



EIU Best Practices Series **No. 26**

## Promotion of EIU through Multilingual Education

EIU Best Practices 2011  
A Case from Nepal



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**APCEIU**

Asia-Pacific Centre of  
Education for International Understanding  
under the auspices of UNESCO

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# Foreword

Faithful to its mandate, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under the auspices of UNESCO has served as a regional centre to promote Education for International Understanding (EIU) towards a Culture of Peace in Asia and the Pacific region since its establishment in 2000.

As educators are faced with great challenges in the fast-shifting world of globalization, APCEIU is well aware of how collective efforts can form a greater force towards a Culture of Peace by learning from one another and from the past. On this account, APCEIU has been publishing the EIU Best Practices in order to provide a platform to share diverse experiences and perspectives among various professionals in the field of education.

The EIU Best Practices aims to promote a Culture of Peace by supporting local initiatives in 47 UNESCO Member States in the region and encouraging innovative EIU practices in different local contexts. The EIU Best Practices Programme advocates the idea of “Learning to Live Together” (LTLT), which encourages participatory learning and critical thinking to develop mutual understanding towards the relationship between selves and others. Thanks to continuous support from the National Commissions for UNESCO in the Asia-Pacific region as well as numerous efforts of EIU practitioners, APCEIU has published and disseminated a number of monographs of distinctive cases over the past five years. This year, five new cases are introduced with series number 22 to 26.



Through this issue, we take you to the beautiful and hilly district of Palpa, Nepal, where the majority of the ethnic community residing in this area is known as the Magars. The case introduces the practice of Multilingual Education in a school called the Nava Jagrit Primary School, where education is being practiced in their mother tongue, Magar language, as the medium of instruction. As an attempt to protect its cultural diversity through the preservation of its ethnic languages, the case highlights a specific practice in the Nava Jagrit Primary School that are in line with EIU, while it also showcases how the multilingual education can optimize the outcomes of the students educational capacity.

May the cases in this year's publication continue to spread inspiration to construct further openness, equality and diversity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. I also expect that through this endeavor, various EIU Best Practices can be shared among educators, scholars, policy makers and activists who are committed to promoting a Culture of Peace in the region.

December 2011



LEE Seunghwan  
Director

# EIU Best Practices is...

APCEIU has been committed to the promotion of a Culture of Peace since its inception, in line with one of the pillars of education “Learning to Live Together.” A Culture of Peace has been a key principle at the core of UNESCO’s ethical mission. It involves a set of values, attitudes and behaviours that can be taught, developed and improved upon to enhance mutual understanding and conflict resolution. Attaining a Culture of Peace requires transformation of institutional practices, as well as individual values and behaviours in which education plays a crucial role in the process. As a major educational tool aimed at promoting a Culture of Peace, EIU addresses issues related to cultural diversity, globalization and social justice, human rights, peace and sustainable development. It focuses on increasing the capacity of learners to deal with issues of everyday life, to resolve community conflict and to enjoy human, political and civil rights to a greater extent.

APCEIU launched EIU Best Case Studies in 2006 in cooperation with the UNESCO Member States in the region to encourage educators, scholars and activists to implement and share local initiatives on EIU. It is an outreach programme that invites them to share their efforts in promoting education for a Culture of Peace in different social and cultural contexts. Now renamed as EIU Best Practices in order to further encourage the participation of practitioners in the field, the programme seeks to promote and collect innovative practices based on optimal classroom conditions and activities, school climate, community and social atmosphere, and

disseminate them throughout the region.

The programme is conducted through the following steps: 1) Call for Applications: APCEIU sends announcement letters along with application forms and guidelines to the 47 National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO field offices, major National Institutes of Education in the region and APCEIU's MOU partners in the region; 2) Screening and Selection: Submitted applications are reviewed by the Screening Committee, composed of experts, who then select the best practices; 3) Field Visit: APCEIU staff undertake field visits to the programme sites of the selected cases to confer the EIU Best Practices awards, conduct field observation and interviews, and provide the selected applicants with the guidelines for the final report; 4) Submission of the Final Reports: Selected applicants submit the final reports to APCEIU based on the guidelines; and 5) Publication and Dissemination: Final reports are published as a monograph series and disseminated throughout Asia and the Pacific region.

Given the favorable and enthusiastic responses from the region, and support from the National Commissions for UNESCO, APCEIU wishes to expand the positive momentum built thus far and further its efforts for the coming years.

APCEIU encourages educators, scholars and activists from the Asia-Pacific region to apply and share their experiences and perspectives. The Centre expects that through the EIU Best Practices, diverse practices of EIU will be widely shared throughout the entire region and beyond, thus contributing towards achieving a Culture of Peace.

