

# Higher Education Status in Nepal: Possibilities and Prospects

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## Abstract

Higher education is the key to the overall development of a country like Nepal, whose population is ephemeral through a demographic transition. Currently, 11 universities, four health academies and 1432 higher education institutions associated (constituent and affiliated) are providing mainstream higher education in Nepal. However, providing access to higher education to the increased number of the eligible population still remains a challenge, while on the other hand, the quality of higher education and its significance to local and national primacy has been a concern. In the meantime, planners, policymakers and researchers need timely and relevant data in order to meet the challenge faced in their relevant sectors. Despite having challenges in higher education in Nepal, Tribhuvan University, the oldest and leading university, is producing more Masters, MPhil, and PhD graduates for the nation's overall development.

**Keywords:** Higher education, possibility, prospects, status

## Background

Higher education has a crucial role in the overall development of a country like Nepal, whose population is passing through a demographic transition (Upadhyay, 2018). Currently, a total of 11 universities, 4 health academies and 1432 higher education institutions associated (constituent or affiliated) with them are providing mainstream higher education in the country. However, on the one hand, providing access to higher education to the increased number of the eligible population still remains a challenge, while on the other hand, the quality of higher education and its relevance to market and national priority has been a concern.

Universities provide higher education through their central departments, constituent campuses, affiliated campuses and medical academies (UGC, EMIS, 2018). Currently, there are eleven universities and four medical academies. The universities are Tribhuvan University (T.U.), Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU), Kathmandu University (K.U.), Pokhara University (PokU), Purbanchal University (P.U.), Lumbini Bauddha University (LBU), Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU), Mid-Western University (MWU), Far Western University (FWU), Nepal Open University (NOU) and Rajarshi Janak University (RJU). And the medical academies are the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS), B. P. Koilara Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS) and Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS).

Each university has different institutions or faculties. Faculties offer several programs and courses the higher education in Nepal. Faculties are controlled by the respective Dean's Office of the university. For each faculty, there is one Dean's office. Bachelor's and Master's Levels are the two major levels of study (education) offered by the universities. PhD research programmes are also run by each university. Most of the Bachelor's programs are of four years though some programs, such as medical programs, are of five years. Master's level programs are for two years. PhD programs are also offered in constituent campuses of some universities.

The constituent campuses are managed directly by the concerned university from all the universities (Simkhada, & Van Teijlingen, 2010). Affiliated campuses are controlled and managed by non-governmental organizations, and their academic programs are affiliated to universities. The affiliated campuses work under the control of respective affiliating universities (Baral, 2007). The affiliating campuses teach courses developed by their universities; exams of such campuses are conducted and evaluated by the affiliating universities. Affiliated campuses are further categorized into private and community. Private campuses are controlled and managed by private organizations under the rules and regulations of the concerned university, whereas community campuses are controlled and managed by the stakeholders of the community with non-profit motive as per the rules and regulations of the concerned university. Affiliated campuses have a considerable degree of administrative and financial autonomy (Bista, Sharma, & Raby, 2019; Dhakal, 2017).

In the year 2018/19, there are altogether 1432 higher education campuses, 147 constituent (10.27%) campuses, 747 private (52.16%) and 538 community (37.56%) campuses. Tribhuvan University, a leading university in Nepal, has 1141 campuses (61 constituent and 1080 affiliated campuses). The other major universities in terms of student numbers are PU, PokU, and K.U. These universities have more than 18000 students and more than 20 campuses. PU has 116 (8.1%) campuses, PokU has 67 (4.68%) campuses, and K.U. has 24 (1.68%) campuses (Bhatta, 2015; EMIS, 2018).

This study shows the status of higher education in Nepal. Eleven full universities and four medical academies (governed by the Government of Nepal) and their constituent and affiliated campuses are providing education on different programs of different faculties to the students. The campuses of the universities are categorized into two types: constituent and affiliated. The affiliated campuses are either private or community-based (Gaulee, 2014).

The history of higher education started in Nepal with the establishment of the first college, i.e. Tri-Chandra College, in 1918 (Kölbel, 2013). Tribhuvan University came into function in 1959, and it was the only university in Nepal until 1985. In the early 80s, the Government adopted the concept of a multi-university system, and as a result, Mahendra Sanskrit University was established in 1986, followed by Kathmandu University in 1990, and Purbanchal and Pokhara Universities in 1995 and 1996, respectively. All these universities were established through the Acts approved by the Parliament, and they function as public institutions (Chauhan, 2008; Shiwaku, Shaw, Kandel, Shrestha, & Dixit, 2007).

