
Structure and Application of Master's Level Course of Political Science at Tribhuvan University

Chakrapani Lamsal

Abstract

The Political Science of the master's level is examined from horizontal perspectives with interpretive and constructive philosophic base. The objective of this article is two folds. The first is to review the limitation of the current courses, application, and evaluation manuals and the second is to envisage the application mode and its faculties. The study is based on primary as well as secondary sources of information. The information was collected through a documentary (office record) and telephonic survey. The study follows a mixed methods operative of research. Shifting in semester system from the pre-existing annual system is a reformative step towards quality education. But there are still some challenges in connecting the syllabus and curricular activities to the market. To some extent, the objectives of the current course are vague, unspecific, and general. The lack of minimum number of faculties in the periphery and expertise in the Kathmandu valley is a problem for the application of the course. It is needed to train the faculties and adopt more contextual teaching-learning approach as envisioned by the new education policy, 2076. It identifies some contextual issues to make the course more specific, practicable, and applicable. It suggests an alternative learning and evaluation pattern that addresses complexities like Covid and the lack of faculties.

Keywords: Curriculum, specific vs. general syllabus, Knowledge-based economy, Job market, semester

Introduction

There must be a clear and coherent rationale for the level wise curriculum design in any discipline. The coherence of such a curriculum is designed with horizontal and vertical perspectives in general and specific attributes are embodied in a specific program. New relevant inclusion in the course and expert human resources are expected from the beginning (Hachhethu, 2004). Master of Arts in Political Science (hereafter MAPS) program was started in 1960-61 at Tribhuvan University (hereafter TU) with specific objectives. The MAPS course at TU is designed like other social science courses. Course coverage or element of the course is a basis for evaluation as well as the objectives for certain level in terms of its production. Such a course must focus on the production of quality products

with a specific level of knowledge. All courses aim to build a strong discipline through the design and application of specific curricular attachments. The MAPS has certain objectives to be fulfilled by the designated course. Why can the political science discipline not address properly the problems of its area, and are there any problems with the course objectives, structures, or capabilities of the faculties or fault on teaching-learning methods and evaluation techniques? It is a grand question of political science research in Nepal. This paper tries to answer the research question as, 1). Does the current objectives of the course of MAPS at TU are sufficient to fulfill current needs or links the product with the market? 2) Is the structure of the course sufficient to produce human resources tackle the market? 3) Do the number and quality of the faculties tie with the size and programs of the University? And, in the present context of pandemic Covid-19, how is the evaluation method applied? National education policy, 2076 has providence the new direction in terms of policy, objectives, goals, aims, and strategies. It identifies major problems and challenges of higher education with new measures to be adopted. The current course is reviewed based on constitutional spirit and issues raised in the new education policy relating to higher education. It also inquires the application mechanism and the achievement indicators. It intends to add something new in developing the course as a tool to make it more relevant. The objective of this article is to review the limitation of the current courses, application, and evaluation, and to visualize application and evaluation mode and the conditions of faculties. It follows a horizontal perspective to evaluate the course and developmental approach to equip the discipline and academic quality. It utilizes the primary as well as secondary sources of data. The information was primarily collected from the documentary sources (office record) and telephone conversation in March 2021. It follows a mixed methods approach of research.

This article explores on the specific problems that have affected perception and attitude towards political science and hints the ways to be adopted to make it more relevant and effervescent. It is divided into six headings, the first is introductory, and the second is conceptual. The third deals with the programs of political science and the fourth one is related to its syllabus. The fifth section deals with contemporary and specific issues of political science and the sixth section shows the current human resources of this discipline at TU. Lastly, the conclusion is drawn based on shreds of evidence as well as self-observation.

Concept of curriculum

The literal meaning of curriculum is derived from the Latin word *currere*, meaning chariot race, runway, or path, laid way to reach the goal. A curriculum is a plan of action or a written document that includes strategies for achieving desired goals or ends (Talla, 2012 p.1). The above view is popularized by Hilda Taba and Ralph Tyler, which means the steps are planned. Curriculum development demands a creative and innovative vision to foresee and plan to meet the needs and existing challenges. It should adopt a broad view

