

Brief overview of the integrated curriculum in Nepal: Key features, impacts and challenges

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Abstract: This article provides a brief overview of the integrated curriculum of Nepal. It uses the desk review method. It delves into the context of curriculum development and its rationale in the Nepalese context, emphasizing the need for a shift towards an integrated approach. The article explores the integration of the current basic level (grades 1-3) curriculum and discusses the continuum of curriculum integration. It highlights the evolving concept of an integrated curriculum and sheds light on its key features. Additionally, the article discusses the challenges of implementing an integrated curriculum in the Nepalese context. It explores the impact of integrated curriculum on the Nepalese education system, and students' learning, such as the development of soft skills, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary skills. The article also provides recommendations for promoting integrated curriculum practices and emphasizes the importance of teacher professional development and stakeholders' participation for effective implementation.

Keywords: Competencies, critical thinking, interdisciplinary skills, soft skills

Abstrak: Artikel ini memberikan gambaran singkat tentang kurikulum terpadu Nepal. Ini menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka. Laporan ini mendalami konteks pengembangan kurikulum dan landasan pemikirannya dalam konteks Nepal, serta menekankan perlunya peralihan ke arah pendekatan terpadu. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi integrasi kurikulum tingkat dasar saat ini (kelas 1-3) dan membahas kontinum integrasi kurikulum. Laporan ini menyoroti konsep kurikulum terpadu yang terus berkembang dan menyoroti fitur-fitur utamanya. Selain itu, artikel ini membahas tantangan penerapan kurikulum terpadu dalam konteks Nepal. Studi ini mengeksplorasi dampak kurikulum terpadu pada sistem pendidikan Nepal, dan pembelajaran siswa, seperti pengembangan soft skill, pemikiran kritis, dan keterampilan interdisipliner. Artikel ini juga memberikan rekomendasi untuk mendorong praktik kurikulum terpadu dan menekankan pentingnya pengembangan profesional guru dan partisipasi pemangku kepentingan untuk implementasi yang efektif.

Kata kunci: kompetensi, berpikir kritis, keterampilan interdisipliner, soft skill

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims to provide an overview of the concept of curriculum integration in Nepal, focusing on the integrated curriculum for primary grades (1-3). The practice of combining different subjects for learning purposes, also known as interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, cross-curricular learning, or curriculum integration, has a rich historical background. It can be traced back to educational philosopher John Dewey in the United States and has been implemented in New Zealand secondary schools since the 1940s (McKinnon et al., 1991; Barnes, 2015).

In the 1970s and 1980s, thematic approaches that integrated subjects gained popularity in primary schools globally (Chambers & Forlin, 2021). Influential educators Paul Hirst and Basil Bernstein discussed curriculum integration during this time, with Bernstein proposing the subordination of subjects to a relational idea (Hammond, 2017).

This approach aimed to enhance student engagement and provide real-world relevance to learning (Beane, 1997). The shift towards an integrated curriculum is a departure from the traditional subject-centered approach and is gaining momentum worldwide (Beane, 1997; Nema et al., 2022). As stated by Drake and Reid (2020) an integrated curriculum fosters comprehensive and meaningful learning experiences connected to real-life situations.

In Nepal, efforts have been made to develop an integrated curriculum for primary grades in 2018, with a pilot program being conducted in certain schools during the academic session of 2019 (Curriculum Development Centre, 2019b). While the concept of an integrated curriculum is not entirely new, its systematic implementation in Nepal is a recent development, requiring clarity among education stakeholders regarding its principles. It should be noted that the degree to which integration occurs may vary. In recent times, the implementation of an integrated curriculum in Nepal has gained momentum. However, several questions and concerns have arisen regarding its effective implementation.

This article aims to outline the key features of the integrated curriculum for primary grades in Nepal, emphasizing its major characteristics as a whole. It provides a brief overview of the background of the integrated curriculum and explores its theoretical development and evolving concept. Additionally, it discusses the key features, impacts, and challenges associated with the integrated curriculum.

