From Tradition to Transformation: A Literature Review of Educational Change and the Marginalization of Community-based Learning in Nepal

Alisha Gautam

A Study submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (MEd)

2026

School of Education

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Alisha Gautam

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Megan Lourie, my supervisor, for her invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, encouragement, and patience during this research. Her advice and experience have been crucial to the realization of this study. I would also like to thank the academic staff at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) for their supportive learning environment and the knowledge and learning I have gained throughout my time at AUT.

I want to thank my husband, Mr. Avishek Baral, for his constant love, patience, understanding, and encouragement throughout my postgraduate studies. His unwavering encouragement has been a great asset in both the fruitful and difficult phases of this research.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my parents, family, and friends for their constant support, prayers, and faith in me. Their support has helped me to persevere and get this done.

Lastly, I recognize the many people who have helped in any way with the completion of this study. I am really thankful to them for their support and encouragement.

Abstract

The literature review critically reflects on the impact of the formalization of schooling on community-based learning and the reconfiguration of cultural identity, language, indigenous knowledge, and community involvement in schooling in Nepal. Prior to the formal school system, learning in Nepal was mostly associated with the family, the local community, religious life and rituals, occupation, farming, festivals, traditional narration, apprenticeship, and social interaction. This learning enabled knowledge, skills, values, languages, cultural practices, and relationships to be passed on from one generation to the next, to local environments. As a result of the political changes since the 1950s, formal education grew in size and was increasingly associated with literacy, national development, citizenship, recognized qualifications, employment, and social mobility. This process opened up significant educational and economic opportunities, but also reinforced the dominance of standardized curricula, textbooks, exams, the dominant language, trained teachers, and state-approved knowledge. As a result, oral, practical, place- and community-based knowledge has been sidelined as informal, supplementary, and/or culturally relevant but not academically valid.

The study is conducted as a systematic literature review (SLR) using secondary academic sources. Five themes were identified in the literature, and they are interconnected. First, formal education has played a key role in the evolution of literacy, mobility, and national development, and has favored written, standardized, examinable, and certifiable knowledge. Second, intergenerational learning, cultivation, the organization of festivals and rituals, ecological knowledge, craft, oral history, problem solving, etc., are also part of the indigenous knowledge system but are not widely acknowledged in formal curricula or assessment systems. Third, the widespread use of Nepali and English has created a language hierarchy that can make it difficult to learn mother tongues and can cause issues in learners' cultural identity, confidence, memory, and sense of belonging. Fourth, community involvement has evolved from teaching and knowledge sharing to administration and governance, and to fundraising and support, with communities perceived as being involved in education. Lastly, the creation of a local curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogy, multilingual teaching, indigenous values of leadership, and improved school–community partnerships provide practical opportunities for integration. Meanwhile, implementation is constrained by limited

resources, insufficient teacher training, low institutional capacity, participant attitudes, and inconsistent policy implementation.

This study reveals opportunities and marginalization in the process of education change in Nepal. Formal education should therefore be sustained and expanded, and made culturally, linguistically and locally responsive. Community knowledge, mother tongues, elders, families and local knowledge holders can be valid sources of knowledge, improving equity, relevance, participation, cultural continuity, and learner's sense of belonging.

Keywords: formal schooling, community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, mother-tongue education, cultural identity, educational change, community participation, Nepal

Table of Contents

Attestation of authorship ii

Acknowledgements iii

Abstract 1

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction 7

1.1 Educational Change and Community-Based Learning in Nepal 7

1.2 Significance of the Study 8

1.3 Structure of the Study 8

CHAPTER TWO: Background 10

2.1 Overview 10

2.2 Historical Development of Formal Education in Nepal 10

2.2.1 Pre-Modern Learning Traditions 10

2.2.2 The Emergence of Modern Schooling and Nation-Building 10

2.2.3 Contemporary Policy Landscape 11

2.3 Community-Based Learning Traditions in Nepal 12

2.3.1 The Nature and Diversity of Community Learning 12

2.3.2 The Changing Role of Families, Elders, and Local Knowledge Holders 12

2.3.3 Indigenous Knowledge in School Leadership and Governance 13

2.4 Language, Power, and Identity in Nepali Education 13

2.4.1 The Politics of Language in Education 13

2.4.2 Decolonizing Language in Education 13

2.4.3 Language, Identity, and Belonging in School 14

2.5 Research Gap and Rationale for the Study 14

2.6 Research Questions 15

Chapter 3: Methodology 16
3.1 Introduction 16
3.2 Research Approach 16
3.3 Research Philosophy 17
3.4 Research Design 18
3.5 Data Sources 18
3.6 Search Strategy 19
3.6.1 Keywords and Search Terms 20
3.6.2 Database Search Procedure 21
3.7 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria 21
Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria 21
3.8 Article Selection Process 22
3.8.1 Selection process 23
3.9 Data Extraction and Analysis 23
3.9.1 Data Extraction Framework 23
3.9.2 Thematic Analysis Procedure 23
3.10 Ethical Considerations 25
3.11 Chapter Summary 26
CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and Analysis 27
4.1 Introduction 27
4.2 Formal Schooling, Modernization, and the Reordering of Knowledge 28
4.2.1 Schooling as a Modernization and Development Project 28
4.2.2 Standardized Curriculum and Educational Legitimacy 29
4.2.3 Reform, Inequality, and Local Disconnection 30
4.3 Marginalization of Indigenous Knowledge and Community-Based Pedagogies 31

4.3.1 Indigenous Knowledge as Intergenerational Community Learning....31
4.3.2 Hierarchies between Modern Schooling and Community Knowledge....31
4.3.3 Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Indigenous Educational Value....32
4.3.4 Indigenous Values in Leadership and Limited Formal Recognition....32
4.4 Language Hierarchy, Mother-Tongue Education, and Cultural Identity....33
4.4.1 Policy Recognition and the Mother-Tongue Implementation Gap....33
4.4.2 Language as Identity, Memory, and Belonging....33
4.4.3 Decolonization, Curriculum, and Language Power....34
4.4.5 Language Marginalization as Cultural Marginalization....35
4.5 Reduced Community Participation in Formal Education....35
4.5.1 From Community Pedagogy to Formal School Governance....35
4.5.2 Unequal Voice within School Participation....36
4.5.4 Community as Supporter Rather than Co-Creator....36
4.6 Opportunities for Integrating Community-Based Learning into Formal Education....37
4.6.1 Local Curriculum and Contextual Education....37
4.6.2 Implementation Challenges in Local Curriculum....38
4.6.3 Culturally Responsive and Multilingual Pedagogy....38
4.6.4 Revaluing Community Knowledge in School Culture....39
4.7 Synthesis of Key Findings....39
Chapter 5. Discussion and conclusion....43
5.1 Introduction....43
5.2 Formal Schooling as Opportunity and Knowledge Reordering....43
5.3 Indigenous Knowledge as Living Pedagogy....45
5.4 Language Hierarchy, Cultural Identity, and Belonging....46
5.5 Community Participation and the Shift from Co-Creators to Supporters....48

5.6 Integration as a Pathway between Tradition and Modernity....49
5.7 Overall Interpretation of the Findings....51
5.8 Conclusion....52
5.10 Implications for Future Research....53
5.11 Final Statement....53
References....54

List of Figures

Figure 1: Theoretical framework.... 25

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Thematic and sub-thematic structure of Chapter Four.... 27
Table 4.2: Alignment of findings with the research questions.... 41

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Educational Change and Community-Based Learning in Nepal

One of the primary means by which societies transmit knowledge, values, language, culture, and identity from one generation to the next is education. Nepal has transformed learning in many ways. Before the broader expansion of schooling in the twentieth century, numerous forms of learning were embedded in family life, communal activity, oral tradition, religious education, agriculture, and the knowledge of crafts and apprenticeships. The learning experiences did not always occur within formal institutions; however, they played a crucial role in passing down practical knowledge, moral values, and cultural identity through generations. Caddell (2002) argues that one must interpret schooling in Nepal within the context of broader historical developments in the state and society.

Formal schooling in Nepal became more widespread and more directly connected with national development, literacy, citizenship, and social mobility after the political transformations of the 1950s, particularly after the Rana regime was overthrown in 1951. The national education system in Nepal has been developing through a dynamic process brought about by the interaction between domestic demand and international influences (Pradhan, 2017). This expansion opened up opportunities for learners, their families and communities through improved access to literacy, formal qualifications, and employment and to public life. Yet, the educational shifts also pose questions of what might be lost in the process of the marginalization of community-based forms of knowledge in the name of school-based, textbook-based and examination-based education.

This study looks at the shift from informal learning in the community to formal education in Nepal. It primarily addresses the effects of this change on cultural identity, language and community involvement in the learning process. Education is not solely a vehicle for academic knowledge; it has a significant impact on the development of a learner's identity, place, language and culture. In Nepal, schooling has frequently been a space that has embodied certain cultural, linguistic and political values, instead of being an impartial one. Dhami (2024) claims that language-in-education policies in the country remain rooted in a hierarchy of languages, knowledge and culture which continue to privilege some by giving them greater importance and value than others. This study will examine how formal education can be combined with community based learning, without negating the importance of formal learning.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study is significant because Nepal is diversified country in terms of language, ethnicity, cultural practice and local knowledge system. There are 131 mother tongues in Nepal (Gyanwali, 2025). This linguistic diversity is indicative of the fact that change in education does not impact one homogeneous population. Instead, it impacts societies that have varied backgrounds, languages, ideologies, and learning styles. So the issue of formal education and community knowledge is not only an educational one, but a cultural and ethical one.

The research may also be extrapolated to larger international conversations about Indigenous knowledge, culturally responsive education, decolonization and epistemic justice. These arguments ask the question, who has proper knowledge in formal education and who does not. Nepal is of special importance because it is not a postcolonial state, unlike most of the other states in the postcolonial world. However, colonial and development-oriented knowledge systems have remained a part of Nepal's education system. Language education in Nepal is also linked with the decolonization struggle, which highlights the issues of recognition, identity and educational justice (Phyak, 2021).

The research is also significant, as it opens up opportunities to consider a more inclusive education system in Nepal. Formal education has established actual possibilities of literacy, mobility, and broader participation. At the same time, it can also negatively influence students' connection with local languages, local knowledge and local culture when the curriculum is not based on these. Poudel et al. (2022) suggest that the language education policy in Nepal can be understood from the perspectives of curriculum, power and decolonization. This study critically examines how formal schooling can recognize community-based learning, local languages, and cultural knowledge while maintaining the benefits of educational development.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is presented in five chapters, all of which examine the ways in which the tradition of community learning has been influenced by the transition to formal schooling and the implications of formal schooling for cultural identity, language use, and community involvement in Nepal. The study is introduced in Chapter One, which shows the relevance and general orientation of the study.

Chapter Two examines historical and conceptual bases and provides a discussion on the traditional learning practices, developments of formal education, role of families and communities and relationship of language, power and identity in Nepal.

It also identifies the research gap and articulates the research questions. Chapter Three discusses the methodological approach to be used in the study, which entails the interpretivist approach, the qualitative research design, the systematic literature review process, data sources, selection criteria, and the thematic analysis procedures. In Chapter 4, the findings are presented and analyzed based on major themes that have emerged in the literature. Lastly, Chapter Five discusses the primary conclusions, addresses the research questions, explores the implications of the study, and offers suggestions for further research and educational practice.

CHAPTER TWO: Background

2.1 Overview

This chapter provides the background of the study by explaining how formal schooling evolved in Nepal and the impact that this had on community-based learning. It begins with a description of the pre-modern traditions of learning, followed by an expansion of modern schooling, community learning, language politics, and cultural identity. The chapter concludes by explaining the gap in the research and presenting the research questions.

