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**Music education in the campuses of Tribhuvan University**  
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**Citation:** Regmi, D. C. (2022). Music education in the campuses of Tribhuvan University. *Journal of Fine Arts Campus*, 4(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jfac.v4i2.54834>

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**Abstract**

An organized music education system is pivotal for the overall development of an individual or the country. The country which has a systematic music education creates opportunities for all types of music related professionals. Many countries have incorporated music into their education system. Sad to say, no governments in the Nepali History ever made effort to establish and to promote a broad-based, organized and institutionalized music education. It is only after 1951, the organized and institutionalized music education have begun to put down roots in Nepal. The establishment of Tribhuvan University (TU) in 1959 can be taken as a momentous event in this regard. In this paper, we take a look at the role of Tribhuvan University and campuses under it contributing to the development of music education in Nepal. This paper tries to portray the current state of music in the campuses under the TU.

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**Key words:** *Tribhuvan University, music education, curriculum.*  
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**1.1 Background**

Music is a natural phenomenon, which falls beyond the scrutiny of materialistic eyes and views of historians or even the mighty musicians who cultivate the original 'Nada' in different modes to present a musical event. The term 'music' is used all over the world to refer to the vocal and instrumental performing arts, often accompanied by dancing (Regmi, 2004).

The people of Nepal have always been seekers of the truth, probing mysteries of nature and exploring natural beauties. Music is taken, at the highest level, as a holy and sacred thing; a means of salvation and realisation of God. Music is an integral part of Nepali life and society which the Nepalese have used as a means of entertainment, religious rites and rituals, education and occupational purposes. Music, from the earliest times, has been an important mode of expression of the human creativity. Today, it is a valued social and cultural art form transcending language, religious and racial barriers. In modern life, music serves several purposes, such as;

- Music is a worthwhile accomplishment for its own sake, an education for life.
- Socially shared musical activities help develop personality traits and promote much needed social harmony
- Music education fosters, actively and imaginatively, the affective, cognitive and psychomotor aspects of human development.
- Musical creativity, linked with competence and enterprise, provides life and employment opportunities.
- Music has an important role to play in the economy, both nationally and internationally.

Various past studies have proven that quality music education and instruction is helpful in improving academic performance—specifically, better scores on standardized tests. It is also established that the pursuit of music facilitates learning other subjects. Various researches have indicated that the brain of a musician, even a young one, works differently than that of a non-musician. Similarly, people who have had formal musical training tend to be pretty good at remembering verbal information stored in memory. Variety of instruments and songs are important to enhance children's educational experience and foster their academic, social, and emotional growth (Brown, No date).



Numerous researches have also shown that learning the do-re-mi's can help children excel in ways beyond the basic ABCs. It also found that learning music facilitates learning other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas. Overall, music education or training helps young people for language development, increases IQ, the brain works harder, spatial-temporal skills and improves test scores (Cerabesi, 2016).

Music education is an academic necessity and asset to any student who wants to reach their full learning potential throughout their life. Sarah Malburg listed following most important reasons for providing music education to students (Malburg, 2012):

- Provides an aesthetic experience.
- Provides the students with opportunities for emotional response.
- It instills life values such as; discipline, cooperation, social skills, and ethics.
- Knowledge of music technology, music history, music theory, and music culture will reinforce knowledge in other academic subjects as well.
- Music often create a sense of school spirit, which, in turn, provides the students with a sense of self-worth which will almost always reflect a positive attitude.
- Provides the direction to obtain the highest level of achievement and excellence deemed possible.

In cognizance of the importance of music education, schools and universities around the world are treating music as an important part of the overall education system. And hence, they are putting their best efforts into making the music curriculum more scientific, realistic and customized for the young people. It is sad to say that no governments in Nepali history ever felt the necessity to establish and promote a broad-based, organized, and structured musical education. Only with the advent of democracy in 1951, the Government of Nepal has established many institutions. However, an organised and institutionalised system of musical education seemed to have put down roots in Nepal only after the establishment of TU in 1959. The initiation and efforts made by TU (with some exceptions) has been certainly helping to create conducive environment for the development of music education in Nepal.

## **1.2 Research Methodology and Data Analysis**

This is a descriptive and exploratory research aiming at exploring the situation of music education in Nepal. The design has been purposely chosen, as the goal of the study is to describe and examine the role of TU in the development and institutionalization of music education. Since, this task is not yet done in a systematic way, the exploration is expected to be helpful in establishing firm experience in the betterment of music education in the campuses of TU. The information required to meet the objectives of this study will be collected using both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data will be ascertained mainly from interview with various teachers, students, administrators, policy makers and other experts who have knowledge and experience about music, curriculum and institution dealing with music education. In course of collecting secondary information, the several musicians of Nepal, Department of Archaeology, libraries and available published documents, syllabuses and reports will be consulted extensively.