Integrated curriculum practice is an educational approach that promotes interdisciplinary learning by connecting various subject areas within a cohesive framework. It emphasizes the integration of knowledge, skills, and concepts across disciplines, providing students with a holistic understanding of real-world issues and fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Burke & Lehane, 2023; Drake & Reid, 2018). Integrated curriculum practice encourages students to make connections between different subjects, promoting a deeper understanding of concepts and enhancing their ability to apply knowledge in meaningful ways (Burke & Lehane, 2023; Drake & Reid, 2020).

The approach moves away from traditional subject-centered instruction and fragmented learning experiences, towards a more cohesive and interconnected educational experience (Paleczek et al., 2023; Rijal, 2021). It breaks down the traditional boundaries between subject areas and promotes a more holistic and interconnected learning experience for students (Nema et al., 2022; Paleczek et al., 2023). This curriculum approach facilitates holistic learning by assisting children in establishing connections and relationships between various subjects and concepts, blending content, skills, and concepts from diverse disciplines (Nema et al., 2022; Drake & Reid, 2018).

Integrated curriculum practice encourages students to make connections between different areas of knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding of the content and its relevance to real-world contexts (Drake & Reid, 2018; Setyantoko, et al., 2023). It incorporates interdisciplinary skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, which are essential for success in the 21st century (Burke & Lehane, 2023; Maharani, et al., 2024; Ye & Xu, 2023). This approach recognizes the importance of equipping students with these skills to thrive in an ever-changing world and contribute to the betterment of society. Real-world problem-based learning emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach, which supports the case for integrating curricula (Burke & Lehane, 2023; Drake & Reid, 2020, Yomaki, et al., 2023). Engaging students in learning experiences that involve real-world challenges offers an effective means for them to

overcome complex problems (Ferreira & Trudel, 2012; Ye & Xu, 2023). Integrated curriculum practice has been associated with increased engagement, motivation, and improved academic achievement among students (Rijal, 2021; Paleczek et al., 2023). It promotes the development of essential skills and fosters critical thinking, ultimately contributing to enhanced academic performance (Burke & Lehane, 2023; Paleczek et al., 2023).

However, integrating curriculum faces challenges such as the need to enhance the systematic and structured nature of interdisciplinary learning curricula and the assessment of integrated teaching and students' interdisciplinary abilities (Ye & Xu, 2023; Herro et al., 2017; You et al., 2018). To support the successful adoption of interdisciplinary learning, there is a need for pedagogical support and curriculum resources that empower teachers to effectively utilize this approach (Meng, 2022; Ye & Xu, 2023).

Integrated curriculum practice is an educational approach that promotes interdisciplinary learning by connecting various subject areas within a cohesive framework (Burke & Lehane, 2023). It fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity among students, while also developing essential skills for the 21st-century workforce (Ye & Xu, 2023). Despite facing challenges, the implementation of integrated curriculum practice can lead to increased engagement, motivation, and improved academic achievement among students. The implementation of an integrated curriculum in Nepal poses significant challenges and requires a comprehensive understanding of its key features, impacts, and associated challenges. While integrated curriculum approaches have gained attention for their potential to enhance student learning and promote interdisciplinary connections, there is a need to examine the specific context of Nepal and assess the effectiveness of such approaches in achieving educational goals. This comprehensive overview aims to identify the key features of the integrated curriculum in Nepal, evaluate its impacts on student learning outcomes, and address the challenges faced in its implementation. By addressing these issues, this study seeks to provide valuable insights and recommendations to improve the integration of curriculum in Nepal's educational system, ensuring a holistic and effective learning experience for students. Similarly, educators can overcome barriers to interdisciplinary learning and facilitate its implementation by offering pedagogical support and providing effective curriculum resources.

METHOD

This article explores the landscape of the newly introduced curriculum in comparison to the previously adopted curriculum. The method of the study is based on the review and analysis of various published and unpublished documents. The article adopts a review-based approach to explore and analyze different facts and findings related to the integrated curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Context and rationale

The development and implementation of an integrated curriculum in Nepal for grades 1 to 3 is a recent endeavor (Curriculum Development Center, 2019a). The curriculum underwent a piloting phase in 2019, involving 103 public schools, and was subsequently revised based on feedback before being implemented across all schools in 2020 (Curriculum

Development Center, 2019b). The integrated curriculum in Nepal aims to address the limitations of the traditional subject-centered approach and provide a comprehensive and meaningful learning experience (Drake & Reid, 2018). It recognizes the importance of interdisciplinary skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities for students to navigate the complexities of the 21st century (Drake & Reid, 2018).