2.2 Historical Development of Formal Education in Nepal

2.2.1 Pre-Modern Learning Traditions

Before the establishment of modern school education, learning in Nepal primarily revolved around family, community, religion, occupation, and everyday life. The methods of knowledge transmission were oral narratives, rituals, agricultural activities, crafts, religious education, and apprenticeship. Education in Nepal has to be understood within the context of social change, state formation and history (Caddell, 2007). This is because the learning process was not started in the modern schools. The previous learning practices served their own purposes, values and social roles.

The Gurukul and Guru-Shishya Parampara systems were traditional approaches to education that involved learners in close contact with their Teachers and Elders. Gurukul education included the intellectual, moral and spiritual education (Acharya, 2025). Farming, animal husbandry, healing, festivals, songs, proverbs and family work were some places in which local knowledge was passed across the different communities. These practices were significant as they connected knowledge to identity, place, and community life.

2.2.2 The Emergence of Modern Schooling and Nation-Building

Formal education began to be limited in scope until the political change that brought an end to the rule of the Rana, after which it gained considerable extent. The local social reality and global influences have influenced the development of the national education system in Nepal (Pradhan, 2017). After 1951, the state more increasingly became seen as education a tool for national development, literacy, citizenship and social mobility.

The schools came to be regarded as an important institution for producing educated citizens and for promoting the development of the nation.

This expansion of schooling not only made it more accessible but also constituted institutionalization and nationalization of schooling, as national curricula, national textbooks, and national exams, national language policies were established. National identity, foreign aid, decentralization, and global reform have influenced education policy in Nepal (Shrestha, 2024). This has led to an increase in formal education and a greater importance on written, school-based and examination oriented knowledge. This has caused stress to local languages and local knowledge systems which existed at community levels and were not easily integrated into the formal school education system.

Colonial epistemic power was also linked to the development of schooling in modern times, even though Nepal was not colonized directly. The colonial ideas can also be found in the curriculum, even in the countries that are not officially colonized (Poudel et al., 2022). This influence has been felt in Nepal, where English is given great respect and formal education focuses on academic writing. This is related to the reasons that local knowledge is seen as less valuable than what can be obtained in schools.

2.2.3 Contemporary Policy Landscape

In the last few decades, the government of Nepal has introduced reforms which can be linked to federalism, decentralization, curriculum reform and linguistic inclusion. The Constitution of Nepal has provided the right of the community to receive education in their mother tongue. As per the Constitution of Nepal (2015), every citizen of Nepal has the right to learn their own language and education in their own schools. This is a formal policy declaration of the acceptance of mother-tongue education and the development of a local curriculum.

But, good classroom practice does not always follow good policy. Shrestha (2024) identified the existing policy implementation issues in Nepal in terms of governance, resource allocation and local capacity. The use of Nepali and English as primary languages in schools is dominant but there is lack of consistency in using mother-tongue education. This policy-practice gap is relevant to the understanding of the potential role of formal education in maintaining the marginalization of local languages and knowledge systems.

2.3 Community-Based Learning Traditions in Nepal

2.3.1 The Nature and Diversity of Community Learning

There is no single system of community based learning in Nepal. It is concerned with many forms of learning, which are geo-cultural, language, ethnic, religious, and local livelihood. Learning has been attributed to agriculture, oral tradition, community rituals and ecological knowledge by the Tharu community. As presented by Niure (2019), the vision of both indigenous and formal education is to focus on the development of students, but there are differences in the aspects of language, pedagogy, values and the orientation of students towards culture.

In the hill, mountain and Terai communities, learning has often been experienced in the context of family labor, agricultural activities, animal husbandry, craft skills, local stories and religion. This type of learning is usually hands on, spoken and place-based. It is transmitted through the parents and elders, religious leaders, farmers, craft workers, and other knowledge holders who reside within it. Education in Nepal has often been criticized for its limited connection to the resources, knowledge systems, cultural practices, and everyday needs of local communities, particularly in rural areas (Shahi & Parajuli, 2024). This disconnection may be a key issue for children from indigenous and rural populations and minority language groups whose everyday experiences may not be represented in school.

2.3.2 The Changing Role of Families, Elders, and Local Knowledge Holders

Formal education has shifted the authority to determine what counts as legitimate knowledge and how it is transmitted from families, elders, and community knowledge holders to schools, teachers, and formal educational institutions (Singh, P. (2002). Important also were families, elders and local specialists in the teaching process in community-based learning. In institutional education, power is more closely related to the trained teachers, books, tests and curricula that the state accepts. The local language, cultural knowledge, and community relationship are important in indigenous learning systems (Niure, 2019).

This is not only an institutional change, but a symbolic one as well. Children learn through the use of textbooks in either Nepali or English language and may be led to believe that what they learn in school is more important than what they learn from the community. Khanal et al. (2023) reported that schooling was seen as a privilege for Kham Magar community, but there was a lack of cultural fitment with the national education system.

The primary concern of this study is this "conflict" between ideals of valuing formal education and cultural distance.

2.3.3 Indigenous Knowledge in School Leadership and Governance

Another aspect that needs to be explained is the concept of community schools in Nepal. Most community schools are established and funded by the public sector and are part of the public education system. Community-based learning differs from community schools because it comprises non-formal, local, intergenerational, and culturally embedded practices of learning.

Community based knowledge in community schools is not only about what is taught in the curriculum but also how the school is led and governed. Sherpa et al. (2024) found that indigenous values had an impact on leadership practices of Sherpa head teachers in community schools. From their analysis, they believe that indigenous values can be applied in supporting the inclusion, accountabilities and transparency and care of disadvantaged groups. This means that the community knowledge can not only impact on the curriculum but can also impact on the leadership and the relationship between the school and community.

2.4 Language, Power, and Identity in Nepali Education

2.4.1 The Politics of Language in Education

One of the most obvious places where formal education and community-based learning intersect is language. Although Nepal's education policy recognizes linguistic diversity, Nepali and English continue to dominate classroom instruction. Dhakal (2021) claims that multilingual education based on the mother tongue in Nepal is fraught with significant implementation issues. This implies that not all children are taught in the same language as they speak at home.

Language is not a mere means of teaching. It is also related to identity, confidence, and belonging. So, local-level policy on language in education frequently fails to represent linguistic diversity in practice (Panthee, 2021). Learners, whose native language is neither Nepali nor English, may find schooling challenging, both academically and culturally.

2.4.2 Decolonizing Language in Education

Recent research has explored Nepal's language educational policy with a decolonial approach. According to Phyak (2021), there is a relationship between erasure and language power struggles with indigenous language education in Nepal.

This method demonstrates that language hierarchy is not only a communication issue, but also an issue of the knowledge that is appreciated.

According to Dhami (2024), even after the policy acknowledgment of linguistic diversity in Nepal, English remains a powerful tool in the education system of Nepal. The same is demonstrated by Bhusal and Baral (2025), who indicate that even basic-level English education has not been able to address the multilingual and multiethnic classroom realities in Nepal. The works show that decolonization of language education is not simply to be achieved by incorporating local languages into policy texts. It also includes an element of thinking about curriculum, teaching and teaching resources, and how local knowledge is valued.

2.4.3 Language, Identity, and Belonging in School

Language hierarchy has implications beyond academic performance. Schooling may undermine a sense of belonging when children are taught in a language that is not their own and when their cultural world is not reflected in the curriculum. As a result, the Nepali and English languages can contribute to the twofold marginalization of indigenous and minority languages (Poudel et al., 2022). This is important as language is directly associated with cultural identity and engagement in education.

Literature therefore suggests that there is a relationship between language hierarchy and classroom communication as well as recognition, identity and belonging. Khanal et al. (2023) highlight that indigenous peoples are interested in education, but also believe it is not always reflective of their language or culture. This view reinforces the enduring importance of community-based learning in the debate on reforming education.

2.5 Research Gap and Rationale for the Study

As discussed in Sections 2.2–2.4, the reviewed literature describes the expansion of literacy, qualifications, and social opportunities through formal schooling in Nepal (Lal, 2025; Pradhan, 2017). However, studies of indigenous education and language policy also identify the marginalization of community-based knowledge and minority languages (Dhakal, 2021; Niure, 2019; Phyak, 2021). Some of the important issues related to this problem have been investigated. Studies are targeting language policy or indigenous education, curriculum reform, policy implementation or governance of the school.

However, these areas are addressed individually and not necessarily in a single comprehensive review. A language policy, indigenous education, curriculum reform, policy implementation and school governance have been the subject of existing studies, except for the latter which has given less attention.

This study, therefore, takes a slightly different approach by critically reviewing and synthesizing published literature through three connected lenses: cultural identity, language use, and community participation.

By doing so, it examines not only how community-based learning has been marginalized, but also how this transformation has reshaped learners' relationships with local knowledge, mother tongues, and community involvement in education.

2.1 Research Questions

The main research question is:

How has the shift from community-based learning traditions to formal schooling reshaped cultural identity, language use, and community participation in education in Nepal?

The sub-questions are:

i. How has the development of formal schooling affected the value given to indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies in Nepal?
ii. How have language policy and the dominance of Nepali and English influenced mother-tongue learning and cultural identity in Nepali education?
iii. What opportunities and challenges does existing scholarship identify for integrating community-based learning and indigenous pedagogies into Nepal's formal education system?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology adopted for the study on the transition from community learning to formal education in Nepal is explained. It provides an overview of the research method, philosophy, design, and data sources. The chapter also provides a description of how relevant literature was identified, selected, and analyzed to answer the research questions. Ethical aspects and research quality are discussed. This chapter explains transparency and rigorous analysis of educational change, marginalization of indigenous knowledge, language, and community participation, and opportunities for culturally responsive and community-connected education.

3.2 Research Approach

The qualitative method is used in this research because the study aims to explore and interpret the impact of educational change in Nepal on community-based learning, rather than relying on numerical data for measurement. The research is concerned with the nature of the indigenous pedagogies, community involvement, language usage, and cultural identity, all of which are socially and culturally embedded. These complex issues require an understanding of values, experiences, and perspectives that can only be grasped through a qualitative lens. A qualitative approach is therefore best suited, as it allows for an in-depth analysis of the way educational transformation has been discussed, interpreted, and represented in the existing academic literature. This method also helps to develop a critical understanding of how formal education has affected the traditional community-based learning practices in Nepal.

Qualitative research can be used when one aims to have a deep understanding of a complex social and educational problem. Qualitative research is used to understand complex social phenomena and to analyze meanings and human-centered perceptions in their context (Lim, 2025). This is significant for the present study as marginalization of community-based learning is not only an educational problem, but also a cultural and social one. It includes issues of who is included in whose knowledge, of which languages are acknowledged and which are not, and of how communities are included or excluded from schooling.

Surveys, interviews, observations, or statistical data are not used in the study. On the contrary, it draws on secondary academic literature, particularly peer-reviewed journal articles that have shown concerns about Nepal's education system, language policy, indigenous knowledge and

community learning, and culturally responsive education. In this way, the study can be compared to the work of other researchers and areas of consensus, conflict, and gaps.

The qualitative approach also aids in the interpretation of various studies. Wiesner (2022) states that interpretative qualitative research is not merely a research technique, but an understanding of meaning. This supports the aim of this study, which is to analyze the understanding of educational change in existing scholarship.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy used for this study is interpretivist. Interpretivism is about meanings, interpretations, experiences, and social contexts. This is appropriate for the study because it does not view education as a neutral and purely technical process. Rather, education is seen as being culturally, historically, linguistically, and politically formed. The transition from community-based learning to formal education can be explained only in part as a policy shift or institutional development in the context of Nepal. It also has to be understood as a social, cultural change that impacts identity, language, knowledge systems, and community involvement.

