Research Article

Establishing a University Writing Center: A Lesson Learned from Universities Outside Nepal

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Abstract
The goal of this article is to characterize the university writing center as a crucial institutional resource for the support of student writers and to advocate for its establishment at Tribhuvan University (TU). To achieve this, it explores the factors that prompted its origin and development in the universities of the United States of America. It also unpacks the underlying philosophy of the center by elucidating its pedagogical approaches, current practices, and administrative mechanisms. Building upon the historical contexts of writing centers, it proposes the establishment of a similar center at TU as a means to address the everyday concerns, needs, support, and assistance of the community of student writers within the university domain. Furthermore, it investigates the types and ways of potential academic opportunities that a writing center can provide to enhance effective writing skills and publishing practices in the university. Through a review of the historical as well as pedagogical practices of writing centers in the United States, the article establishes its argument that introducing a writing center at TU can contribute to various forms of support, such as source identification, audience awareness, review and feedback, documentation, etc., catering to writers of all levels, from novices to experienced, in developing their writing skills, habits, and practices. Additionally, the proposed writing center at TU is positioned not only as a productive student support system for a resourceful learning environment but also as a space offering on-campus employment opportunities for students, ultimately fostering a stronger connection between academia and the job market.
Keywords: University writing center, writing pedagogy, collaboration, peer-tutoring, writing center administration, process-based writing

Introduction

The impetus for the ideas explored in this paper emerged from my role as a consultant at the writing center of The University of Texas at El Paso, USA. As a Ph.D.

student, I assisted student writers across writing processes, spanning from brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising to editing. Over the entire academic year in 2021 AD, I gathered a myriad of experiences and insights that have prompted me to compose this article with the central focus of illuminating the significance of such writing centers, particularly in the context of Tribhuvan University (TU).

At TU, educational practices typically revolve around scheduled regular classes, leaving students without accessible support when they require assistance beyond those structured sessions. Acknowledging the efficacy of the writing center, I have undertaken the task of crafting this ethnographic narrative-based article, aiming to underscore the necessity of establishing a writing center at TU. The primary audiences targeted by this paper are university authorities, expecting them to take the initiative toward proposing and implementing a writing center. Additionally, writing instructors and scholars with an interest in the realms of teaching and researching writing, its pedagogy, and writing centers at TU will gain some valuable insights from the content presented in this article.

In the context of teaching writing at TU, researchers and scholars, both within or beyond the discourse community, seem to lack sufficient advocacy for establishing institutional support like a writing center. Due to this, the availability of literature on this topic is few and far between. Gopal Prasad Pandey's article "Unpacking Writing Needs of Nepalese University Students" identifies the challenge associated with teaching and learning writing at TU because it requires "[writing] teachers . . . help students learn all the subskills of writing so that they can communicate in the target situations effectively" (257). He claims that students, particularly at the undergraduate level, require strong assistance in demystifying the challenge of writing and sharpening their effective writing skills. To develop such skills, Hem Lal Pandey also argues that a "writing course requires huge responsibility, patience and enthusiasm from both the instructors and the students" (76) meaning that teaching writing to the students in both undergraduate and graduate needs rigor. Both the sources indicate that the curriculum of TU includes a significant portion of writing courses but the expected outcomes are hardly achieved. Taking this point as a research gap, this paper explores the possibilities of enhancing the effectiveness of teaching, assisting, and supporting student writers through the institutional effort of the writing center at TU.

In this paper, I have employed a critical literature review methodology to answer the three research questions stated below. This methodology helped me to understand the contexts of writing centers and their historically specific pedagogical practices. The purpose of this methodology is to systematically review and analyze existing research and publications on the historical and academic needs of students to have writing centers as well as to find out the commonly endorsed pedagogical approaches at the centers. The critical literature review provided a comprehensive understanding of the topic and enabled me to identify the potential possibilities and challenges of the writing center at TU. To find out the relevant online resources from the database, I used the library access provided by The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to reach JSTOR, Google Scholars, Scopus, Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), MinerQuest, and others with the help of keywords related to the topic. Additionally, I conducted a manual search through a reference list of the articles reviewed in the study. Moreover, I browsed through UTEP's library for relevant books about the topic. I included only those resources related to the history of the writing center, its pedagogical paradigms, and newer perspectives and trends. Finally, the critical literature review methodology was limited to the published resources only in the English language.

