Multilingualism and Sustainable Development in Nepal

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Outline of Presentation

A. Introduction: Geography, Population, Language situation, Constitutional Rights, Education Policies and Int’l agreements

B. Positive Developments, Changes and Benefits

C. Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

D. Conclusion
Geography
Population and Language Situation

A. Population: 26.495
B. Ethnic Communities: 126
C. Languages: 123
D. 55.36% do not speak Nepali as their first language
E. 44.64% Only speak Nepali as their first language

Source: Census 2011
Constitutional Rights

- Every Nepali community has the right to education up to secondary level in their own mother tongue and to start and operate schools and educational institutions as provided in the Law.
- Every Nepali community has the right to preserve and promote its language, script, cultural civilization, and heritage.

Source: Constitution of Nepal 2015
Language in Education Policies

- Local language (mother tongue) will be taught as a subject (National Curriculum Framework for School Education (preschool - Grade 12) Curriculum Development Center)
- The mother tongue will be the medium of instruction in basic education especially Grade 1-3 (National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal, 2007)
- The mother tongue will be taught as a subject in Grade 6-8 (Basic Education Curriculum 6-8 Grades (2012, Curriculum Development Centre))
Language in Education Policies

- The Medium of Instruction (MoI) for all students, except Nepali and English speakers, shall be local mother tongues in basic education up to grade three (Multilingual Education Implementation Guidelines, 2010, Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal)

  “Multilingual Education (MLE) is culminating in policy but not in enforced practice. This is the big challenge to implement MLE in Nepal.”

- Education Act 8th Amendment Bill 2016:
  “Education Act 8th Amendment Bill 2016 is a positive step in carrying out reforms in the structure of education. But it is not enough to reform the education system as per our sociopolitical changes to provide quality education for all.”
Nepal’s International Agreements

- **Education for All Goals**: Including access for all children, meeting learning needs of all children
- **ILO 169**: Related to the rights of indigenous communities in Nepal
- **Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People**: Related to rights of indigenous people: their culture, identity, language, employment, health, education and other issues
- **SDG 4**: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all
Positive Development in Language and Education

- Nepal Multilingual Education Symposium 2007
- Mother tongue is being used to teach as a local subject in community schools, 2007
- A dictionary of Nepali-English-Mugali (a local language) has been developed by DEO Mugu. *(p55, Status Report 2013, DoE)*
- Constitute the Language Commission (Sep 08, 2016) under Chairmanship Dr. Lavadev Awasthi. The Commission is constituted in line with the constitution provision.

These developments are not significant enough to promote multilingual education in Nepal because policies and plans are only limits on papers.
Changes and Benefits of Multilingual Education

**Changes:** Students are more interested to remain in schools with good learning achievements. Parents and teachers are more positive and supportive towards schools. As well, they are more aware to use their heritage language and culture in education.

**Benefits:** Children, Schools and Societies. “Multilingual Education is a key factor to provide strong foundation of quality education for all in basic education.”

“Multilingual Education is not only beneficial for the individual but it is also a fundamental element in the achievement of social cohesion.”

(Hywel Coleman, Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World, 2015)
Changes and Benefits of Multilingual Education Cont.

“Mother tongue is one of the most powerful tools to preserve and convey culture and cultural ties.” (Hurisa Guvercin, 2010)

“Education must be facilitated to explore and respect our language and culture which will promote our identity.”

▪ MLE will help to create positive thinking between the individual and society and produce good and productive citizens
▪ Achieving educational goals will help peace building and lead to a harmonious environment in the community
▪ People will be able to create the best employment and business opportunities
“The use of mother tongue in basic education as a means to providing a strong foundation that leads to a quality education for all remains a great challenge in Nepal.”

“Language is the key to communication. It can provide bridges to new opportunities, or barriers to equality. It connects, and disconnects. It creates unity, and can cause of conflict. Language is many things, but it is rarely simple.” (MTB-MLE Lessons Learned from a decade of Research and Practice, 2014)

“Community, they have their own ideas and strategies to make sustainable development or change in the community, but we forget to know or acknowledge this reality.”
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

- **Goals and Objectives:** We were unable to define our educational goals and objectives for the country in the last 45 years. “An education without clearly defined goals and objectives is always problematic for the country.”

  Develop National Goals of Education, change the Education Act and prepare the long-term Education Plan: Our focus must be on long-term (minimum 50 years) national education plans with strong strategic and implementation guidelines guided by an inclusive national language policy which will fit with the national goals of education.

  “Let us reform the education system because this will lead to better outcomes and make Nepal a successful county.”
**Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions**

- **Political Transition:** Nepal is in a political transitional situation since the April 2006 revolution, however we have a new Constitution and it has been functioning since September 20, 2015.

“A good education system supports and improves the politics. Good politics will help to make good policies and good policies will helps to develop the nation. Therefore, education matters for sustainable development of the nation and multilingual education matters for quality education for all.”
Parents are losing faith in government (community) schools and sending their children into English Medium (of Instruction) Schools. They believe that English medium education is necessary for better employment and business opportunities. “MLE is wielded as a political term rather than an academic and pedagogical one and there is often a lack of political commitments.” (A Study on Integration of Local Contents in School Curricula, 2010)

To meet these challenges, the government must ensure that community and private schools operate under the same policies and system with supportive and effective regulation and monitoring.
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

**Promote One Education System:** Encourage private schools to teach students’ L1 as a subject & ensure private schools use the same curriculum as government schools. If government school can demonstrate excellent learning outcomes for students using L1 as a MoI, this will stimulate private schools to use MT as a MoI.