The study is an examination of how change in education has been understood and represented in the available literature in the field, and an interpretivist philosophy is appropriate. Words like "modern education", "traditional learning, "formal schooling", "indigenous knowledge," and "development" may not have clear definitions. They have been read in various ways by scholars, communities, policy makers, and educators. Formal education can be seen as a route to literacy and opportunity, while community education can be seen as a continuity of culture, practical knowledge, and identity. This study explores the diverse meanings without claiming there is one definitive true meaning.

Interpretivist qualitative research focuses on the experiences and meanings of people in their social lives (Ataro, 2019). This is important as this study examines the relationship between educational transformation in Nepal and cultural identity, language hierarchy, and community knowledge. Similarly, Fischer (2025) states that interpretive research aims to grasp what people think, but also why specific meanings and thoughts are created. This contributes to the study's objective of considering the explanation of the marginalization of community-based learning in the existing scholarship.

3.4 Research Design

The study uses a systematic literature review as the main research design. This strategy does not assess primary data; it is a systematic and critical review of the peer-reviewed scholarly literature. Systematic literature reviews are especially suitable when the research has a particular research question that involves synthesizing the knowledge from multiple sources (Lame, 2019). This review aims to analyze the literature on Nepal's educational system, community-based education, indigenous pedagogies, language policy, and culturally responsive education.

Systematic review design carries a transparency and replicability of the process. It is a well-considered process and takes place in a number of stages, including choosing a database, developing search terms, and defining specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The following measures have been taken to ensure that the literature selected is rigorous, comprehensive and fits within the research focus. A good variety of contemporary scholarship is covered by multiple search engines (Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and Taylor & Francis Online). The well-designed search query and Boolean operators can be used to narrow results and exclude irrelevant content, helping to highlight relevant studies in the search results.

The systematic review design allows for a critical evaluation of existing research on the topic. It also helps to identify patterns, debates, contradictions and gaps in the literature. This lens is important for understanding the intricate nature of educational change in Nepal from the perspective of the marginalization of learning within the community and the potential for reintegration of this form of learning. Thematic analysis of literature is used to examine the interpretation of the effects of formal education on cultural identity, language use, and community participation, and how indigenous pedagogies might be integrated into the formal system of pedagogy.

3.5 Data Sources

This study is based on secondary data. This study does not include interviews, questionnaires, classroom observations, focus groups, or fieldwork. It is, on the contrary, built on academic journal articles that have been reviewed and address themes of educational change, community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, language policy, mother-tongue education, and culturally responsive education in Nepal.

When using peer-reviewed academic literature, it is a good practice to use sources that have been evaluated by experts before being published, which in turn adds to the credibility of the study. This also makes certain that the study is not based on the researcher's own opinion or casual information but on scholarly discussions.

The primary sources of information were journal articles found in reliable academic journals.

The databases used were:

Google Scholar,

Scopus

Web of Science

ScienceDirect

Emerald Insight

SpringerLink

Taylor & Francis Online

NepJOL

The suitability of these databases lies in their provision of access to academic literature across education and social sciences, development studies, and cultural studies. Additionally, they facilitate systematic searches for researchers by employing keywords, subject areas, and publication dates

Secondary data is appropriate for this study as it is a review of existing literature and through comparison and synthesis, rather than empirical data collection. Literature-based research can help researchers organize their knowledge and identify research gaps from literature (Snyder, 2019).

3.6 Search Strategy

A well-defined search strategy was developed to find relevant scholarly sources for this study. The study was conducted in the form of a systematic literature review, which requires a systematic search process, transparency, and a search process that is closely related to research questions. The search terms were formulated based on the study's title and the key concepts of the study.

These ideas include educational change, formal education, community education, indigenous knowledge, language policy, mother-tongue education, cultural identity, community participation, and culturally responsive pedagogy in Nepal.

3.6.1 Keywords and Search Terms

Below were the key words generated from the study title, research questions, and the key themes for conducting the literature search. These search terms were then combined to form Boolean search strings, which would make the search more systematic and focused. The main Boolean search strings were:

Search No.	**Search String**
1	“Nepal education reform” AND “formal schooling”
2	“community-based learning” AND Nepal AND education
3	“indigenous knowledge” AND Nepal AND education
4	“indigenous pedagogy” AND Nepal
5	“traditional learning” AND Nepal AND schooling
6	“mother-tongue education” AND Nepal
7	“multilingual education” AND Nepal
8	“language policy” AND Nepal AND education
9	“cultural identity” AND education AND Nepal
10	“culturally responsive pedagogy” AND Nepal
11	“local curriculum” AND Nepal AND education
12	“community participation” AND schooling AND Nepal
13	“decolonizing education” AND Nepal

These search strings helped identify literature on educational change, indigenous knowledge, language, identity, and community participation in Nepal.

Boolean Operators:

(community-based learning OR indigenous knowledge OR traditional learning) AND Nepal AND education

(formal schooling [OR] education reform [OR] school education) AND Nepal AND (cultural identity [OR] language)

("mother tongue education" OR "multilingual education" OR "language policy") AND Nepal

("culturally responsive pedagogy" OR "local curriculum" OR "community participation") AND Nepal AND schooling)

3.6.2 Database Search Procedure

For each of the selected academic databases, the same or similar Boolean search strings were used to search the database. The search was limited to English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 to narrow the results. A search log was created to document the titles of relevant articles, along with their authors, publication years, and sources. Duplicate articles found in multiple databases were removed. The remaining articles were evaluated for relevance based on their titles and abstracts. Potentially suitable articles were then assessed further by reading their full texts and finally selected.

3.7 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To make sure that the literature reviewed was relevant, credible, and aligned with the research objectives, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. This study primarily focused on peer-reviewed journal articles that are directly related to educational change, community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, language policy, culturally responsive pedagogy, cultural identity, and/or local curriculum in Nepal or other closely related South Asian contexts.

Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria:

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers
Articles published in English	Book chapters
Articles directly related to the research topic	Theses
Articles published from 2015 to 2025	Industry reports, magazines, or blogs
Full-text articles available	Non-English publications
Studies focused on Nepal or highly relevant South Asian educational contexts.	Duplicate studies
Articles addressing education reform, language policy, indigenous knowledge, community-based learning, cultural identity, or local curriculum	Articles with no clear connection to education, language, culture, or community-based learning
	Articles without full-text access
	Studies lacking academic relevance or methodological transparency

3.8 Article Selection Process

3.8.1 Selection process

The article selection process was designed as a multi-stage process to ensure that the literature in the study would be relevant, credible, and relevant to the research questions. The first step, Identification, was a systematic search of the selected databases with a set of predetermined Boolean search strings and keywords. This stage generated a wide range of articles for review consideration.

The second step was Duplicate Removal, which involved identifying and eliminating duplicate data across the different databases to eliminate data duplication. This was to make sure that the articles would be varied in the review.

The third step, Title and Abstract Screening, involved reviewing all identified articles by reading through the titles and abstracts. Articles were excluded at this stage only when their titles and abstracts indicated that they fell outside the research questions. Studies addressing educational change, community-based learning, language policy, indigenous knowledge, and culturally responsive education in Nepal remained eligible because these topics were deliberately included in the Boolean searches. Final inclusion were depended on relevance and the full-text eligibility criteria, rather than on the presence of search terms alone.

Eligibility Assessment, fourth stage, was a full text evaluation of the remaining articles based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Articles that were not suitable for the study were excluded to assure the methodological rigor and relevance to the research questions.

Lastly, during final selection, articles that were not directly related to the research questions and were not of much significance were removed. The selected articles were divided based on the identified themes from the literature review done which were: educational reform and modernization, language policy and mother-tongue education, indigenous knowledge and pedagogy, cultural identity and schooling, community participation, and culturally responsive education. The thematic organization has enabled a systematic treatment of what can be synthesized and critically analyzed in the following chapters, and to provide a basis for the aims of the Study.

3.9 Data Extraction and Analysis

3.9.1 Data Extraction Framework

Each article selected was extracted using a consistent data extraction framework. This allowed for all sources to be analyzed in the same manner and kept organized and transparent. Data gathered from each of the articles were the authors, year of publication, study title, country or context, research objective, research methodology, key results, relevance, limitations and recommendations.

This framework helped to compare the selected studies in a clearer manner. For instance, it indicated whether an article addressed language policy, indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, formal schooling, community participation or culturally responsive education. It was also used to record the relevance of each article to the research questions to ensure that the literature selected supported the purpose of the study. Limitations and recommendations helped to identify gaps in

the literature and future research directions.

3.9.2 Thematic Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase procedure was used for analyzing the extracted data. Thematic analysis is a flexible approach to analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006):

Recognizing, interpreting and describing trends or themes of qualitative data. This method was appropriate for this Study as it facilitates the identification of themes that link to the research questions across all of the studies (Peel, 2020).

The first phase was to read in detail the selected articles and highlight key points and ideas. The second phase was to create initial codes from the findings, arguments, and concepts that were relevant. These codes related to language hierarchy, formal schooling, indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, community participation, etc. During the third phase, codes that were related to each other were clustered into more general themes. The fourth phase involved checking whether the themes represented the reviewed literature. The final themes were defined and named in the fifth phase. The final analytical discussion was created in the sixth phase.

The themes identified were: the state's role in modernization and standardized schooling, the hierarchy of language and marginalization of the mother tongue, indigenous knowledge being displaced by state knowledge, decreased participation of communities in education, and opportunities for culturally responsive and community connected education. In this way, the analysis went beyond a mere summary and developed a critical synthesis of the current scholarship on educational transformation in Nepal.

