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The Idea of a University in the Context of Nepal

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the conceptual aspect of university, university education, and the challenges of university education in Nepal. Governments around the world view universities and other higher education institutions as essential to achieving a number of national agendas. Investments in higher education institutions are increasing continuously with the belief that universities can be the source of continuous ideas to develop a knowledge-based economy. The idea of a university has been changing over time due to globalization and the shift in the knowledge-based economy. Education is becoming more globally integrated as new models for higher education are developed. The system of modern university education is undergoing serious transformations. In this regard, this paper has a special focus on what the prospects for University education are; in what context Nepalese university education exists; and what issues have impeded Nepal's university education system. This discussion is qualitative in nature and is based upon relevant literature review.

Keywords: University education, Philosophical foundations, Public debate, Autonomy, Impactful research, Knowledge.

Background

In the 21st century, education is globally recognized as an indispensable means of a country's social, economic, and political development because of its critical role in nurturing skilled, competent, and qualified human resources. Realizing this fact, there has been unprecedented growth of public investment in institutions of higher education and a growing demand for education in such institutions. Higher education comprises all post-secondary education, training, and research guidance at education institutions that are authorized as institutions of higher education by state authorities; universities and

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graduate schools are the most notable examples. Following World War II, higher education expanded throughout the world remarkably. Yet, the development of university education in the context of today's globalized world has been criticized and challenged globally. Some scientists and researchers have declared that universities are 'dead' or that their existence is in ruins and logically, this suggests the downfall and doom of higher education itself (Barnett, 1999). However today, higher education institutions still serve valuable social functions—they transmit cultural ideas and develop economically useful knowledge, to state a few. Furthermore, the trend in enrollment rate suggests that the increase in the influx of students for higher education was greater than that for primary and secondary education. It grew from 12 million students in 1960 to 88 million in 1997, an approximate seven-fold increase (UNESCO, 2000, 67).

Higher education is both an aspiration of young people and a fundamental requirement for employment in the contemporary industrial world. Higher education thus not only provides unique opportunities for personal improvement but also promotes equality of opportunity and shared prosperity. A well-managed, strategically oriented, diversified, and articulated higher education system is vital for producing diverse and capable graduates needed for the current economy and the nation's aspired economy. As higher education institutions, universities have three paramount functions: (1) provide education, (2) conduct research, and (3) contribute to society. In this regard, research and education complement each other; research paves way for a higher level of education and understanding, in turn, fosters the skilled people necessary to conduct research. Recently, much has been expected from higher education institutions regarding their contribution to their immediate society. They are expected to circulate accumulated knowledge back to society and avoid becoming "ivory towers" (IFIC and JICA, 2004, 1). In this regard, only research-based higher education can offer limitless avenues for economic development and social mobility.

In the context of Nepal, the first forms of education revolved around two major religions: Hinduism and Buddhism. There were established systems and institutions to train priests and other personnel to propagate these religions. Modern academic education in the country developed much later. After the 14th century, the then King Jayasthiti Malla reorganized and reinforced the existing caste system, placing greater focus on occupational training (caste occupation). Subsequently, the apprenticeship system was widely used. Guilds were organized which, among other things, looked after the education of youth (Wood, 1965, 8). Initially, Prithivi Narayan Shah advocated that every youth ought to be trained for war; yet, after conquering the Kathmandu valley, he heavily

focused on the industrial and vocational development of the people and country. Additionally, he introduced state responsibility in education and facilitated the education of children of the soldiers lost in conflicts. As a result, education that was based on Buddhist and Hindu traditions suffered (Wood, 1965, 9). During the Rana period (1846–1950), while Western countries were developing and extending their educational systems, the Rana ruling group was strongly opposed to public education. This opposition has frequently attempted to shut down every educational institution in Nepal. However, still, parents hired the Indian or British gurus to teach their children in the English educational system. Consequently, the concept of universal education was suppressed for more than a century.