(Su, 2012 p.157) of the social and political context of the society and system of education while updating. Curriculum can be defined as both in a narrow way (list of contents) and in a broad way (all the experiences received by a learner). It is an umbrella term (Ibid p.153) which includes a lot of issues, experiences developed in a different disciplines. It denotes syllabus, course content, course of study, an outline of the teaching-learning frame. There is no consensus about the conception of curriculum from the classical to that of modern educationists. However, there are varied conceptions and understanding of the concept of curriculum. With changing demands and aspirations of the larger social framework, curriculum evaluation and reform be a regular task. At the same time, varied perspectives will emerge and are appreciated by different sectors of society (Talla, 2012 p.8). It focuses mainly on the semester course of MAPS, its evaluation pattern, and Human resources. In this context it is taken in a broad sense. It belongs only to the curriculum of MAPS under the faculty of humanities and social science (hereafter FOHSS) at TU.

Political Science program

Political Science is a separate discipline of social science. It was introduced just after the downfall of the Rana regime in 1950 as part of civic education in Nepal (Hachhethu, 2004). In the beginning, political science course focused mostly on political thought and constitutional development, and public administration. University courses were much influenced by Indian orientation due to the affiliation of colleges in Nepal to Patna University. The Panchayat era was an obstacle for its development as a critical study of diverse subjects with different perspectives. The decade of Ninety was a golden era for the discipline of political science in Nepal (Khatri, 2001, Hachhethu, 2004) in terms of faculties and research. It was more influential by its platform (POLSAN), activeness, and faculties in the decade. The proficiency certificate level was dropped after forty years of its operation. Bachelor's level course as a major is conducted in twenty-eight constituent and affiliated colleges under FOHSS at TU. Bachelor's level program in the initial period was two years and then introduced three years, and currently, a four years/ eight-semester course is in practice as a general and specific.

The political science program at the master's level has been running since 1961 in TU. It has contributed significantly to the academic, and political arena of Nepal. MAPS is a major discipline under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in TU. It adopts an interdisciplinary approach and tends to provide theoretical knowledge of political science in general and the understanding of Nepalese politics and political systems in path color. MAPS spelled out its offers as an opportunity to get theoretical and practical knowledge of political science, an in-depth knowledge in the globalized context, and offers various research methods and techniques, and their application. It is one of the oldest and reputed programs dedicated to developing qualified human resources in the political field. This program was revised two times of its annual course during the nineties and finally dropped

out of the annual program for regular-stream in CDPS in 2014. The semester system launched in the 2014 winter session in CDPS for the first time and in 2017 in other colleges. MAPS adopts an interdisciplinary approach to widen its perspectives. It has adopted semester, annual, and again semester streams in the history of Tribhuvan university. Two-years with a four-semester program is being conducted currently at the master's level. Overall evaluation is performed by internal assessment (40%) by the faculty in the department and the final exam (60%) is conducted by the Dean's Office in consultation with the CDPS. The internal assessment includes paper presentation, attendance, assignment, term paper, and midterm exam as evaluation measures. Thesis writing is compulsory. The semester system has a four-point GPA scale for evaluation of learning achievement. MAPS is being conducted in ten constituent colleges (as shown in table 1) and in some other affiliated colleges. Any candidate who has passed the bachelor's level in any discipline can join the master's course at TU. Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) program is going to be launched by this year. International relation is a sub-discipline of CDPS and from its commencement was in operation at the same department. However, today international relations have its own separate department. CDPS designated the course to specialize in foreign policy and diplomacy, public administration, human rights, domestic politics and specifically promoting national interest in specific geopolitical conditions of Nepal. The University, faculties, and the government must be ready to develop such a center by performing their respective roles. The semester system was designed with specific aim, but its application is questionable in terms of a) to make the specialization course more specific, b) to connect the product to the job market, c) to equip the faculties with modern technology, d) to develop contextual evaluation methods and criteria, and e) to manage the mechanism for proper application of course at any context.

Structure of syllabus at master's level

The structure of the syllabus in the master's level semester system is two years with four semesters. Only two semesters come into operation at a time. In the past, the overlapping of the annual (private) system and the semester system in some years had created confusion in various ways. Ultimately, the annual system was fully replaced by the semester system. On the one hand, there was a pressure of exams for students in the annual system and low enrollment in the semester system on the other. Tribhuvan University must change itself as the demand is raised for improving its quality and competitiveness in the national, regional, and global context. The syllabus for the master's level prepared in 2014 has not been updated so far. The syllabus is to be updated to make it more relevant and competitive as the changing context has taken place. The syllabus must be reshaped on a philosophical and practical basis. Social reconstruction and development in methodology as well as linking with the market are some points for a new update. Course revision must be a regular process of any university to tie up with time, context, and market. Political scientists have

pointed out problems for decades (quoted in Hachhethu, 2004), but making a competitive discipline in a national as well as regional and global context is still challenging.