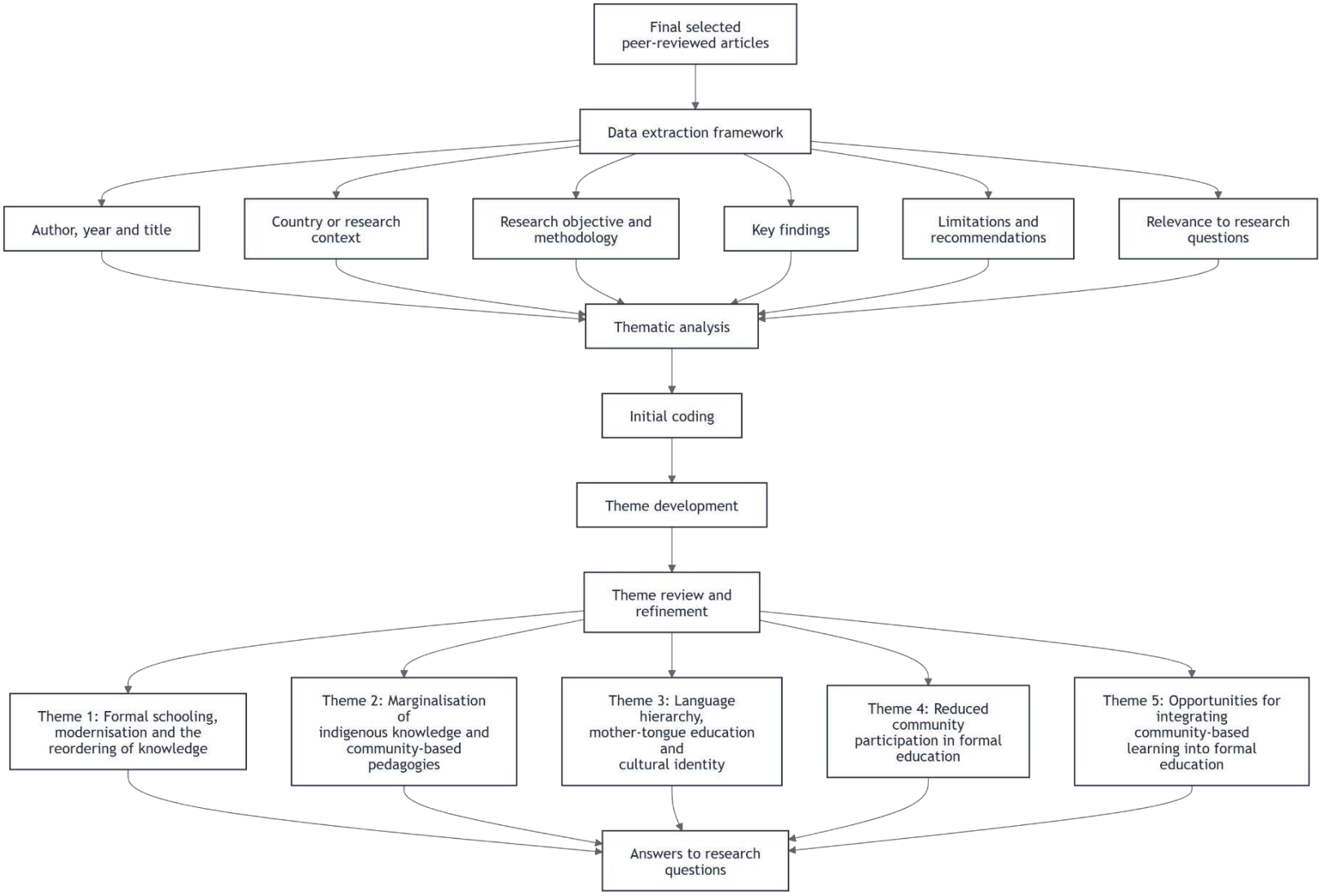


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Formal ethical approval was not sought because the study did not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, classroom observations, or personal/confidential data. The research was based only on published academic and peer-reviewed literature. The review did not present direct risks to participants or raise issues of informed consent, confidentiality, or personal-data protection.

Although formal ethical approval was not required, ethical principles remained relevant throughout the research. The study was conducted in a manner that is appropriate to academic integrity: Sources were cited, authors' ideas were represented fairly, and evidence was interpreted objectively.

Good referencing, paraphrasing and using sources appropriately, selecting and analyzing the literature, presenting information clearly without misrepresentation or plagiarism were given particular attention. These practices contributed to the credibility, reliability and trustworthiness of the review (Ali et al., 2025).

3.11 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the methodology that has been employed in conducting literature review on the issue of change in education and the marginalization of community-based learning in Nepal has been explained. It described the qualitative research approach, interpretivist research philosophy and systematic literature review design. It also outlined the secondary data sources used, the search strategy, keywords, Boolean search strings, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the process of selecting articles, the extraction process, and the thematic analysis process. Ethical issues, the quality of research and limitations were also discussed. In general, the methodology offered a systematic and transparent approach to a review of the existing scholarship on formal schooling, indigenous knowledge, language use, cultural identity, and community participation in Nepal.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the systematic literature review through five themes that emerged from the selected literature. Rather than summarizing each article separately, the chapter synthesizes patterns across the studies to show how formal schooling in Nepal has reshaped community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, language use, cultural identity, and participation in education.

The analysis is structured along five interrelated themes: (1) formal schooling, modernization and knowledge reordering (2) indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies; (3) language hierarchy, mother-tongue education and cultural identity; (4) community involvement in formal education; (5) and integration opportunities. These themes are summarized in Table 4.1, along with their primary sub-themes, and the purpose of each section for analysis in relation to the research questions.

Table 4.1: Thematic and sub-thematic structure of Chapter Four

Main theme	**Sub-themes**	**Analytical purpose and key supporting literature**
Formal schooling, modernization, and knowledge reordering	Schooling as a modernization project; standardized curriculum and educational legitimacy; reform, inequality, and local disconnection.	Explains how schooling expanded literacy and mobility while privileging written, examinable knowledge (Joshi, 2025; Koirala, 2025; Lal, 2025; Shrestha, 2024).
Indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies	Intergenerational learning; festivals and everyday practice; modern/community knowledge hierarchy; curriculum and school leadership.	Shows that indigenous knowledge remains active but has limited formal recognition (Bhattarai & Khatri, 2021; Chaudhary, 2022; Niure, 2024; Sherpa et al., 2024).
Language hierarchy, mother-tongue education, and identity	Policy recognition and implementation gap; language as identity; decolonial curriculum; local governance and multilingual pedagogy.	Analyses how Nepali and English dominance affects mother-tongue learning, identity, and belonging (Dhakal, 2021; Dhami, 2024; Phyak, 2021; Poudel et al., 2022).

Community participation in formal education	Shift from community pedagogy to formal governance; unequal participation; parental and gendered barriers; community as supporter rather than co-creator.	Examines how formal structures include communities administratively but not always pedagogically (Adhikari & Adhikari, 2021; Aryal, 2021; Katel & Katel, 2024; Khadka, 2023).
Integration opportunities	Local curriculum; implementation challenges; culturally responsive pedagogy; multilingual teaching; revaluing community knowledge.	Identifies practical ways to reconnect schooling with local knowledge and linguistic diversity (Adhikari, 2024; Dhungana, 2021; Shahi & Parajuli, 2024; Sunuwar, 2023; Thapa, 2025).

Note. This table is included to show how the chapter is analytically organized. It does not replace the thematic discussion that follows.

4.2 Formal Schooling, Modernization, and the Reordering of Knowledge

4.2.1 Schooling as a Modernization and Development Project

The first important finding of the literature reviewed is that formal education in Nepal has been strongly associated with modernization, national development, and social change. The growth of formal schooling has long been recognized as a means to literacy, citizenship, jobs, economic mobility, and national development. Modernization in Nepal's education system has always been associated with national planning of the school sector and the overall objective of educating learners for their social and economic lives in the modern world (Joshi, 2025). This implies that school is not only a place of acquiring knowledge but also an essential institution in which the state aims to create modern citizens.

Research indicates that formal schooling has provided significant opportunities. The national education policy has made a positive impact on the country's educational progress by enhancing access, strengthening institutions, and demonstrating a commitment to education at the policy level (Lal, 2025).

Formal schooling cannot just be viewed as a cultural loss. Formal education has helped a lot of learners to access literacy, qualifications, employment and participation in the public arena. The reviewed literature also indicates, however, that not all communities have enjoyed the same benefits from formal schooling. While progress has been made in providing access to education, there remain a number of challenges relating to equity, quality, policy effectiveness and implementation issues (Lal, 2025). Rural learners, indigenous communities, minority-language students, economically disadvantaged families, and learners with disabilities are affected by these inequalities particularly (Thapaliya, 2024).

Formal schooling can be experienced differently by these groups due to lack of recognition of their contexts in the curriculum, language of instruction, resources, teacher availability and assessment systems (Thapaliya, 2024). As a result, the modernization of schooling has opened up opportunities for a larger number of people, but not for all.

4.2.2 Standardized Curriculum and Educational Legitimacy

A key observation that could be gleaned from the reviewed literature is that formal education has changed the notion of what constitutes legitimate knowledge in Nepal. Schooling creates a legitimate authority for knowledge imparted through the official curriculum, textbooks, classroom teaching, evaluation, and certification. This study by Shrestha (2024) reveal that governance problems, inadequate resources, coordination gaps, and policy implementation and learning problems in classrooms play a significant role in influencing the process of educational policy implementation in Nepal. These policies and administrative arrangements are significant because they shape what knowledge is rendered visible in schools. Knowledge that can be written or standardized can be tested, and can be certified, will be more likely recognized as academic knowledge (Shrestha, 2024). In contrast, knowledge learned through family work, oral tradition, ritual practice, ecology, farming, apprenticeship, and community life may receive less formal recognition because it does not always fit easily into textbook- or examination-based systems (Bhattarai & Khatri, 2021; Chaudhary, 2022; Niure, 2024).

International educational concepts are also playing a part in this realignment of knowledge. Shah and Brett (2021) argue that international discourses on citizenship, rights, global awareness and development influence global citizenship education in Nepal. These ideas can contribute to achieving important learning outcomes and indicate that the Nepalese curriculum is influenced by

both local and international priorities. Global frameworks can be more salient than local histories, indigenous ecological knowledge, or community-based pedagogies, and can separate learners from their own cultural and community contexts.

4.2.3 Reform, Inequality, and Local Disconnection

The literature also suggests that educational reforms can reproduce inequality when they are not closely connected to local contexts. Koirala (2025) shows that systemic reforms in Nepal have aimed to promote equitable education, yet persistent inequalities in access, quality, and outcomes remain.

This indicates that the marginalization of community-based learning is connected to broader structural inequality in formal schooling. Learners from urban, Nepali-speaking, English-oriented, and economically secure backgrounds may be better positioned to succeed in formal school settings. In contrast, minority-language learners can be disadvantaged when mother-tongue-based multilingual education is not implemented effectively (Dhakal, 2021). Also, learners with disabilities may be affected differently when reform policies do not sufficiently address diverse learning needs (Thapaliya, 2024).

The reviewed literature further indicates that formal schooling has altered educational authority in Nepal. Shrestha (2024) shows that schooling is organized through state policy, curriculum, administration, and implementation structures. There is a tension between modern education and local or indigenous knowledge (Bhattarai & Khatri, 2021). Niure (2024) shows that community knowledge is transmitted through intergenerational relationships and local practice. Chaudhary (2022) demonstrates that festivals and everyday cultural participation also function as indigenous pedagogical spaces. Taken together, these studies show that formal schooling has not simply added new knowledge to existing traditions; it has changed which forms of knowledge are formally recognized, assessed, and certified.

4.3 Marginalization of Indigenous Knowledge and Community-Based Pedagogies

4.3.1 Indigenous Knowledge as Intergenerational Community Learning

Secondly, the role of indigenous knowledge and pedagogies that emerge from the community are active and continue to be educationally relevant in Nepal, although not always the formal school system recognizes them as such. The literature reviewed reveals that community-based learning is

not a monolith but an array of community learning traditions. The indigenous knowledge of Tharu community is passed on by parents, elders, peers and other members of the community (Niure, 2024). The Tharu festivals in Western Nepal serve as teaching moments for children to learn through participation, observation, performance, and community practice (Chaudhary, 2022). Bhattarai (2023) also suggests that local knowledge can be used to enhance classroom learning as it is linked to the experiences of students in their daily lives. Indigenous reasoning can also be applied to mathematics, for example, through the identification of local methods of measuring, calculating and solving practical problems (Subedi, 2021). In this study, Sherpa et al. (2024) demonstrate how indigenous values can be used for school leadership, the application of caring, accountability, transparency, and inclusion. These studies together suggest that family teaching, apprenticeship, craft knowledge, festivals, rituals, agricultural knowledge, ecological understanding, and oral storytelling constitute a part of community-based learning. Oral, practical, relational learning, however, is more likely to be viewed as cultural practice than formally recognized learning, because this form of learning is more likely to be passed on orally, practically, and relationally.

