basic level (grade six to eight) could cover the municipality level local content and resources. Similarly, if this curriculum structure extends to the secondary level too, the district level local content and resources such as geographical structure, tourism areas, religious places, sociocultural composition of society and so on might be included. These realities expanded that the local curriculum is necessary to preserve the people's identity for assimilating each other’s cultural practices. The local curriculum enables the learners to preserve the local heritage, occupation as well as economic activities.

### **Local curriculum development process in school and local level**

The local curriculum was developed by a certain team of teachers as well as a group of experts outside the local government through the contract basis (THEKKA BASIS). Due to these circumstances, the teachers did not get any chance of participating in the local curriculum development process. A few teachers are getting the chance to develop the local curriculum at local level. The four teachers' schools have not developed the local curriculum at school level. These schools selected the English subject as a local subject for grade one to five and computer for six to eight. The P-1 teacher said, senior teachers, head teacher and school management committee head jointly decided English grammar as a local subject for grade one to

five. They believed that this subject would help to improve the language skills of the students. She also added that computers as a local subject for grade six to eight is useful for improving the technological skills of the students. The same perceptions were expressed by another P-3 teacher. He added that the English language skills and computer skills are important for today's job market. Due to this reason, the school teachers decided to implement these subjects in place of local curriculum/subjects. According to him, the curriculum was not developed in schools for teaching these subjects. The different textbooks were selected from the market by the subject teacher for teaching English language and computer subjects. The teacher believed that textbooks are the major sources for teaching these subjects. Another interesting experience being expressed was that teachers conceptualized these subjects as optional subjects rather than local subjects. The P-1 teacher did not use the textbook for English language teaching. She reflects:

I want to say without lying, we do not use any textbooks for teaching. I have not prescribed the textbooks to the students for practice in school and home. I teach based on my experiences. I do not use materials or textbooks while teaching these subjects. This last year, we did not conduct the assessment of these subjects.

Another P-4 teacher also provided a similar view on the subject selection process of the local curriculum in school. In his school, teachers have selected the computer subject as a local subject for grade one to five since the last two years. Before this they did not select the local subjects where teachers were taught basic numerical skills and language skills in place of local curriculum in school. For supporting this argument, he shared the idea on local curriculum selection process of school in this way:

What we have done is we searched a Nepali medium 'Practical Computer' book which was available in the market and have been teaching it from Grade 1 to five. Last year, it was not possible due to the Corona pandemic.

This statement states that they did not discuss with parents, school management committee and community leaders for selecting the local subject/curriculum. Teachers collectively decided to teach the computer subject as a local subject in grade one to five. In the discussion, teachers realized that the information communication and technology skills are inevitable for students. For this subject teaching, he added, we have only two computers to conduct the practical work for forty-one students in school. Due to the lack of computers, they only focused on theoretical knowledge of computers and elaborated subject matter with the help of textbooks.

One of the teachers (P-2) said that the rural municipality has developed the local curriculum of grade one for the academic year 2021-2022. The local government has played the leadership role in developing the local curriculum. The local government has developed the same local curriculum for all community schools within the local government territory. For this, the education committee of the municipality formed the curriculum development team including selected teachers and experts. This team discussed with the head teachers and community leaders for collecting their opinion on local people's needs. He added about the participation of teacher as:

This team did not discuss it with me and our school's teachers. This team only called the head teacher for discussion in the municipality office. However, the head teacher has not shared the discussion matter with the school staffs till now.

According to him, the municipality has sent the developed curriculum for implementation in the academic year 2021-2022 to all the schools. This developed local curriculum has covered the content like introduction of municipality, geographical maps of municipality, culture of different ethnic people and tourism areas. After reviewing this curriculum, he felt that the curricular contents are not relevant for grade one students. He and other teachers discussed this curriculum informally and concluded that it is not suitable for grade one students. In his opinion, this developed curriculum is only appropriate for grade five or six students. He further added, "This grade one curriculum has covered the concept like square kilometer, the no of ward and names of local government representatives, features of different tourism areas and so on". The



municipality also developed the textbook for this curriculum. The textbook is also not appropriate for six-year-old children according to their developmental maturity.

The teachers believed that the schools or local government (municipality) can take leadership roles in deciding the local curriculum. For this, one teacher (P-1) argued in this way: "The school or local government can take the leadership role in developing the local curriculum. Now, the local government can take the initiation for selecting the local subjects." She further added that the rural municipality has the major responsibility in developing local curricula for all schools. The participation of teachers, parents and community leaders is needed to ensure while selecting local subjects as well as contents. It becomes clear that teachers acknowledged the local curriculum for school education. They favored the local government leading a decentralized curriculum rather than school-based curriculum. But they accepted that if the local government provides the opportunity for developing local curriculum, we can develop a local curriculum at school level. For this, the school management committee and community leaders need to get involved for effective implementation. Similarly, all the teachers agreed that if the community needs are the same for all municipality levels such as agriculture, the municipality could develop the same local curriculum for all students.

