

Motivation of Student Toward Politics: A Study of Tribhuvan Univeristy Campus – by Shankar Poudel

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Abstract

This article is based on the study conducted in Tribhuban University for the MPhil degree. This study was conducted to find out student's motivation towards politics, their contribution in academic improvements and shaping the larger countries academic progress. To fulfil this questions, qualitative methods was applied. Data were collected through in-depth interview and case stories. The total three case stories and 15 interviews were taken. Main argument of the article is Free Student Union (FSU) leadership have been concerned with party politics rather academic improvements. This show the overall image of Nepal's FSU's looking glass self. There are several motivational factors of the student leaders being engaged in politics. Family background, Political situations, peer groups, institutional effects, class and ideology. Most of them have begun their political affiliation and activities from their school life and few of them have joined the politics at the colleges, where from they were ideologically motivated or were embraced by the political movement of the time.

Keywords: Democracy, FSU, Politics, Student's motivation, TU,

Introduction

Nepali students have very remarkable contributions in the democratization process in Nepali democracy. In fact, all the yesteryears' political movements were led by students and its organization. All the history of the modern history is abundant collection of the political struggle either that is in the latent or manifest form. Historic events in different countries have proved to demonstrate the fact that there is no deficiency of people fighting for liberation if the nation is under authoritarian regime, struggling for rule of law and democracy. The journey of human emancipation from subjugation and tyranny does not stop. The dictatorial regimes collapse and totalitarian policy and autocratic governments fall due to sacrifices of the people who are dedicated to fight till their last breath. According to Meena Ojha, "Students belong to educated intelligentsia a dynamic section of society who fight for rights through recourse to demands and Sloganeering

(2010, p.3). She further observes 'these are the conscious and progressive group of society, a focal point of political change in the world (p.4) ". Nobody can deny the nebulous history of student's movements around the world. Students have got success in major world events of fighting for national liberation after second world war. They have become "a militant fighting force to overthrow colonialism and external domination (Rana, 1994, p.1). Within the country students have fought for democracy, justice and equality. There are numerous such successful instances.

Freedom movement of Poland in 1956, French student movement against Charles De Galle in 1964, Pakistani student's struggle against Ayub Khan in 1969, Bangladeshi student fighting for independence in 1971, Iran's student out throwing Shah Reza Pehalvi in 1979, Anti Sukarneo protest of Uganda in 1987, Indian student movement of Asam in 1989, Japanese student protest against security alliance with USA in 1990 and student movement of Argentina in over throwing pureno are classic example of power and success of student as an agent of revolutionary change. Likewise, 'The Korean student movement of freedom and the student movement of China in Tianmein square (1990) for liberty and freedom; although shattered brutally, these are the highest form of student movement in the world (Ojha, 2010, p.5).

Nepali students have very remarkable contributions in the democratization process. In fact, all the yesteryear political movements were fought by students. Anti-Rana protest of 1949, against Royal Coup 1962, 1974 against New Education policy and student movement of 1979 against Panchayat which ultimately pushed then King for referendum, people's movement of 1990 and April uprising of 2006 are classic examples in this regard (Snellinger, 2008, p.2). TU was established in 1959 and student union had started since 1962. The main winners in union election were supporters of banned political groups, either NC or Left wings; so, the union was dissolved by 1974 with the introduction of New Education policy. The student movement of 1979 not only pushed the King of referendum but, also for restoring FSU as a formal institution of TU. Student organizations like NSU and ANNFSU until then were legalized by court's verdict so; they could contest election with their own party banner and manifesto, thus symbolizing FSU as multi party contest. Again the winners were either NSU or ANNFSU and the pattern still continues. The union thus has become the center of political training for producing future party leaders.

Review of related literature

The study of politics is a very vague topic itself. Inside politics student politics is a universal phenomenon so there are lot literatures on it, however only a few academic researchers had been done. This section includes few, theoretical and empirical literature review concerned with student politics in the world in general and in Nepal particularly. In my research, I have reviewed the manifestos of student organization; which appeared during the period of the free student election. Various booklets published by student organizations in different date are also reviewed here for collecting empirical as well theoretical information, but these may not be enlisted in this review section. To conceptualize the ideas on student's engagement and participation across time, some selective theoretical books are reviewed that has lead this research towards appropriate directions.