4.3.2 Hierarchies between Modern Schooling and Community Knowledge

The reviewed literature suggests that indigenous knowledge is sometimes treated as less academically legitimate than formal schooling (Bhattarai & Khatri, 2021). The conflict between modernity and Nepalese education (Bhattarai & Khatri, 2021) is in the lens of local and indigenous knowledge. Local knowledge and knowledge acquired through traditional means are often seen as traditional knowledge and less academic, whereas schooling is often synonymous with progress, rationality, development and mobility. This sets up a hierarchy of formal school knowledge over community knowledge. Learners can then learn to internalize the idea that learning in school is more important than learning from the family, elders, land, labor, festivals or community practice

4.3.3 Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Indigenous Educational Value

The literature reviewed also reveals that no formal education is needed to integrate indigenous knowledge into formal education. Bhattarai (2023) believes that local knowledge can be used at the secondary level of school curriculum in classroom learning to make the learning more practical, contextual and related to students' life. This indicates that formal schooling and community knowledge can be integrated where teachers are aware of the learning value of the community's

practices. Agricultural activities, knowledge of the environment, traditional measuring units, local history and cultural stories can be linked to, for instance, science, social studies, mathematics, language and moral education. Moreover, Subedi (2021) demonstrates that indigenous thinking and reasoning in mathematics education can also be beneficial in the process of measuring, designing, calculating and solving practical problems. The significance is that not only cultural and social learning is indigenous knowledge, but also with intellectual values for academic subjects. The question is not if local knowledge is helpful in the classroom, but whether formal curricula, textbooks, and measures of learning and progress are sufficiently flexible to acknowledge community knowledge as a legitimate way to learn.

4.3.4 Indigenous Values in Leadership and Limited Formal Recognition

Indigenous knowledge can also be harnessed by school leaders and governors. Sherpa et al. (2024) propose that indigenous practices can help shape leadership in community schools based on values such as care, accountability, transparency, and inclusion of disadvantaged groups and support. The findings go against the notion that indigenous knowledge is only relevant when it is used as a topic of the curriculum. It also demonstrates how indigenous knowledge can influence school leadership, decision making, relationships and service to disadvantaged students. Indigenous knowledge, in this context, has administrative value, ethical value, relational value and pedagogical value.

The literature reviewed indicates that there is some indigenous knowledge practice in Nepalese communities but it is not given much importance in the formal school system. As illustrated by Niure (2024), intergenerational relationships are still crucial to the passing on of information on community knowledge. Moreover, festivals, rituals, and cultural involvement remain as the indigenous pedagogical spaces (Chaudhary, 2022). Local knowledge can be meaningfully utilized in classroom instruction by identifying its relevance by teachers (Bhattarai, 2023). But formal education is where authority is granted to trained teachers, curriculum, textbooks, exams, and certifications.

According to Shrestha (2024), formal education is structured by policy, curriculum, administration and implementation. Elders, farmers, ritual specialists, craft workers and other holders of knowledge within a community therefore can continue to teach their knowledge within their community, but in a way that is not formally equal to the knowledge that is taught in schools.

This finding directly answers the first research sub-question. The formalization of schooling has had an impact on the valuation of indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies as being informal, supplementary and cultural, rather than academic and central. It is not that indigenous knowledge is not available, it is only that it is not fully recognized and included in formal education.

4.4 Language Hierarchy, Mother-Tongue Education, and Cultural Identity

4.4.1 Policy Recognition and the Mother-Tongue Implementation Gap

The third key finding is that language hierarchy is one of the most powerful ways in which formal education transforms cultural identity and educational belonging in Nepal. The reviewed literature indicates that while linguistic diversity is officially acknowledged in education policy in Nepal, this is not always the case in the classroom. Dhakal (2021) argues that although mother-tongue-based multilingual education has been given policy priority in Nepal, its implementation is hindered by factors such as limited resources, teacher training, teaching materials, political commitment, and social attitudes. This reflects a significant disconnect between policy recognition and practice.

4.4.2 Language as Identity, Memory, and Belonging

Language is not just a means of teaching. It is also a bearer of identity, memory, belonging, confidence, and cultural knowledge. Phyak (2021) argues that indigenous language education in Nepal should be considered as decolonial struggle against erasure, as dominant language policies and practices have historically marginalized indigenous languages. This is a main concern of this study. The absence of home languages in school results in the partial absence of students' cultural worlds. The school then becomes a place where learners are expected to adapt to the dominant linguistic norms, not a place where their own languages are accepted as legitimate sources of knowledge.

4.4.3 Decolonization, Curriculum, and Language Power

Language hierarchy in Nepal is also linked to the issues of power in the curriculum and decolonialism. Despite the fact that Nepal is not a formally colonized country, colonial and hierarchical ideas can be embedded in curricula that need to be addressed if one is interested in decolonizing the curriculum (Poudel et al., 2022). This not only reflects how the national policy

influenced the transformation of education in Nepal, but also the role of global languages and dominant ways of knowing.

Literature reviewed reveals that values attached to language are not the same in each language and it holds symbolic and educative value. The findings of Dhami (2024) indicate that English is still retaining its position of strength in the educational system in Nepal, due to its modernity, success and broader opportunity.

Poudel et al. (2022) point out that Nepali has been designed as a language of national identity, state communication and broader public engagement. According to Phyak (2021), indigenization languages are deeply linked to identity, cultural memory and resistance to erasure. The hierarchy influences learners' perceptions of the worth of their own language identities.

In addition to official recognition of linguistic diversity, decolonizing language-in-education policy demands more (Dhami, 2024). Using inclusive language does not automatically make inclusive classrooms. A school can recognize local languages symbolically without abandoning the use of Nepali or English in textbooks, examinations, administration and in classroom teaching. In this case, local languages are still present in the students' homes and communities, but are less visible when it comes to the formal school knowledge that students are gaining.

4.4.4 Local Governance, Constitutional Rights, and Classroom Pedagogy

There are also challenges at the local level in language policy. Panthee (2021) noted that transferring administrative responsibilities and decision-making powers from central government to local authorities does not necessarily ensure linguistic inclusion in local government, like in the case of Rupandehi District. This limited linguistic inclusion is further affected by the lack of resources, trained educators, curriculum materials, and political commitment to effectively implement multi-lingual education in local governments. This is particularly important in the federal Nepal context where local governments are expected to have more education responsibilities. The findings suggest capacity development, funding and real planning of language in the context of decentralization.

The recognition of a right to language in the constitution is not sufficient either. Nevertheless, there are some problems with language maintenance and multilingual schooling even with the constitution of Nepal (Joshi & Eslami, 2024). This illustrates the interrelationship between language policy and the social and economic contexts. Many parents would do anything to make

sure their children learn Nepali or English (which is linked to mobility, higher education and jobs) in every family culture, while many others value the importance of the mother tongue. To keep the culture alive and also at the same time promote social development is a difficult task. Despite their positive attitudes towards mother-tongue education, families might opt for the dominant language education as they believe that it benefits the future.

The classroom is not an exception in this regard either. To address the diversity of learners' linguistic and cultural resources, responsive pedagogy is a must in multilingual classrooms (Pokhrel, 2020). Being bilingual should not be considered a disadvantage in learning. Rather, home languages might foster understanding, confidence, identity, and participation. Likewise, Thapa (2025) believes that culturally responsive pedagogy is an effective approach to teaching writing in multilingual Nepal as learning is linked to students' cultural experiences, home language, and stories. The findings highlight that linguistic inclusion is not a policy matter, but also a practice in education.

4.4.5 Language Marginalization as Cultural Marginalization

This theme is directly related to the second research sub-question. The dominance of Nepali and English has also shaped mother-tongue learning and cultural identity, leading to a hierarchy among languages. Some languages are perceived as beneficial for school education and social mobility, while others are viewed as domestic, traditional, or less useful. This hierarchy is related to the wider concerns of curriculum, coloniality, and power (Poudel et al., 2022). Thus, language marginalization is cultural marginalization as well. By excluding learners' languages, learners' identities and community knowledge are also diminished in formal education.

4.5 Reduced Community Participation in Formal Education

4.5.1 From Community Pedagogy to Formal School Governance

The fourth key finding is that formal education has altered the nature of community involvement in education. In community-based learning traditions, families, elders, farmers, religious leaders, craft workers, and local experts were directly involved in teaching and transmission of knowledge. Children learned by getting involved in household activities, farming, festivals, rituals, oral stories, and community duties. However, formal education has decentralized authority by distributing it among teachers, schools, textbooks, examinations, education offices, and official educational

governance systems, including School Management Committees (SMCs).

This is not to say that there is no schooling in communities. Instead, their function has become more formal, administrative, and institutionalized. Aryal (2021) has found that community involvement in school education in Nepal is facilitated through formal mechanisms such as school improvement planning, SMCs, and local decision-making. Such participation is important because schools need local support and accountability. They are not like traditional community-based learning, where the community members were the first-hand knowledge holders and teachers.

4.5.2 Unequal Voice within School Participation

Research indicates that participation is frequently inequitable. Adhikari and Adhikari (2021) report that there are both positive and ongoing challenges in school governance in Lalitpur for women. Formal participation in governance does not necessarily lead to equal participation in decision-making. This is significant because it may serve as a symbol if the power dynamics are not addressed. Although women and other marginalized groups, such as indigenous people or economically disadvantaged parents, may be present in the school, they may not have the actual power to decide on the curriculum, the use of language, or the nature of the school culture.

Likewise, Khadka (2023) notes that while women's engagement in school management committees can influence decision-making, this influence can be constrained by social norms, limited confidence, limited access to information, and institutional practices. This shows that participation involves more than simply attending; it also means having a voice and making a meaningful difference. Their cultural and pedagogical knowledge is marginal if community members are included solely to assist school administration, fundraising, or attendance monitoring.

4.5.3 Community Schools, Parental Participation, and Structural Barriers

In Nepal, community schools are generally publicly funded schools that operate within the formal education system. Although they are located within local communities, they are different from community-based learning because they usually follow national curricula, formal examinations, official administration, and dominant language practices. Therefore, a school may be called a community school without necessarily incorporating community knowledge, local language, or indigenous pedagogy into classroom teaching.

In these formal institutions good governance is an important component of school-community

relations. Gairhe (2023) asserts that good community schools are accountable, transparent, participatory and well-managed. Formal involvement in school governance, however, does not necessarily translate to a significant role for parents and community members in curriculum, pedagogy, and the use of language.

According to Katel and Katel (2024), there are multiple impediments in parental participation in government schools, such as lack of awareness, socioeconomic issues, time constraint, ineffective communication, and low involvement. This indicates that parents might be supportive of school attendance but might not be able to actively participate, particularly where school processes are complex and cumbersome, or where their own education is low. At the same time, Sijapati (2019) connects gender-based inequalities found in community schools to other gender inequalities in society that are relevant to participation and education experience. These studies, when taken together, reveal that social, economic and institutional factors continue to influence the involvement of the communities in formal schools.

4.5.4 Community as Supporter Rather than Co-Creator

The overall conclusion of the literature is that formal education has shifted the nature of the pedagogical relationship with the community into a formal governance relationship. While communities may be called upon to contribute to the education of their children, they are less likely to be acknowledged as a source of curriculum, language, cultural memory, or indigenous pedagogy. This finding directly relates to the main research question. While community participation has not been abolished in educational change, it has been transformed. Citizens often find themselves in the role of supporters of education, rather than co-creators of educational knowledge.

4.6 Opportunities for Integrating Community-Based Learning into Formal Education

4.6.1 Local Curriculum and Contextual Education

The fifth key finding is that formal schooling and community-based learning are not necessarily opposed to each other. Shahi and Parajuli (2024) show that contextual education and local resource-based curriculum can connect school learning with local needs, resources, and practical knowledge. Adhikari (2024) explains that local curriculum development in Nepal creates opportunities to include community context, although implementation remains challenging.

Sunuwar (2023) also shows that school-level local curriculum practice depends on local understanding, resources, and coordination between schools and communities. These studies suggest that local curriculum can provide a pathway for incorporating community history, occupations, agriculture, ecological knowledge, festivals, heritage, mother tongues, and place-based learning into formal education. In this way, schools can become more connected to students' lived experiences.