In this paper, I am prompted by epistemological and ontological research questions related to the university writing center, its pedagogy, and practices.

Categorically, I have three research questions that are answered by this paper: What historical and academic factors led to the emergence of writing centers in American universities? What existing institutional and pedagogical practices in the teaching of writing require the university writing center at TU? In what ways would the establishment of a writing center and its pedagogic approaches address the challenges and struggles faced by the student writers?

Writing courses have become required components of the curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate (Master's, MPhil, and PhD) levels at TU. Therefore, university authorities must give careful consideration to developing institutional support for both the students and the faculty across the departments. Currently, one key determinant of educational quality and university ranking is the publication record of the university scholars. The rationale of this paper is to explain how the establishment of the writing center at Tribhuvan University would address this exigency.

The objective of this article is to contextualize the practices associated with assisting students in writing, with a specific focus on the model employed by writing centers in American universities. In doing so, it aims to demonstrate the significance of establishing a similar space at Tribhuvan University for the enhancement of writing skills in academic, professional, and workplace contexts.

In the subsequent sections of the article, the trends of teaching writing in the center are contextualized in relation to the practices mainly observed in American universities. The article then reviews how it arose at Tribhuvan University and disappeared. The same section reviews the practices of Kathmandu University as well. Following the reviews of the centers in these institutions, the paper presents the synthesis of dominant pedagogical approaches employed in writing centers. Subsequently, it proposes some strategies for managing space and resources for the administrative mechanism of the writing center at TU. Finally, the article concludes by briefly summarizing the main points discussed.

Development of Writing Center in the American Context

The concept of writing centers in the United States of America emerged in the early twentieth century. Initially started as 'laboratories' or 'clinics,' they provided informal guidance and special assistance to academically struggling students. Peter Carino, a historian of writing centers, highlights Philo Buck, a high school teacher in St. Louis, USA, as a noteworthy precursor to the laboratory approach to writing instruction stating that "Buck's students' wrote together on topics of their own choosing while he himself spent time with each individually before having them read and critique one another's paper" ("Early Writing Centers" 105). The early beginnings of the writing center were characterized by its role as a part and practice of *teaching methods* rather than *an institutional space* within the university structure.

Lab and clinic models of writing centers continued to exist until the mid-1930s. However, the methods and practices of these centers gained broader recognition through publications like the *English Journal*. Regarding this, Carino's history of writing center reveals that the inaugural editorial issue of the journal in 1912 emphasized the "efficacy of the laboratory method," sparking the academic discussion on the need for such centers within the rhetoric, writing, and English discourse community ("Early Writing Centers" 105). During the 1930s and 40s, The University of Iowa and The University of Minnesota, the first two American universities, provided a separate and dedicated space for laboratory instruction of writing. Building on the practices of these two universities, Elizabeth Boquet categorizes two types of writing centers: those functioning only as a method' before 1934 and those transformed into a site' after that (467). The former

method-based center's pedagogy was characterized by supervision, control, and "careful gaze of the instructor [where] students labored, afforded the opportunity first to self-correct errors in drafts and, failing that, to have their papers corrected immediately, line by line, by the instructor himself, thereby encouraging the internalization of the discursive norms" (Boquet 466-67). In the latter model, teaching writing was acknowledged as an integral component of university education across disciplines. This recognition highlighted the potential for effective implementation within a designated space, such as a writing center.

Subsequently, the 1950s was a pivotal decade for the writing center for two significant reasons. Firstly, writing labs received official recognition as an integral component of teaching writing across university programs. Secondly, the importance of these developments is underscored by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCC), formed in 1950, which provided a forum for the Writing Center scholarship. Notably, in the first issue titled "The Organization and Use of the Writing Laboratory: The Report of Workshop No. 9" of CCC, writing laboratories were formally defined as follows:

> [Writing Centers provide] a special room, where, under the supervision of a trained faculty member, a student (or a small group of students) may receive methodical, individual instruction in English writing problems according to his needs, be they in correct usage, punctuation, coherence, and unity, or any other branch of English. The atmosphere is made more congenial for such activity by writing tables, helpful books, and dictionaries. (31)