The integrated curriculum in Nepal comprises six major learning areas, including language and literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, health and physical development, and creative arts (Curriculum Development Center, 2019a). By promoting connections between different subjects, the curriculum aims to make learning relevant to real-world contexts. It minimizes content duplication and encourages holistic approaches to problem-solving, enabling students to apply their skills across various disciplines (Drake & Reid, 2018). The learner-centered approach of the integrated curriculum emphasizes student engagement and active participation (Drake & Reid, 2018). Moreover, the integrated curriculum aligns with Nepal's vision of inclusive education by catering to diverse learner needs and fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment (Curriculum Development Center, 2019b). It promotes inclusivity and equity by providing opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, to engage in multidimensional learning experiences (Curriculum Development Center, 2019b).

Thus, the development and implementation of an integrated curriculum in Nepal for grades 1 to 3 depart from the traditional subject-centered approach. The curriculum aims to provide a holistic and meaningful learning experience, emphasizing interdisciplinary skills and addressing the challenges of the 21st century (Drake & Reid, 2018). It aligns with learner-centered education principles and fosters inclusivity and equity in education (Curriculum Development Center, 2019b).

Evolving concept of integrated curriculum

The concept of curriculum integration has a long history, rooted in ancient Greece, where education encompassed various subjects for the benefit of individuals and society (Jaeger, 1986). However, over time, the curriculum became focused on separate disciplines, neglecting the integrated approach (Drake & Reid, 2020). The history of integrated curriculum includes both traditional and progressive approaches, with the progressive approach emphasizing the development of students' skills and dispositions (Beane, 1997; Drake & Reid, 2020).

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in curriculum integration, particularly in the context of twenty-first-century learning and inquiry-based education. Advocates argue for addressing real-life issues and treating subjects as interconnected rather than isolated (Beane, 1997; Harden, 2000). McMaster University in Canada has been recognized as an early adopter of integrated curricula in medical education (Brauer & Ferguson, 2015). An integrative curriculum, according to Beane (1997), provides a cohesive foundation of essential knowledge and skills, offering a meaningful framework for exploring values. The concept of integration carries various meanings, including blending separate elements into a unified whole, incorporating an element as an integral part of a larger framework, and promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities (Jacobs, 1989). However, the diverse meanings and definitions of integrated curriculum have posed challenges for

researchers and practitioners (Lenoir & Hasni, 2010). Integration can be seen within subject areas, where subjects are taught in a more general manner, or as the infusion of concepts or skills across multiple subjects (Drake & Reid, 2020).

Thus, the concept of integrated curriculum has a rich historical background and has experienced a resurgence in recent years. It aims to provide a cohesive and meaningful learning experience. Integrated curriculum can be understood as blending separate elements, incorporating essential components into a larger framework, and promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities (Burke & Lehane, 2023).

Continuum of curriculum integration

A curriculum continuum guides the progression of learning and content across grade levels, ensuring a coherent sequence of instruction and supporting student development (Alsharif, 2014). It creates a cohesive curriculum, prevents gaps or redundancies, and aids in instructional planning and assessment design (Lynch et al., 2017). Integrated curriculum exists on a continuum with varying degrees of integration. The disciplinary approach focuses on individual subjects, while the multidisciplinary approach shares a common theme but maintains discipline-specific instruction and assessment (Drake & Reid, 2020; Roehrig et al., 2021). The interdisciplinary approach blurs disciplinary boundaries, emphasizing connections between subjects and involving practical activities that combine knowledge and skills (Drake & Reid, 2020; Ming et al., 2023).

Interdisciplinary thematic learning explores the interconnections between subjects and addresses real-world issues through the exploration of specific topics or situations (Wang et al., 2020). The transdisciplinary curriculum represents the most integrated model, incorporating multiple disciplinary perspectives and addressing authentic real-world issues (Drake & Reid, 2020). It enables students to establish connections across academic subjects and apply their knowledge to relevant concepts, issues, or problems (Dieleman & Juárez-Nájera, 2015; Drake & Reid, 2020). Integrating STEM education with the humanities and arts showcases how interdisciplinary approaches enrich responses to real-world issues like climate change (Drake & Reid, 2020). Figure 1 illustrates the continuum of curriculum integration, encompassing disciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches.