A new dynamic period in the development of education began immediately after the collapse of the Rana autocracy in 1951. In order to develop school-level education that was in line with the English educational system, several organizational initiatives were taken. Many schools were quickly established without sufficient preparation, funding, or infrastructure. Although Nepal's higher education began in 1918 when the then Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher Rana founded Tri-Chandra College, which was affiliated with Patna University in India, major growth did not occur until 1951. This is because Chandra Shamsher's motive for establishing a college (Tri-Chandra College) was more political rather than having a sincere desire to advance education in the nation. He intended to create a college as a 'showplace' to demonstrate his 'progressivism' in light of Nepal's changing circumstances (Wood, 1965, 48).

The formal beginning of university education in Nepal was recognized with the founding of Tribhuvan University (TU) in 1959. Even though the founding of TU is recognized as the most significant initiative to enhance higher education in Nepal, until democracy was restored in 1990, higher education in Nepal remained identified with and exclusive to TU. Mahendra Sanskrit University was established in 1986, but it only took a limited number of students and focused mostly on teaching Sanskrit to a very particular group of people.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the concept of multi-university became prominent among policymakers and academics. At present, Nepal hosts seventeen universities and five recognized medical Institutes (equivalent to universities). Out of the seventeen universities and five institutes, eleven universities and four institutes are under the central government, and six universities and one institute are under the provincial government. Under the umbrella of the eleven central universities, 1447 campuses across Nepal provide higher education. Out of 1447 campuses, 754 are private,

539 are community-based, and 154 are constituent (University Grants Commission, 2023, 26). It is evident that out of all the campuses of the universities, only 10% are public-funded constituent campuses whereas rest 90% consist of private and community campuses. Out of the seventeen universities, fifteen, except Madhesh Agriculture University and Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU), offer similar programs in fields like agriculture, management, law, science and technology, education, forestry, engineering, forestry, humanities and social sciences, and animal science and fisheries (multiple programs/level within one roof).

In Nepal, access to higher education has increased significantly since democracy was restored in 1990. On the contrary, there still exists persistent debate over the Nepalese higher education reform and the role that it plays. Universities in Nepal are now going through a difficult time, much like the rest of the country's educational system. Various questions are being raised in front of universities whilst universities are struggling to maintain their role of propagating advanced ideas, increasing employment levels and wages, promoting greater social stability, increasing civic engagement, and controlling brain drain or talent loss. Among the issues, universities are currently facing several concerns, including constrained economic growth due to low skill levels in the workforce and limited access to applied research capacity for addressing local problems. In light of this, it seems that higher education is becoming more of a burden for young people in Nepal. Effective links between higher education institutes, the government, and the market are essential for realizing national interests. Instead of advancing society as a whole, Nepal's higher education institutions, public policy, experts, and the modern globalized market are at odds with each other. For instance, higher education institutes are not offering appropriate programs and curriculums necessary to tackle the changing socioeconomic, and political environment of the world. Likewise, higher education institutions are not being used by the government to further national interests. In this context, professionals and intellectuals have long expressed concern about how to bring the government, the market, and higher education institutions together for the benefit of national interests. Before 1990, higher education institutions in Nepal were instructed to support regimes; however, in recent years, their mobilization has moved away from state control. Similarly, because institutional space between higher education institutes and public policy-makers was absent, the role of higher education institutes could not be seen in the public policy-making process.

In the same vein, Nepali higher education institutions lack strong connections with their peer institutions on a variety of fronts, including knowledge generation, skill

development, and so on. Instead, they pursue their agendas independently, which has resulted in a resource crisis and the duplication of agendas. The establishment of synergy, which is essential to serve the national interest and developmental interventions, is negatively impacted by the absence of balanced interconnection between the objectives and concentration areas of higher education institutions. Numerous higher education institutions in Nepal focus on different themes, however, there is not a single institutional space that links their knowledge and supplementary information. At the same time, except for a few technical institutes, higher education institutes of Nepal hardly offer high-quality education. In this regard, this article concentrated on the theoretical aspects of Nepal's higher education system, particularly the university education system.