# Author



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# Acknowledgement

It is a great pleasure and privilege to have been given an opportunity to be part of the EIU Best Practices 2011.

I would like to convey my utmost gratitude to the local community and teachers who initiated this programme.

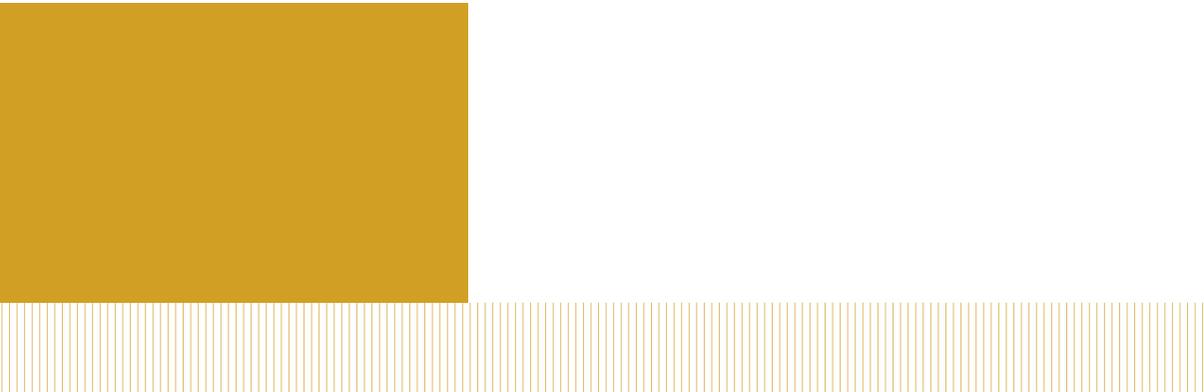
My sincere appreciation goes to APCEIU for awarding and publishing the case as well as the Nepal National Commission for UNESCO for all the support extended to me. I feel proud and happy to share this to the world.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Department of Education and Nava Jagrit Primary School Palpa, Nepal. Grateful thanks are also due to Mr. Philip J. Purnell, Manager of Programs Office, for reading and commenting on the drafts of this report and to Mr. Piereangelo B. Alejo for his valuable inputs in the text of this report.

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# Promotion of EIU through Multilingual Education

## 1. Introduction and Background

### 1.1 National Context

National legislation and education policy documents strongly support the rights of children to have the education in their mother tongue. Nepal's constitution of 1990 states that the medium of instruction shall be in Nepali for the primary level to assure the right of every citizen to choose education in their mother tongue. This is further reinforced by the enactment of the interim constitution of Nepal in 2007.

Although the exact number of language spoken in Nepal is debatable, the 2001 census lists 92, Ethnologue lists 126 and the indigenous Linguistic Society of Nepal lists 143. The number of languages may increase up to 200. It is strange that in such a small country the number of language spoken is so large. These languages contain the life experiences, knowledge systems, folk literature, ethnic arts, customs and traditions of the various ethnic groups that speak them.

Despite Nepal's size, the existence of over 200 different languages in the country reveals the country's richness in its cultural diversity. Every valley, mountains and its neighboring towns are home to a different ethnic language. Yet this also raises concern for policy makers and government officials on how to best implement a programme which preserves its rich cultural diversity and at the same time maintain a whole unity as Nepalese.

Given the immense size of the non-Nepali speaking population, it is

imperative that the government addresses these educational needs. Non-Nepali speaking students have been found to be a disadvantaged group in the Nepalese school system, where the medium of instruction is Nepali. The participation of non-Nepali speaking students in primary education is low. Their achievement at school is lower than that of Nepali speaking students. The data shows the drop-out rates are highest among those schools where non-Nepali speaking groups are studying.

## 1.2 International Study Reports

According to Thomas and Collier (2002), the largest longitudinal study in the world on the education of minority students, those students who reached the highest levels of both bilingualism and school achievement were the ones where the children's mother tongue was the main medium of education for the most extended period of time. This amount of education in the mother tongue was the strongest predictor of both the children's competence and gains in English, and of their school achievement (Hough and Skutnabb-Kangas 2005).

UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.