However, writing centers suffered from a derogatory label from the 1950s to the 70s. University authorities, teachers, staff, and students often viewed these centers as spaces established for the underprepared, deficient, poor, and intellectually impoverished students. For instance, Robert Moore's "The Writing Clinic and the Writing Laboratory" tarnished the image of these centers labeling them as 'remedial centers.' Moore argued that "writing clinics and writing laboratories are becoming increasingly popular among American universities and colleges as remedial agencies for removing students' deficiencies in composition" (388). Such misconceptions prompted scholars such as Stephen M. North and Andrea Lundsford to write against prevalent stereotypes. Stephen M. North's "The Idea of a Writing Center," worked to wipe out the dark image of a writing center as a place for fixing errors and correcting punctuation, grammar, and mechanics by emphasizing "the idea that a writing center can . . . [never] be some sort of skills center, a fix-it shop" (435). This often-quoted statement in the writing center scholarship contributed to dispelling the parochial images associated with writing centers by clarifying what they were not.

The misconception of the 'remedial label' attached to the writing center needs to be highlighted so that the intended audience of this paper too will not perpetuate it. The concept itself may appear foreign to the concerned stakeholders because English in the university community of TU is a second, third, or fourth language, and it is common to associate the writing center with a language error-fixing center, which it is not. It is also because most writers in TU's context struggle with grammar and punctuation issues. However, I do not mean that TU's writing center will have to replicate the US university models and we will have opportunities for intellectual discussions on this language matter in the future. But, in this paper, my primary focus is to emphasize the reasons for establishing the center itself rather than discuss about the best models.

Since the 1990s, writing center practices have been hugely influenced by Stephen M. North's works. His most significant contribution to this field revolves around his most popular statement in the discourse community of the writing center: "Our job is

to produce better writers, not better writing" (438). By this, he means that the primary goal of a writing center is not just to edit or improve individual pieces of writing but to empower the writers themselves to become confident and independent.

Over the last decades, the modes of writing centers' services have undergone significant change in the United States of America (USA). Specifically, since COVID-19, they have started offering online consultations (both synchronous and asynchronous) in addition to in-person services. In online services, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is a pioneering institution in providing online resources and services to writers in their needs. Another innovative and recent phenomenon is a multiliteracy center. According to this idea, the twenty-first-century writers' needs are not limited to traditional alphabetical composition practices but to digital and multimodal composition as well. This approach requires supporting writers working with a diverse range of compositional mediums and multimodalities such as flyers, videos, PowerPoint presentations, audio recordings, podcasts, visual graphics, and several other modes. David M. Sheridan, a pioneering scholar in this field, advocates for the transformation of traditional writing centers into multiliteracy centers to address comprehensive coverage of composition practices. He argues, "Multiliteracy centers should be spaces that reflect the diversity of semiotic options available to composers in the 21st century" (6). Likewise, the formation of writing center associations is also a new trend in the field to have intellectual conversations, organize conferences, and workshops, and lead to publications.

Most interestingly, the business world has also started to recognize the value of writing centers, with the Philadelphia Federal Reserve serving as one such example. Regarding this new venture, Josh Bernoff highlights the effective communicative goals gained by the corporate world through writing centers. According to him, such centers work for the effective communication skills of the employees. With the help of the example, he shows that "Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, one of 12 banks in the U.S.'s Federal Reserve System, dramatically improved the clarity and impact of their written reports." Without this improvement "communicating an important point to the target audience can easily get muddled. The result is that bank executives may not understand what problems they need to fix" for which the writing center has proved to be a great help.

The influence of the writing center concept is increasing day by day, and it is no longer confined to American university programs alone. Chris Thaiss et al.'s *Writing Programs Worldwide: Profiles of Academic Writing in Many Places* offers a comprehensive picture of the conventions and practices of writing, whether through writing centers or without, outside the US. If writing centers were not productive academic spaces, these extensive expansions would not have been possible. The mapping venture of this collection, aimed at exploring teaching writing practices across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, recognizing "the variety and rich complexity of persons, languages, traditions, geographies, conditions, and purposes" (Thaiss 6). These diversities help us see that organizations and alliances formed within writing center scholarships contributed to materializing academic ventures such as conducting workshops and conferences and publishing books and articles. Writing centers, in that sense, have become transnational phenomena.