Conceptual Aspects of University/Higher Education

The modern university education system differs greatly from one another and is challenging to explain in a particular context. Hence, a better approach is to understand it via the functions it serves or is supposed to serve as defining exactly the objectives of higher education is a challenging task (Clark, 1981). Higher education includes not just universities but also other institutions of higher learning. These higher learning institutions can take the form of universities or other tertiary learning institutions. Generally, higher education comprises the university as a part of a broader group of related institutions. According to the British perspective, a university is an organization that leads the field in research and has the authority to award degrees on its own (Allen, 1988). According to Assie-Lumumba (2005) universities and higher education, however, are sometimes used synonymously in certain situations. However, they do not always cover the same reality. Higher education denotes a more holistic resonance as it encompasses all post-secondary or higher educational institutions. A university is a kind of institution of higher learning that awards degrees or other qualifications. Modern higher education can loosely be understood as a concerted combination of higher learning and training that includes both universities in the traditional sense as well as all forms of post-secondary professional institutions.

On the other hand, a university is a symbol of a community of scholars or individuals as well as a place of higher education. A university helps develop higher intellectual abilities in people in traditional professional disciplines and promotes high-level research. It also represents a group of people who are involved in research and study. A university can be thought of as a source of universal knowledge, which produces highly skilled human power for various professions. However, it should be noted that other types of higher education institutions also serve similar purposes of training middle-

class technical and vocational professional personnel. In this regard, Assie-Lumumba (2005) argues that universities and other higher education institutions have different missions, goals, and functions, as well as different requirements for faculty qualifications, student admissions standards, program lengths, and certification types. According to Verger (1992), the modern term university has been derived from the classical Latin word, *universitas*, which means, ‘the totality’ or the ‘whole’. In medieval times, the term university denoted the organization of teachers and students. The development of intellectual capacity and systematic research in academic fields has emerged as the primary goals of universities, especially since the 18th century (Ruegg, 1992).

Furthermore, a medieval university served as a center for research and higher learning for a community of scholars who were both relatively independent and coherent within them. Before the development of universities worldwide, there existed some kind of educational institution. Higher learning emerged as a consequence of the advancement of our civilization and caused the emergence of a university (Perkin, 2007). A university attracts students, teachers, and academic staff more strongly than other higher education institutions. They take pride in their history, especially in maintaining some form of administrative autonomy. During the Middle Ages, universities were among the most prestigious and privileged institutions that advanced intellectual ideas and culture. Because universities gather a wide variety of scholars in one place, they are still conduits for the development of knowledge that can change the world. At the same time, these institutions also serve as a heritage of the past. John Henry Newman, who contributed immensely to the idea of a university, articulated his ideas as:

A University is a place ... whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge; ... a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse. ... It is the place to which a thousand schools make contributions; in which the intellect may safely range and speculate. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, ... discoveries verified and perfected, and ... error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. ... Mutual education, in a large sense of the word, is one of the great and incessant occupations of human society. ... One generation forms another. ... We must consult the living man and listen to his living voice, ... by familiar intercourse... to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes (quoted in Boulton and Lucas, 2011, 2506).

After this brief account, it can be said that a university can be understood as a venue for higher learning. It is a community of scholars who engage in professional development, teaching, learning, research, and service to the socioeconomic, political, and cultural requirements of society. In other words, higher learning institutions and universities deal with education and scholarship through teaching, research, and public services.

The knowledge produced by a university may be the most frequent and most consequential element in forging the culture of a society. It may influence the emergence and decline of professions, as well as the socioeconomic strata of localities and even entire countries (Kerr, 1995). A brief look at the philosophy and goal of higher education can help us better gauge the current notion of a university. University is ultimately linked with education and philosophically, two important questions revolve around education: what is education? What is education for? Regarding this Jarvis argued education is an “organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills, and understanding valuable for all the activities of life” (Jarvis, 1955: 105) According to Chinese philosopher Confucius, “education is a process of integrating individuals into society and that knowledge should be acquired for the sake of harmony in society” (quoted in Jarvis, 1995:105). Furthermore, at the time of Aristotle, the goal of education was to produce educated citizens to meet society's material demands (Frijhoff, 1997). The concept of a university has changed over time; however, the fact is that it is still a place that provides higher education. A university is a component of the broader political, social, and economic framework of the society in which it operates. It is often found that how higher education/university is defined and perceived is constantly changing depending on the situation of the time (Kerr, 1995).