The literatures which I have included in this research by the scholar from abroad and within Nepal as follows. Among many scholars who have done research based on student politics Amanda Snellinger is one of the prominent figure who has minutely observed the activities of student's leaders in political movement of Nepal during her doctoral study on political engagement of Nepali students. The in-depth analysis and observation of her study is a milestone piece in this regard. She has written and published many research articles and critical reflections on Nepalese student movement. Among them the following three articles are presented here.

Smellinger (2005) has written an articles on "peace and Democracy in South Asia, in Himalayan Journal of Political science Voume 1. (2): 18-43. In this article she writes about major shift on nature of student movement in Nepal over the period of time, their participation for the regime change, where she has also presented their struggle against the autocratic system of Nepal. She has observed the participation of student from the seven-student organizations, and their effort to bring both politically active and non-active students from the government owned universities to the street against the active monarchy.

Snellinger has written another article in 2006 entitled Idealizes Forms: The parameters of Social (student) Movements in Nepal. This was published in Mahendra Lawoti (ed.), Contentious Politics of Nepal. In this article she has vividly presented the nature and trend of student movement in Nepal (Lawati, 2007). The youth engagement in peaceful demonstration in the street and violent fighting from the jungle during Maoist insurgency is described here. She has published another article entitled, "The young Political Generation Today, Five Years Later," in Himalaya, the

Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies: Vol. 31 in 2011. In this article she has minutely described the history of student movement in Nepal since 1949 up to 2006. Her historical and analytical approach in this study gives a real picture of student movement but she lacks in presenting the history and role of FSU in Nepal. Michael S. Kochin (2011) has written an article entitled "Academic Politics between Democracy and Aristocracy", where he argues that politics is matter of academic discourse. According to him, the political action is done by those who desire for governing and have strong motivation for leadership. He differentiates the politics between democrats and aristocrats. He built his argued through implication of Plato's theoretical framework of leadership.

Walter Andersen and Alok Pant (1970) wrote article on "Student Politics at Allahabad University". They have mentioned the various politics group, their connections and their leadership are analyzed including the sociological dimensions concern with student's politics in Allahabad university, which has given the picture of the student's alienation in both university and socio-economic sectors. They find that "student politics at the university is regarded as the "intervening variable" between violence and alienation. The psychological need for such violence becomes apparent within the context of student frustrations. Nicholas V. Longo and Ross P. Meyer (2006) discusses on student's level of understanding on politics, their views, political engagement, and their everyday practices in colleges beside the role of higher education for the greater participation among the college students. He has analyzed the information through the focus group discussion. T.K. Oommen's article "Student Politics in India: A Case Study in Delhi University (1974) attempts to analyze the institutional context, the process of recruitment of leaders in the university and their socio-economic background and nature of student's politics within the university, he generalizes the issues of the student's politics through the empirical findings (Oommen, 1974).

Hyes (2010) stated the need and challenges of education reform in Nepal and behavior of student leaders and their concern political organizations. In his article he is unable to highlight the some of the pitfall of Nepali student's politics, their participation and mobilization and accountability issues. Shiva Kumar Dangi has published "Sixty years struggle of Nepalese student" in 2007. He has given vibrant picture of historical development of student politics of Nepal including the establishment of different student organizations. The student's movement of Sanskrit Chhatra Sangh to the ANNISU revolutionary are covered in this book. This book is particularly focused on

the description of left wings student organizations. Dangi has not employed any scientific methods and theoretical grounds in his book and he has presented left wing perspectives, so this book is unable to give entire information's regarding the student movement in Nepal (Dahal, 2007).

Rana (1994) has written book entitled "Nepal Student Union in Democratic Movement of Nepal", which gives the information about the NSU struggle for the establishment of democracy, human rights and nationalism since the Rana regime to restoration of democracy in Nepal. He has given historical description of NSU that includes the establishment conferences, and contribution in referendum of 1979 and the people's movement of 1994. Rans's book is written from the Nepali congress perspectives, thus he failed to present the overall students struggle for democratization. Due to failure to present the later movements after the 1995 this work cannot be the basis for over analysis of Nepalese student politics. A Youth Initiative publication "Generation Dialogues-Youth in Politics"(2010) is a booklet based on the research/study on youth in politics in Nepal. The distance and relation between, youth and politics in Nepal has been discussed in number of ways throughout the book. Three different sections in book are focused on different aspects of Nepali youth, their aspirations and motivations.