History of Writing Centers in Nepal

Throughout its history, the writing center at Tribhuvan University has had a tenuous existence. It was formally established by a group of Masters of Philosophy students on June 10, 2014, in the Central Department of English. It was inaugurated by

the then-head, Professor Amma Raj Joshi. A blogpost, capturing the event, states that Professor Joshi was highly excited and hopeful about the center's potential in supporting the student writers in the university. Tribhuvan University Writing Blogpost quotes Joshi's enthusiastic speech: "The writing center will prove to be a milestone for the development of Academia in TU." However, this initial excitement proved to be short-lived, as the center could not exist and survive beyond that inaugural point. There is no official record of its activities, progress, continuity, or any further efforts either for its institutionalization or its existence. Apart from a few blog posts that were updated in the same year, 2014, the writing center seems to have disappeared from the annals of Tribhuvan University's history. However, the blog posts also consistently highlighted the potential opportunities that writing centers could offer to the journey of student writers.

Another source discussing the need for a university writing center in Nepal is the NELTA ELT Forum website. Padam Chauhan has posted a transcribed interview with Teresa Neubert (conducted on behalf of Kathmandu University in March 2022) entitled "Writing Centers in the U.S. Universities and Colleges: What, Why, to Whom, and How" (Interview). Neubert, an assistant director of the writing center of Minnesota State University, highlights how it can serve the exigencies of the writers in the context of KU. This interview also aims to draw the attention of the English discourse community to establish writing centers across the universities in Nepal. But, I think, several factors are working in delaying the recognition. Firstly, university authorities seem to be ignorant of its epistemological and ontological significance. Secondly, the writing and publishing culture has not aggressively grown up yet. Thirdly, numerous departments and institutions have been established in universities with lofty missions but have remained dysfunctional over time. Among the twelve universities in Nepal, only Kathmandu University (KU) started the writing center institutionally. However, even KU's writing center does not seem fully and effectively operational. The university's website https://writing.ku.edu.np/ reveals that the center's web page itself has not been updated since its inception in 2020.

Writing Center Philosophy and Its Pedagogical Practices

The university writing center is primarily a learning center designed and established for collaboration in writing-related activities. Its goal is to assist writers of all levels, from first-year students (referred to as early Bachelor's students in the context of TU) to PhDs. Its services encompass a wide range of writing tasks, including classroom assignments, academic papers, reports, research articles, theses, dissertations, multi-modal documents, PowerPoint presentation designs, web pages, and more. The center is open to anyone in the university community, including students, faculty, and staff. While its practices vary, collaboration, individualized instruction, and minimalist and non-directive guidance are some of the basics of its pedagogy.

(a) Pedagogy of Collaboration: Writing center pedagogy serves as an alternative to the traditional, top-down, teacher-centered classroom practice. It embraces an egalitarian approach that fosters a non-hierarchical relationship between tutors and student writers. Such a relationship is made noticeable by the use of preferred titles like 'consultants' in place of 'instructors' and 'student writers' in place of 'learners' or just 'students' in the center. Here, consultants and student writers work together collaboratively to achieve meaningful conversation for the development and enhancement of effective writing skills. Andrea Lunsford, a pioneering scholar in the field of collaborative writing pedagogy, holds the idea that the center is a site for collective engagement and participation in the knowledge-making process. She argues:

> [C]ollaboration both in theory and practice reflects a broad-based epistemological shift, a shift in the way we view knowledge. The shift involves a move from viewing knowledge and reality as things exterior to or outside of us, as immediately accessible, individually knowable, measurable, and shareable - to viewing knowledge and reality as mediated by or constructed through language in social use, as socially constructed, contextualized, as, in short, the product of collaboration. (4)

Lunsford's concept of collaboration stems from her belief that knowledge is not the product of an isolated and solitary effort of an individual, but is socially, contextually, and collectively constructed. Consequently, the kind of constructivism applied in the pedagogy of the writing center recognizes the values of the ideas that a student writer brings to the center. However, Lunsford is vigilant about the assumption that the collaborative approach is genuinely participatory. She states, "I think we must be cautious in rushing to embrace collaboration because collaboration can also be used to reproduce the status quo, the rigid hierarchy of teacher-centered classrooms is also replicated in the tutor-centered writing center in which the tutor is still the seat of all authority but is simply pretending it isn't so" (74). Therefore, it is essential to maintain and practice the real essence of collaboration in the pedagogy of a writing center. For that, Lunsford's insights are valuable to implement in any writing center pedagogy. She hypothetically asserts:

> Such a center would place control, power, and authority not in the tutor or staff, not in the individual student, but in the negotiating group. It would engage students not only in solving problems set by teachers but in identifying problems for themselves; not only in working as a group but in monitoring, evaluating, and building a theory of how groups work; not only in understanding and valuing collaboration but in confronting squarely the issues of control that successful collaboration inevitably raises; not only in reaching consensus but in valuing dissensus and diversity. (75)

A genuine collaboration, hence, occurs only when power and authority are justifiably distributed among the members. To adopt this model, the tutoring of a writing center has to actively involve the engagement of both the student writers and the tutors.