Objectives of MAPS in some extents are vague, unspecific, and lacking clarity about what types of human resource is to be produced. Courses must be redefined as core compulsory area and concentration area specifying different clusters of subjects intended to connect to the specific job market. Such courses interlink from second semesters to the fourth semesters. Concentration areas may be defined as foreign policy and diplomacy, conflict management, peace building and sustainable development, public administration, comparative politics and governance, human rights and social justice, and regional studies. Internal assessment must intend to focus on the specific area to be covered with empirical knowledge. In this format, students must do their thesis on their concentration area. Addressing the challenges as identified by national education policy, 2076 in the syllabus of MAPS is a gap to be filled up as soon as possible. The syllabus must be reshaped in the frame of national policy in the changing context.

Table. 1. Syllabus of master's Level semester System

S. N.	First Semester (15 Credits.)	Second Semester (15 Credits)	Third Semester (15 Credits.)	Fourth Semester (15 Credits.)
1.	Political Philosophy -551 (3 Cts.)	Constitution and Government - 556 (3 Cts.)	Comparative Government- 561 (3 Cts.)	India and China (3 Cts.)
2.	Modern Political Theory -552 (3 Cts.)	Public Policy and Governance-557 (3 Cts.)	Politics and Governance of South Asia-562 (3 Cts.)	Democracy and Human rights- 568 (3 Cts.)
3.	International Politics-553 (3 Cts.)	Conflict, Peace and Development-558(3 Cts.)	Nepalese Politics and Political Behavior -563(3 Cts.)	Regional Studies -568 (anyone)- 3 Crts. Middle East-568-1, or South and southeast Asia-568-2), or Western hemisphere-568-3)
4	Public Administration-554 (3 Cts.)	International Law- 559 (3 Cts.)	Foreign Policy of Nepal- 564 (3 Cts.)	
5	Research Methodology -555 (3 Cts.)	Politics and Government of Nepal- 560 (Crts.3)	International Studies- 565(Anyone) -3 Crts., International Political Economy- 565-1), or Diplomacy-565-2, or International Organization-565-3	4. Thesis writing-569 (6 Cts.)

Source: CDPS

The master's course is composed of 60 credits, 15 credits in each semester. One credit is measured equal to sixteen class hours. There is no specific provision of reading and writing or performing on specific skill as an integral part of the credit. It is also one of the pitfalls of the semester system and must be addressed in time. The first and second semester has a compulsory area followed by five subjects each of three credits. Third and fourth semesters have compulsory subjects as well as optional courses. Among the optional courses 3 credits of international studies courses in the third semester and 3 credits of regional studies courses in the last semester is placed. Thesis writing is compulsory for this stream in the last semester as a weightage of 6 credits. Certain bases and standards are developed for evaluation. But the question remains how it has been applied. Duplication of the semester and annual program in MAPS had misled the semester system in some years and made an additional misconception of the discipline. It is treated as only a general subject in place of specific knowledge of the political science area. Such treatment is itself a barrier to the road of making competitive discipline. Fifteen credits in each semester is the right way but the meaning of the semester system is a little different. High-ranking universities in the world have limited credits i.e., 25 to 45 in total semesters at master's level. But their students learn more than our sixty credits in their limited credits. So, credit is not everything, the major concern is learning output fitting to the context. The philosophy behind the semester system is more practicable in terms of flexibility and inclusion of contextual content to add to the syllabus as a hidden curriculum. The other aspect of the semester is to be trained the students in practical knowledge as a balanced set of theoretical understandings.

Contemporary challenges and issue of review

The government of Nepal has proclaimed a national education policy, 2076 to meet the new demands of the changing situation. It has identified the fundamental problems and failures to be competitive, productive, and research-oriented in higher education. Some scholars identified Inadequate budget allocation in education and careless approach in STEM education is a major challenge in Nepal (Joshi, 2018 p.4). Such challenges cannot be overcome without a drastic change in the content, orientation, and attitude in faculties as well as leadership of higher education.