Universities have historically served the community in three interconnected ways: By educating younger generations, by preserving and advancing knowledge, and by providing talent, ideas, challenges, and advice. These roles have taken form during different periods and in different places. During the Greek period, the goal of higher education and the university in the Western world was the pursuit of learning the truth and advancing the knowledge and capabilities of scholars that helped improve the quality of their individual lives as well as the society as a whole. According to Plato, the goal of higher education is to cultivate individuals for the ideal society by assisting them in achieving inner happiness. This way, the state will profit from the harmony created by happy citizens carrying out their assigned jobs (Allen, 1988). This includes the cultivation/training of the mind. In general, the goal of a university education should be to foster critical thinking through both teaching and research to improve human life via

the means of intelligence and sound judgment, so that humans can tackle any situation. Therefore, education should enhance life, develop good judgment in the people, and help them better understand their environment.

However, Newman (1996) did not accept Plato's idea of the purpose or function of a university. For him, University implies pursuing universal knowledge (Newman, 1910). He believes that instead of advancing knowledge, universities should serve to diffuse knowledge and make it widespread. "The purpose of a university education is the achievement of a particular expansion of outlook, turn of mind, habit of thought, and capacity for social and civic interaction" (Newman, 1996: xv). On the contrary, Jaspers (1993) argues the university serves as a venue for systematic research and teaching where researched truth is transmitted through teaching. Jasper believed that a university or higher education is a center for research and knowledge hunting, promotion, and dissemination.

The various perspectives discussed above show that a society's political and socioeconomic development shapes the idea of a university. The concept of a classical university was that of a cultural center where, rather than teaching practical skills, students studied life-guiding values and worldviews and absorbed intellectual tradition. Later, the Humboldtian University model became dominant as a scientific learning process, and universal knowledge was reduced to scientific knowledge. Perhaps, the universities today do not function the same way as they did before, as different people hold varying reflections about contemporary universities. Some opine that universities have entered a new phase, and have transformed; others think that universities have altogether degraded or the age of the university has ended. Regardless, it seems that the idea of a university must cater to the required educational demands of a certain society at a certain time.

The development of technology forced higher education institutions to transform. As technology facilitates mobility, interaction, and collaboration, universities have transformed and expanded their function with its use. However, universities function inside a particular socioeconomic, cultural, and political fabric of society. Therefore, in the current world, university transformation procedures differ amongst countries. Generally, the goals and roles of universities have expanded and changed over time from world perception to a more research-centered, professionalized, and specialized institution through knowledge production and dissemination (Fuller, 2003). The rise of the Humboldtian idea of a university played a significant role in the transformation of the functions and mission of the university. Kerr (2001) claims that by the 20th century, the

university that had started as a small group of masters and students had grown into a much larger organization with a diverse range of staff, programs, and functions united by a shared name and set of goals. Since the 20th century, higher education institutes have been massified. As a result, the massification of higher education expanded globally in the last decades of the 20th century (Trow, 1973).

The university has evolved into a “Multiversity” in the modern, globalized world, with a wide range of goals and functions, as well as a diverse student body that includes both academics and non-academics (Kerr, 2001). Especially after the end of World War II, many “governments lack the fiscal resources to respond to rising domestic demand for a higher education with more state supply” (King, 2004, 23). It fueled the formation of private higher education institutions around the world. Real public expenditure on education dropped drastically. In addition, universities and higher education came to be seen more as products of the commercial sector. In other words, education in a university was commodified (Gumport, 2000,71). Higher education has been globalized and corporatized to raise funds, which has increased the number of fee-paying international student's mobility. Subsequently, the products of higher education have been marketized. According to Kerr (2001, 4) higher education institutions and universities have become “secondary schools, vocational schools, teacher-training schools, research centers, uplift agencies, businesses, ...cheapened, vulgarized and mechanized themselves” and “worst of all, they become service stations for the general public” as a result of the dynamics of change and the outcomes of transformation. The modern educational system has run its course. The historical background of universities demonstrated that higher education is currently undergoing a process of change that is dominated by the Global North approach, rather than transformation and readjustment in light of the socioeconomic, cultural, and political settings that currently exist in the relevant society. The Global South imports the Global North approach through imposition, persuasion, or colonialism. This development demands new systems of governance. As a result, it is creating new power dynamics inside higher education institutions as well as between the state and higher education (Henkel, 2005). In addition, a university must be “sufficiently stable to sustain the ideal which gave it birth and sufficiently responsive to remain relevant to the society which supports it” (Ashby 1966, 3).