4.6.2 Implementation Challenges in Local Curriculum

There are also difficulties in implementing the local curriculum in practice. Adhikari (2024) states that limited technical capacity, inadequate resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and weak local government support can hinder local curriculum development in Nepal. This demonstrates the need for more than just recognition of the importance of community based learning in the formal school curriculum. It also requires properly trained teachers, community involvement, culturally sensitive resources, and institutional backing. Sunuwar (2023) shows that the local curriculum practice in schools is driven by local understanding, capabilities and coordination between schools and communities. Combined these studies indicate the power of local curriculum to link formal education to community knowledge, but effective implementation, local capacity and collaborative effort is required to succeed.

4.6.3 Culturally Responsive and Multilingual Pedagogy

Another important opportunity to advance equity and inclusion in education is providing culturally responsive education. According to Dhungana (2021) culturally responsive education is the process of acknowledging learners' culture, practicing inclusive teaching and respecting diversity. Culturally responsive pedagogy may be beneficial for learners in Nepal, a country that is home to a diverse ethnic, linguistic, caste, religious, and regional population, to close the gap between home and school. It makes it possible for the students' cultural activities to be a part of learning, rather than set aside.

Multilingual pedagogy can also provide a means of linking formal education and community learning. In the multilingual classroom, responsive pedagogy supports teachers to view linguistic diversity as a resource (Pokhrel, 2020). This is significant as many children in Nepal start school speaking a language other than the main language of instruction. Students can gain more confidence, a deeper understanding, and a stronger sense of identity when home languages are

used as learning tools.

Culturally responsive pedagogy has been found to facilitate writing competence by linking classroom writing to local experiences, cultural narratives, and the students' home language.

4.6.4 Revaluing Community Knowledge in School Culture

It is also necessary to shift the perception of educational value in integrating community-based learning, indigenous knowledge and local pedagogies into formal learning to realize this. Bhattarai (2023) demonstrates that local knowledge can be utilized in classroom instruction if teachers are aware of its importance in students' daily life. Sherpa et al. (2024) propose that the role of school leadership and governance can also be informed by indigenous values, namely, care, accountability, transparency and inclusion. The literature reviewed, therefore, indicates that integration should not only include the incorporation of local topics into textbooks. It must also signal a larger cultural transformation in schools, recognizing ways in which community knowledge is a valid source of teaching, leadership and educational decision-making.

This finding answers the third research sub-question by identifying both opportunities and challenges for integrating community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, mother-tongue education, and culturally responsive pedagogy into Nepal's formal education system. The opportunities include local curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, multilingual pedagogy, indigenous leadership values, and stronger school-community partnerships. The challenges include weak implementation, limited resources, insufficient teacher preparation, language hierarchy, and social preference for dominant languages. Therefore, integration is possible, but it requires planned, systematic, and locally responsive educational practice.

4.7 Synthesis of Key Findings

The selected literature has been analyzed and organized into five main findings in this chapter. The first finding is that formal education in Nepal has been associated with modernization, national development, literacy, citizenship, and mobility. However, the literature also shows that formal schooling has reordered educational knowledge by prioritizing written, standardized, textbook-based, and examination-oriented learning. Educational reform has expanded opportunities, but these opportunities have not been equally experienced across all communities.

The second finding is that indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies continue to

exist in Nepal, but they remain only partly recognized within the formal education system. Community-based learning continues through intergenerational transmission, festivals, local practices, agricultural knowledge, ecological understanding, and indigenous reasoning. However, these forms of knowledge are not always acknowledged as formal school knowledge.

The third finding is that language hierarchy plays a central role in the marginalization of community-based learning. Although mother-tongue education is recognized in policy, its implementation remains limited. The prevalence of Nepali and English may impact the status and visibility of minority languages and have a negative impact on learners' cultural identity and confidence, as well as their sense of belonging.

The fourth finding is that formal education has changed the nature of community participation. There are formal participation systems in place via the governance and management system of the school, but meaningful influence is uneven. While communities may be engaged in supporting schools, they are not always acknowledged as possessors of curriculum knowledge, language knowledge, and/or indigenous pedagogy.

The fifth finding is that there are real possibilities for incorporating community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, mother-tongue education and culturally responsive pedagogy with formal schooling. Local curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogy and multilingual teaching can support the school and community knowledge gap. These strategies, however, are resource-intensive, teacher-prep dependent, institutionally supported and require meaningful community involvement.

Table 4.2: Alignment of findings with the research questions

Research question	**Main finding**	**Relevant chapter sections**
Main research question	Formal schooling has expanded opportunity but reshaped cultural identity, language use, and participation by privileging state-approved, standardized knowledge.	4.2, 4.4, and 4.5
Sub-question 1	Indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies remain active, but are often positioned as informal or supplementary rather than central to academic learning.	4.3
Sub-question 2	The dominance of Nepali and English creates a language hierarchy that affects mother-tongue education, identity and belonging.	4.4
Sub-question 3	Local curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogy, multilingual teaching and school-community partnerships offer realistic integration pathways, but implementation remains challenging.	4.6

To sum up, the findings suggest that Nepal's education has resulted in opportunity and marginalization. Formal education has contributed to raising literacy and mobility, but has also negatively affected the accepted value of community-based education, indigenous knowledge, mother tongues, and local involvement.

So, the chapter ends with a conclusion that education in the future in Nepal should not be seen as

a choice between tradition and modernity.

It should seek to be more inclusive, however, to incorporate formal academic learning and to affirm community knowledge, cultural identity, linguistic diversity and Indigenous pedagogies as key components of educational development.

Chapter 5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This discussion chapter explains the results of the systematic literature search in terms of the main research question and sub-questions. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of the shift from the community-based learning tradition to formal education on cultural identity, language use and community participation in education in Nepal. The findings reveal opportunities and tensions as a result of formal education**.** On the other hand, formal education has helped to develop literacy, qualifications, employment opportunities, national development, and public life participation. The literature considered, however, has demonstrated that schooling has also changed the value of various forms of knowledge, languages and community involvement.

The conversation is structured around 5 areas. It begins with an exploration of formal education as an opportunity and a process of (re)ordering knowledge. Secondly, it recognizes and respects the current relevance of indigenous knowledge and community- based pedagogies. Third, it looks at the hierarchy of languages and its implications for identity and belonging. Fourth, it discusses the change in the role of communities in formal education. Fifth, it explores opportunities and challenges of community-based learning, indigenous knowledge and mother tongue education in the formal education system of Nepal.

5.2 Formal Schooling as Opportunity and Knowledge Reordering

First of all the findings suggest that formal education in Nepal is not only a tale of losses or gains. Rather, it is a complex process that has expanded educational access and, as well, challenged the notion of what is considered “legitimate” knowledge. As per Joshi (2025), educational modernization in Nepal is associated with national planning, development and preparation of learners for the modern social and economic life. There is also a positive role of education policy in enhancing access to the formal educational system (Lal, 2025). These studies demonstrate that there is important public value to formal schooling. It has helped many students become literate, obtain recognized qualifications, find employment, and engage actively in society.

The results also indicate, however, that the development of formal schooling has altered the way knowledge is recognized. Formal schooling typically enhances knowledge that can be written, codified, transmitted through books, evaluated by tests, and awarded by institutions. Shrestha

(2024) reveals that governance structures, resources, coordination, and the link between policy intention and classroom practice affect the educational policymaking and implementation in Nepal. This is because formal education serves not only as a system for transmitting knowledge but also as a system that determines what is recognized and what is not acknowledged as knowledge.

This reordering is important because community-based learning can be different from school-based learning. The knowledge passed on through family work, farming, ecology, oral history, ritual practice, apprenticeship, craft, festivals, and intergenerational relationships does not always fit into the textbook or examination model. The indigenous knowledge is transmitted through parents, elders, peers, and community members (Niure, 2024). Likewise, Tharu festivals are pedagogical spaces where children learn through participation and practice in cultural activities (Chaudhary, 2022). These are types of learning that are educational and may not be perceived as academic knowledge in the context of formal schooling.

Thus, the question is not whether formal education is valuable; the question is whether formal education can appreciate other knowledge systems without positioning the knowledge taught in schools, which is written and certified, as higher than others. Bhattarai and Khatri (2021) identify the conflicts between modernity and Nepalese education, especially regarding local and indigenous knowledge. From their work, they concluded that modernization can establish a hierarchy between modern school and community knowledge. If formal education is considered the most valuable form of learning, students may undervalue the knowledge gained from elders, land, labor, festivals, and local languages in favor of what is found in textbooks and examinations.

This is a very close connection to equity. While systematic changes have been made in Nepal to provide equitable education, significant inequalities persist (Koirala, 2025). Dhakal (2021) shows that the implementation of mother-tongue-based multilingual education can be detrimental to minority-language learners if not done well.

The text demonstrates that educational reforms can have varying effects on learners with disabilities as they do not adequately address the diverse learning needs of these students (Thapaliya, 2024). The studies show that formal education has different impacts on different learners.

Children from urban, Nepali-speaking, English-oriented, or economically privileged backgrounds might have an advantage in formal education. Students from rural, indigenous, minority-language, or economically disadvantaged backgrounds might find school to be culturally and linguistically removed from their lived realities.

It is therefore important to keep two points in mind when speaking of formal education. Education has opened up opportunities, but it has also reshaped knowledge and power. It has not only introduced new knowledge to the old traditions. The system has created a hierarchy in which the formal knowledge of the state-approved curriculum, formal examinations, official textbooks, and institutional certification are valued more highly than oral, practical, local and intergenerational knowledge. This response will answer the first research sub-question by highlighting how the formal schooling system has shaped the view of indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies.

5.3 Indigenous Knowledge as Living Pedagogy

The second question is about the recognition of indigenous knowledge and community-based pedagogies. From the results, it can be said that there is no total lack of indigenous knowledge among the Nepali communities. Instead, it continues to be passed on as part of daily life, relationships, festivals, oral tradition, and means of livelihood and community involvement. The Tharu community exemplifies intergenerational relationships and community engagement in the transmission of indigenous knowledge, as noted by Niure (2024). As Chaudhary (2022) demonstrates, festivals in Western Nepal are not just cultural events, but also learning spaces. Such research debunks the notion of learning exclusively in formal classrooms.

It is significant because it extends the concept of education. Community-based learning is relational, practical, and place-based. It is learning by doing, observing, listening, participating, and practicing. It is related to agriculture, ecology, craft, ritual, food, language, moral values, and social responsibility. This learning can occur in a non-formal, non-assessed way, but it can help in the development of identity, practice, and cultural continuity.

In this perspective, community-based learning is not an inferior form of education; rather, it is a distinct learning system that functions differently from traditional educational frameworks, employing varied methods and values.

The literature also reveals that indigenous knowledge can be incorporated into formal school education when it is considered to have educational value. According to Bhattarai (2023), local knowledge can be incorporated into the secondary-level classroom to bring about contextual and meaningful learning. Subedi (2021) demonstrates how indigenous modes of thinking, measuring, designing, and problem-solving can effectively support mathematics education. These studies are significant as they demonstrate that indigenous knowledge is not restricted to cultural topics. It can be used for mathematics, science, environmental education, social studies, language learning, and moral education.

Building on this, Sherpa et al. (2024) demonstrate how indigenous values can be used in school leadership and governance. They argue that indigenous knowledge is not just a subject of the curriculum, but can also influence relationships, accountability, inclusion, transparency, and care for disadvantaged learners. This extends the use of indigenous knowledge beyond the classroom and demonstrates the potential of indigenous values to shape school culture and influence leadership practices.