## **1.3 Music Education in Tribhuvan University**

The establishment of TU in 1959 can be taken as a milestone and quantum leap forward in favour of organized teaching/learning of music in Nepal. As a result of this, various campuses under TU started teaching classical vocal, instrumental and dance. Padma Kanya was the first college to institutionalize formal music education in Nepal in 1959. Later on, this was replicated to other campuses under TU namely Ratna Rajya Laxmi and Fine Arts in 1977 and 1979 respectively. It is also interesting to note that the Faculty of Education of TU included music in the Intermediate level in 1967 allocating 200 marks for the subject. This course was offered in College of Education in Kathmandu and Thakur Ram Multiple College, Birgunj in 1967 and 1971 respectively. After running for few years in Intermediate level both the colleges closed this programme (Regmi, 2020). Hereunder, we briefly discuss the situation of music in the various campuses of TU.

**Padma Kanya Multiple Campus:** Padma Kanya a girls' campus under TU, established in 1951, has a long history of music education in Nepal. It has been the precursor of music education in Nepal served



as pioneer to institutionalize music education in 1959 as an extracurricular subject at the Intermediate level. This was followed by inclusion of music as an optional subject in Intermediate level in 1960 and Bachelor level in 1963. Later on, in 1966, folk music and dance was also incorporated as an extracurricular activity into the course (Padma Kanya, 1959). The current course is the combination of eastern classical, Nepali folk music with some basic knowledge on western music. Earlier, the students have option to choose between classical music (vocal or instrumental) and dances. However, recently campus has made a policy that students can choose music (vocal or instrumental) can also choose dance as another optional subject. Recently, in past, campus has also started the master's classes in dance. In its history of six decades, Padma Kanya has hosted many eminent Nepali musicians as teachers who have worked through the years to establish and maintain a standard of excellence for music at the campus. Previously, the department had over 20 teachers as well as a large number of students. However, after the removal of Certificate level, the number of students fell sharply and so fell the number of teachers.

**Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus:** Ratna Rajya Laxmi Girls' College, was established in 1963. It was converted into co-education and named Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus in 1973 and a course on music was introduced as an optional subject in the Intermediate level. The college started Bachelor in Music in 1999, almost after 26 years of running Intermediate level classes. The music classes were running very well and the students were in good number. However, the elimination of certificate level from campuses under TU affected the smooth run. Now, they have only Bachelor level in music. Since its establishment many renowned vocalists and tabla players have contributed to the development of music education in TU.

**Fine Arts Campus:** Fine Arts Campus, earlier known as Juddha Kala Pathshala was originally started by Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher in 1934 as Nepal Art School which was later converted to a full-fledged Art campus in 1973 (Pokharel, 2016). The classical vocal and sitar was incorporated into the Intermediate level in 1976 and Bachelor level in 1977. As with the Padma Kanya and Ratna Rajya, the curriculum of this campus too was modelled after eastern classical music syllabuses of different Indian institutions. At present, the campus is running 4 years Bachelor level in various discipline of music that includes: vocal, instrumental, folk music and dances. Like other campuses of TU, this campus too bore the brunt of the fateful decision taken by TU to phase out the PCL.

**Central Department of Fine Arts (CDFA):** The establishment of CDFA and the introduction of Masters level study in music and Fine Arts in the TU in 2009 can be taken as a significant breakthrough in favour of higher education in music in Nepal. Until yesterday, students aspiring higher studies in music had to obtain degrees from foreign institutes have now opportunity to pursue their higher education in their own country. Initially, two years Master's programme is now converted into four semesters and the earlier course has also been revised to give space to the eastern classical music, western music and the Nepalese folk music. Similarly, in 2017, the CDFA has also started the MPhil-PhD programme in Fine Arts which can be also taken as another landmark achievement in the history of formal music education in Nepal. A student having BFA or BA or an equivalent degree in music or a recognized Universities degree of BA with subject related degree from any formal institutions are eligible for admission in MFA in music and as student having Master's degree in any discipline from TU or Universities recognized by TU are eligible for admission in MPhil-PhD in Fine Arts.