The eleven full universities like Tribhuvan University (T.U.), Kathmandu University (K.U.), Pokhara University (PokU), Purbanchal University (P.U.), Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU), Lumbini Bauddha University (LBU)), Far-Western University (FWU),

Mid-Western University (MWU), Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU), Nepal Open University, Rajarshi Janak University, and four medical academies and the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS), Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) and Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS) are producing human resources for the overall development of the country.

## Objectives of the Study

This article intends to fulfil the following objectives:

- To explore the higher education status in Nepal in terms of girls' enrollment, gender parity index and student-teacher ratio;
- To find out the pass rate of students in Tribhuvan University, the number of graduates in different faculties in seven universities in Nepal.

## Methodology

A quantitative research design is used in this study. The population of the study were all eleven universities in Nepal. The census sampling technique was used in this study. Document analysis has been done to prepare this article. The secondary information is collected through contributions of the concerned universities, Dean's offices and their office of the controllers of examination of the respective universities. The document Education Management Information System (EMIS) published by the University Grants Commission was also used to prepare this paper. Information and the data were collected, and calculated values of the indicators on bar diagrams, pie charts and line graphs. Telephone calls, emails and meetings with the persons who are accessible during the study have been done to collect the data. The examination departments were requested to provide data to prepare this article. Quantitative data analysis was interpreted through the pie chart, bar diagram, histogram and line graph.

## Findings

The findings of the study are grouped on students' enrollment in higher education, percentage of campuses on the basis of ecological regions and the provinces, enrollment of girls in higher education, gender parity index, gross enrollment ratio in higher education, student-teacher ratio, the status of higher education in Nepal, number and share of campuses of universities and medical academies, and the number of campuses of universities by the level of education.

It was found that the ecological belts 58.73 percent (841) campuses located in Hill, 35.96 percent (515) campuses in the Tarai and 5.31 percent (76) campuses in the Mountain. In terms of the provinces, 621 (43.37%) campuses are located in Bagmati Province, 185 (12.92%) in Lumbini province, 196 (13.69%) in province one, 123 (8.59%) in province two, 151 (10.54%) in Gandaki province, 95 (6.63%) in Sudurpaschim province and 61 (4.26%) campuses in Karnali province. In terms of the level of education, 1306 campuses are offering Bachelor's level programs, and 301 campuses are offering Master's level programs. This shows that the majority of the higher education institutions are located in the province with the capital city Kathmandu. Most of the higher education institutions are located in the Hill region of Nepal.

## Status of Higher Education in Nepal

The status of higher education in Nepal is studied under the headings of the enrollment of students in higher education institutes, gender disparity and many other factors.

### Enrollment of Students in Higher Education Institutes

In the year 2018/19, 4,41,819 students are enrolled in higher education institutions in Nepal (EMIS, UGC, 2018). Tribhuvan University shared about seventy-five percent of the total students enrolled in the higher education institutions in Nepal. T.U. has 335,543 (75.95%) students, PokU has 30,542 (6.91%) students, PU has 27,527 (6.23%) students, and K.U. has 18,356 (4.15%) students and the rest of the students is enrolled in other universities and medical academies. This shows that T.U. is the leading university in terms of student number and access. The enrolment proportion in terms of field of education is 76.97 percent in general programs and 23.03 percent in technical programs. Enrolment in management, education, and humanities is 46.37 percent, 17.19 percent and 10.96 percent, respectively as opposed to 8.38 percent in science and technology, 6.38 percent in medicine, and 6.57 percent in engineering. This data shows that about fifty percent of students' enrollment covered by the management programme and the least i.e., 6.57 percent of students are enrolled in engineering. Among the three types of campuses, private campuses have the highest number of students. It shows that most of the private campuses are located in the villages and thus the students' enrollment in these campuses is more. The student enrollment share in the community campuses is 27.41 percent, constituent campuses are 36.03 percent, and private campuses are 36.56 percent.

Table 1. Status of Higher Education in Nepal

S. N.	Campus type/ University	Campuses				Student				Teachers	Graduates
		Community	Constituent	Private	Total	Community	Constituent	Private	Total		
1	TU	529	61	551	1141	119,984	118,521	97,038	335,543	7592	70,077
2	NSU	4	12	2	18	421	3081	247	3749	484	na
3	KU	0	9	15	24	0	8385	9971	18356	252	2916
4	PU	5	5	106	116	694	1562	25271	27527	74	5085
5	PokU	0	9	58	67	0	2292	28250	30542	133	5528
6	LBU	0	1	8	9	0	330	365	695	23	na
7	AFU	0	10	7	17	0	3502	369	3871	122	na
8	MWU	0	18	0	18	0	7353	0	7353	290	na
9	FWU	0	15	0	15	0	10113	0	10113	363	338
10	BPKIHS	0	1	0	1	0	1528	0	1528	na	336
11	NAMS	0	2	0	2	0	447	0	447	na	na
12	PAHS	0	1	0	1	0	931	0	931	216	230
13	KAHS	0	1	0	1	0	56	0	56	49	0
14	NOU	0	1	0	1	0	955	0	955	49	0
15	RJU	0	1	0	1	0	153	0	153	30	0

Tribhuvan University has the leading role in student enrollment in the higher education sector in Nepal. In the year 2018/19, 441,819 students were enrolled in 1432 campuses of

eleven universities and four medical academies.

