

Student Access to Bachelor and Master level of Education faculty in Purwanchal University

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Abstract

Education develops human personality, thoughts, dealing with others and prepares people for life experiences. Education is the backbone for all round development of the nation. The educational status is regarded as one of the crucial factors for assessing human development index of a country. In Nepalese context, different educational policies have been adapted in the country after almost every democratic movement, with an aim to enhance student access to quality education. Purbanchal University, has been playing leading role to provide education to the people through several different constituents as well as affiliated campuses throughout the country. However, the condition of student access to higher education in terms of their gender, ethnicity, and geographical proximity is still not satisfactory. The present study is concerned with the current scenario of student access to higher education in Purbanchal University.

Keywords: student access, diversity, drop out, scholarship policy, learning achievement

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Introduction

Higher education is the sign of economic and social development in the country. Education helps people to think, feel, and behave in a way that contributes to their success, and improves not only their personal satisfaction but also their community. It helps in preserving and developing the historical and cultural heritage of the nation. Similarly Upadhyay (2018) has claimed that it helps in producing competent manpower in the global context and it encourages and promotes research in the different areas of education. Higher education is one of the most important factors for the overall progress of the country. Higher education develops human resource in a country that will take care of other remaining resources in the country. It is very important for the development of the nation. It has lately been realized that a nation can develop and prosper even without other resources if it has competent and educated manpower.

Now in Nepal, there are 11 universities. One of them is Purbanchal University. The establishment of Purbanchal University was in 1993 and was visualized as an extraordinary endeavor by the Government of Nepal to create an academic centre of excellence in the Eastern Development Region of Nepal. Its prime role was outlined to act as a catalytic agent for the promotion of socio-economic transformation in Nepal through quality education appropriate for quality life and sustainable future. The main programs offered in this university

are Management, Arts, Education, Law, Science & Technology, Engineering and Medical & Allied Science.

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Tribhuvan University is the first national institute of higher education in Nepal. It was established in (1959 AD) with the objective of preparing capable and qualified human resources for the overall development of the nation. It equally focuses on imparting standard higher education, protecting and developing national culture and tradition. Its motto is to involve in extensive, empirical and timely creation of knowledge and research in the fields of arts, science, technology and vocation. Despite the growing number of students' enrollment annually at higher education, there is wider discrepancy in enrollment and achievement among the students who belong to different gender, ethnicity and geographical proximity.

Khaniya (2006) has clearly stated that equity and excellence are parameters which cannot be overlooked while talking about diversity and flexibility. Although PU has been making significant effects to bridge the gap among these groups, there is little research done to see the inter-class and inter-ethnicity discrimination in student's enrollment and achievement. In light of contributing to address the research gap regarding higher education, this research will seek out to assess the existing situation of students.

Higher education is needed for strengthening communities and nations. Carls C. Dalstrom, the President and CEO of 2000-2007 United Student Aid Fund, too, opines, "Higher education should serve entire communities and the nation so that the country can get higher tax revenues, less unemployment, greater productivity, reduced reliance on public assistance, increased consumption, greater civic participation, less crime, better quality of health, civic life, and social cohesion" (quoted in Institute for Higher Education Policy, News Release, Washington, D.C., March 20, 2007) . This view shows that higher education is for overall development of a country. Many countries have been said as developed with their higher education.

The following three fundamental premises of the UN system relating to higher education also support the concept referred to by Carls. Everyone has the right to education (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 20, Para 1). Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. States Parties shall make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity (Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960, Article 4).

To meet the demand for increased access, higher education has continued to grow in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Referring to the expansion of higher education in Europe and America, Trow (2000) notes that the history of higher education since the Second World War both in the United States and Europe has been a history of the expansion of access and its consequences. In Europe, the growth was initially beyond the tiny numbers enrolled in a few European universities before the war to the 30 to 40 per cent of the age grade currently enrolled in all forms of post-secondary education. The most recent statistics reported by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) show that there has been significant progress in middle-income and developing countries (World Education Indicators [WEI] Countries). The Highlights of UIS Report (September 2007) state that in 2005, more students entered and graduated from universities in the WEI countries than in the Member States of the OECD combined. About 5.7 million WEI students attained a tertiary (type A) degree compared to 5.2 million from OECD countries. This figure does not include data from India, which are currently not available. According to newly released statistics, China now has the most tertiary graduates in the world – 2.4 million in 2006.