**Sirjana College of Fine Arts:** The TU affiliated private college Sirjana College of Fine Arts was established in 2001. In the context of no music being taught in high schools and the phase out of PCL from all campuses under TU, the number of students pursuing music at college level has been on the decline every year. Against this frustrating scenario, the establishment of this college is considered crucial in bridging the gap between high school and the university education. The college has included music education at Intermediate level in 2010 in affiliation with Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) and Bachelor level classes in music in 2014 following the music syllabus of TU.

#### **1.4 Information gathered from Perception Survey**

In its history of six and half decades of TU, the music department of various campuses has hosted many eminent Nepali music teachers who have worked through the years to establish and maintain a



standard of excellence for the development of music education in TU. It was moving well and the campuses were running music courses both in PCL and Bachelor level in quite efficient manner. However, the decision taken by the TU in 2009 to phase out PCL came as terrible blow for the promotion of music education in Nepal.

Since there is no music course in high school level and no Intermediate level in campus, there has been a big fall in number of students every year which impacted the growth of music education in Nepal. On the other hand, lack of music education friendly plans and policies, TU has not been able to enhance the quality of music education as well as expand its music programme beyond the four campuses. To explore the reason, we have interviewed and discussed with scores of teachers, academicians, administrators and students of music on the current state of music education in the various campuses under TU. Although the discussion was held on different aspects of music, we have put down below the summary of the views of respondents which matters to the areas of our research.

#### **1.4.1 Infrastructures and Learning Environment**

In order to run music classes, the institutions need to have basic minimum infrastructures and resources. Most of the respondents expressed dismay at the inadequate class room facility and lack of separate essential infrastructures for music. They complained that campuses lacked music-friendly learning environment. Some of the students were frustrated at the available resources in their campuses. The music department doesn't have enough and good music instruments, music or audio video libraries, computers and other accessories needed to run smooth class of music. Some of the students and teachers said that they do not have even class rooms to carry out regular classes and practices. Even the available classrooms are fairly small and with dirty carpet covered in dust.

Some even explained that if they had known this sorry state of music classes, they would have given the second thought before enrolling in music. They questioned "Given the pathetic state and poor facility, how could one expect large numbers of students in music!" Nevertheless, some others expressed tone of optimism. Some of the students and teachers from Fine Arts Campus expressed their happiness at the on-going construction of their new campus building in Bhotahity at the centre of Kathmandu. They were of view that though they were not lucky and were denied sound learning environment, future students will have a better place to learn music.

Likewise, the students and teachers of Padma Kanya Campus take an optimistic view about friendly learning environment for music department after completion of proposed construction of new dance building. However, after completion of the building, the campus administration denied to provide those music and dance friendly spaces to the music department and provided to non-art related subjects.

The students from Central Campus opined that they do have a good learning physical facility; however, they are deprived of minimum necessary equipment and resources needed for music students. Almost all of the respondents were unanimous on voicing their concerns over the need for good library, quality instruments and audio visual music library in the music departments. Thus, from the responses of teachers and students, it is clear that the colleges running music classes are in want of sound music learning environment and required facilities.

#### **1.4.2 Economic security and employment opportunity**

From interviews it is learnt that learning music is quite expensive. Compared to other subjects, music takes much time and effort to learn while they have very little incentive, prospects, scope and opportunities to become a professional musician. Most of the respondents didn't see the prospect of living a rich and successful life through music. Few respondents hoped to land at least a job in school as music teacher in consequence of the government policy to hire at least one music teacher in schools. However, the government's policies often get confined to the papers so most of the respondent students think entering into music involves big risk, for it costs money, effort and time without promises of return.

Most of the respondents pointed at the issue of job security in music sector and said that they might have to look and settle for job completely different from what they have studied. As of today, besides few schools and four campuses of TU, there have been no music classes. Not much jobs are going on for the



musicians and artists even within the university. Most of the teachers are either part time employee or on contract basis and their earning is deplorably low. Some of the teachers teaching on a daily wage basis are on the lookout for other opportunities; for they find it difficult to scrape along on small pay they receive from the campuses. One of the respondent teacher openly admitted "Sometimes in a period of 6 months I collect a cheque worth 10,000 and that falls only too short in meeting my family need. And hence, I bank on things like gigs, private tuition, recording, travel, religious festivals etc. How can one possibly survive on this paltry sum?" he questioned.

#### **1.4.3 Music curriculum**

A large number of respondents held view that the curriculum of TU is only too traditional, old fashioned, out of tune with the time and challenges, and unproductive for all-rounded musicians, and is far from realistic. They think that the current curriculum of Bachelor or Master's level, does not contain the materials or knowledge that it takes for a student to build their skills on and on that strength compete in the global market. Even the teachers who themselves involved in the syllabus- designing process voiced their dissatisfaction over the current curriculum and its designing process. They opined that they are doing all they could do at their level to push for change in the current music curriculum of TU. However, in spite of their effort and concerns it is difficult to get the desired change materialize.