In the context of TU, I have experienced that the practices of collaboration and peer tutoring hardly occur. In such a situation, student writers are likely to experience loneliness, abandonment, crisis, writer's block, anxiety, and more in their writing journey. In the absence of neither collaboration nor a student-centered classroom approach, writing classrooms themselves can be entirely authoritative and, at times, oppressive as well. In that case, such classes essentially follow and perform Paulo Freire's "The banking model," where "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits" (53). In contrast, collaborative teaching writing approaches practiced in the writing centers rely on the exchanges of ideas, perspectives, and approaches among the involved subjects. Perpetuating of oppressive writing pedagogy at TU can be seen in two instances. Until a few years ago, I found that the adjacent department to English, i.e. the Central Department of Nepali, used to provide an exhaustive list of topics for the thesis writing students forcing each student to choose one from the list for their writing. This approach is fundamentally flawed and goes against the philosophy of teaching writing. Instead of empowering students to find research topics for themselves, this tendency imposes teachers' interest and perspectives on the students. I have also noticed that writing instructors, especially thesis supervisors, tend to correct students' writing with massive red marks. Ironically, at times, such teachers receive rewarding remarks and applause

from the students as well as higher authorities for performing 'a great job.' In such a wrong mentoring practice, teachers may grow as good editors but students will not. So, establishing a writing center at TU can be a good starting point to get rid of such unfair and ethically wrong practices existing in university classrooms and beyond.

(b) Pedagogy of Non-Directive and Minimalist Tutoring: While scholars lack consensus on the power dynamics between tutors and students in writing centers, a widely accepted principle is that tutors should respect students' efforts in their papers. It is commonly argued that tutors should facilitate writers rather than dictate a specific path. Despite the varying approaches, a general guideline discourages tutors from imposing their perspectives, as this could stifle the voices of students in their papers. Regarding this, writing center scholarship distinguishes between lower-order concerns (LOCs), which encompass issues like grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice, and higher-order concerns (HOCs), which involve developing ideas, understanding the audience, considering rhetorical situations, discourse communities, and organizational patterns. According to Donald A. McAndrew and Thomas J. Reigstad, higher order concerns (HOCs) are related "to the meaning and communication of the piece, . . . matters of thesis and focus, development, structure and organization, and voice" (42) whereas the lower-order concerns (LOCs) are related "to surface appearance, correctness, and standard rules of written English" (56). In my perspective, tutors may adopt a more directive approach when addressing LOCs to enhance the readability of writing. However, they must adopt a non-directive approach when addressing HOCs, allowing the student writers to establish their agency, authority, and voice in their writing activities.

In explaining the philosophy of minimalist tutoring, Jeff Brooks distinguishes between the roles of an editor/proofreader and that of a tutor/guide. He posits that the editorial role involves making corrections in an individual paper, possibly with a "red pen in hand" (129). The role of a tutor is not to improve individual papers but to "improve their writers" (128). He further argues:

> Our [writing tutors'] primary object in the writing center session is not the paper, but the student. Fixing flawed papers is easy; showing the students how to fix their own papers is complex and difficult. Ideally, the student should be the only active agent in improving the paper. The tutor's activity should focus on the student. If, at the end of the session, a paper is improved, it should be because the student did all the work. (132)

Brooks, as in the quote, emphasizes that a writing center tutor should perform the role of a facilitator to help writers develop their writing skills and abilities, rather than correct their writing piece. This approach aligns with the idea that the primary goal of a writing center is 'to produce better writers, not better writings.' Brooks' discouragement of the directive approach is referred to as "a hands-off approach to students' papers-one that avoids editing the papers for errors in favor of emphasizing structure, organization, logical reasoning, and stylistic control" (128) by Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood. For this context, Brooks favors the ideas of Stephen N. North to advocate that "process is far more important than product [in writing]" (30) and draws on Donald J. Reigstad to emphasize the importance of "discuss[ion] strategies for effective writing and principles of structure" (129) in teaching writing.