The P-4 teacher's understanding was different from the other teachers on taking responsibility for local curriculum development. He argued that teachers should take a major responsibility in making a local curriculum because they only can capture the local subject matter and resources as per the needs of community people. According to him, the centralized authority provided such an opportunity to promote the teachers' creativity in curricular activities. But we are missing this opportunity due to the lack of financial resources and parental awareness. Our laziness is also responsible for this situation.

No training programs or workshops on local curriculum development were conducted. Similarly, the district level training program only focused on the mother tongue subject related activities. The local curriculum development directive provides the same guideline to develop the local or mother tongue curriculum (MOEST, 2019b). But in his opinion, the training program was organized for those schools which are going to develop the mother tongue curriculum. Furthermore, the schools or local government also have not taken the initiative for developing curriculum locally. One teacher (P-5) argued that both schools and local governments have not prioritized this subject for basic education. He added that most of them focused on the management of the English medium teaching for quality improvement. It is clear that the local agencies are not aware of how to manage the local curriculum at local level. The rooftop mindset also influences the local subjects' selection and curriculum development at local level. The P-3 teacher said that the parents are not familiar with the local subjects or mother tongue related subjects. He said, "For this situation, teachers are more responsible where they did not make any efforts to inform the parents about the provision of local subjects. Likewise, we did not want to take on the extra burden of tasks because we will get the same incentive with or without doing the local curriculum development related activities." I think the local curriculum development process is the technical aspect where the involvement of parents are not crucial. But, for taking ownership, the parents need to be aware of why this form of local curriculum is essential for their children. Otherwise, parents are less interested in the local curriculum. However, Another P-2 teacher's perception is different and argued that the teachers take the local curriculum development process as a burden. He further added that it is not included within the regular duty of a teacher legally. Due to this reason, teachers were reluctant in taking local curriculum development responsibility at school level. But now the local government is going to take responsibility for developing the local curriculum for all schools.

Without developing the local curriculum, the schools implemented the local subject. For this, schools selected the computer and English language related textbooks from the market and taught their students. The teachers were not satisfied with this process of local subjects' selection process at school. According to them, this subject is not the priority compared to other national core subjects because they did not want to

take on extra tasks of burden with the same incentive. Similarly, they perceived that this subject is more important for preserving community identity as well as promoting the local, cultural, geographical and tourism areas. Knowing these benefits, they were reluctant to develop the local curriculum because most of the teachers have several responsibilities in society like farmers, social reformers, political members as well as businessmen. The P-4 teacher viewed that because of these several responsibilities, they were unable to provide sufficient time for their professional work. He added that teachers need to be professional at first for taking this responsibility otherwise it is not possible to manage the curricular activities at school. It is clear that professionalism is the major factor that affects the teachers' participation in curricular decisions at local or school level. The P-5 teacher looked at it differently, the reason behind why teachers are not developing the local curriculum at school level. He believes that:

The main reason for not being able to develop the local curriculum at school is waiting for the higher body for support. Guardians are not aware of it, no one takes care of it, this is how everything is going on. Before two years, Computer subject had not been taught either. Students were taught addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Now, realizing the need of technology, we have used it. Yes, if the higher body makes it compulsory, we will develop it. Otherwise, we are fine with it.

Another teacher (P-2) disagreed with these viewpoints and argued that the local government should take the major responsibility for local curriculum development. The school is unable to develop the local curriculum because it does not have sufficient financial resources for managing this curriculum. Due to this reason, the local government can take the leadership role in developing curriculum at school level. But presently, the local government has not informed the school staff about the discussion of local curriculum development related activities. The education committee and local government leaders only selected a few teachers as an expert and collected the opinions of head teachers only. In his experience, the parents did not get the chance to participate in this local curriculum development process. This experience showed that the roof top mindset of the central authority in decision making can also be seen in the local government too. This fact shows that the political representatives as well as bureaucratic leaders did not believe the teachers' strengths till now.

### **Discussion**

Teachers conceptualized the local curriculum in a generic sense. In their understanding, the local curriculum is a set of local content or organized form of local knowledge within the name of a local subject. Within this organization, the local subject only covers the list of subject matters related with their culture, occupation, geographical territory, as well as tourism places. There are several functional perspectives on local curriculum in the name of intended or written form of curriculum, operational or taught curriculum, learnt curriculum, assessed curriculum and hidden curriculum (Lockley, 2018). Among these functional perspectives, teachers only conceptualized the local curriculum as a list of intended learning outcomes or content. I drew the claim that the conceptual understanding of teachers is in the initial phase. They only conceptualized the local curriculum as an organization of content that is available in the local community.