According to Budwig and Alexander (2020), and Dambre et al. (2022), the curriculum design spectrum ranges from disciplinary curriculum, characterized by loose integration, to transdisciplinary curriculum, characterized by deep integration. The current school curriculum in Nepal follows a disciplinary approach, while a transdisciplinary curriculum is less common globally, mainly found in select higher education institutions, particularly in fields such as sciences, health promotion, and environmental protection (Budwig & Alexander, 2020). In a transdisciplinary curriculum, subjects are not compartmentalized, and students actively engage in project-based learning and problem-solving tasks (Dambre et al., 2022).

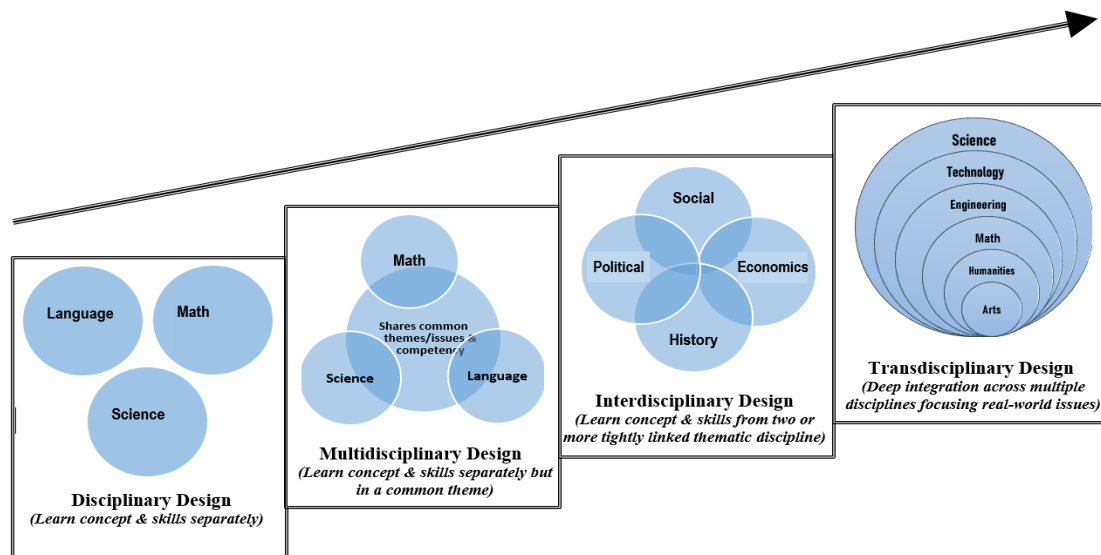


Fig. 1. The Continuum of curriculum integration

Basic level (grade 1-3) curriculum integration in Nepal

In an effort to align with global changes while addressing local needs, the Government of Nepal (GoN) introduced the National Curriculum Framework 2019, which emphasizes holistic development, social justice, and the cultivation of competent citizens. As part of this framework, the GoN implemented an integrated curriculum for the basic level grades (1-3) in Nepal, focusing on four thematic learning areas: our surroundings, English, Nepali, and Mathematics.

According to the Curriculum Development Center (2019a), the integrated curriculum utilizes an interdisciplinary approach that connects different subjects and makes them more meaningful and applicable to children's real-life experiences. Previously, the Primary Education Curriculum 2063 in Nepal consisted of six distinct subjects, including Nepali, English, Math, Social studies and creative arts, Science, health, and physical education, and a local subject or mother tongue. In the recently introduced integrated curriculum, the subjects have been consolidated into three learning domains: language, math, and our surroundings. The language domain specifically integrates Nepali, English, and the mother tongue in an interdisciplinary manner (Curriculum Development Center, 2019a). The math component remains a distinct discipline, while the domain of 'our surroundings' encompasses the subjects previously covered under social studies and creative arts, as well as science, health, and physical education. This domain is also integrated into an interdisciplinary approach.

The integration of the curriculum for the basic level grades (1-3) in the three core domains (language, math, and our surroundings) and the interdisciplinary integration of the language and our surroundings domains are depicted in Figure 2. This integrated curriculum design aims to provide a more cohesive and relevant learning experience for students in Nepal.

