

# Tribhuvan University Pioneering Higher Education in the History of Nepal

**Manoj Kumar Karna**

Lecturer Department of English,  
Multiple Campus, Patan, T. U.,

Email: [manojkarna77@gmail.com](mailto:manojkarna77@gmail.com))

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## Abstract

*As per the requirement of changes in higher education to meet the global challenges in the different time beings, Nepal has been witnessing the formal education planning since 1955 and especially the high level education commission since 1983 with various updates in every step. Historically, Tribhuvan University (TU) is the only central and the eldest university of Nepal which carries about eighty percent weight of higher education and its activities are demonstratively a sample for other universities of Nepal. Currently, Nepal has seventeen universities and still there are many in the pipeline. Despite having many sources of higher education in Nepal, the brain drain is a major problem here. This research article consults different book, websites, report and the relevant recent media sources to make a true sense of the qualitative research. A historical brief study of higher education of Nepal, the planner and the stake-holders will get insights for quality education so that the universities like TU will retain its glorious image again.*

**Keywords:** Education planning, Higher education, Policy, Quality, Traditional pedagogy.

## Introduction

This article sincerely examines at potential causes of the Nepalese youths leaving Nepal for higher education in almost all streams currently at most ever in the history of Nepalese higher education. Tribhuvan University (TU) was organized in 1956 CE but incorporated in 1959 CE as the oldest and as well as the only central university in Nepal and till date, it has honoured more than twelve thousand students on last 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 on the occasion of its 49<sup>th</sup> Convocation Day leaving a historical landmark in the world. So any research on Nepal's higher education will be most reliable in the case one makes TU as the study base. However, Nepal has right now seventeen universities, by named, TU in 1959 CE (2016 V. S.); Nepal Sanskrit University (2043 V. S.); Kathmandu University (2048 V. S.); Eastern University (2051 V. S.); Pokhara University (2054 V. S.); Lumbini Bouddha University (2061 V. S.); Agriculture & Forestry University (2067 V. S.); Mid-Western University (2067 V. S.); Far-Western University (2067 V. S.); Open University (2073 V. S.); Rajarshi Janak University (2074 V. S.); Gandaki University (2076 V. S.); Manmohan Technical

University (2076 V. S.); MCEhesh Agriculture University (2078 V. S.); Lumbini Technical University (2079 V. S.); MCEhesh University (2079 V. S.), and MCEan Bhandari Science & Technical University (2080 V. S.). Despite having many universities in a small country like Nepal, the political disinterest in the governments implementing the former suggestions of different report and policies on higher education and also the different hindrances in TU, Nepali students are seeking the foreign universities after school level certificate. Following Paulo Freire's theory of 'Pedagogy of Oppressed' and Goodman's theory of 'Roles of Schools', the article focuses on more activities of the students and acCEemia for skillful learning and creating the job opportunity.

Purposefully, this article generally objectifies on: i) to make feel a sincere review of Nepalese university teacher automatically in her/his pattern of teaching, ii) to draw a sharp picture from higher education historical policies that where the Nepalese government, planner and acCEemia lapse due to which the Nepalese youths feel currently no fulfill of their requirements from TU and the other universities in Nepal, and specially it objectifies i) how to stop the Nepalese brain drain which is happening for study of higher education.

### Method and Theoretical Foundation

Pedagogy in teaching activity is the most crucial factor for learner and teachers. It helps students to learn the course material effectively and the teaching pedagogy may be different for different subjects or faculties. For example, the teaching method of Mathematics is not the exact how the language and literature teaching follows or, history follows. There are many theorists who have formulated principles on teaching methodology as a whole. According to one definition of "pedagogy" (Sally, 2005), it is the study of teaching methods. This scientific writing discusses two theorists – Paulo Freire and Goodman for the intended purpose here.

A Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Reglus Neves Freire (1921–1997) seems dissatisfied with old practice of teaching because for him it is like making a bank of memorizing things in the student without practical knowledge. It is the reason Feire tries to invent a new pedagogy to liberate the student and the teacher also in his language through the conscientization. Talking on trCEitional pattern of pedagogy, he writes in his *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (The big thinkers, n. d.) that the old pedagogy of teaching the student is nothing but dehumanizing them and oppressive also. He broCEly says that the knowledge and culture is changeable. The student must get chance of going outside for practical work and more exposure of life understanding. So Freire writes that 'knowing of word' and 'knowing of the world', knowing of world means knowing the society, both are essential for the student and the teacher. In fact, the author believes that education is a type of 'praxis' which means it is a combo of the action and its proper reflection of that action in behave.

Like Freire, Goodman other theorist, believes that education is not just trCEitionally taught a student with pedagogy, that is, education is to make student able to CEapt in the dynamic world. He CEvocates that education should provide skill of job in the student. Referring to Goodman, Swayam Prakash J. B. R. writes in his *Philosophical and Sociological*

*Foundation of Education* that education's role should be as the student's capacity to CEjust in the changeable society; provide the opportunity of job; provide the opportunity of education to all and especially those who are far from development, and to develop the constructive individual (J. B. R., 2010). In fact, Freire and Goodman stress on that education should be free from any mental capturing of the school.

Hence, this research article follows the qualitative method. It consults some theories on the teaching pedagogies in Nepal's higher education with suggestive one (s) and verifies the higher educational parameters from university grants commission as well as the claims of the stakeholders. It consults different books, recent mass media, report and websites.

### **What about higher educational history in Nepal?**

Nepal has the formal establishment of educational background since 1854 CE. when Durbar High School gets opening in the year. About sixty-four years later in 1918, Tri-chandra college gets affiliation from the then Calcutta (Kolkata) University in Nepal which takes the shape of Tribhuvan University (TU) in 1959 CE. Vishnu Karki writes gives the historical account and pens, 'After twenty-seven years of TU, the then Mahendra Sanskrit University but now called as Nepal Sanskrit University, was established in 1986' (Karki, July 14, 2023). He understands that the 1990s is the golden period for Nepal when many universities come in the existence like Kathmandu University (1991); Pokhara University (1994); Eastern University (1997), and so on along with many institutes in Nepal. According to the data of Nepal's university grants commission, Karki writes, their total number (university and institutes) is twenty. But this number has increased by 2023.

But J. B. R. divides the Nepal's educational background as per the major political era shifts, viz. pre-democratic period (before 1951 CE./2007 V. S.); post-democratic period (between 1951- April 18, 1971/ Baisakh 5, 2028 V. S.), and development period (1971 to onward). This division reflects also Nepal's important democracy day on February 19, 1951; the royal coup by King Mahendra on December 31, 1960 (Paush 17, 2017 V. S.); Nepal National Education Planning Commission 1955 (2011 V. S.); All Round National Education Committee 1962 (2018 V. S.); Report of UNESCO Mission 1962 (2019 V. S.); National Education System Plan 1971-1975 (2028-32 V. S.); Royal High Level Education Commission 1983 (2040 V. S.); the year of referendum in 1980 (2036 V. S.); the restoration of democracy April 8, 1990 (Chaitra 26, 2049 V. S.); National Education Commission 1992 (2049 V. S.); Higher Level National Education Commission 1998 (2055 V. S.); Educational High Level Working Committee's Report 2001 (2058 V. S.); the April Movement to wipe out any type of monarchy from Nepal to gain republican system April 26, 2006 (Baisakh 13, 2063 V. S.); promulgation of the current federal democratic republican constitution September 20, 2015 (Ashoj 3, 2072 V. S.), and so on. Though the National Education System Plan 1971-1975 (2028-32 V. S.) implemented on April 18, 1971 was deposited forcefully on the citizen without any common discussion but it gave the aim and objectives of education with educational organization. So, J. B. R. mentions this plan that education will develop ethics, doing labour, self-dependence, creativity, tendency of scientific thinking, to respect other's idea and views, attraction to good arts, and world brotherhood in

an individual (2023). Under this national education committee, there are university, institutes and campuses to be regulated by education ministry, regional education directorates, and district education offices respectively.