However, there is a debate regarding the effectiveness of this minimalist and non-directive tutoring pedagogy in the writing center. Opponents of this approach argue that it cannot be practically applicable because even when tutors ask questions or share their knowledge in guiding and supporting students, it becomes inadvertently directive. For them, this approach is not practicable because whenever tutors ask questions or

utilize their knowledge in instruction, facilitate, or help the students, it automatically happens to be directive. One of such scholars is Peter Carino. He argues:

> The watchword in tutor training should not be nondirective peership, but flexibility. Tutors should learn to shift between directive and nondirective methods as needed, and develop some sense of a sliding scale.
> - More student knowledge, less tutor knowledge = more nondirective methods.
> - Less student knowledge, more tutor knowledge = more directive methods.
> ("Power and Authority" 124)

Carino's concepts above present a compelling model of peer collaboration within the framework of the writing center at TU, particularly given the likelihood of less confident and more academically needy students seeking assistance. In such instances, tutors may find it necessary to adopt a more assertive and directive approach to enhance the productivity of their guidance.

(c) Pedagogy of Individualized Instruction: In this instructional approach, tutors facilitate one-on-one conferencing sessions, creating an environment where students can freely engage in dialogue, posing questions to clarify their work. The concept of individualized instruction, as articulated by Kelly Lou, involves "talking with an individual human being, face-to-face, about his or her writing; it meant helping each uneasy writer become a more confident and competent writer by actually writing" (4). Within a larger classroom setting, as in TU, not every student may express their questions, concerns, or challenges, which potentially leads to heightened anxiety and frustration about writing.

In such circumstances, the writing center can stand as a crucial supportive space for writers in overcoming writing-related struggles. Addressing this situation, Muriel Harris views writing centers as "nurturing, helping places which provide assistance . . . to students to help them grow, mature, and become independent" (17). Harris further emphasizes the importance of the center in fostering a "tradition of sharing, of helping, of working together" (16). Such individualized guidance pedagogy employed by the center can also be relevant in the Eastern cultural instructional practices, reminiscent of the Gurukul education system, where students received personalized mentoring from their Gurus. Establishing a writing center, therefore, not only serves as a practical solution for addressing writing challenges but also emerges as a means of preserving and enriching the values inherent in Oriental teaching practices.

Establishing the University Writing Center at TU

Establishing a writing center at TU could create a space for on-campus employment opportunities for at least a few students. While working as a Ph.D. student at UTEP, I worked as a writing consultant at the University Writing Center. It covered my scholarship. Throughout my tenure at the center, I frequently reflected on the scholarship criteria at UTEP in comparison to those at TU. It seems that TU's current provision of scholarship criteria in Humanities and non-technical disciplines is primarily based on students' academic performance in the preceding semester which looks like a ridiculous practice. I contend that scholarship provisions should adhere to logical criteria. A more viable alternative could be the implementation of a contribution-based model, achievable through a part-time employment policy for students in the writing center.

Under this proposed model, exceptional graduate students could serve as peer consultants in the center, mutually benefiting both the students and the institution. This initiative would allow students to refine their professional skills and apply the knowledge

acquired in their classes. Furthermore, this model could be extended to MPhil and Ph.D. students, mirroring practices commonly observed in the United States. Consequently, providing scholarships to students solely based on their past academic achievements or personal accomplishments may be deemed inconsequential in comparison to the tangible contributions students can make through active engagement in the writing center.

To ensure the viability and sustainability of the proposal for student employment in the writing center, TU should consider augmenting the scholarship amount to enhance its motivational impact. Additionally, the appointment of a dedicated director to oversee pedagogical and administrative procedures is imperative for the successful implementation of this initiative. The director, serving as a mentor, would guide student employees in practicing peer tutoring, a methodology proven to be successful in the U.S. context. This approach is likely to prove effective at TU as well, given that both student writers and student tutors undergo a parallel learning experience. The symbiotic nature of this arrangement fosters a mutually beneficial environment, contributing to the overall success and effectiveness of the writing center program.