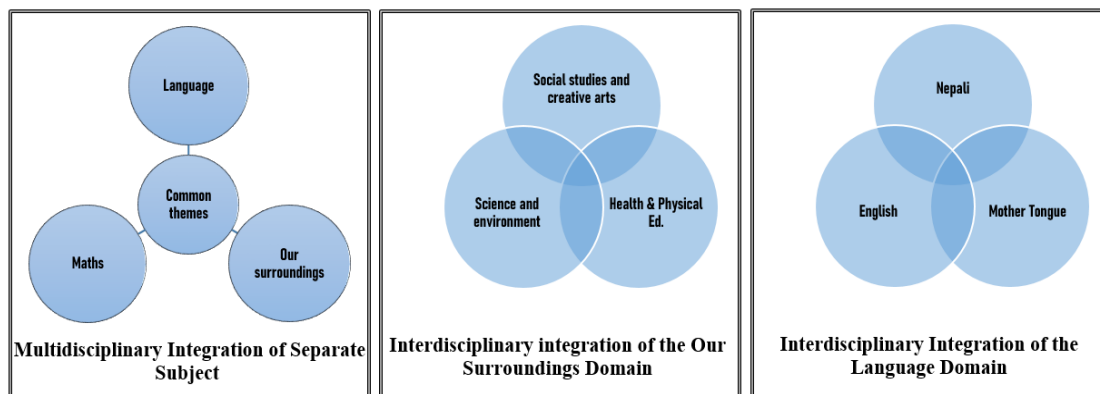


Figure 2. Basic level (grade 1-3) curriculum integration

Key features of integrated curriculum

Traditional outcome-based education has historically prioritized objective knowledge and employed a compartmentalized approach to teaching and learning (Rijal, 2021). However, the demands of the 21st century require interdisciplinary collaboration and the ability to draw upon multiple disciplines to find solutions to real-life challenges (Burke & Lehane, 2023; Drake & Reid, 2020). In this context, the experiences and opinions of learners within authentic contexts hold more value than isolated subjective knowledge (Ye & Xu, 2023).

To address these needs, integrated curriculum approaches that promote collaboration among different disciplines have gained importance (Beane, 1995; Drake & Reid, 2020). Such approaches aim to provide learners with comprehensive knowledge, competencies, and orientations toward various soft skills (Burke & Lehane, 2023). Drake and Reid (2020) argue that when these skills are integrated into various academic disciplines, the curriculum empowers learners to actively explore and critically engage with the subject matter. Additionally, an integrated curriculum encourages learners to share their ideas, experiences, and practices, fostering an empowered and connected environment that promotes collaboration and knowledge creation (An, 2020; Ye & Xu, 2023).

According to Ye and Xu (2023), the "4C Skills" consisting of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity are essential competencies that are vital for fostering talents necessary for future social development. These skills not only interconnect and support subject material knowledge and core skills but also enable students to succeed in formal education and adapt to a rapidly changing world. Meng (2022) suggests that when students merge their learning experiences, they develop skills that help them connect and organize knowledge. This, in turn, improves their understanding of the world and their problem-solving abilities.

According to Burke and Lehane (2023) and Ye and Xu (2023), the primary objective of an integrated curriculum is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to successfully address and solve authentic real-world problems. In order to tackle the demands of the modern era, it is essential to integrate a diverse range of skills, including life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information technology skills, as the foundational domain within the integrated curriculum (Ye & Xu, 2023). These skills play

a vital role in preparing students to thrive in a rapidly evolving world and successfully tackle the complexities of today's society (Burke & Lehane, 2023). Through the integration of these skills across the curriculum, students can cultivate a comprehensive range of competencies, equipping them to navigate and excel in real-world situations (Ye & Xu, 2023).