Table 2. Enrollment of Male and Female Students in Higher Education Institutions in Nepal

S. No.	University	Male	Female	Total	Share
1	KAHS	32	24	56	0.01
2	RJU	88	65	153	0.03
3	NAMS	130	317	447	0.10
4	LBU	478	217	695	0.16
5	PAHS	386	545	931	0.21
6	NOU	844	111	955	0.22
7	BPKIHS	818	710	1,528	0.35
8	NSU	3,143	606	3,749	0.85
9	AFU	2,422	1,449	3,871	0.88
10	MWU	3,900	3,453	7,353	1.66
11	FWU	3,855	6,258	10,113	2.29
12	KU	9,824	8,532	18,356	4.15
13	PU	13,108	14,419	27,527	6.23
14	PokU	17,613	12,929	30,542	6.91
15	TU	155,217	180,326	335,543	75.95
<b>Total</b>		<b>211,858</b>	<b>229,961</b>	<b>441,819</b>	<b>100</b>

### Girls' Enrollment in Higher Education

The overall girls' enrollment in higher education in Nepal is about 52 percent. By university, the girls' enrolment proportions of T.U. are 53.74 percent, of K.U. is 46.48 percent, of PokU is 42.33 and of PU is 52.38. The proportions of girls' enrolments in the medical academies are also higher. Girls' enrollment in BPKIHS is 46.47 percent, PAHS 58.54 percent and NAMS 70.92 percent. The biggest share (64.77%) of girls' enrollment is observed in community campuses in terms of campus types. This figure is 50.05 percent in private and 44.45 percent in constituent campuses. The proportion of girls' enrolment is highest in the education faculty (63.73%), followed by 61.56 percent in medicine, 50.84 percent in humanities, 55.98 percent in management. The percentage of girls in total enrolment at the Bachelor level is 53.55 percent, and the Master's level is 41.01 percent. These data show that the enrollment of girls in higher education in Nepal is good.

### Gender Parity Index

The gender parity index of higher education in the year 2018/19 is 1.09. GPI of the community campus is 1.83, the constituent campus is 0.80 and the private campus is 1.00 (EMIS, UGC, 2018). By levels, GPI of bachelor level is 1.15 and master level is 0.7. GPI of gross enrolment ratio (GER) is 0.88. Regarding faculty, medicine has a GPI of 1.6, education has 1.76, management has 1.27, humanities and social sciences has 1.03, science and technology has 0.56, and engineering has 0.2. The gross enrolment ratio for higher education in Bachelor's level of education is 18.21 and 5.22 in Master's level programmes.

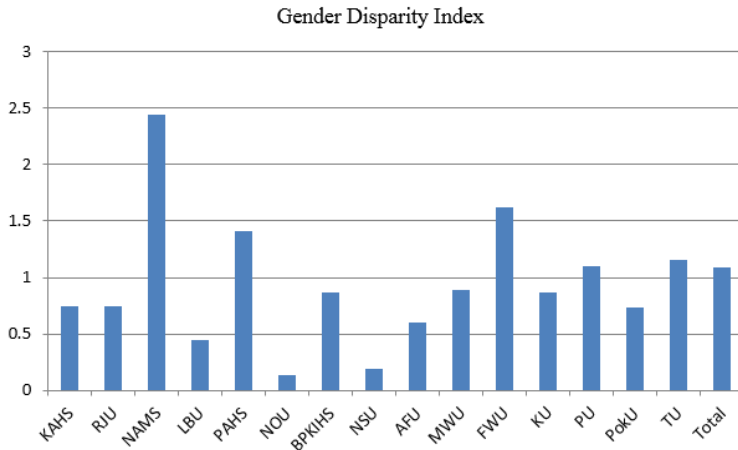


Figure 1. Gender Disparity Index

### Student-Teacher Ratio

The overall student-teacher ratio in the higher education institutions in Nepal is average. Tribhuvan University, the oldest and the leading university in Nepal, has a student-teacher ratio of 15.61:1. Kathmandu University has a value of 33.27:11, whereas MWU has 25.36:1. The FWU has 27.86:1, PokU 17.23:1, PAHS with 4.31:1 and LBU is 14.35:1. Other universities like NSU have a student-teacher ratio of 6.37:1, AFU has 28.70:1, KAHS has 1.14:1, RJU has 5.10:1 and NOU with 19.49:1. The data of the student-teacher ratio shows that the student-teacher ratio in the higher education institutions in Nepal is good.

