

Major Issues and Current Trends in Higher Education in Nepal

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Education in Nepal is structured as school education and higher education. School education includes primary level of grades 1-5, lower secondary and secondary levels of grades 6-8 and 9-10 respectively. Grades 11 and 12 are considered as higher secondary level. Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) supervises higher secondary schools which are mostly under private management. Higher education consists of bachelor, masters, MPhils, and PhD levels.

Throughout the world, higher education plays a significant role in human as well as overall nation development. In the process, countless number of people is groomed for government, academia, business, industry, entrepreneurship, and other various jobs. But, in the context of country like Nepal, there exist various problems and challenges. Nepal is undergoing a social and political transition and is in its most critical and formative period. Nepal is struggling to modernize with globalization taking particular forms shaping the educational policies and practices.

Today's dominant education model of Nepal is a system based on antiquated paradigms. What students are meant to learn has often not been clearly defined, well taught or accurately assessed. We really need a curiosity-driven and self-directed learning system based on acquiring knowledge, skills, aptitude, values, innovation and creativity. The current educational models consistently limit the passionate celebration for the wide spectrum of human ability and creativity and try to fit into pre-determined boxes, extricating rather than encouraging young people's unique abilities and talents. There are very limited choices of subjects for students which they could pursue of their interest. Hence, either they are compelled to study other subjects staying in Nepal or go to abroad countries incurring bulk financial expenses. For example, if a person aspires to develop his/her career in the field of student affairs and services then there's not any option available in terms of this subject in higher education arena of Nepal. In almost every university of Nepal, evaluation systems still rely exclusively on traditional paper-and-pencil tests of factual knowledge, which may promote only rote memorization. So, this system must be replaced by a scientific model of evaluation, which can reflect our students' creativity, innovation and vocational skills. We have to sincerely strengthen our weak administrative mechanism in terms of supervision, accountability and financial support. It needs a major overhaul.

Hence, foreign degrees have become the desire of many Nepali students and they have been traveling to various countries across the world. Records from the Department of Scholarship at the Ministry of Education show that the Nepali students have acquired No Objection Letters for 64 countries across the world. MOE (Ministry of Education) Nepal distributes No Objection Letter for students applying for abroad study. Only after having, No Objection Letter students can pay the fee for foreign university. However, Australia, Japan, the United States, China, the United Kingdom, India and Germany are popular destinations for Nepali students. Number of students applying for the no objection letter has doubled over the last four years with as many as 29,380 students applying for the letter from mid-July 2014 to mid-June 2015. Only 11,912 students had applied for the letter in 2011/12 and 16,499 in 2012/12. The number dramatically increased last year with 28,126 applying for the letter (Republica, 2015). The number of Nepalese leaving the country to study and work is on the rise as students and professionals cite a lack of opportunities at home.

Therefore, in order to tackle the increasing rate of brain drain, many things, such as knowledge, skills, resources, commitment and willingness to bring about changes, are required and these dimensions are

more challenging in a developing country like Nepal. Now we need a customer-driven education system that could help us become important beacons in the pursuit of excellence. For this, Nepalese Universities have to come up with diversified subject choices which can ensure both theoretical and practical exposure. Government should come up with proper set of plans and policies to develop technical and vocational education to produce skilled manpower in a country. Having said this, crux lies in the availability of employment opportunities and proper environment to start up an entrepreneurial venture for the manpower after completion of their higher education/university degree. Hence, Nepal should overcome the current phase of political transition as soon as possible after prolongation of new constitution on September 20, 2015 and direct its efforts towards development of each and every productive sector.