Resembling to aims and goals of 1971 educational plan and expanding those to nine points with other twelve policies, J. B. R. further writes that higher level commission on education of 1998 gives the provision first time of higher education as technical and non-technical; their quality and autonomy; regional, open universities to conduct; entrance test; the research on Sanskrit education; to establish the international research centre; translation institution; study of ancient language; the affiliated campus as public and community; to provide grants them for support; the need of such institution to conduct the higher education in integrated way; terms and conditions for university teachers and staffs; monitoring and supervision; the welfare fund; the decentralization of the examinations; concept of academic calendar; semester system of teaching, and so on. These bases give the foundation of establishment of university grants commission in Nepal.

According to *University grants commission quality assurance and accreditation 2009* (UGC Act) (Nepal), quality in higher education are the approved or fixed lowest or the infrastructures, contents of needs and conditions, symptoms and the characteristics. In this *University grants commission quality assurance and accreditation 2009*, there are provision of test of quality standard, criteria for measuring the quality standard, the self-review for criteria, peer review for evaluation and such others. The committee under this Nepalese quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) monitors and interacts for the prescribed purposes with the higher education entities in the country and the standing committee looks after this committee. It is important to note that the committees' duty becomes vital for higher educational entities which are to disseminate the information of quality assurance accreditation to the government, student, job providers and the other related parties; to organize the avian, meeting, workshop, seminar and so on for quality assurance and accreditation; to conduct the research for quality standard education in higher education field; to conduct the programmes of promotion, motivation and development to bring improvement; to provide the technical and grant for autonomy, transparency and quality; to register the higher educational entities for quality assurance and accreditation certificate, and to provide the prescribed services by the law.

For the principles of quality assurance and accreditation, the section four has formulated the bases as all types of higher education must be quality assured and all the stakeholders will contribute the Nepalese higher education level in the international level; to fulfill the requirements of all the higher students in the fields of arts, science, skill and technology; to ensure the competitive opportunity of jobs, demand and supply in the regional, national and international labour market through higher education; to respect the treaties and agreements of Nepal done with any regional and international bodies in the favour of higher education, and to ensure the basic physical infrastructure and other terms and conditions. However, according to Nepali quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) provision in section five, a

higher educational entity must score more than fifty percent out of fifty marks to get the QAA certificate.

In overall, the total ten sections in this Nepali quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) have the provisions as follows- while the first section is opening; the second section deals with the committee and special committee, the third secretariat and quality assurance and accreditation division; the fourth the work for quality assurance accreditation; the sixth the self-evaluation of quality standard; the seventh the review of equivalence; the eighth the fixation of criteria for quality assurance accreditation; the ninth the code of conduct for occupational and professionalism, and the tenth miscellaneous.

The fourth annual report of University Grants Commission on higher education 2021/22 (2078/079 V. S.) examines a selection of key topics for QAA strategic plan from 2021 – 2030 which has conducted fifteen times the meeting of Educational Quality Assurance and Accreditation (EQAA) for policy making; the meeting for technical committee for nine times and such other many meetings for self-study and for betterment of higher education overall. But the report shows that number of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) from TU, other Nepali universities, and other institutes number, where they are more than thousand in number, have applied for or passed the criteria of Letter of Intent (LOI) for renewal of HEI certificate is just eight campus and colleges; and twelve institutes, and just five HEIs for re-accreditation in annex 11 only.