### Number and Share of Campuses of Universities and Medical Academies

In higher education in Nepal, Tribhuvan University has 79.68 percent of students share, whereas the least share (1.26%) by the K.U. and NSU of each in Nepal. This data shows that Tribhuvan University is the leading university in terms of student numbers.

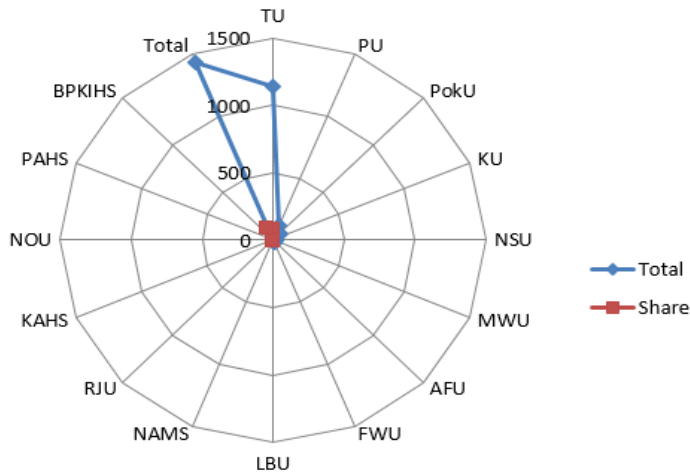


Figure 2. Number and Share of Campuses of Universities and Medical Academies Students Enrollment

The distribution of students in twelve different faculties shows that there are 204,855 students in management faculty, 75,957 in education, 48,433 students in humanities and social sciences, 37,026 students in science and technology. Also, 29,018 students are enrolled in engineering and 28,251 students in medicine. Other faculties have less than ten thousand students enrolled in the academic year 2018 B.S. (Fig. 3).

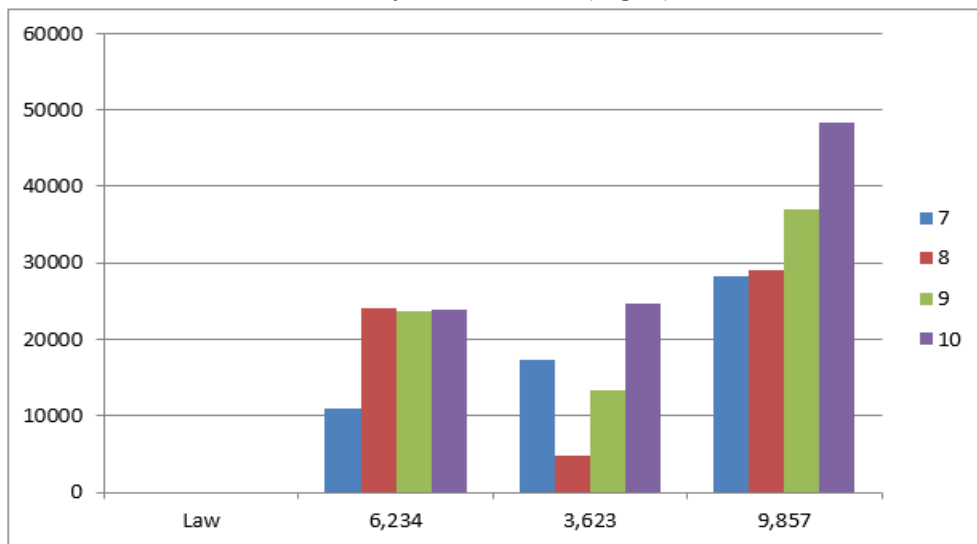


Figure 3. Students Enrollment

The distribution of students in terms of male and female is shown (Fig. 4). It shows that the enrollment in higher education of females is more than fifty percent. This result clearly shows that the condition of women in Nepal is good in terms of higher education studies.