Historical background

The conversations around the new ranking especially raised questions about the evolution of a culture and system of education that has been shaped by radical geopolitical forces and changes – local, regional, and global – that, when unpacked, could offer important perspectives for scholars of higher education.

While quite brief, the history of Nepal's "modern" education is often dramatic and fascinating, not only in terms of influence of radical internal political shifts, which allow scholars to productively analyze those influences to generate theories and perspectives about education (Pandey, 2006), but also in terms of how global forces have played themselves out in this short history and what lessons scholars of education elsewhere could draw from the global/local interactions. Similarly, Parajuli (2012, p. 297) writes, for instance, that "the Rana era education policy moved from keeping the masses 'ignorant' (by barring their access to education) to crafting the minds of the masses (by teaching them their 'duties')." But the democratic revolution of the 1990s brought about a tectonic shift in the other direction, putting neoliberal privatization at the front and center (Regmi, 2019).

The "modernization" of education, which many understand as involving adopting the modes and methods of education from the West or from "international" standards, is not a straightforward story. Modern, formal education in Nepal is said to have begun with Durbar High School ("durbar" meaning "palace") that was established after a visit to Britain by Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana in 1850 (Sharma, 1990). Since then, "modernization" has been a platform for ongoing local sociopolitical tensions, as well as being shaped by global forces.

So, for instance, today's public interest in the English language and medium of instruction evolved from English being a secret means for the ruling oligarchs to gain connection with the world outside, to an aspiration for greater social capital among the upper class and caste to, and finally, becoming a rather unrealistic aspiration for the middle class (Sharma, 2018a). Similarly, the view of education as an economic investment in the individual's life – which is in tension with its view as a social investment for social good – has also evolved with the same modernization.

In this brief history of Nepal's higher education, politics and political economy remain the most potent shaping forces.

In one hand, higher education prompted by macro-level political and economic and the tendency for structural change in education to be stagnated by other cultural, political, and socioeconomic forces on the other. On the one hand, from the autocratic Rana regime (1846–1951) to the ultra-nationalist Panchayat system led by the Shah dynasty (1960–1990), the civil war prompted by Maoist insurgents (1996–2006) and then to the liberalization (1990s onward) and globalization of the economy by the democratic revolution that led to eventual rewriting of the country's constitution as a federal democracy (2015), major shifts in political and socio-economic structures have led to major policy changes in education, as well as new kinds of institution, curricula, and teaching learning culture to some extent. On the other hand, education has not seen similar structural changes or, for that matter, significant change in culture and expectations, roles and relations, rewards and motivation for various stakeholders in higher education.

Higher education remains characterized by a number of “sticky” issues, such as the use of higher education institutions as a political battleground, the predominance of lectures as pedagogy and exams as assessment, a culture of convenience shaping key aspects of the system (such as teacher hiring and promotion, curriculum, teaching, assessment, student success), lack of flexibility in equivalency and transfer, insufficient willpower and autonomy to implement a federalized structure in education, loss of expertise and lack of distribution of talent, the practice of research and publication in name only (if any) among scholars, and little integration of research in graduate education (with almost none in undergraduate education (Bista, Sharma, and Raby ,2019).

Statement of the problem

In Nepal, higher education is still beyond the equitable access for girls under- privileged class and ethnicity groups. Regarding this situation, UGC (2015: 3) has mentioned that the participation of geographically and economically backward group of people in higher education has not increased although some scholarship is managed. Although, many efforts have been made to bring every child in university it needs to be made effort to make higher education accessible to each and every student, irrespective of their castes, language, culture and ethnicity, studying in higher education. There are many questions that are still unexplored. What is the existing situation of enrollment and achievement of girls, ethnic students and students from remote areas in higher Education? How can the access of those students be enhanced to higher education, especially in Tribhuvan University. These questions provide

examples of existing problems which create a curiosity to be explored based on empirical study.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to know the status of access of students in Bedand M.Ed. level under Purbanchal University.