There are inconsistencies between course contents and objectives of the curriculum to produce qualified and competitive human resources in comparison to a regional and global context. Objectives of MAPS are also unspecific and lack the clarity in terms of a new shift towards inclusive and functional democracy. Higher education must contribute to facilitating such shifting. Nepalese political scientists have already indicated some measures to improve and identify the problems of political science in its curriculum and faculties during the seventies (Pradhan 1974: 147, Malla 1974, Baral et al. 1978, Poudyal, 1988, Jaiswal and Amatya 1997, Khatri 2001 and Hachhethu, 2002) as quoted in political science in Nepal (Hachhethu, 2002 p. 229-231). Scholars have identified dozens of problems, but

the condition has not improved yet. Some lacking is seen in the course content and even in its faculties and academic writing. Some scholars have suggested a national focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education (Joshi, 2018 p.47). Such advice makes other subjects like political science to be more updated for being relevant.

Course offerings or distribution of content and their application is another issue of political science. If the objectives of MAPS are defined properly, course offerings and content updating would be a prime concern. Knowledge has become the driver of the world economy. Higher education should be focused on such a departure. Masters' courses are considered as prerequisites for research fundamentals before students start the M. Phil. and, or doctoral degree. Departments and faculties should have sufficient research projects to achieve practical knowledge of research. Adaptation of the semester system is an affirmative step for this requirement. Programs without such infrastructure may be a paradox in current needs. Each course must be redefined in the context of specific objectives set by national educational policy. Inconsistencies between the course content and the stated objective must be swiped out.

The emergence of a global economy has forced many nation-states to reshape their systems of higher education to make them globally competitive, and many countries have developed major plans for investment in higher education (Wang, 2010 p.6). There is no room for any country to be isolated from the globalized world. The emergence of knowledge class appeals to be more competitive and qualitative everywhere in the world. Higher education again came to the fore for planning the knowledge-based economy. Universities may create new knowledge through research moving into a knowledge-based society.

Integrating technology in the classroom is another issue of effective curriculum and its application. Teachers and students both should be engaged in academic research. Provision of involvement of university faculties in governmental or non- government research must be mandatory. So that faculties, as well as students, may be benefited from the research. It's only the way for translating research into classroom practice. There is a need to develop different expertise who can effectively contribute to the current needs. Exchange of teachers in major universities in SAARC countries and specifically with the universities of India and China is a viable way to this direction. Research projects must be introduced and funded by the state until the generation such fund. Human resource development is an immediate need to sustain and upgrade the quality. Courses must be updated to link practical knowledge sellable in the market. Higher education must introduce research projects to develop empirical knowledge and to keep themselves updated in their specific fields. Overemphasis in qualitative research and less prioritization of quantitative research is another issue of political science study at TU. It needs a balanced application of qualitative as well as quantitative methods of research.

Finally, important issue is the quality and competitiveness of education in a global context. Scholars have identified issues of quality maintenance in the semester system (Regmi and Khatiwada, 2019 p.4-5, Joshi, 2019 p.15-17). They have pointed out that lack of proper content, effective teaching, evaluation method and policy are common. Specific norms, values, attitudes, and ethics must impart to the students as a social capital in the national scenario but, disciplinary expertise in a global perspective is necessary to compete in the employment market. Quality education is the only logic for adaptation of the semester system. Quality depends upon the full implementation of course with qualified hands. MAPS education in various colleges is only conducted for convenience to achieve a degree and not for a quality education. It is a serious question for university authorities and governments at different levels. Programs without infrastructure outside of the valley should either be closed or granted the minimum common requirements for such programs. The situation of faculties in some campus is ironical.

Human Resources and Future of Discipline

Human resources in university comprise governing authority, teaching faculties, and educational management team which are always a crucial matter. Table 2 clearly shows the discrepancy of faculties in most colleges. Enrollment of students in MAPS is normal except in some colleges. The number of faculties in most of the colleges is inadequate. Specifically, the ratio of professor, associate professor, and lecturer is not properly maintained. Thakur Ram multiple campus and RR multiple campus Janakpur do not have any full-time teacher. How can regular personnel of the college deliver his services while acting as a single part-time teacher in Thakur Ram Multiple Campus, Birgunj? What is the meaning of quality education in the semester system in such a situation? Quality and competitive education remains a hallucination till such conditions prevail. The curriculum must be evaluated with its application model. The number of faculties allocated in different colleges is not sufficient at all. Moreover, higher education demands expertise in various fields of knowledge to operate the academic program.