School governance also warrants attention alongside leadership. In Nepal, School Management Committees (SMCs) connect community schools with parents and local authorities and can exercise substantial influence over school planning, resources, oversight, and accountability (Puri & Chhetri, 2024). This authority can strengthen community participation, but political interference and unequal representation can also weaken the ability of SMCs to act in the interests of all learners (Puri & Chhetri, 2024). Where committee appointments or decisions become aligned with local party interests, SMCs can provide political actors with a foothold in community schools rather than amplifying the voices of parents and local knowledge holders. Transparent selection processes, inclusive membership, and clear accountability are therefore important for ensuring that governance, as well as leadership, supports culturally responsive schooling.

The results also indicate, however, that the knowledge of the indigenous people is partially recognized in formal education. It is not that indigenous knowledge is not available. Instead, it is not always recognized as legitimate knowledge within formal school structures. The formal recognition of trained teachers, textbooks, or examinations is not always available. And elders, farmers, ritual specialists, and local knowledge holders may continue to teach within the

community, but they are not generally treated in the same manner as trained teachers. This indicates that the marginalization of indigenous knowledge is not just a matter of lack. It's about recognition, status, and authority.

Therefore, education in Nepal is currently facing a major challenge in effectively utilizing the formal education system without compromising the educational value of community-based knowledge. Without taking into account local knowledge, schools risk disconnecting learners from their own cultural and ecological world.

However, if local knowledge is only superficially introduced, such as by incorporating isolated cultural examples without altering pedagogy, the hierarchy between formal and community knowledge could be maintained. To achieve meaningful integration, there is a need for a bigger change in the concept of educational value.

5.4 Language Hierarchy, Cultural Identity, and Belonging

The third issue is language (or the lack of it). The results reveal that language hierarchy is one of the most powerful means through which formal education changes cultural identity and belonging. Nepal is a linguistically diverse country, and the mother tongue is closely related to family life, cultural memory, local knowledge, and community identity. But there is a tendency for formal education to be taught in Nepali and English. This results in a disparity in the status of languages and affects the learner's perception of his/her language identity. The mother-tongue-based multilingual education is a policy issue in Nepal; its implementation is limited due to resource constraints, lack of trained teachers, inadequate materials, political issues, and social attitudes (Dhakal, 2021). This is a policy/practice gap. Children will not learn in their mother tongue, and their home languages will not be respected in school without an existing policy.

Phyak (2021) suggests that indigenous language education should be considered as a decolonial struggle against erasure. This is important because it is not only a tool for teaching and learning, but also tied to identity, recognition, and power. When learners' home languages are not present in school, a part of their cultural identity is also missing. Learners can then find themselves in school environments where they are required to conform to dominant linguistic norms, rather than be allowed to be taught in their own language as a means of acquiring knowledge.

Poudel et al. (2022) relate language education policy with curriculum and decolonization. They argue that the curriculum in a non-colonized country can reinforce the hierarchical assumptions.

In this context, English has symbolic significance that is linked to modernity, success, and global opportunity, which is relevant to Nepal. It is also evident from the study that English continues to play a significant role in Nepal's educational system (Dhami, 2024). Nepali is associated with national identity, state communication, and broader social participation. However, indigenous and minority languages are associated primarily with home, community, and tradition. This hierarchy can shape the learners' and families' valuation of various languages.

This can be a challenging situation for families and communities. Mother tongues are important to identity, sense of belonging and cultural continuity. However, Nepali and English are considered as essential languages for higher education, employment and mobility. Although the rights to language are constitutionally guaranteed, Joshi and Eslami (2024) show that there are obstacles to language maintenance and multilingual schooling.

This does not imply that parents may have preferences for mother-tongue education in their culture, but may opt for dominant-language education because of expected benefits. The challenge is not simply a failure to enact a language-in-education policy; it also concerns the gap between policy recognition and classroom implementation, alongside families' social and economic aspirations.

The findings also suggest that language should be pedagogic and not symbolic. However, Panthee (2021) demonstrates that linguistic inclusion is not a given in local governance. Pokhrel (2020) argues that the term responsive classroom refers to a classroom approach that embraces linguistic diversity as a resource and tool for learning. Culturally responsive pedagogy can be used to bring students' home languages, cultural experiences, and local stories into the classroom to help them improve their writing skills (Thapa, 2025). These studies have proven that mother-tongue education is not merely about language rights in policies. It requires teacher training, teacher-made teaching materials, teacher training in classroom strategies, and positive attitudes towards multilingual learning.

Regarding the second research sub-question, the discussion illustrates the influence of Nepali and English on the mother-tongue learning and culture regarding the language value hierarchy. This hierarchy affects classroom involvement, confidence of learners, family decision-making, and the presence of minority languages. Language marginalization is therefore cultural marginalization because language has a memory, it has a sense of belonging, it brings local knowledge, and it brings identity.

5.5 Community Participation and the Shift from Co-Creators to Supporters

The fourth key challenge is the evolving role of communities in education. The results indicate that formal education has not excluded communities from the education system, but rather has changed the nature and type of their involvement within it. The involvement of families, elders, farmers, religious leaders, craft workers, and local experts in teaching and knowledge sharing was a key aspect of community-based learning. In formal education, participation is more likely to be organized through school governance, school management, planning, attendance, fundraising, or accountability.

The community involvement in school education in Nepal occurs at formal levels, such as school improvement planning and local decision-making (Aryal, 202). This type of involvement is crucial as schools require local accountability and support. However, it is not a community-based pedagogy. A community can provide administrative support to a school, but it cannot influence the content of the teaching or the languages used in the classroom.

This is particularly relevant to community schools. Gairhe (2023) states that community schools need to be accountable, transparent, participatory, and well-managed. However, community schools are still formal institutions. They generally adhere to national curricula, formal exams, official administration, and dominant language practices. A school can be a community school without necessarily integrating community knowledge or local pedagogy into classroom learning.

The results also show that participation is not even across the community. Women's involvement in governance of the school is still a big challenge (Adhikari & Adhikari, 2021). Some of the identified challenges that restrict women participation in school management committees could include social norms, lack of information, and institutional practices (Khadka, 2023). Parents encounter problems in accessing school which include low awareness, socioeconomic problems, time constraints, ineffective communication and limited active participation as noted by Katel and Katel (2024). The findings of these studies indicate that formal participation structures do not necessarily lead to meaningful influence.

This has important implications for the main research question. The movement from community learning to formal school education has transformed community involvement from knowledge holders to school supporters. Communities may still be invited to participate, but are usually invited as administrators, fundraisers, monitors, or supporters of attendance. They may not have a

strong voice in school decision-making regarding their local knowledge, language, culture, and pedagogy. This demonstrates that changes in education have occurred not only in its content but also in who is empowered to determine knowledge.

A more participatory vision of community would involve schools acknowledging families, elders, and knowledge holders as partners in curriculum and pedagogy, beyond their roles in the school's governance. This approach is not an attempt to substitute trained teachers with community members. Instead, it involves building partnerships between formal teachers and community knowledge holders, in which the formal teachers link school learning to life in their community. This would help to narrow the gap between formal education and community education.

5.6 Integration as a Pathway between Tradition and Modernity

The fifth important issue is the potential for integration. The results indicate that formal education and community learning need not be seen as mutually exclusive. Rather, there are opportunities to link them together in the local curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogy, multilingual teaching, indigenous leadership values, and school-community partnerships.

Shahi and Parajuli (2024) reveal that contextual education and local resource-based curriculum can bridge the gap between school learning and local needs and practical knowledge. Local curriculum is identified as an opportunity to incorporate community contexts into education. However, it is equally difficult to implement (Adhikari, 2024). Local curriculum practice relies on local knowledge, resources, and school-to-community coordination (Sunuwar, 2023). The research indicates that local curriculum can offer a viable means of connecting formal schooling to community knowledge.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is another pathway. In culturally responsive education, the recognition of learners' cultures, inclusive teaching practices, and respect for diversity are explained by Dhungana (2021). This is particularly the case in Nepal where learners belong to different ethnic, linguistic, caste, religious and regional groups. Culturally responsive teaching enables students to see themselves and their lives and communities in the light of their school experiences. It may also challenge the idea of a culture-less formal schooling.

Another focus of integration efforts is the integration of multilingual pedagogy. Fortunately, Pokhrel (2020) argues that the multilingualism of classrooms can be considered as a resource. This study by Thapa (2025) presents the potential for culturally responsive pedagogy, with its emphasis

on links between the local experiences and home languages, to support the development of writing. The research shows that the use of mother tongues and local narratives has no negative impact on learning, but rather can help learning.

The discussion, however, should also take into account the difficulties of integration. Adhikari (2024) highlights technical capability, resources and teacher preparation as challenges for teachers in developing local curriculum, while the local government is seen as a facilitator. Sunuwar (2023) states that implementation at the school level relies on the capacity and coordination locally. In relation to mother-tongue education, several challenges have been mentioned by Dakal (2021) including resource, teacher, materials and attitude. The challenges demonstrate that integration is not possible with policy statements**.** It requires practical planning, teacher training and flexibility in curriculum, teaching resources and community involvement.

Hence, it is concluded that the future of education in Nepal should not be seen as a dichotomy between tradition and modernity. Literacy, qualifications, and participation in wider social and economic life require formal education. Community-based learning is essential for cultural continuity, identity, and local knowledge and belonging. A more inclusive education system would be able to unite these by acknowledging that local knowledge, mother tongues, and indigenous pedagogies are not obstacles to modern education. These are tools that can increase the quality of education, and make it fair.

5.7 Overall Interpretation of the Findings

Together, the findings explain the opportunities and marginalization of the educational change in Nepal. Formal education has provided opportunities for literacy, jobs, citizenship, and national development. Concurrently, it has privileged written, standardized, and examination-based knowledge over oral, practical, and community-based knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is still alive within communities, but not fully accepted in formal education. There is policy recognition of mother-tongue education, but Nepali and English are the predominant languages of instruction. Communities are still involved in schools, though they are usually limited to governance, rather than being co-creators of knowledge.

The overall contribution of this study serves as a compilation of these issues. The subjects of language policy, indigenous knowledge, school governance, local curriculum, and culturally responsive education have been studied separately in the past. This review provides evidence of

the links between these issues in the context of the broader shift from community-based learning to formal schooling. Cultural identity, language use, and community participation are not distinct issues. They are connected by the issue of who knows what in education.

The discussion thus contributes to a more balanced perspective on educational change. Formal education should not be rejected, because it has created important opportunities. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed to be neutral or automatically inclusive. The curriculum, language practices, assessment regimes, and governance mechanisms can regenerate hierarchies of knowledge, language, and participation.

The challenge for Nepal is to develop an education system that fosters literacy, mobility, national development, and values community knowledge, indigenous pedagogies, local participation and mother tongues.

This is the answer to the main research question. The change from community-based learning traditions to formal education has had an impact on cultural identity, as the culture and knowledge of the community are seen in the school. This shift has also impacted on language usage, with Nepali and English coming into use and the mother language usage being restricted to a practical level.

It has evolved community involvement from sharing information to formal governance and community support. When schools, teachers, policy makers, and communities work together to design locally responsive, culturally inclusive education, successful integration can be achieved, as suggested by the literature.

5.8 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the change in cultural identity, language use and community involvement in the Nepalese educational system due to change from community-based learning traditions to formal system of education. The results of the systematic literature search suggests that formal education has provided good opportunities for education, but at the same time it has led to marginalization of community-based learning, indigenous knowledge and mother-tongue education. The outcome shows that formal education has a positive impact on literacy, qualifications, social mobility and national development. It has also intensified the impact of curricula, textbooks, examinations and certifications, and in some cases, neglected local, oral and practical traditions and intergenerational knowledge, which are marginalized and non-formal.