### **Do Nepalese universities follow the above criteria?**

To find the answer whether Nepali higher educational entities or not, the fourth annual report of University Grants Commission on higher education 2021/22 (2078/079 V. S.) says no completely cipher but their number is seriously very low. Again the writer invites you to see some other parameters from mass media to ascertain the acCEemic loops in Nepal in higher education. Referring to Kapil Pokharel, a gold medalist in Economics at master's level in the forty-ninth convocation of TU on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023, Nunuta Rai writes, 'To clear the wrong perception of that there is no use of study and has to be a jobless person, I have done hCE labour and have won the gold medal' (Rai, 2023). Rai further mentions the opinion of Kapil Pokharel for improvement in TU and other Nepali universities he sees: he wants to do something in own nation so insteCE of medal, the opportunity of job is essential. Pokharel believes that TU must have the knowledge about medalist students after six months, there should be provision of allowing more marks in the service commission, the priority to such student in teaching is essential and a time will be expected like when he returns to Nepal after his doctorate degree.

Other media persons are also not satisfied. They also bring data to prove their logic. Pointing out that the teachers in TU mostly are busy with politics rather than teaching activities and that the ranking of TU in Times Higher Education 2024 degrCEed by falling down between 1,201 to 1,500 which was earlier between 801 to 1000, Rajesh Kumar Rai writes, 'For promotion to associate professor and professor, there should be a provision for doctorate degree; to provide more weigh of marks for peer-reviewed article than the earned

certificates' division in the past, and not to count the tenure of any authoritative post until the person does not take the class' (Rai, 2023). He further mentions that there are difficult processes in TU for writing proposal, gathering the fund, to conduct the research in lengthy time duration, to publish the article. He even wants to increase the number of seats for open competitors than the internal vacancies in TU service. Though Rajesh Rai's ideas are for goodwill of TU, however, his all ideas are not practically applicable in the universities. For example, whoever wants to achieve the doctorate degree as soon as quick and also devotes for it but many candidates are there whose poor financial capacity hinders in Nepal and TU. In such condition, if the Ph.D. holder provision becomes a way only for promotion in associate professor and professor then who will write research articles in the peer-reviewed journal and why will anyone go to serve in the university far from Kathmandu ?

Pointing out the existing problems in the Nepalese universities and especially in TU, Karna notices those problems by diving in two parts: of the government's constituent campus and the private affiliated college. He finds that some problems are common but some are uncommon in those sectors. He mentions that the brain from Nepal even in the science faculty is much which is a question mark not only on the acCEemia but also on the central government's policies on higher education in Nepal (Karna, December 11, 2023). Karna finds out that more than average semester classes do not properly follow here all the verdicts of dean offices in campus and colleges like term-paper writing, project work, fair internal evaluation etc; there is a fear of loss of job after one/two semester as well as the low and late payment of remuneration in the private sector compel the teacher there to be more as a bargainer to collect students for enrolment than to remain as a teacher; the school level education poor background having students with sound financial background and their parents mostly think that their children will be an excellent human resource in abroCE with a magical stick and without studying hard so the trend is more to go abroCE; no earning way for students during thesis and internship; lack of opportunity to handle the latest technologies in the specific field in Nepalese classes, and such others help students to do brain drain from Nepal.

In another article, Karna again CEEds more points which are responsible for brain drain form Nepal. Karna thinks that only the new authority of TU (or, any university) cannot solve all the problems rather the federal government must acknowledge its part also and the authority personality must have goodwill, desirous to improve the situation in free atmosphere as an authority to work there. He writes that the poor performance of TU's staffs; still the semester classes running in the lecture method; the unfair and foul student politics in the name of students' wings near different political parties; not updated the course of studies; less number of well-trained university teachers; not well facilitated classrooms with CEvanded technologies; no cozy classrooms for students; examination conduction whole year not in a separate examination building/hall rather in the teaching rooms by hampering the classes; acCEemic calendar not being applied hard and fast; plagiarism in thesis and term paper; same person question paper setter, also examiner and scrutiny member becoming; examinations not occurring fairly; result not being published in time; a hoax of Nepalese

higher institutions are not global competitive, and so on are some reasons why the Nepalese students go abroad for higher studies (Karna, December 28, 2023).