Research questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following specific research questions have been framed:

- a. What is the status of access to students to study B.Ed. and M.Ed. levels in colleges of Purbanchal University?
- b. How do students and teachers perceive the access of students in B.Ed. andM.Ed. levels ?
- c. What are the policy provisions made by Purbanchal University for the students' accessibility?

Methodology

The methodology of this study is qualitative and interview is taken to know the perception of students and teachers.

Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure of this study is purposive. So, some teachers and students involved under Purbanchal University were selected deliberately as respondents of this study. The respondents were from Biratnagar, Morang and Sunsari districts.

Analysis

The main office of Purbanchal University is located in Biratnagar, Municipality. It has got a building of its own and other offices are at rented buildings. Moreover, Purbanchal University has not got constituent colleges of B.Ed. and M.Ed. levels of itsown. All colleges of Education faculty are affiliated colleges and they are run privately. Some colleges of Education faculty in Biratnagar under Purbanchal University are Gograha college, Annapurna College and Edinburg College. Most of the students to study in Education faculty in Biratnagar come from Morang, Sunsari, Saptari and Janakpur districts. The analysis has been made on the following themes:

Importance and Motivation for Education Faculty

Many students are attracted towards the study of BEd and MEd levels. The students were asked about “why have you been motivated towards the study of Education faculty in higher education level?” Regarding this query, the students of both B.Ed. and M.Ed. levels showed their positive attitudes. They had known the value of Educational study in their locality. Moreover, it was the subject which would help them to get jobs in teaching sector. The students were interested to do the job of teaching in their locality. It was also found that the students who completed B.Ed., they would get employment in secondary level of teaching jobs and those who completed

M.Ed. level, would get jobs in Higher Secondary Level and college levels. In this way, this faculty of Education was of great importance for them.

Courses of Study

The students were asked about selection of courses they would get to study in their colleges. Regarding this question, the students selected as respondents of the colleges under Purbanchal University gave common views. The students could select the subjects such as- English, Nepali, Maths, and other education related subjects as major subjects. The students could get teaching jobs according to their major subjects in schools and colleges. The students would feel some difficulties to study English as major subject because of their weakness in high school level.

Access and Facilities

This is the main point of enquiry of this research study. Regarding this aspect, the students' views are that the colleges take admission of those students who want to study in Bed or MEd levels. It means that there was no any problem for enrollment in these levels of educational study. The respondents also mentioned that there was no any discrimination from the side of colleges. The students from any group of socio-economic status would get enrollment in BEd and MEd levels.

On the other hand, regarding facilities, the students mentioned that PU has not got constituent colleges for Education Faculty. The colleges running now are all privately funded colleges. So, they had no any chance of facilities from university. Some students would get facility of reduction of fee from college management. The facility the students would get was that college would provide them books for a year and they would return after final exam of the respective year.

Achievement

Regarding the point of achievement, the students mentioned that they have hope of getting teaching job in their locality. It was because their former friends have got teaching jobs easily. The students seemed to have been satisfied from their study of educational programmes. Some of the students were flexible in taking courses because they were working in schools. The colleges would provide reading materials for them and manage extra classes for them.

The teachers of the selected colleges were also asked in the same way. Regarding access, the teachers said that the university has not given any facility of scholarships to the students. The college management would provide some concession in fee for the students. Almost all students who would come to college, would be enrolled with compromisation of some kind on own way. The teachers also would take class in flexible way and prepare the students for exams.

Findings

The findings from the analysis are of great concern. One of the most important things to be done is that PU has not established constituent colleges of Education Faculty. PU has made only the policy of affiliating colleges instead of establishing own colleges. The colleges have to pay affiliating fee and students' enrollment registration fee. PU has to provide scholarship to the students who enroll in Education Faculty. But PU prepare syllabus of Education Faculty, which is

mostly similar to TU. So, as a whole, students of Education Faculty have not experienced about any facilities for access to higher education. Colleges themselves manage access of different groups of students.

Conclusion

Although PU has got colleges affiliated from eastern region to western region of country, it has not established its own college of Education Faculty. It has got very few constituent colleges in Morang district. But on the other hand, large number of students under PU is in Education faculty. So, this research has revealed that PU is running as affiliating university instead of establishing constituent colleges.

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