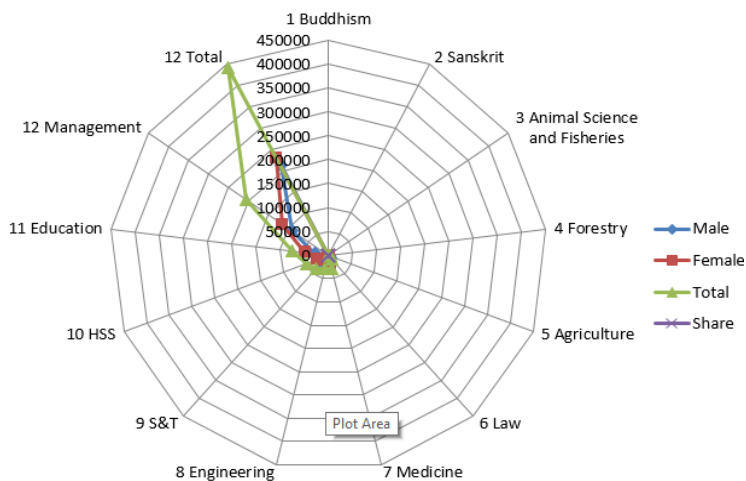


Figure 4. Women’s Status in Higher Education in Nepal

### Number of Students in Ecological Belts

Most of the students are studying in the Hill belt compared to Mountain and Tarai belts

(Fig. 4). But the data also shows that the number of students enrolled in higher education studies from the Terai region of Nepal is dramatically increasing.

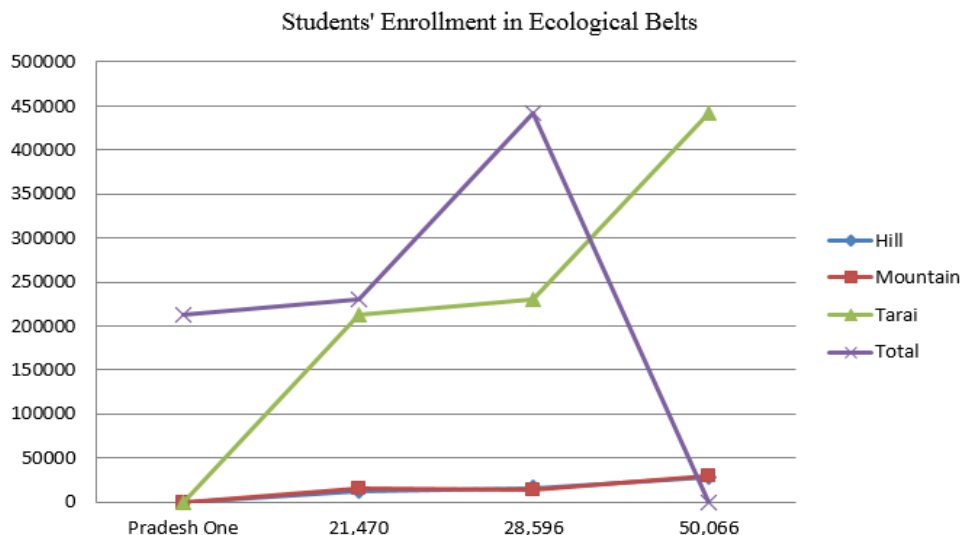


Figure 5. Student' Enrollment in Ecological belts

### Student Enrolment in Seven Provinces

The students' enrolment in seven different provinces is shown in figure 5. Bagmati Province has 231,197 students, province Two has 29,703, province one has 50,066, Gandaki province has 39,407, Lumbini province has 50,171, Karnali province has 13,576, and Sudurpaschim province has 27,699 students. This result shows that the students' enrolment in the Bagmati province is more than in any other province.

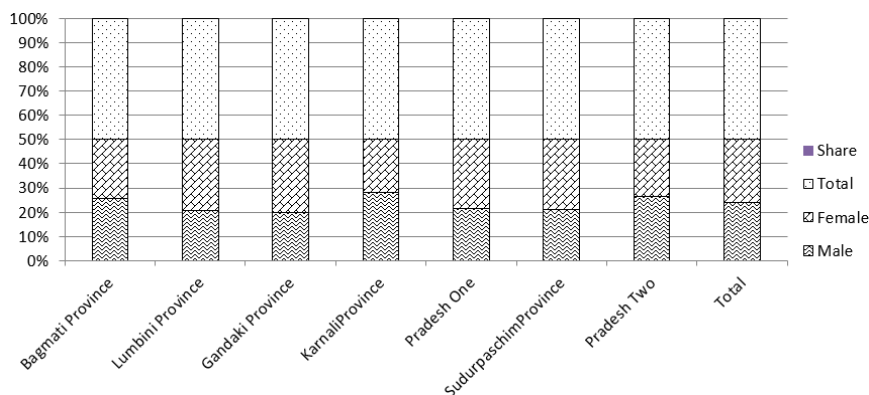


Figure 6. Student Enrolment in Seven Provinces

### GPI in different Levels of Education

GPI of Bachelor's level of education is more than other levels of education. Very few female students are seen to be enrolled in Master, MPhil and PhD levels of education. This



result shows that the involvement of females in higher studies like Masters, MPhil and PhD levels is very low in comparison to Bachelor level of education (Fig. 6).