Some other respondents were of opinion that the syllabus in itself was not that bad as it allowed space and scope to improve it gradually. One shouldn't take a dogmatic approach to it. We need to observe flexibility. They said that the current syllabus, be it of Bachelors or Masters' level, are too heavy. In their opinion, the designers of syllabuses have focused to feed numbers of *ragas* and *talas*. The syllabus should rather be more focused on the interests of music students favouring their overall development by concentrating on the modern and scientific technique of learning.

There had been unanimity of opinion among respondents over the syllabuses, be it of Bachelor or Masters level. The syllabuses, that date back some six decades, were originally designed around traditional practices and belief. Thus, they perceive the document as an unscientific, unrealistic, and out of tune with the present-day need. Despite repeated revision, restructuring, and introduction of new courses, the effort didn't really bring about any significant changes to the content of the previous courses. Nowhere the existing syllabuses contain the essential materials or knowledge that it takes for students to enhance their skills so as to enable them to compete in the global market. Thus, most of the respondent suggested that current syllabuses need to improve and update as per the changing context and trend.

#### **1.4.4 Poorly informed administration and unclear policy**

In course of the study, we also came across some administrators and chief of the institutes whom we found poorly informed about the issues and technologies related to music. Most of them held the superficial notion that music isn't that important as other subjects like math, science, economics etc. They even have no idea or lack of understanding about the resources required for music instruction or to run music classes. One of the respondents (music teacher) shared his experience by citing an anecdote about one administrator of his campus who didn't even had the knowledge on how music classes are run in the institute. He explains that in music practical classes there is always the need to have a principal teacher of vocal or instrumental, and additional number of accompanists. The presence of two teachers in one class had been a subject of curiosity for the administrator who failed to understand the relevance of it.

Some teachers and students were of view that most of the administrators and authorities of the TU have very little or no idea about music and that they fail to see how music education can help the overall development of the students. They also shared some unpalatable experiences about how campus and TU administration discriminate and look down upon the students and teachers of music as opposed to teachers and students of other subjects. At times, they tend to think that music teachers are inferior to the teachers of other subjects and that they take to teaching music because they do not have any other option. Thus, the music teachers find poor or no representation in any committees formed in the campuses or in the university.

The respondents have cited many examples about lapses and unclear policy of TU that is hindering to growth of music education or sector in TU. In Nepal, most of the teachers of TU, artists, musicians and



students have so far received degrees from the institutes such as Prayag Sangit Samiti, Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and other various Indian Boards. However, in 1988, without any reasonable justification, TU made an abrupt decision to derecognize degrees obtained from such institutions and Boards of India. Most of the respondents expressed their views that the fateful decision caused serious setback to the growth of music education in Nepal.

Surprisingly, even after having such decision, TU Service Commission has been appointing and promoting teachers with degrees of such institutions continuously. A respondent who is also a permanent teacher working in the TU since last many years has applied for the MPhil-PhD programme and already completed his two semesters and promoted to the third semester. However, after successful completion of his two semesters, now the Curriculum Development Centre and Dean office has denied to give him admission in the third semester by saying that he has not obtained the Bachelor degree in his subject. If so, how he was eligible to get admission in the MPhil-PhD level!

The Fine Arts Subject Committee is the authority to decide in such issues but no authority has consulted the Subject Committee on this matter. The Committee has even already decided that any persons having Bachelor level degree in any subject with additional degrees of music are eligible to get admission in the Master level. Regarding this, we have also made efforts to meet the concerned authorities but found that none of the officials are accountable and are trying to shift their burden to another authority or division. The above examples show that the policy of TU is not clear, lack of coordination and the authorities are not aware of their own decision. This kind of abrupt decision of TU has not only created problem but also has left no signs of solution. If TU wish to solve this problem, they should follow the practices of many Indian and other international Universities by recognizing such degrees on the basis of similar academic degrees as well as the expert opinion of Fine Arts Subject Committee.

#### **1.4.5 Narrow scope, space and opportunity for formal music learning**

Many of the respondents believed that music learning opportunity is available only outside the formal education system and is costly. They were of view that in comparison to other subjects, students learn music only at the university level and, that too, in limited places. One of the major reasons for the decline in number of students each year in TU campuses is the absence of incentives and encouragement to become a musician. They favoured an urgent intervention by the authorities to change the status quo by advocating with schools and colleges to run formal music classes so that student gets an opportunity to learn music at early stage and more jobs can be created for the musicians.