**Model MLE Programs:** Province, District, Constituency and Municipality or Village Development Committee

**Community School Capacity Building Activities:** Establish training and empowerment program for school administrators and school management committee to give the local community a greater control over their own schools as expected by the Ministry of Education community school policy.
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

- **Linguistically Diverse Societies**: Increasingly, people seek opportunities to improve their quality of life through migration, and, as a result, promote linguistic and cultural diversity. How will we implement MLE in a multiple language situation in one classroom? Most of the classrooms have children who speak different languages.

Ensure using mother tongue as a MoI in preprimary and primary grades 1-3 of basic education. Politicians and policy makers are must know that multilingualism will opens doors to the world.
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

- **Curriculum, Contextual Teaching Learning materials, Teacher Training and Support System**: MLE competencies are not included in the curriculum and there are no quality textbooks. English and minority languages are taught as subjects in community schools. Teachers are unable to teach students in their mother tongue due to their lack of training and difficulty switching from the local language to Nepali and English (Language Acquisition issues).

  **Language Progression Plan**: Ensure policies that show a clear language progression plan for students who do not speak Nepali as their first language to learn Nepali and for all students an international language (English).
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

Language situation most of the classroom

L1 (home language):
- Nepali and minority language speaking students

L2 (Second language):
- Nepali for minority language speaking students
- Minority languages for Nepali speaking students

IL (International language):
- English for all students
Why language is vital in education? We need to understand and help the local stakeholders (parents, teachers & government officials) to understand why they should use the mother tongue, Second language and English step-by-step progression. It will help the children become a global citizen with high self-confidence and make them competent to fight against poverty and hunger.
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

**Standard and Contextual Textbooks**: Publication and distribution of standard textbooks with contextual content and for each subject. Student must be taught their L1 as a subject.

**Universities Programs to Produce Quality Teachers**: Universities programs are must be designed to prepare qualified, skillful and competent teachers with multilingual capacities.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation of Teacher’s Performance**: There is no effective system to support, monitor and evaluate the teacher’s performance. Some teachers are not qualified or capable for teaching effectively because they lack technical capabilities and some teachers despite their qualification are unable to provide quality education.
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

Teacher Recruiting and Training System: Develop and establish a recruiting and training system that produces qualified, capable, competent & committed teachers. Good teacher should be rewarded & poor either retrained or withdrawn from schools.

- **Student’s Evaluation System:** Schools using mother tongue as a medium of instruction are evaluating student’s academic performance are using a language different than MOI. For example, the schools are using mother tongue as the MOI but the school exams are written in the dominant language (Nepali).

Continuous Assessment System (CAS): Implementing a CAS for students as soon they enroll.
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

- **Low Literacy Rate of Parents:** The average literacy rate in Nepal is only 65.9%. Male and Female literacy rate is 75.1% and 57.4% respectively. “Literacy rates are increasing as per the data but economic growth is not increasing but decreasing, which lead to the question of ‘does our education system work?’”

Transitional (L1-L2-English) Literacy Projects for Parents: Literate parents are better able to support their children’s education. The government or non-government organization should provide transitional literacy learning opportunities to parents who request them.

“A well literate and educated person is enable to start and continue their profession or business in effective way with proper management.”
Key Issues, Challenges and Solutions

- Poor Coordination and Networking among the Stakeholders

**Continue Advocacy**: Promote local, regional and national as well international networks to advocate for effective and sustainable MLE which will ensure quality education for all.

“Education systems must help the new generation to be stronger, wiser, confident, competent and skilful. These attributes will enable them to become a good and productive citizen. It will also prepare them to love their country and use their skills to make their country prosperous.”

“Multilingualism - a gateway to Sustainable Development.” (Georgiana Epure, 2015)
Conclusion

The future of nation depends on its education system and how well children are educated. Language used in education in learning and instruction contribute to the quality of education and how languages are used to teach various subjects in schools.

“Education system must help to change and enhance the socio-economic situation of the country. Good education (informal, formal and non-formal) helps people to create their imagination (analytical thinking) power and support them to make wise decision in right time using their knowledge, experiences, and capacities. Democracy functions effectively if the people are able to use their rights prudently.”
Conclusion

“Education is essential to preserve the unique identities of indigenous peoples, as well as for the full development of their potential as individuals and as communities” (A joint statement from UNESCO, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific and unicef, Aug 09, 2016)

“If your Development become a disaster for us that is not acceptable at any cost.” (May 2016)

“The idea of sustainable development as maintaining a balance between economic growth and maintenance of natural resources and ecosystem has been extended to cultural diversity.” (Jasone Cenoz, Towards Multilingual Education, 2009)
Conclusion

“The mother tongue is one of the most powerful tools to preserve and convey culture and cultural ties.” (Hurisa Guvercin, 2010)

“We are not poor, but our vision, leadership, management skill and tolerance power is weak. An inclusive, quality, multilingual education system is capable of overcoming these issues. Quality education matters for quality development.”

“A Nation can never be finished by its people’s death, but it will be finished when the youth forget their identity.” (Che-Guevara) So, multilingual education matters to transfer indigenous and national identity to new generations.
“Empower all the children and youth to make a better world through quality education, vocational training and spiritual motivation.”
Conclusion

A multilingual education will ensure an inclusive, quality education. An inclusive quality education will prepare good citizens. Good citizen will be enabled to select good people’s representatives or politicians. Good politicians will able to deliver good governance. Good governance will help to achieve the 17 goals of sustainable development.
For a better future, Education Matters!
For a better education, Multilingual Education Matters!

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Thank You!
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