The need for long-term mother tongue education is well documented worldwide. UNESCO publication (UNESCO 2005), lists the following benefits of Multilingual Education and Multilingual Education for linguistic minorities:

- a. Learning in L1 (first language) does not hinder learning of L2 (second language);
- b. Learning in L1 helps learning of L2 (second language);
- c. Learning to read L1 (first language) is easier and faster;
- d. What is learned in L1 (first language) transfers to L2 (second language);

- e. L1(first language) allows students to learn curriculum, content from the beginning of formal education;
- f. Strong L1 (first language) helps students perform better in L2(second language) academic work;
- g. L1(first language) allows parents to participate more in their children's education;
- h. Bilingual education (both L1 and L2) improves cognitive development;
- i. L1(first language) helps teachers in assessing learning achievement;
- j. Special support in learning L2 (second language) helps students become bilingual; and
- k. Relevant strategies support students to become bilingual and bi-literate. Here L1 (first language) stands for mother tongue and L2 (second language) stands for second language.

This approach is accepted in both national and community level. There were different views for the first language and second language. If a child has first language rather than Nepali, s/he can easily learn Nepali as a second language after strengthening the first language. As supported by various international studies, it is important to conduct the teaching and learning process for a child in his/ her first language.

In the context of Nepal, and especially the Magar community, the Magar (Palpa Magar) language is the first language, Nepali (national language) is the second language and on top of all this English is also taught as the third language. The same applies in Nava Jagrit Primary School, thus, the teaching and learning process in this school is considered as multilingual.

### **1.3 Local context of Nava Jagrit Primary School, Dhaireni Palpa**

In Dhaireni village of Papla District, the western part of Nepal, 99% of people are from Magar community, an ethnic community. The community differs in many aspects because of their own language, culture, religions,

traditions, customs and occasions, etc. Given the abovementioned situation, the Magar community spearheaded the multilingual education in Nava Jagrit Primary school, Dhaireni. Multilingual education refers to the formal use of more than two languages in the curriculum (UNESCO, 2003, p. 17).



▲ Students lining up on school ground



▲ Class taught in Magar language

After various consultations and meetings, the programme was launched upon the approval of the School Management Committee and with the help of the teachers and community. The School Management Committee and the main functional authorized body have the right to control all activities. The parent-teacher association (PTA) is also a responsible body for the school activities. Both the school and the PTA joined forces to implement the programme.

A school is said to be an agent of change. Acknowledging the importance of school in preserving their culture and language, the community agreed to implement the programme in Nava Jagrit Primary School.

## 2. Description of the Programme

### 2.1 Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the programme is to enhance quality education for non Nepali speaking children of the community having education in their mother tongue through Multilingual Education Program.

The objectives of the programme are:

- to increase the enrollment rate and decrease the dropout rate;
- to strengthen the capacity of community through active involvement in the programme;
- to increase the learning capacity of the students;
- to develop and preserve the culture and language;
- to explore the traditional knowledge, skills and technology; and
- to promote peace in communities and nations.

The target group of the programme are the children of Magar community who do not speak and understand well the Nepali language.

### 2.2 Programme Activities

The following activities were launched in this school.

#### 2.2.1 Enrollment campaign

Enrollment campaign was launched at the beginning of school year. Local community organizations, school management committee, teachers, local government and political leaders all joined together to implement the programme successfully. Posters and pamphlets were disseminated. Folk song competitions were organized which helped raise awareness on the importance of education. Different programmes on health and sanitation were also initiated.

### 2.2.2 Awareness Programme

Awareness raising is imperative in the implementation of the programme. Informing the stakeholders of the advantages and disadvantages of the programme contributed to the success of it. Awareness raising also included the importance of education in preserving the culture and accepting cultural diversity.



▲ Teachers planning for awareness programme

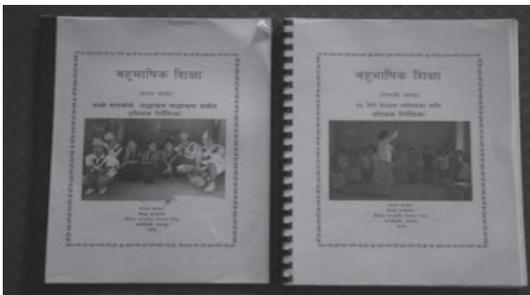
### 2.2.3 Trainings and Meetings

The Nava Jagrit Primary school realized that there is the urgent need to train the teachers since the programme is new and the teachers find it difficult to implement it successfully. Capacity building through trainings and meetings of School Management Committee and PTA members were given which helped them understand their rights and duties.

There are many teachers training centers in different part of the country. The National Center for Educational Development (NCED) is the main responsible body for the teachers training. It is the head office of the teachers training centers. The Department of Education, National Center for Educational Development, and Curriculum Development Center helped conducted the workshop while the District Education Office monitored the programme. Some language experts were also invited during the trainings.