Where Do Nepalese Universities Stand?

The present era of globalization has made university education more competitive forcing universities to struggle for their existence. As education products were widely available to students regardless of location through learning resource centers, preparatory

courses, etc., boundaries around university education got blurred. In this condition, the university education becomes successful when they grow or develop according to the law of development. The university education system has changed since the Industrial Revolution, moving from being a memory school to a thinking school; eventually, it was suggested that the main aim of higher education should be the acquisition of employable skills to support more general economic objectives. University operations and courses have changed because of globalization and the knowledge economy, which required redesigning all the processes occurring within the university.

There are different universities in different parts of the world and they have mutual interactions and relations to one another. These higher learning institutions work with different types of populations and with various degrees of systematization based on the unique socioeconomic, political, cultural, and historical characteristics of the national, sub-regional, and regional levels. These academic institutions create and disseminate fresh information that broadens our perspective on the world. However, the history of higher education and universities suggests that universities established in the developing world could not establish higher learning academic spaces like universities of Western developed countries.

During the Industrial Revolution, Western universities were founded and grew following the principles of the factory of knowledge based on Newman and Humboldt's principles and they have been remarkably successful. It has produced a model for higher education that is practically universal. These universities have grown to become prominent entrepreneurial centers because of their interactive social setting and operational freedom, which greatly fosters creativity within the institution. Universities serve as centers for radical thought and social progress in their communities and become the fundamental agents that drive the modern world. Therefore, their model has been widely duplicated. In addition, in many countries, they facilitate the growth of the national research base and have stimulated the creation of cross-disciplinary ideas to tackle the numerous intricate problems that both domestic and international communities confront. Indeed, modern universities are now known for their adaptability and flexibility. They demonstrated the importance of a dynamic engagement process in the search for knowledge, its justification, and sensitivity to the needs of the modern world. They have researched the theoretical uncertainties in knowledge and looked for practical applications for different discoveries. They have tested, strengthened, and passed on the wisdom that previous generations have inherited. Furthermore, they have worked to develop solid principles of action and thinking that they pass on to succeeding

generations of learners. Thus, universities in the contemporary world have stipulated two things. On the one hand, they have given students the broad and specialized abilities they need to face the world and ensure their own and society's overall well-being. On the other hand, they have foraged in areas of study and abstraction that might not seem immediately pertinent to others. Successful universities in the Western world create new possibilities through research and shape people through teaching. The interaction between research and teaching generates new capacities that are as per the needs of the times. They create new potential for progress through ideas and people.

In the context of Nepal, we have achieved remarkable progress in the quantity of higher education for the last 70 years. However, the entire Nepalese educational system including the universities is going through a difficult time right now. The Nepalese university/higher education system is struggling to maintain its role. Many questions are being raised about the performance of the Nepalese university. In this context, the many factors that today influence and create challenges in the qualitative development of Nepalese higher education governance are discussed in the following part.

First, the philosophical foundations of an educational paradigm are a specific and important issue. Every educational system needs to be firmly rooted in a methodical reflection on the nature of reality, knowledge, and values. University education must have clarity about its core principles and their purpose. Higher education institutions should not be rushed by coercion, urgency, or regulation to adopt a particular identity that is being presented to them by the outside world. Instead, they must interact with it to establish a widely acknowledged goal. Universities need to be fully aware of their social responsibility. Universities have to answer the following questions in their special ways, even if they embrace the triangle of teaching, research, and innovation: What kind of education? What kind of study? In addition, what role do universities have in fostering innovation? However, Nepalese universities/Institutions of higher education are rushed by a combination of inducement, urgency, and regulation into accepting an identity proffered to them from their surrounding world rather than developing their own objectives.

