

‘Teach in English or Retire’: Basic-level Teachers’ Experiences of Implementing EMI in Nepali Community School

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The medium of instruction (MOI) policy in education has become a burning issue in the multilingual classroom in Nepal. Many schools shifted to EMI after the government adopted a liberal economic policy in the 1990s. Influenced by neoliberalism in education, many private schools were established with EMI and gradually attracted parents from middle and high-class families. This study explores the basic-level teachers’ experiences of implementing EMI in Nepali community schools and the challenges they face in implementing EMI in their classrooms. I employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of 12 basic-level teachers teaching 6 community schools in rural Nepal. Following in-depth interviews with 12 teachers and their classroom observations, this study presents their lived experiences of using EMI in their classrooms. Results indicate teachers’ tension and burden in implementing EMI due to low English proficiency and lack of pedagogical skills. However, teachers adopted EMI due to parents’ pressure, and for their professional survival because the decline of students from their schools forced them to early retirement. Similarly, the belief in the English language to achieve global opportunities and a better future career has established English as a linguistic capital in Nepal and reproduced educational inequality. Furthermore, teachers faced challenges such as linguistic and pedagogical incompetency, an unsupportive school environment and a lack of training to implement EMI in community schools. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of EMI policy in the Nepali community schools and support in forming the language policy in school education.

Keywords: English Medium Instruction, Basic-level teaching, Community school