The study further reveals that indigenous knowledge exists and is in living existence in the Nepali community. The knowledge is passed down with family teachings, festivals, rituals, farming, ecological knowledge, local languages, oral history and local connections. However, this knowledge is often viewed merely as a cultural practice rather than as a form of academic knowledge. This establishes a hierarchy between formal school knowledge and community knowledge.

Another significant finding of the study is language. Although mother-tongue education is recognized in the policies, Nepali language and English are prevalent in classrooms, learners' identities, and educational belonging. Even though mother tongue education is mentioned in the policies, Nepali language is still the prevalent one in the classroom, learner identity, and educational belonging is English language. While closely tied to cultural memory and community identity, mother tongues are not necessarily accorded the same status in formal education. This means that language marginalization is a cultural marginalization.

The study also shows that the nature of community participation has changed. Communities are still part of education, but their roles have changed. Elders, parents, local experts, and cultural leaders were the direct knowledge holders in community-based learning. In formal schooling, communities are more likely to be engaged in governance, school management, or as parents. This does not imply that communities can support schools, but without necessarily influencing curriculum, pedagogy, or language use.

5.10 Implications for Future Research

This study relies solely on secondary literature. Future research should include empirical studies involving students, parents, teachers, school leaders, local governments, and indigenous knowledge holders. The study could be conducted in the field to explore the implementation of local curriculum in various parts of Nepal, the practice of mother-tongue education, and the role of communities in classroom-based learning. Comparative studies of rural, urban, indigenous, and multilingual communities will enhance our understanding of how formal schooling affects diverse learners.

5.11 Final Statement

Finally, it concludes that a question of education transformation in Nepal is not between tradition and modernity. There remains a need for formal education to have the three objectives of literacy,

mobility and national development. Community-based learning, indigenous knowledge, local participation and mother tongues are further important elements of cultural identity, feeling part of the community and educational justice. Considering Nepal's education system, if it were more inclusive, it would be able to embrace different knowledge systems, and similarly would not discriminate the importance of traditional knowledge systems of the community which still play a significant role in the lives of learners of Nepal.

References

Abatar Subedi. (2021). Studies in Mathematics Education: Curriculum Analysis from Indigenous Knowledge and Gender Perspective. *Interdisciplinary Research in Education*, *6*(1), 99–114. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/ire/article/view/43427

Acharya, T. (2025). Development of Curriculum Concept and Gurukul Education System in Nepal. *Journal of Musikot Campus*, *3*(1), 135–145. https://nepjol.info/index.php/jmc/article/view/81214

Adhikari, R., & Adhikari, D. (2021). Women's Participation in School Governance in Lalitpur, Nepal: A Participatory Development Practice. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, *18*(01), 24–34. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/njdrs/article/view/41946

Adhikari, S. (2024). Local Curriculum in Nepal: Problems and Challenges in Development and Implementation. *Dibyajyoti Journal*, *6*(1), 103–118. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/dj/article/view/72048

Aryal, S. (2021). Process and Practices of Community Participation in School Education of Nepal. *Rupantaran: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *5*, 110–124. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/rupantaran/article/view/39868

Ataro, G. (2019). Methods, methodological challenges and lessons learned from a phenomenological study about the OSCE experience: Overview of paradigm-driven qualitative approach in medical education. *Annals of Medicine and Surgery*, *49*, 19–23.

Bhattarai, D. P., & Khatri, B. B. (2021). Dichotomy between Modernity and Nepalese Education System: A Qualitative Analysis. *NUTA Journal*, *8*(1–2), 50–57. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/nutaj/article/view/44038

Bhattarai, T. (2023). Local Knowledge and Its Applicability in Secondary Level Classroom Instructions. *Curriculum Development Journal*, *31*(45), 178–192. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/cdj/article/view/68989

Bhusal, P. C., & Baral, R. K. (2025). Unfulfilled promises of diversity: a decolonial assessment of the basic level English education in Nepal. *Cogent Education*, *12*(1). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2460251

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235356393_Using_thematic_analysis_in_psychology

Caddell, M. (2002). Education and Change: A Historical Perspective on Schooling, Development and the Nepali Nation-State. *Unpublished*, (December), 1–29. https://oro.open.ac.uk/2907/1/caddell-History.pdf

Chaudhary, N. (2022). Quest for an Indigenous Pedagogy: Learning from Tharu Festivals of Western Nepal. *Journal of Tikapur Multiple Campus*, 109–127. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JoTMC/article/view/46520

Constitution of Nepal. (2015). *The Constitution of Nepal*. https://ag.gov.np/files/Constitution-of-Nepal_2072_Eng_www.moljpa.gov_.npDate-72_11_16.pdf

Dhakal, B. R. (2021). Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Nepal. *Scholars' Journal*, 82–92. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/scholars/article/view/42465

Dhami, N. (2024). Decolonizing Language in Education Policies of Nepal. *Far Western Review*, *2*(1), 246–264. https://nepjol.info/index.php/fwr/article/view/70542

Dhungana, J. (2021). Cultural Diversity Responsive Education: Exploration of Concepts and Dimensions. *Education and Development*, *31*(01), 48–66. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/ed/article/view/62202

Fischer, F. (2025). Interpretivism vs. positivism in policy studies: Is there common ground? *Critical Policy Studies*, *19*(3), 371–376. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19460171.2025.2536645

Gairhe, G. P. (2023). Exploring the Implementation of Good Governance in Community School: A Case Study. *Shikshya Sandesh*, *6*(1), 50–58. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/shikshyasandesh/article/view/63092

Gyanwali, G. P. (2025). Provincial Languages of Nepal and Their Endangerment. *Patan Gyansagar*, *7*(1), 1–15. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/pg/article/view/79549

Joshi, P. R., & Eslami, Z. R. (2024). Barriers to language maintenance and multilingual schooling:

examining the language policy provisions in Nepal's constitutions. *Cogent Education, 11*(1). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2362013

Joshi, T. R. (2025). Modernization in the Education System of Nepal: Reflections from the School Education Sector Plan. *Nepalese Journal of Society and Culture*, *1*, 85–104. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/njsc/article/view/87104

Katel, N., & Katel, K. P. (2024). Enhancing Parental Participation in Government Schools: Overcoming Challenges and Promoting Active Participation. *Rabi Sangyan*, *1*, 9–22. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388587443_Enhancing_Parental_Participation_in_Government_Schools_Overcoming_Challenges_and_Promoting_Active_Participation

Khadka, T. B. (2023). Women's Participation in School Management Committees and Their Influence on Decision Making. *Chaturbhujeshwar Academic Journal*, *1*(1), 51–66. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/caj/article/view/63134

Khanal, J., Khatri Chhetri, G. R., & Ghimire, S. N. (2023). Exploring marginalized indigenous communities' expectations and experiences with the national school education system in Nepal: a study of Kham Magars. *Discover Global Society*, *1*(1), 8. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44282-023-00008-6#citeas

Koirala, S. (2025). Systemic reforms for equitable education in Nepal: Bridging policy promises and persistent inequalities. *Nepal Public Policy Review*, *5*, 173–204. https://www.nppr.org.np/index.php/journal/article/view/93

Lal, S. (2025). Nepal's National Education Policy: Challenges, Progress and Future Directions. *Political Science Journal*, *3*(1), 95–107. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/psj/article/view/77458

Lame, G. (2019). Systematic Literature Reviews: An Introduction. *Proceedings of the Design Society: International Conference on Engineering Design*, *1*(1), 1633–1642. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/proceedings-of-the-international-conference-on-engineering-design/article/systematic-literature-reviews-an-introduction/40D4CEA7A7CC3FB6ED6233E79A0A2A1F

Lim, W. M. (2024). What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *33*(2), 199–229. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14413582241264619

Niure, D. P. (2019). Converging and Diverging Points of Indigenous Education and Formal Education Systems in Nepal: A Case of the Tharu Community. *Interdisciplinary Research in Education*, *4*(2), 111–122. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/ire/article/view/27931

Panthee, D. (2021). Language in Education Policy in Local Governments: A Case of Rupandehi District. *Journal of NELTA Gandaki*, *4*(1–2), 119–132. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/jong/article/view/42651

Peel, K. L. (2020). *A Beginner's Guide to Applied Educational Research Using Thematic Analysis*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339274704_A_Beginners_Guide_to_Applied_Educational_Research_using_Thematic_Analysis

Phyak, P. (2021). Subverting the Erasure: Decolonial Efforts, Indigenous Language Education and Language Policy in Nepal. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, *20*(5), 325–339. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15348458.2021.1957682

Pokhrel, M. M. (2020). Responsive pedagogy for a multi-lingual classroom. *Sotang, Yearly Peer-Reviewed Journal*, *2*(1), 144–155. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/sotang/article/view/47608

Poudel, P. P., Jackson, L., & Choi, T.-H. (2022). Decolonisation of curriculum: the case of language education policy in Nepal. *London Review of Education*, *20*(1). https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/lre/article/pubid/LRE-20-13/

Pradhan, U. (2017). *The National Education in Nepal: Between the 'Local' and the 'Global.'* https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10169438/1/Pradhan%282018%29LocalGlobal.pdf

Puri, P. K., & Chhetri, D. (2024). A systematic review of the role of school management committee for the school performance in Nepal. *Education Journal*, *13*(3), 97–107. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.edu.20241303.12

Shah, R., & Brett, P. (2021). Global citizenship education in Nepal. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, *13*(2).

https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/ijdeg/article/id/1896/

Shahi, B. B., & Parajuli, T. R. (2024). Contextual Education and Curriculum for Local Resource Utilization. *Shiksha Shastra Saurabh*, *24*, 105–117. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/sss/article/view/753

Sherpa, D., Baraily, K., & Rai, B. (2024). Impact of Indigenous Practices in School Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Community Schools. *NCC Journal*, *9*(1), 80–86. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/NCCJ/article/view/72252

Shrestha, R. P. (2024). Policymaking and Implementation in the Education Sector in Nepal. *Journal of Education and Research*, *14*(2), 32–48. https://jer.kusoed.edu.np/article/policymaking-and-implementation-in-the-education-sector-in-nepal-17787

Singh, P. (2002). Pedagogising knowledge: Bernstein's theory of the pedagogic device. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *23*(4), 571–582. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569022000038422

Sijapati, D. B. (2019). Gender Status in the Community School of Nepal. *Patan Pragya*, *5*(1), 209–218. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/pragya/article/view/30476

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, *104*, 333–339. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296319304564?via%3Dihub

Sony, E., Ali, E., Cletus, E., Agbakhamen, C., Ogheneteme, E., Okoro, P., & Okeke, G. (2025). Ethical Standards in Research: A Professional Imperative. *International Journal of Innovative Scientific & Engineering Technologies Research*, *13*(1), 94–104. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389068583_Ethical_Standards_in_Research_A_Professional_Imperative

Sunuwar, Y. (2023). Practices of Local Curriculum at School Level in Jhapa District: A Review. *Kanakai Journal*, *3*(1), 1–18. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/kj/article/view/65834

Thapaliya, M. (2024). Impacts of neoliberal school reform policy on students with disabilities in Nepal. *Research in Education*, *119*(1), 79–96. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00345237241234606

Thapa, H. (2025). Developing Writing Competence through Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Multilingual Nepal. *KMC Journal*, *7*(2), 1–12. https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/kmcj/article/view/83431

Wiesner, C. (2022). Doing qualitative and interpretative research: reflecting principles and principled challenges. *Political Research Exchange*, *4*(1).https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2474736X.2022