Second, the debate over changing the higher education system is gaining traction among the public, particularly when it comes to universities and their role in contemporary society. As the central institutions of higher education systems, universities are experiencing an unexpected crisis due to the growing need to adapt to rapid and significant changes that take place in the political, economic, and social environments on a national and international level. Marketization, internalization, and

globalization are the main exogenous drivers, which are made up of an intricate web of processes that have a substantial impact on developments both domestically and globally, including in higher education institutions. Both history and geography have an impact on the policy framework that shapes the educational institutional environment. Adapting to the growing need for changes to the higher education system to keep it sustainable, satisfy public expectations in their respective cultures, and address the challenges and demands of the global environment is a fundamental component of academic hearings.

Despite having a short history, Nepalese higher education development has passed many strategically prepared educational plans and policies related to its development, quality enhancement, and accessibility. Among many such provisions, the higher education policy is a tool for regulating higher education in the country. As higher education significantly depends on such policies, the periodic revisions and improvements in such policies become imperative for the overall development of the country's higher education. However, Nepal has had no uniform and concrete higher education policy till now. Although there is the Higher Education Policy, 2019, in practice this document is full of tall promises that look attractive only on paper. Neither does the policy categorically lay out the new structure of our education system nor does it consist of immediate and medium-run programs that help in translating the vision of national prosperity. Therefore, the slogan “making Nepal an educational hub for specific subjects” seems disconnected from the actual state of affairs. A clear higher education policy with strong political commitment, strategic human resource development, and a focus on the desired outcomes of higher education are essential for the growth of higher education in Nepal.

Third, long-term investment in scientific infrastructure and human development results in qualified human resources, scientific research, and development activities. For a developed state, these are valuable. Education enables nations to have a competitive edge in the long run. However, the main source of many issues in higher education is a lack of funding and autonomy. Nepalese universities spend far less than universities of developed countries on each student. It is obvious that higher education is exerting greater stress on public budgets; the majority of public universities heavily rely on central governments for funding due to the extremely low tuition fees and fierce opposition to raising their standards. Likewise, government officials who approve budgets may have little understanding of higher education in general, of the goals and capabilities of a particular university, or of the local context in which it operates. In addition, there is a lack of coordination regarding capital and operating budgets. Often,

the construction of large new facilities is common, but there is never enough funding for their maintenance and operation later. Public universities in Nepal often devote up to 80 percent of their budgets to personnel, leaving few resources for infrastructure maintenance, libraries, equipment, or supplies.

Likewise, to become a successful university, it needs considerable autonomy to determine its policies and priorities in a wide range of its activities. Universities of Nepal are autonomous in some aspect i.e. in setting academic structures and course content. On the other hand, central authorities commonly have control over certain other features of higher education, in particular, borrowing funds, the appointment of high-profile authority, recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff, fulfillment of institutional tasks, and so on. The administrative system of Nepalese university education is also over-centralized and has become ossified. The central administration exerts absolute authority over almost every aspect of university education i.e. financing, controlling the operation of the system, determining the curriculum and instructional objectives, setting goals, content of teaching, and so on.

Fourth, in university education, there is a concern not only with what is learned but also with how it is learned. Generation by generation universities should serve to make students think. Students gain the ability to identify problems on their own and solve them using logical, evidence-based arguments; they also learn how to look for relevant information related to the current issue, distinguish between appearances and veracity, and independently verify what is stable in that wildly unstable mixture that frequently passes for understanding. Every member of a society ought to have these qualities. Institutions of higher learning achieve this by developing students' innate ability to comprehend and look for significance. However, pedagogy practiced by Nepalese higher education institutes is concerned solely with the transfer of information and graduates are less skilled than they could have been. Such pedagogy fails to engage the student with the actual uncertainty present, with the deeper underlying issues of the subject, and with the overall context; consequently, higher education produces results of declining quality. However, to secure quality education, and meet the expectations of increasing demand, the quality of various aspects, including teachers, students, facilities, equipment, educational materials, methods, and financing must be enhanced. In addition, the rapid expansion of higher education widens the gap among different institutions. Hence, a system to guarantee the quality of education and research becomes necessary.