Methodology

Tribhuwan University as being the biggest and oldest of this kind has produced around 90 percent of the human resources, who have been largely employed in different level of government positions beside the politics in Nepal. The student leaders who had built their carrier in politics from FSU at central campus could be seen in different units of the government with different capacities such as Central leaders, ministers, policy makers, diplomats and University professors as such. The FSU as usually is everywhere, the center for political training and a forum for national debate is also a fact in Nepal. Besides few, most of the present national leaders were indoctrinated in politics during their study period at Central Campus, TU. In this regard, student politics has become an interesting area of study. Academically, nominal works have been carried out in this field. Besides these, my own experience as a former student leader and a professional at TU in present has motivated to select this topic. Moreover, availability of data is another reason for choosing the field. I could collect data from my colleagues and many of former FSU leaders could be found in informal meetings.

The historical, descriptive and analytical research design has been employed in this study with some case studies (case stories). It encompasses the historical background of student politics in Nepal, and their present status in their respective political party including their motivational factors in politics. The historical facts connected with student leaders and their contribution for democracy and educational reform have been collected and explained in detail through which researcher has explored the leadership building process. This design helped me to find the connectivity between student politics in FSU, TU and their motivational factors.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interview and secondary data were collected through journal, books and archival records. The respondents of this study for the collection of primary information have been the active student leaders in the university in the past and present. Particularly the in-depth interviews (3 persons) have been done with student leaders of the Free Student Union of the Tribhuvan University central campus, Kirtipur. The respondents were the formal members of free student union from 1979 to 2008 – mainly the presidents – namely Balkrishna Khand Rabindra Adhikari and Himal Sharma who currently represent Nepali Congress, NCP (UML) and NCP (Maoist) respectively. In addition to this 15 other active student leader who had hold position in the past as well as currently in position were interviewed to get information regarding history and evolution of student union and to have access to the Archival data of the student union in central campus. In this way, total of 18 interviews (3 in-depth case stories and 15 general interviews) were done with the free student union members representing three major students' political organization. And data were analyzed as per the tribulation method.

Discussion

The student protest of 1979 has come with a distinct wave for Nepalese politics. Then King Birendra announced the referendum to stop the increasing agitation as it was fueled with Political Parties. The Election has to be held between Multi-party system (BLUE) and Panchayat. Although Panchayet was declared in the referendum with marginal votes there has been drastic change in University politics and educational sector (Dangi, 2006, p.77). The semester system was abolished and Free Student Union election has re-established since 1980. The Panchayet backed Rastrabadi Bidyarthi Mandal (NNSF) was also abolished. Then onwards the FSU elections started to hold according to party system. Student organizations were recognized and registered by university. Now, they could contest the election with their own flags and party candidates. It has always been

mini party elections in university after then. The NC backed NSU and Communist Party backed ANNFSU were the major contestants. The Student Union was also renamed as 'Free Student Union (Dangi, 2006: 78).

Role of FSU Leaders in Politics and Profession

Generally, most of the former student leaders after their student life have entered into party politics everywhere in the world. It is so because they are well trained in leadership matters, politically well informed and has already found the positions in party ranking, too. The nexus they have made in student life largely helps them to be national leaders. Furthermore, they are mostly favored by people in media, bureaucrats, and security forces and by people of business enterprises. Their well-established name in society and their high academic backgrounds has also added impetus to their political career. It thus obvious that we find many former student leaders from TU engaged into national politics. The name few among them includes former Prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, RPP Nepal President Kamal Thapa, young parliamentarians Rabindra Adhikari and Gagan Thapa. We can find another bulk of former student leaders who have not directly involved in party politics. From this group most of them are involved in academic professions. Former Chairman of UGC, Nepal and former VC of TU Dr. Kamal Krishna Joshi, Bal Mukunda Kharel, Professor Dr. Yaggya Adhikari, Prof Bishwombhar Pyakurel and, Bhim prasad Neupane Chalise etc. all have been prominent leaders in TU FSU. Among them some few have become social workers and NGO runners like Gauri Shanker Pradhan and business entrepreneurs like Birendra Bhakta Shrestha. This study finds no former FSU leaders entering into bureaucracy