In this context, Peter Carino's work "Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring" offers pertinent insights into the realm of peer tutoring that could prove relevant in the context of TU. Unlike the other advocates for absolutely minimalist tutoring, Carino sees the importance of exercising a certain level of power and authority by tutors within the writing center. He also emphasizes that tutors possessing comprehensive knowledge and proficiency in the conventions of writing practices will be valuable credentials for the tutors in the writing centers. Tutors, particularly those from the English Department, are deemed suitable choices for the writing center due to their background in writing courses and familiarity with the challenges faced by both basic and experienced writers. Carino contends that such peer tutors, armed with a certain level of expertise, can strategically pose questions that guide student writers toward enhancing their writing skills. This interactive approach, where the student writers respond to questions leading to improvements in their writing, is a collaborative process. Through this model, as Carino asserts, "Both student and tutor share authority and engage in collaborative operations to improve the text" (119). Adopting this approach of mobilizing students as tutors in the writing center at TU has the potential to address concerns related to producing unemployed graduates, offering a pragmatic solution, at least to some extent in the English Department.

For administrative management and tutor mentoring, universities typically appoint a director to oversee the operation of the center. In addition to the director, TU's writing center can also tap instructors from the English Department who possess substantial experience in teaching writing and conducting research related to writing. Considering the current context of declining student numbers, it appears feasible to engage faculty members from the English Department, both the Humanities and Education disciplines, to contribute to the success and functionality of the writing center.

Another common concern in establishing a writing center at TU could be its location. In many instances, writing centers in the US are strategically placed in highly accessible locations, often within university libraries. In that sense, in the context of TU too, the recently constructed library building emerges as an ideal venue. Justification for this choice lies in the accessibility of the library to students from all departments, including those from outside the University Campus, who can regularly utilize this facility. The central location enhances the writing center's reach, ensuring that a diverse student population can derive maximum advantage. Metaphorically, the library space can be likened to what Mary Louise Pratt terms a 'contact zone.' This designation suggests a space of interaction and engagement where individuals from various backgrounds

converge, fostering a dynamic environment conducive to collaborative learning and the exchange of ideas. Such a strategic placement aligns with the philosophy of inclusivity and accessibility that a writing center aims to embody.

Finally, the concept of the Research Management Cell of the University Grants Commission (UGC) can also be effectively mobilized through the establishment of writing centers across campuses. The Cell, through the Center, can also contribute to the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) program launched by the UGC. By providing support in developing writing skills, these writing centers can become valuable assets in fostering academic excellence and meeting the objectives outlined by the UGC's QAA program. This symbiotic relationship between writing centers and academic initiatives aligns with the broader goal of advancing the overall quality and standards of higher education in Nepal.

Conclusion

To conclude, based on the popularity and success of the university writing center programs within and beyond the educational settings, as discussed by the writing center discourse community scholars in the US context, this paper explores the potential reasons for setting up a similar center at TU and also illustrates the ways of establishing and institutionalizing it. The primary objective of proposing this project is to foster and elevate the writing skills and capabilities of student writers across all disciplines at TU. In the context of the current inadequate student support centers for the academic growth of students beyond the regular and traditional classrooms, it envisions that the writing center at TU could prove to be an innovative venture in empowering the students with the skills that they need to possess in their future job markets.

Drawing upon a comparative analytical observation of the teaching and learning of writing in Nepal and the United States, I have synthesized insights from my autoethnographic experiences in this paper. This synthesis has allowed me to identify key challenges and struggles faced by student writers at TU, as well as the opportunities that a writing center could offer them. Among the challenges, the difficulty in finding a patient and meticulous reader to identify issues aligning with academic conventions is the major one. Additionally, such writers may encounter writing blocks for which they need assistance from experienced and resourceful mentors, and such needful situations may appear at any time. To make the availability for such support at any time within office hours, the only possibility could be through writing centers. Since writing instructions require individualized guidance, writing centers could fill the gap of unavailability of such institutional space in the teaching-learning practices at TU. Furthermore, this paper envisions a university writing center at TU as a valuable on-campus employment opportunity for bright and skillful graduates. By assisting their peers, these students not only enhance their writing and communicative skills but also position themselves for potential career opportunities. The potential dual benefits of skill development and self-empowerment achieved through the writing center align with the broader objective of the university to prepare students for success in both academic and professional spheres.

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