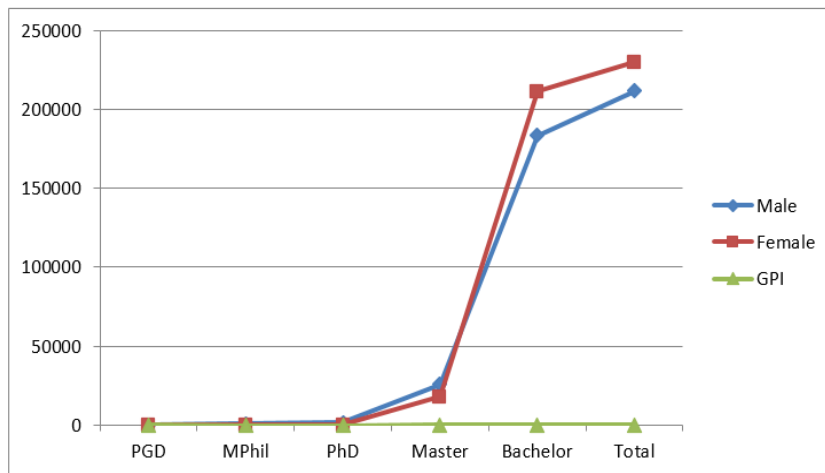


Figure 7. GPI in different Levels of Education

### Pass Rate of Students in Tribhuvan University

The pass rate of T.U. in different provinces is shown (Fig. 7). Province one has a pass rate of 25.38 percent, two has 17.39 percent, Bagmati province has 31.1 percent, Gandaki has 18.8 percent, Lumbini has 23.27 percent, Karnali has 30.47 and Sudurpaschim has a pass rate of 21.95 percent. This result clearly shows that the pass percentage of students at T.U. is very low.

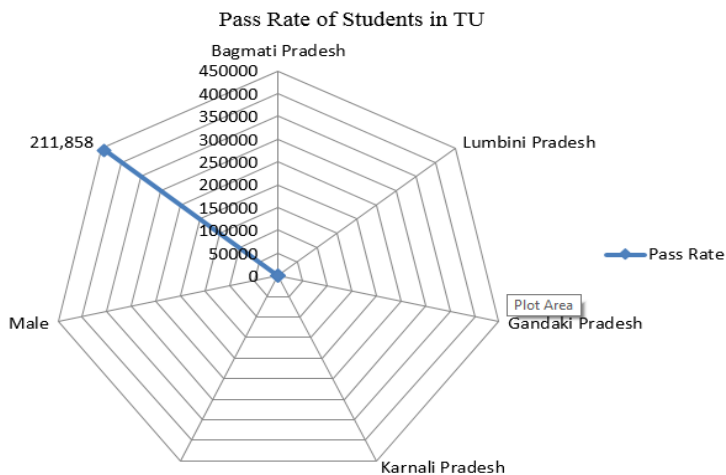


Figure 8. Pass Rate of Students in Tribhuvan University

### Number of Graduates in different Faculties

The number of graduates in different institutions is shown (Table 1). The number of graduates in different faculties of universities KU, PokU, PU, FWU and medical academies BPKIHS and PAHS are presented in the form of a line graph.

Table 3. Number of Graduates in different Faculties

Faculty and Institutions	Number of Graduates
Education	968
Engineering	304
HSS	529
Law	164
Management	5,505
Medicine	4,162
Science & Technology	2,801

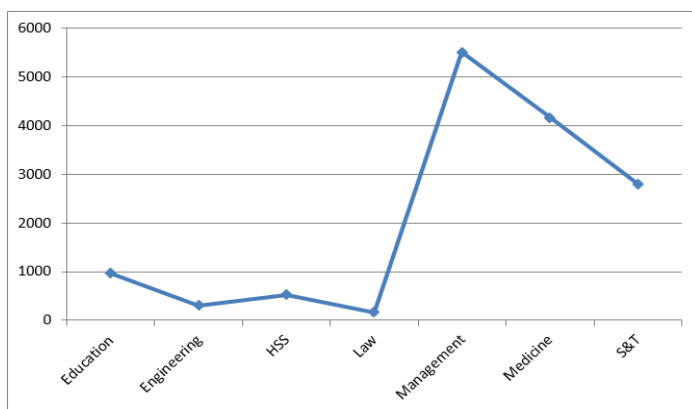


Figure 9. Number of Graduates in different Faculties

### Gross Enrollment Ratio by Level and Gender

The gross enrollment ratio in higher education levels as per gender, it shows that the enrollment of females is more than that of females (Fig. 9).