Former student leaders in party politics and professions

It is a general phenomenon that students after having academic degrees from colleges and Universities choose their future profession in their respective field of expertise. As being active and used to in politics, obviously, most of the former student's leaders from student organization central committee, college committees and FSU have found engaged in national politics. By one or another way most of the central leaders of all political party have been prominent student leaders at their study period. This study has found the following former FSU leaders in different capacities of following political parties of Nepal Nepali Congress- Arjun Narsingh KC, Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Balkrishna Khand and Dipak Giri. CPN (UML)- Shanker Pokhrel (Secretary), Jagannath Khatiwada and Rabindra Adhikari UCPN (Maoist)- Himal sharma, Mukti Pradhan CPN-Maoist-

Hitman Shakya, Shivaram Yadav Federal Socialist Party –Vijay Rai MJFN (Republican)- Jay Prakash Gupta (Former President)

Student's Journey Toward Politics

As per the research questions and the methodology, the third important part of this research is the motivation of the individuals to join student's politics as a career in their life. For this section, three in-depth interviews have been taken from three past student leaders from three major parties. Based on a dozens of interviews with student leaders in central campus who were elected as President, Vice-president and Secretaries, number of motivational factors have been found. In general, the factors of motivation have been diverse as per individual respondents and it is also common to have multiple motivations in the part of a single student leader interviewed. Classification of responses in different themes, the study shows numbers of perceived and experienced motivational factors, stated as follows: 1) Democratic Values and Principles 2) Social Inequality and Justice 3) Family Background 4) College Environment and Friend Circle 5) Transformation of Political Trend Itself.

1. Democratic Values and Principles

In this study, student leaders have been found to be motivated toward joining politics primarily for the sake of democratic values and principles. The university students, who have been exposed to different political theories in their readings as well as exposure to the historical facts regarding the role of students in national politics and social transformation from traditional society to modern democratic society have made them aware about it and its importance (Amatya, 2008). Therefore, almost all responses have prioritized the attachment and action toward the promotion and application of democratic principles as their primary motivation to join student politics. In fact, the political ideology that speaks for everyone toward freedom and dignity is something what every aware student have to work for.

2. Social Inequality and Justice

Another major motivational factor has been identified as the concern for social inequality and justice. Nepal, being a poor developing country, have lots of social problems particularly related with economic condition, distribution of resources and administration of justice. In this context, student leaders have joined politics to work against social inequality.

3. Family Background

Family is the primary socialization agent in every human being's life. Some of the student leaders are motivated to join student politics because of their family background. They have a history of political involvement of their parents and grandparents in national political movement.

4. College Environment and Friend Circle

It is said that “sangat guna ko buddhi, biu guna ko fal (like friends like our thought, like seed like fruits)”; students who come from outside the valley to university for higher education not only acquire knowledge and degrees, rather, they will also get opportunity to be in touch with student activists, which has motivated them to join politics (Badal, 2021). The importance and role of student politics for social change is shared to the friends' circle, which motivates them to join politics.

5. Transformation of Political Trend Itself

Apart from the above mentioned motivational factors, some unique responses also have been noted. Some students have joined politics not only to work for the democratic values and principles, rather, to transform the pattern of traditional political practices toward new. They have been found to be much focused on changing nature of leadership style.

Conclusion

This article argues that most of them are from the rural areas and middle class families. There are several motivational factors of the student leaders being engaged in politics. Family background, Political situations, peer groups, institutional effects, class and ideology. Most of them have begun their political affiliation and activities from their school life and few of them have joined the politics at the colleges, where from they were ideologically motivated or were embraced by the political movement of the time. At last, this concluded that the student politics and activism in FSU leadership has been concern with party politics rather than the academic improvement. The FSU leader those are neither in national politics nor professional politics seems to regretful towards their past history of activism in free student union. The main cause of their inactivity steams from financial problems and lack of the support from both family and their mother party. Student organizations and leaders are finding themselves in dilemma as they were before. After 1990 political role of students has reduced but as sister wings of party they were more engaged in factionalism of their leaders. But, soon with Maoist insurgency and Royal Coup, students have

become the very agent of democratization and new polity of republicanism in Nepal. Now, again the student leaders have less political role but it is necessary that they should be more centralized and engaged on their own educational agenda and student welfare.

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