### 2.2.4 Manual Development

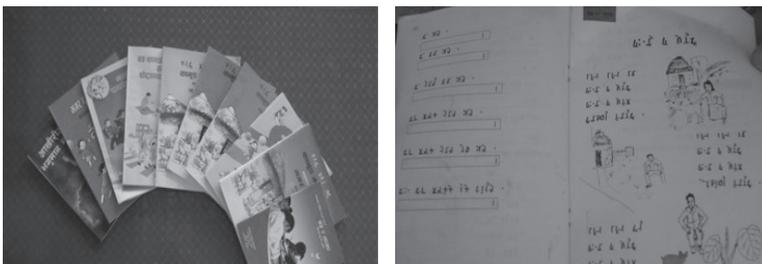
The training manual was developed with the combined efforts of the school and teacher training organization -The National Center for Education Development. Teachers, subject specialists and language experts were involved in the process of manual development. The manual serves as the guideline to conduct the training.



▲ Training manual for teacher trainers

### 2.2.5 Curriculum and Textbook Development

To effectively implement the Multilingual Education Programme, a new curriculum was needed. Furthermore, the development of new textbooks was necessary. The Curriculum Development Center (CDC) helped a lot to realize the programme. Language experts, curriculum officers, subject specialists, and teachers joined forces for the curriculum and textbook development.



▲ Textbooks developed in Magar language

### 2.2.6 Early Child Development Center

In order to broaden the scope of learners, and implement the use of mother tongue to children of earlier ages, the Nava Jagrit Primary School recently opened the Early Child Development Center (ECDC) for children of ages younger than 7. Although a specific curriculum is under development, the ECDC rears children of ages 3-6 into speaking its mother language, Magar. The ECDC functions as a day care center whereby children come and sing songs and play games in their mother language while their parents would be at work.



▲ Children at the Early Child Development Center

## 3. Relevance to EIU

Since EIU aims to promote intercultural understanding, respect for cultural diversity, peace and equity, this project also supports the abovementioned goal. A culture dominated by only one group brings discrimination against and neglect of minorities which is a likely cause for violence. The Palpa Magar community is highly at risk for such violence to take place unless the consequences are taught to them. It is vital to instill a strong sense of cultural identity to minority groups such as the Palpa Magar and raise awareness about the values of their traditional culture.

One way to instill such cultural identity to them is through the Multilingual Education. Language plays a vital role in achieving a peaceful community. Language is not only a tool for communication but it involves cultural identity as well. It is an essential factor in intercultural understanding as

it encourages understanding different people and culture. Respecting the language also ensures respect for fundamental rights and is imperative to attain peace. The loss of language means the loss of knowledge systems, world views, history, efficient ways of communication and cultural identity. When language loss occurs among ethnic minority people, their cultural identity is threatened.



While a national language and identity are clearly seen by policy makers as vital ingredients for securing and maintaining unity in the country, recognition and support for minority cultures must not be overlooked.

From the perspective of cultural connotation, every language bears the imprint of a distinctive ethnic culture. Language is a carrier for experience and knowledge, and every language contains the cumulative knowledge that has been acquired through the practical daily experiences of an ethnic group over a long period of time.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that, “indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to force assimilation or destruction of their culture.”

The Interim Constitution 2007 of Nepal has opened the door for a child to get education in his/her mother tongue. The three year Interim Plan 2007-2009 also mentioned the same agenda. In effect, different plans and programmes emphasize the multilingual education. Nepal is a country where people are from different social, cultural and ethnic background along with Magar.

The Multilingual Education Program appreciates and understands the value of traditional knowledge and community empowerment through language. Empowering local community is a major function of education. This programme also supports community through organizing various kinds of activities. Furthermore, the programme also helped promotes social and gender equality in a linguistically diverse community.



▲ Magar women in Palpa district

## 4. Impacts of the Programme

The impacts of the programme are as follows:

### **Increase Student Enrollment Rate**

An increased in enrollment rate was observed upon the implementation of the programme. Most of the children in the non Nepali speaking community enjoyed reading and learning using their mother tongue. Through the students enjoyments in school, a word-of-mouth quickly

spread across the Palpa Magar community whereby parents hearing of their children's enjoyments accepted the need for an education for their children and thus opted to give them an education rather than keep them in the work field.

The development of the Early Childhood Development Center further proves this to be true. Parents of the Palpa Magar community are even more eager to enroll their children not only starting from the first grade level, but earlier. Parents have realized the importance of educating their children and at the same time have been convinced of the importance of preserving their own ethnic language and culture.