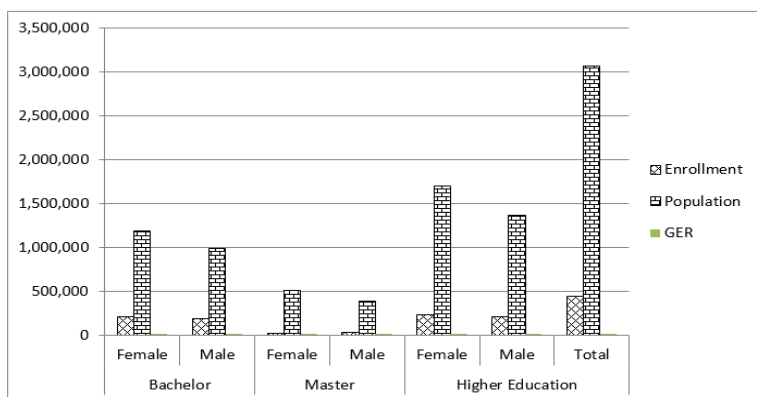


Figure 10. Gross Enrollment Ratio by Level and Gender

## Teachers in Higher Education

Higher education teachers in Nepal are broadly grouped into five categories. Professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers and instructors are the higher education categories of teachers. This section provides information about the number of teachers in the constituent campuses of the universities. The Universities have categorized teachers in the different levels according to their experience, research publications, and educational qualifications.

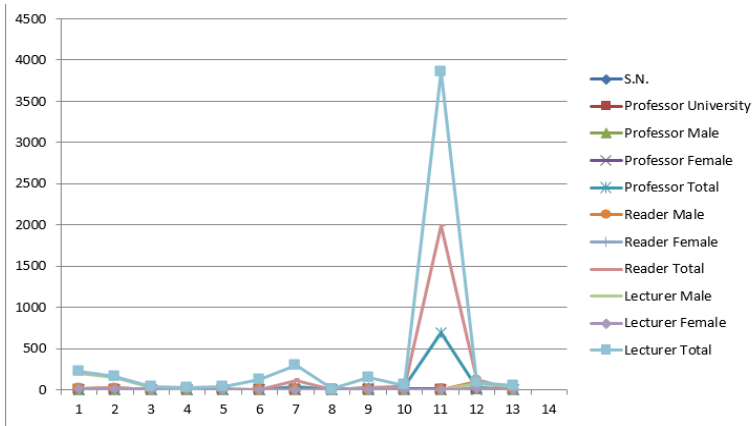


Figure 11. Teachers in Higher Education

Figure 10 shows the numbers of different levels of teachers in the constituent campuses of different universities. The number of professors is 846, the reader is 2,345, and the lecturer is 5,099.

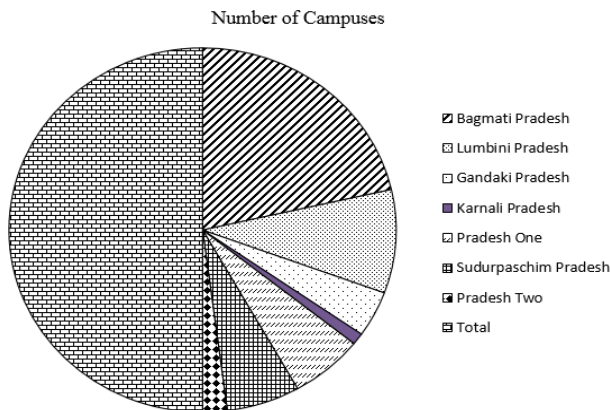


Figure 12. Number of Campuses in Nepal

## Research Funding in Higher Education Institution

UGC has been implementing the Quality Improvement Program (QIP), which has the responsibility of modifying and improving the existing curricula of higher education, conducting refresher courses, and launching skills and capacity-building programs for teachers. In addition, QIP promotes the culture of research and improves higher education

institutions' academic, educational, and physical capabilities. The quality improvement programs are organized as per the Regular Program Guidelines 2073, and necessary endeavours for improvements have been made based on the results of previous programs and suggestions from the stakeholders.