Table 2. Faculties in Political Science and number of students at master's level

S. N.	Campus	Professor	Reader	Lecturer	Asst. Lecturer	Total Faculties	Ph.D.	Number of Students	
								2 nd sem	4th sem
1	Central Department, Kirtipur	4	1	6		11	6	24	34
2	RR Campus, Kathmandu		2	4	6	12		52	45
3	PK Campus, Bagbazar	1	2	3	1	7	1	9	16
4	PNM Campus Pokhara	1	3	7		11	2	17	16
5	MM Campus Nepalgunj			3	2	5	1	14	•
6	MM Campus Dang		1		4	5		46	22
7	Snatakottar Campus Biratnagar		2	1	2	5		17	15
8	RR Campus Janakpur	NA			4			45	32
9	T. M. Campus, Birgunj				1	1		33	22
10	M. M. Campus, Dharan			3	1	4		20	26
11	Other Campuses □		13	18	5 □	36			
Total		6	24	45	26	97	10	277	228

Source: Personnel Administration of TU and Subject Committee Head

- Total drop out in 2nd semester.
- Other Campuses have only bachelors level courses of Political Science.
- Assistant lecturer on contract basis.

The subjects allocated in different semesters are special and demand expertise to handle the research or other teaching manuals. Table 3 clearly shows the direction of faculties and the future of the discipline in TU. Currently, there are ninety-seven faculties in different colleges. Seventeen among them are part-time teachers and dozens of faculties are going to be retired within a year. Only 10 faculties out of 97 have earned PhD degree.

Table 3. Number of political Science teachers in TU

Date	Professor	Reader	Lecturer	Asst. Lecturer	Teaching Asst.	Total
1980	1	2	142	-	-	145
2002	12	69	182	7	14	284
2021	6	24	45	5 □	17□	97

Sources: Hachhethu, 2021 in Political Science in Nepal and TU personnel Administration

- Assistant lecturer in contract basis.
- Teaching Assistant in course contract basis.

The number of teachers is marginalized irrespective of the extension of master's and bachelor's level programs in dozens of colleges than in the eighties and nineties. The number of the faculties in political science is declined by converting the seats in other discipline and small number of recruitments. The ratio of professors, Readers and lecturers is not justified at all. By this fact, the future of the discipline is in peril.

Conclusion

Determining and updating a curriculum is a complex process. It demands a regular interaction among teachers, students, university authorities and government authorities on the matter referred to in research reports at the national as well as regional and global context. It is too late to discuss how to make the university products saleable in the market and to fit the mechanism to adopt new inclusions in the syllabus referred. The objectives as well as the courses are inadequate, unspecific, and less focused on the job market. The availability of faculties is not sufficient. The ratio of professors, readers and lecturers is not maintained properly. The expertise to handle and supervise academic research is not sufficient at all. The course and human resources are to be reshaped to meet the current challenges and needs. Authorities at different levels are not attentive to address such problems in time. Covid-19 Pandemic unfolded the university mechanism in terms of technology in teaching-learning method, flexibility, and creativity in evaluation pattern, and need, eagerness and capacity for application of alternative mode of education. So, standard classes in selected area by selected experts must be run virtually and a new evaluation pattern should be developed. If it takes more time to address the issues raised above, mislays its relevance and the future of MAPS will be more obscure.

So, higher education must be the center of national priority to make the bedrock of a knowledge based national economy, employment market, entrepreneurship, skills, and attitude. Effective curriculum prepares an individual with knowledge to be successful,

confident, and responsible to the society and state. If we accept Paul Romer's theme, knowledge is the basic form of capital and the driving force of economic growth (Wang, 2010 p.5), there is no alternative to focusing on higher education.

There is an unprecedented demand to rethink higher education. Many students going abroad for higher education and employment is also a serious matter of educational concern. The main crux of revision of curriculum and its application, and reshaping its human resources is inevitable. Programs of MAPS in different colleges expect minimum requirements (faculties with the proper expertise, research grants, and physical infrastructure). The central department must initiate an update of the syllabus of MAPS with a practical view to link the university product with their job market. New challenges can be met only with a new vision to connect to a knowledge-based market focusing on recent national context as well as regional and global trends.

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