When designing an integrated curriculum, it is important to prioritize student input regarding what they consider most important to know, do, and be within the curriculum framework (Drake & Reid, 2018). The curriculum structure should incorporate knowledge acquisition ("Know"), skills ("Do"), and attitudes/values/behaviors ("Be"). Drake and Reid (2018) propose an umbrella-shaped structure to represent these aspects, where the integration of the 4C Skills, fundamental skills domains, and the KBD (Know, Do, Be) framework ensures a well-rounded integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes/values/behaviors (Drake & Reid, 2018). The key features are stated below:

Key features:

1. Traditional outcome-based education emphasizes objective knowledge but lacks interdisciplinary collaboration.
2. Integrated approaches foster collaboration among disciplines and empower learners.
3. An integrated curriculum equips learners with comprehensive knowledge, competencies, and soft skills.
4. In the 21st century, the "4C Skills" comprising critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity are vital for students.
5. The integrated curriculum incorporates fundamental domains such as life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information technology skills.
6. The curriculum structure incorporates the KBD (Know, Do, Be) framework, ensuring a holistic integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes/values/behaviors.
7. Student input is vital in designing an integrated curriculum.
8. The integrated curriculum prepares students to solve real-world problems and flourish in a rapidly changing world.

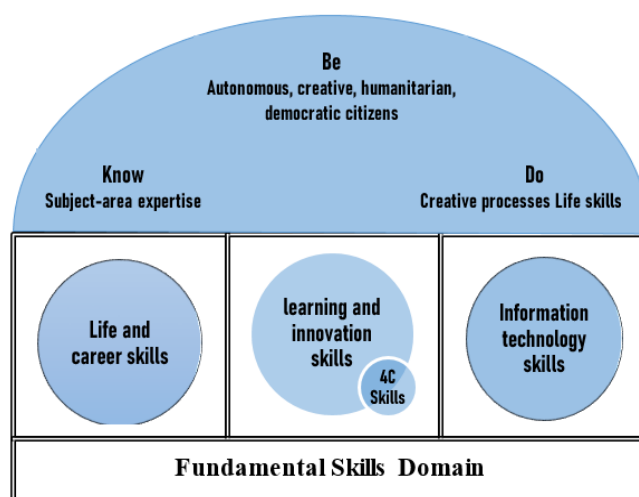


Fig. 3. Fundamental skills domain, 4C Skills, and KBD integrated curriculum framework

Impact of integrated curriculum in nepalese education system

The implementation of an integrated curriculum in Nepal has the potential to yield several positive impacts on students' learning experiences, teachers' instructional strategies, the assessment process, and content integration within the curriculum (Atuhurra et al., 2023). However, there are challenges to overcome, such as evenly distributing the coverage of a wide range of topics, which may hamper the depth of understanding (Atuhurra et al., 2023). Additionally, the integrated curriculum and teachers' instruction predominantly focus on lower and middle levels of cognitive demand, neglecting higher levels that require deeper comprehension (Atuhurra et al., 2023).

The national curriculum framework for school education in Nepal outlines various types of skills, including five main skill categories and 29 soft skills (Curriculum Development Center, 2019a). Grades 1-3 have adopted an integrated curriculum that directly incorporates these different types of skills. However, classroom dynamics in Nepal often revolve around a teacher-centered approach, where students assume a passive role (Kunwar et al., 2022a). This prevailing belief hinders students' personal expressions and their full embrace within the Nepalese teaching and learning environment. Traditional classroom settings and pedagogical approaches have proven ineffective in fostering the development of these skills (Kunwar et al., 2022b).

Efforts have been made to introduce these skills at lower levels, but there is a need to incorporate them into higher levels of education (Shrestha et al., 2022). Moreover, designing appropriate pedagogy and assessment methods that promote critical thinking and align with desired learning outcomes poses challenges in the Nepalese education system. Integrating soft skills into the curriculum provides students with ample opportunities to develop critical thinking, generate innovative ideas, collaborate effectively, and solve complex problems (Shrestha et al., 2022). This approach recognizes the importance of gradually nurturing these skills, allowing students to continuously enhance their abilities throughout their educational journey. Some potential impacts of an integrated curriculum in the Nepalese education system are as follows:

1. *Implementation of Student-centric Learning:* The integrated curriculum in Nepal promotes student-centric learning, departing from the traditional teacher-centered approach, and recognizes the unique abilities, interests, and learning styles of each student. It actively engages students, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. By adopting this approach, the integrated curriculum empowers students to become self-directed and motivated learners, taking an active role in their education.
2. *Fostering Integrated and Practical Learning:* The new curriculum in Nepal emphasizes integrated and practical learning, connecting subjects and promoting interdisciplinary understanding. Through the integration of multiple subjects, students acquire a holistic perspective on real-world issues. Practical applications, experiments, and fieldwork enhance their understanding and critical skills like problem-solving and collaboration. This approach equips students with the knowledge and competencies to tackle real-life challenges, preparing them for future success in education, careers, and society.
3. *Competency-based Education:* The new curriculum in Nepal prioritizes competencies over rote memorization, recognizing the importance of comprehensive skills in today's evolving world. It emphasizes key competencies such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy. Through the integration of these skills, the

curriculum effectively equips students with the necessary tools for success in the contemporary workforce and enables them to make meaningful contributions to society. This shift acknowledges that applying knowledge, thinking critically, and collaborating are crucial for success in the 21st century. The curriculum equips students to face real-world challenges, adapt, and become lifelong learners. Through this transformative approach, Nepal empowers students to thrive and make a positive impact in an ever-changing world.

4. *Inclusion and Diversity*: It prioritizes inclusivity and celebrates cultural diversity. It creates an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and respected. The curriculum incorporates local content, stories, and cultural practices to foster a sense of identity and belonging. This approach promotes empathy, respect, and cultural sensitivity, preparing students to be responsible global citizens. Nepal is committed to promoting inclusion and diversity in education, aiming to provide accessible and meaningful learning opportunities that celebrate and value its rich cultural heritage.
5. *Nurture Values and Character*: It prioritizes values and character development, aiming to foster ethical, responsible, and empathetic individuals. It integrates value-based education, emphasizing virtues like honesty, empathy, respect, and environmental consciousness. The curriculum fosters individuals with academic excellence, moral integrity, and social responsibility, instilling values that promote upright character. This approach recognizes that academic knowledge alone is insufficient and seeks to shape individuals who demonstrate empathy, respect diversity, and protect the environment. Also, it equips students with the tools to make ethical decisions and contribute positively to society, nurturing well-rounded individuals who actively better their communities and the world.
6. *Promoting Critical Thinking*: It fosters critical thinking by connecting various subjects. Students explore concepts from multiple perspectives, enhancing analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. Interdisciplinary learning enables them to draw conclusions and tackle real-world challenges. Through the application of knowledge across different subjects, students develop the capacity to analyze intricate problems and generate innovative solutions. Emphasizing critical thinking prepares them for higher education, careers, and active societal participation. The curriculum equips students with cognitive tools to navigate a complex world, fostering thoughtfulness and discernment.
7. *Enhance Problem-Solving Skills*: It enhances problem-solving abilities by integrating knowledge and skills from various subjects. Students gain interdisciplinary perspectives, enabling them to approach complex problems from different angles. Integrated learning broadens students' understanding of how disciplines intersect and contribute to problem-solving, equipping them with diverse tools and adaptability. Emphasizing problem-solving prepares students for future endeavors and encourages innovative and resilient thinking. Through integrated knowledge and skills, it empowers students to confidently navigate challenges, contribute to society, and make a meaningful impact.
8. *Foster Collaboration and Communication*: It prioritizes collaboration and communication among students and teachers. Through the promotion of cooperative learning, students actively participate in collaborative group projects and discussions,

which in turn foster a sense of teamwork and facilitate the sharing of ideas. Teachers facilitate open dialogue and active participation, strengthening students' communication skills. This emphasis prepares students for the modern world, where collaboration and effective communication are highly valued. Ultimately, the promotion of collaboration and communication empowers students to be effective team players and confident contributors in academic and real-world settings.

9. *Develop Holistic Understanding:* It fosters a holistic understanding of concepts by exploring connections across subjects. Students make interdisciplinary connections, gaining insights and a broader perspective. They develop critical thinking skills, identify patterns, and apply knowledge effectively. The curriculum promotes a comprehensive understanding beyond memorization, encouraging the exploration of relationships between ideas. It prepares students for real-world complexities, equipping them with creativity, adaptability, and a multidisciplinary approach. The integrated curriculum empowers students to be lifelong learners in an ever-evolving world.