All of the informants agreed that the local curriculum is essential to preserve the identity of people and culture of ethnic people as well as their traditional occupations. They agreed that the local curriculum preserved the people's identity, awareness building, inform the geographical and tourism areas of society, promote the religious as well as cultural values and develop the feeling of ownership among the students. This shows that students easily understand their contextual characteristics and practices through this local curriculum. The findings of Andria et al. (2018) are also similar to my results. They found that local curriculum helps to preserve the cultural identity as well as regional characteristics of people. Similarly, Laen, Ayati et al. (2019) also proved the necessity of a local curriculum for preserving the cultures and values of students which are their way of living. These scholars' findings also supported the importance of local curriculum for school education. In my findings, the teachers positively perceive the importance of

local curriculum for protecting the contextual knowledge, values, occupation, cultures as well as geographical and tourism areas. Practically, the teachers were unable to experience the importance of the local curriculum in school because all the teachers did not get an opportunity to develop the local curriculum at school and local level. Based on the discussion, I claim that teachers are familiar with the importance of local curriculum without any practical experiences on local curriculum development practices in school or local level. Whatever benefits of the local curriculum in the community the teachers are not experiencing, it will be of importance only for the theoretical position of the local curriculum.

Theoretically, the curriculum could be developed nationally as well as locally. During the curriculum development, the process may be more rigid (Taba, 1962; Print, 1993) as well as flexible (Print, 1993). The schools did not develop the local curriculum and did not take the initiative in developing the local curriculum. Only one municipality has initiated the local curriculum development practices at local level. This local government did not ensure the participation of teachers and parents in the curriculum development process. The teachers were unfamiliar with this process of local curriculum development. It is clear that the teachers' roles in local curriculum development were not realized by the local government. However, Taba and Skilbeck approach highly focuses on the teachers' roles in curricular decision (Print, 1993). It can be said that the rooftop mindset has also been influencing the local peoples too. In Finland, teachers are autonomous to handle the local curriculum. They should develop their local curriculum according to the national steering curriculum (Mølstad, 2015). But here they are not ready to take the responsibility of local curriculum development related activities at school level or local government level. Teachers feel it as extra tasks within their regular routine. They also focus on the national standard core subjects only in the instructional activities. This finding is also similar to Autti and Bæk (2019) in which they concluded that the local curriculum development activities are the burden tasks that added the extra responsibilities for them. According to them, the teachers' commitments and career experiences affected this situation.

### **Conclusion**

The local curriculum is inevitable for addressing the diversified needs of society. To cover this, teachers positively think about the necessity as well as importance of local standard curriculum. But there is the need to extend the teachers' conceptual understanding of the local curriculum from the list of content to the taught, learned and hidden aspects of curriculum. The local curriculum is essential for preserving the cultural and occupational identity of community people. It needs to promote the cultural, occupational, geographical and tourism areas in the local to global landscape. For this the schools need to develop or select the local curriculum or subject to teach at school level instead of English and computer subjects. The local curriculum is needed to be developed properly with the participation of teachers, local experts and parents. But English and computer subjects are popular as optional subjects instead of local subjects in community schools. The teachers and parents' involvement in curricular decisions is rare, and teachers take an extra burden in their regular duty. The gap on perceptual understanding and the lack of teachers' practical activities on local curriculum development needs to be minimized for the effective adaptation of local curriculum at schools or local level community schools of Nepal.

### **Implication**

The findings can be used to improve the local curriculum related policies of federal to local governments of Nepal. Similarly, it might be useful for local governments to take decisions for valuing the teachers' expectations and experiences. The findings suggest that the local curriculum is important to develop the preservation and promotion of local culture, values, occupation, regional characteristics, and tourism places. For this, teachers are highly positive for local curriculum development and implementation at local level. Though, the results build on the evidence suggests that the local governments or school principals need to take the leadership role in developing local curriculum at local level. Apart from these, the findings can be

applied to make a contextual curriculum at local level by paying attention to its main principles viz. local needs, local subject matter, and local participation.

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### Author's Bio

**Mr. Nirmal Raj Mishra** is a lecturer of curriculum and evaluation at Tribhuvan University of Nepal. He completed a master's in philosophy of education from Tribhuvan University. Now, he is a PhD student of Tribhuvan university. He has done several research projects in ICT integrated teaching, teaching practice,

classroom pedagogy, adult literacy, early grade reading, student assessment, local curriculum as well as being involved in teacher training as a master trainer. e He also published research articles and textbooks.  
Email: [nirmaltu@gmail.com](mailto:nirmaltu@gmail.com)