But other educationist Vishnu Karki thinks that politicizing in the universities by teacher and political parties are more responsible for quality degradation in study in Nepal. He gives example of the USA, England and Australia that there are many universities there but still the charming of study is high there is a lesson for us. Giving the opening history of universities in Nepal, he writes that either the political parties and the vested interest having different people some used universities to uproot the Royal Rule or some wanted to distribute the affiliation to the private to earn or some opened the universities for religious teaching and promotion then some of us followed the politicians for being appointed as an authority but we thought less to provide the quality education to the students and to avoid any type of foul politics (Karki, July 14, 2023).

Let us see the views of Regmi. Comparing neighbouring countries, Nepal has less number of universities. The proportionate number of students in Nepal is far more than India and China. Regmi writes that while India has total 1,023 universities out of which 54 are central, 443 provincial, 123 honorary and 403 private universities are there and China has total 2,738 universities which includes 1,468 higher technical universities; Nepal has total central and provincial 16 universities. Additionally some technical institutes (Regmi, July 3, 2023). He calculates that China has a university per half a million populations; India 1.4 million, and Nepal 1.9 million so, points out the necessity of more number of universities in Nepal but those universities should be on thoughts rather than memorizing method of teaching; meeting with the global challenges of science and technology; to sort out the dilemma between culture and ethics but with social sense, and above all the today's education should be on multidimensional group teaching based on interview.

Regmi questions on the traditional lecture method of teaching in Nepalese universities. Here, his ideas resemble with Karna's ideas mentioned above in this section of article. He writes in another article, 'The unimplemented university calendar is the root cause of downfall of Nepali universities but the regular vacancies to recruit new human resources; management of the part-time teacher and ad-hoc teacher, and the need of campus not prioritizing while implementing any policy are also the key factors' (Regmi, Dec. 12, 2023).

### **What comes out from discussion and the lessons for today?**

From above discussions, one can see that the higher education entities including TU are currently unable to keep the tracks of EQAA's which are amended time-and-again in the *University grants commission quality assurance and accreditation 2009*. As the higher education entities fail to meet the EQAA, they not only lose the faith of the Nepalese society but also their ranking fall down in international magazines. In such teaching ongoing as today in many university and institutes in Nepal with old pedagogy (lecture method) with unrefined course of study; the students will not get praxis of Freire's theory by which the individual reflects the studied material in the practical life and even the theory of Goodman

will also stop working, that is, the product from higher educational bodies of Nepal will not compete globally and will remain as a jobless.

Therefore, the author strongly suggests the following points for all the concerning parties related to higher education in Nepal:

- i) The narrative of no use of higher education in Nepal should be cleared by the stake holder higher education entities of Nepal and the government of Nepal. In fact, to achieve good result, one must labour hard and it is not a magic act rather a habit of reCEing culture narrative is to be set. While the universities need to provide quality and skilled education, the government needs to provide the job opportunities in Nepal; the proper honour to the performing students, and to invest in a huge amount to see outcome in the two and three decCEes aheCE in the nation;
- ii) The university teacher must stop the general politics in the premise of university and also the foul politics to grab the post to fill-up the personal bio-data than the performance in actuality. The university must provide necessary financial support for doctorate degree to all and specially to those who are the core staffs, and the government of Nepal must increase the big financial support in the universities;
- iii) Whether to teach in the government's constituent campus or in a private college, a teacher should perform satisfactorily with the paid salary in the classroom by using all the equipments available, however, there are necessary to be the well facilitated classrooms and no any labour exploitation of the human resources in the private sector so, the regular and fair monitoring from university is essential to ensure the good conditions. The private investor, who wants to earn from education line, should select other business sector;
- iv) The students should get chance of gaining experience and earning for self study during research and internship;
- v) The ensure the semester class activities prescribed by the dean office like attendance, presentation, project work, writing term paper, regular filing the activities of students by teacher, internal evaluation, and so on; and
- vi) The higher education's concerning entities and persons must produce a global citizen who is ethical, a true humanist, a competent and industrious.

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