Challenges of integrated curriculum

Implementing an integrated curriculum in Nepal poses several unique challenges that stem from various factors within the educational system, cultural considerations, and resource limitations. One significant challenge lies in the resistance from teachers who may be hesitant to change power dynamics and surrender control in the classroom (Aziz et al., 2023). Teachers may have concerns about losing control over the curriculum when engaging in collaborative planning, which is a crucial aspect of an integrated curriculum (Aziz et al., 2023).

Developing teachers' competencies and capacities in designing and implementing an integrated curriculum is essential but requires adequate professional development programs (Aziz et al., 2023). Without such programs, teachers may experience frustration, confusion, and difficulties in designing and implementing curricular activities. Providing sufficient support to teachers during the implementation process is another significant challenge. Teachers need ongoing support and feedback as they transition from traditional subject-based teaching to integrated teaching (Drake and Reid, 2018). A lack of support and facilitation can lead to opposition to the implementation of an integrated curriculum.

Obtaining depth in multiple subjects is challenging for teachers, as they often have more profound knowledge in subject-based teaching rather than multiple subject-based integrated teaching (Aziz et al., 2023). Adapting teacher education programs to align with the requirements of an integrated curriculum is also a challenge. Teacher education programs need to revise their curriculum and instructional practices to prepare qualified and skilled teacher educators (Borg & Consult, 2023). Allocating adequate time for planning integrated teaching-learning activities is crucial but difficult, particularly in developing countries. An integrated curriculum demands student-directed and engaged learning, which requires more planning time compared to subject-based teaching (Aziz et al., 2023).

Assessment also poses challenges in an integrated curriculum. Developing appropriate assessment tools and techniques that effectively measure student learning can be complex (Aziz et al., 2023; Ye & Xu, 2023). Teachers may face difficulties and reluctance in assessing students' learning effectively. Preparing content and materials for an integrated curriculum is a complex and flexible process that requires active involvement from both

students and teachers (Ye & Xu, 2023). It demands a deeper understanding, skills, and experiences to decide on the contents, themes, and interconnections among relevant subject disciplines (Drake and Reid, 2018). Some of the key challenges of implementing an integrated curriculum in Nepal are as follows:

- i) Education system structure
- ii) Teacher readiness and capacity building
- iii) Limited resources and infrastructure
- iv) Cultural considerations and societal expectations
- v) Assessment and evaluation
- vi) Policy and stakeholder support
- vii) Faculty hesitations
- viii) Logistical considerations
- ix) Skill development
- x) Adequate support and resources

In summary, implementing an integrated curriculum in Nepal faces challenges such as resistance to power sharing, changing teaching practices, developing teacher competencies, providing support, obtaining depth in multiple subjects, adapting teacher education, allocating time, addressing assessment challenges, and preparing content and materials. These challenges require careful consideration and strategic planning to ensure the successful implementation of an integrated curriculum in Nepalese educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of an integrated curriculum is a pressing demand in the 21st century. However, in the context of Nepal, it poses various challenges, especially in the area of implementation. The alignment and structure of the curriculum across different content areas are crucial in meeting the needs and interests of learners. However, it appears that the implementation of the curriculum lacks satisfaction in terms of adhering to the curriculum's intended spirit and the overall evaluation system. Equally important is the provision of sufficient training and support to teachers, enabling them to deliver instruction that aligns seamlessly with the intended content. The integrated curriculum approach intends to promote active and engaged learning, as well as collaboration and communication among teachers and students, thereby fostering a dynamic learning environment. Nevertheless, implementing the integrated curriculum nationwide presents a significant hurdle in terms of teacher preparation. To facilitate meaningful curricular change, it is crucial to prioritize professional development and place significant importance on incorporating teachers' perspectives in the process (Mohr & Welker, 2017). Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the curriculum, and their clarity, conviction, and enthusiasm are crucial for the successful implementation of the curriculum. It is important to acknowledge that teacher resistance is a potential risk in any curricular innovation, and it cannot be completely eliminated in this case. Therefore, comprehensive and effective teacher preparation is vital before launching the integrated curriculum on a large scale.

Based on the review of the integrated curriculum and its practices in Nepal, it is recommended that promoting the effective implementation of an integrated curriculum requires the development of public consensus and active participation and support from stakeholders. Additionally, it is essential to prioritize professional development and place teachers' perspectives at the core of the process.

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