It is unfortunate that music education is limited to few colleges inside the Kathmandu Valley as formal education. It is widely felt that this situation should change. Music should be included in the curriculum from the school level to the college level so that students can prioritize their interest and pursue career in this field. If more schools offered formal music instruction, and such music instruction intended to prepare students for the university study, then there would be more jobs available for music professionals, and more students would be able to see music study as a viable career. All these will contribute to a favourable condition for music education.

At present, TU offers different types of music courses ranging from classical, vocal and instrumental (tabla, violin, sitar and flute) to folk music. Even the curriculum favours learning of several instruments but the campuses do not give admission to the students due to the lack of resources. As for instance, Padma Kanya Campus has option for learning sitar and vocal but that is beyond the reach of a male student and Nepal Manabiki Campus has only option for learning vocal. So, male students seeking to learn sitar have no opportunity. Fine Arts Campus is the only place where both male and female can get equal opportunity for learning but they have put the restriction of minimum 10 students as condition for running the classes.

Most of the students appear to be very keen to learn classical music, for they think it will help them to build a good foundation in music. They see classical music being a grammar of music, and hence, learning it will help them in future to adapt to any genre of music they want. However, some other students expressed desire to learn other genre of music or instruments too but they have no opportunity for it. Almost



all of them blamed the unavailability of learning opportunity for students to pursue their own interest; hence, they are forced to learn it outside the campus. This could be one of the reasons for gradual decline in numbers of students in the campuses of TU.

#### **1.4.6 Pedagogy and expectations of students**

Most of the students interviewed opined that they wanted to study music before they go to the university. However, they have no such places to go and receive formal music education. The only option before them is to take admission in the University as beginners. Some students said that there had been some very excellent music teachers and that they wanted to learn from the teachers of their choice but the existing system didn't allow them to learn as per their wish. They said this left them with limited options – take it or leave it! Some leave it and take admission in private institutes which turns out to be very costly. They stressed on the need for an arrangement whereby students can learn from one or two teachers according to their choice. There is no doubt about it that it calls the institutes for appointing a good quality teacher.

The students were also of view that the current learning system of music is highly traditional. The teachers are far from using any modern and scientific technique in teaching, learning process. The teaching method, techniques, and the materials are nearly the same as we studied in the history. The introduction of modern methods, techniques and materials in music teaching cannot be overemphasized.

#### **1.4.7 Complacency**

Many a respondent put the blame on fund security of TU constituent campuses for the malady. They said that the government funded TU constituent campuses live with no worry about funding. Since the financial burden and responsibilities is borne by the University, the campuses do not face any challenges in finding funds to run it, and hence, do not bother about the need to be innovative and competitive.

The respondents cited examples of private institutes having little or no physical facility charge high tuition fees, and yet attract large numbers of students and sustain operations. On the other hand, students at TU constituent campuses are on constant decline. With all the competitive and comparative advantages such as; a long history, qualified teachers, nominal fees and better physical facilities and infrastructure, the campuses under TU are unable to attract students. The reason, music programme in the campuses under TU has not grown or expanded in the last 6 and half decades. The complacency too is responsible for stagnating the growth and expansion of music education in TU constituent campuses.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

The architecture, painting, music, and dance are some of the first things that come to mind when foreigners discuss the South Asian city. Since they enjoy great international reputation, music, needless to say, deserves to be protected, promoted, developed, and taught in an advanced level. This should be the reason why music was included in the course of TU as a part of formal education. Unfortunately, music learning opportunity is there in Nepal but only outside the formal education system and that is very expensive. Unlike other subjects, students start learning music only at the university level, and that too, in limited places. In this regard, TU need to expand music education to other campuses and regions of the country.

Music is a broad field; it provides countless opportunities for a rewarding career. If a country has schools, colleges and universities that provide easy access to the opportunity for music education, there's no doubt about it that they produce not merely music teachers, performers but can also produce music arrangers, composers, lawyers, sound engineers, music therapists and an array of other talented music professionals. So, in the long run, a good system of music education pays back to a country and helps develop it economically. Today, music is one of the fastest growing industries in the world promising a wide range of opportunities, employing millions of people. Devotion, talent, genuine interest, sincerity, commitment and willingness to work hard can guarantee a big success in the field of music. But again, carving a career out of this talent requires formal education and devotion. In this direction, the government and the University have to take initiative. Without a well-thought out, long-term perspectives and plan for the promotion of music, not much can be achieved in this sector.

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