As an integral part of the research funding component of the regular program of the UGC, this subcomponent covers the financial support to the faculty members from HEIs and fresh postgraduate students taking Master's, M. Phil or PhD degrees. Young students, as well as faculty members of HEIs of Nepal, are beneficiaries to this program.

The University Grants Commission provides three types of higher education research grants in Nepal. They are collaborative research, faculty research and small research development and innovation research for the higher education teachers in Nepal.

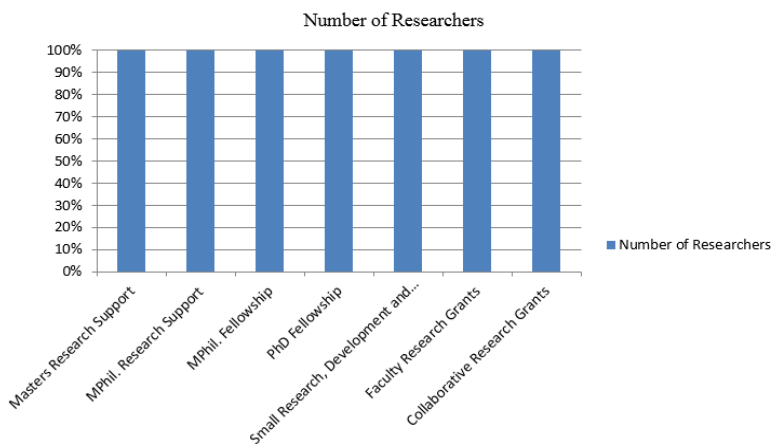


Figure 13. Research Funding in Higher Education Institution

## Discussion

Higher education is one of the most important factors for the country's overall progress (Upadhyay, 2018). Higher education develops human resources in a country that will take care of other remaining resources in the country. Higher education helps improve the nation's development (Bajracharya, 2020; Shrestha, & Khanal, 2016; Tilak, 2003; Wood, 1965). Tribhuvan University has taken major responsibilities regarding the number of students and campuses in the country i.e. about 80 percent of total students and campuses have been in Tribhuvan University alone (EMIS, UGC, 2020). The result shows that only about 20 percent of students have been passed out from colleges every year. The majority of the faculties of the universities have been satisfied with their students' performance, with the contents of the subjects matter, the evaluation system and infrastructure & the universities' policies. Hence, it is concluded that higher education in Nepal has been effective in satisfying the different stakeholders and meeting the objectives for which it was envisioned.

Higher education in Nepal has faced several challenges in the shape of various economic, social, political, and moral changes, and its future depends on the response made by its people to these challenges (Gandhari, 2021; Simkhada, Van Teijlingen, Devkota, Pathak, & Sathian, 2014). The problems plaguing the educational system of Nepal are multidimensional like population explosion, lack of resources, non-participation of the

private sector, scarcity of qualified human resources, inconsistency in the policies of various regimes, political instability, inefficient educational management system, wastage of resources, and poor implementation of policies and program etc.

The country's higher education system comprises nine universities, and three recognize universities (B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Science, National Academy of Medical Sciences and Patan Academy of Health Science) have been producing high standard human resources by conducting higher education teaching-learning programs in different subjects. The act has been passed for the establishment of Open University and which was already established in the current fiscal year. The number of students studying in the colleges under various universities running across the country has reached to 441,461 by the fiscal year 2015/16, with an increment of 17.8 percent as compared to the previous fiscal year. Such a number during the fiscal year 2014/15 was 374,647. Due to the high fluctuation in the number of students studying at Tribhuwan University (T.U.), massive change is observed in the total number of students since the fiscal year 2012/13 (Bajracharya, 2014; Dahal, 2013; Mainali, 2019; Khanal, Gaulee, & Simpson, 2021). The number of students in Tribhuwan University, which was 604,437 in the fiscal year 2012/13, reached 405,341 in the fiscal year 2013/14 recording a 32.94 percent reduction.

### **Recommendations**

Though the effectiveness of higher education in Nepal has been satisfactory from the different stakeholders' points of view, there is a need for improving the quality of higher education at every stage so that a proper foundation can be laid for advanced study in engineering, management, medical, education, agriculture and other areas which are most closely allied to the national economic development and reconstruction of the nation as a whole. The main point to be considered by the educational planner is the adaptation of a multidimensional, flexible, and dynamic education system, which serves people according to their ability and is responsive to their economic, social-political and cultural needs. The higher education system should be flexible enough to offer a variety of courses, formal and non-formal, full time and part-time, correspondence and media-based, to fit every individual as well as the economic needs of the country.

### **Authors' Contributions**

MA collected data, drafted the manuscript. KPA and KG provided scholarly guidance and corrected the manuscript. All the authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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