### **Improvement in Performance**

Children become more active and participative in class since they started using their mother tongue. More interaction occurred between students and teachers which basically improved their performance. Students were not only able to read and write but recite long poems and stories in its own language which has allowed teachers to extend the contents of the textbooks to the traditional stories of the Palpa Magar community which in return further reinforces its attempts to preserve the cultures of the Palpa Magars.

### **Decrease in dropout rate and increase in retention rate**

Upon the implementation of the programme, the children stayed in the classroom longer. The dropout rate was decreased while the retention rate was increased. When children enter in the classroom and they got the child friendly environment, they do not want to leave the class. Students enjoy staying in the class room. They stay in the compound of school. In the classroom children have got such environment. So the students do not leave the school. Hence, dropout rate is very low.

The use of mother tongue language has shown that children feel more

comfortable, like being in their own home as opposed to the foreign environment they have encountered with when attending schools that use only the Nepali language as the medium of education.

### **Strengthen the use of mother tongue**

Previously, the teachers have been using the local language partially in school. The programme encouraged them to further use the basic local language. The teachers and language groups endorsed to use it in the class. The students accepted it positively and they learned the lessons effectively. In line with the programme, the teachers were trained to implement multilingual education. Such initiative enabled the teachers to speak the local language.

## **5. Conclusion**

According to sources, there are over 4 million students at the primary level currently attending schools right now in Nepal. Of the 4 million, over a third of these students come from ethnic or indigenous backgrounds. It has been found that most of the dropouts in the primary school comes from students of these ethnic backgrounds and to make matters worse these children lack the access to schools and are shunned from the right of receiving any form of basic education.

Most societies, including Nepal, have come to agreement on the importance of basic education and that all children must be given the opportunity to receive them through their mother tongue. As shown in the results of the Multilingual Education programme in Nava Jagrit Primary School, children who are taught in their mother tongues have better learning; engage more actively in class by helping them understand the learning activities with greater proficiency. Not only has the programme increased the performance level of the students but the fiscal number of attendance has increased as opposed to the decrease in dropout rates. It is

therefore, in my opinion, most effective to start a child's education through its mother tongue, whereby the children will feel more comfortable during the transitional stages of education and gradual use of the official Nepali language.

The disappearance of ethnic languages and the increase in the use of “one” national language is mainly caused by the global economy, global culture and global communications. This is further encouraged through national policies by governments on its use of official language in education and in the formal occasions, as medium of instruction in schools, the workforce and especially in the mass media. Better education and job prospects are offered on the basis of the ability to use the national/official language. Thus younger generations do not see the value of, and even have negative attitudes toward their ethnic languages. In turn, ethnic languages become stigmatized.

As such, Language revitalization programmes show the struggle of ethnic minorities to preserve their language and culture. To sustain these survival efforts, there is a need for a national language policy that supports the use of ethnic minority languages in public, in schools and in the mass media, alongside the official/national language and international languages.

As mentioned above, the uses of Multilingual Education is very well supported by the government of Nepal and it has become a fast growing popular programme for every community with non Nepali speakers. Several organizations including human rights activists became actively involved in the issue.

Encouraging and developing community support is crucial for implementing sustainable multilingual education programmes. It is only through an efficient and effective awareness programme whereby we can convince the community and its constituents of the importance of their ethnic language and the advantages of the multilingual education

programme.

The use of mother tongue is essential in improving the quality of education. Multilingual education promotes the preservation of cultural identities and intercultural understanding. The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 affirms the commitment of the government to multilingual education. Through the use of an effective multilingual education programme, the advantages not only lie in its goal to preserve its ethnic culture, but in addition, as shown in the results of the programme, students tend to enjoy education, whereby it has resulted in a decrease in dropout rates and an increase in their performance.



▲ Students in the 3rd grade reciting a poem in their mother tongue

# Field Visit

On behalf of APCEIU, Mr. Park Hyun-Jin, Junior Programme Specialist of the Publication and Information Team, undertook a field visit to the Nava Jagrit Primary School in Nepal from 28 November to 2 December 2011 to carry out the following missions: 1) to confer the EIU Best Practices Award, 2) to get a deeper knowledge of the practice, 3) to provide the guidelines on finalizing the report, and 4) to discuss with the school and the Nepal National Commission for UNESCO on how to continue and enhance further activities related on EIU and exchange ideas for future programmes.



◀ Group Photo: Conferring the EIU Best Practices Award with Mr. Kishore Thapa, Secretary-General of Nepal National Commissions for UNESCO (left) and Mr. Narayan Subedi Prasad (center)



◀ Greetings from the Headmaster of Nava Jagrit Primary School, Nepal