Fifth, a university education institute is an integrated organization surrounded by a larger number of various stakeholders. Thus, their internal connections and

expectations are of immense importance. The involvement of the stakeholders in the university education institute's activities (the university's regular planning and improvement) creates a positive impact. The government, industry and professionals, community organizations, staff, alumni, and students are all important stakeholders in a university or other higher education institution. In university education, academics freely contribute their specialized expertise or unique viewpoints to public entities and the general public through talks, performances, debates, and discussions. They also operate as public intellectuals, promoting social activism and debate by taking on a public role. Much of this, engagement of the public and support of government, is important for the success of any university education. Public engagement has created/developed the public ownership and acceptance of the university in the public realm. It contributes to a university's 'halo' effect; the aggregate contribution to civic society can be very great to the university education. However, the issue of engagement of the stakeholders has become more complicated in Nepalese university education. The issue of ownership has been a central concern of Nepalese university education institutes. Among the various stakeholders, no one is ready to take ownership of Nepalese university education institutes. Due to the lack of proper ownership, Nepalese university education institutes are becoming abandoned institutes.

Sixth, if an education system fails to promote impactful research and develop essential skills, it will struggle to create employment opportunities. Graduates from universities who lack confidence in their accomplishments are less likely to start their businesses or find employment following graduation. The research outcomes of the university are powerless to solve the problems of the government. Nepalese higher education is dependent on imported knowledge. The curriculums are not aligned with the needs of the job market; instead, they are overly conventional and to some extent obsolete in value addition. Additionally, resource constraints reduce the ability of students to effectively pursue research and experiment in their chosen field for innovation. Based on the information gathered over the last seven decades, the higher education system in Nepal has not been able to effectively progress original knowledge and skills or assimilate transferred knowledge and skills. Reforming higher education has not been able to give priority to improving the knowledge and skills that society already possesses. Instead, the system has directly or indirectly replaced jobs requiring such innate knowledge and abilities as those of blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, farmers, carpenters, and so forth; as a result, it has never been included in the reforms, teaching, and research related to higher education.

Seventh, Aristotle suggested education as a political subject matter, whereas Marx and Mao considered education as a means to get into the political goal. However, many scholars do not agree with the views of Aristotle, Marx, and Mao and argue that education should be depoliticized. Politics and Education are inherently related to each other. From the time of Aristotle, Confucius, and Chanakya to the contemporary politics of higher education, academics have always had a significant impact on politics and vice versa. Education and educational institutions have sometimes shaped society the way politicians desired, or have sometimes influenced politicians the way the society desired. Therefore, political activities within higher educational institutions have their merits as they promote the democratic practice of dialogue and debate on contentious issues among various groups and prepare a way for managing and solving conflicts. Political struggle always included education as a weapon in Nepal and the use of educational institutes (especially higher education institutes) for political action is rampant. Thus, the highly politically charged atmosphere in Nepalese universities/higher education institutes becomes one of the prominent reasons that discourage management from taking any initiative towards reform in the university/higher education institutes of Nepal.

Conclusion

Higher education comprises all post-secondary education, training, and research guidance at educational institutions such as universities that are authorized as institutions of higher education by state authorities. Among the higher education institutions, universities have three functions (provide education, conduct research, and contribute to society) in total. University education is one of the most important factors influencing the progress of the country as a whole. A nation's human resources, which manage the other resources left in the country, are developed via higher education. After World War II, higher education developed swiftly throughout the world because it was essential to the development of the nation. In fact, it has been realized that if a country has a skilled and educated workforce, it can prosper even in the absence of other resources. However, university education has been developing and changing rapidly in different places in different forms based on its surroundings. While Western university education significantly molded global higher education through systems, organization, curriculum, languages of instruction, research methods, pedagogy, and more, it has adapted deeply to its societal contexts.

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