



Revitalizing Higher Education: Strategies to Retain and Attract Talent in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Study examines challenges in Nepal's higher education system and proposes strategies to retain talent. Factors driving Nepalese students abroad include education relevance, limited seats, economic considerations, ROI, and political stability. Interviews with education ministry officials suggest dialogue with institutions, addressing limited seats, long-term human capital plans, and education loans. Gaps between rhetoric and action in government strategies are noted. Recommendations include fostering dynamic learning, embracing technology, prioritizing faculty development, and creating inclusive spaces. This research contributes practical insights for policymakers and educators to enhance Nepal's higher education landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Youth is the period between childhood and adulthood. Youth is basically the backbone of any nation. They are the future leaders, entrepreneur, employee who build the nation and provide fresh perspectives and energy to help drive economic development and social progress. Youth can play an important role in improving development pace of any country.

In context of Nepal, they are more influenced and concerned towards foreign education and culture. The reason behind it could be the perception of a higher quality of life, willingness to compete, desire to live life at fullest, and desire for greater future security. This shows the need of revitalizing higher education in the country to retain and attract the students to stay there. Globalization has unleashed simultaneous processes of homogenization, hybridization and indigenization with complex and varied patterns of economic, political and cultural impacts. Overall, the process seems to be moving from a modernist, uniform and centralized regime to more decentralized postmodern structures, processes, production, and consumption. Higher education under capitalistic globalization is highly commercialized and premised on “accumulation at all costs”. (Khanal, 2015)

The driving force behind the 21st century economy is knowledge and the developing knowledgeable human capital is the best way to develop knowledge economy. Financing higher education is the central concern for the academic community and policy makers. (Acharya, 2015)

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries have common features, such as geographic and climatic conditions, and share issues concerning the socioeconomic, cultural, and educational advancement of their people. Higher education affects every area of national development and deserves requisite attention. All SAARC countries have a similar higher education structure, including entry qualifications and age, duration of courses, and instructional management system. The pressing demand for higher education and a strong desire for foreign qualification by youth are common issues. Opportunities are limited, with gross enrolment ratios varying among SAARC countries from less than 5 percent to 10 percent. The participation of women is not more than 40 percent in any SAARC country, and the quality of education is substandard. (Chauhan, 2008)

Objectives

To determine the strategies to retain and attract talent in Nepal

To analyse the revitalizing higher education in Nepal

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study looks the prospects of indigenizing higher education in south Asian countries particularly in Nepal. Three major elements of indigenization of higher education are examined: content, teaching and learning, and medium of instruction. It concludes that all three elements of indigenization remain largely unattended. It argues that the higher education system in Nepal is in shambles largely due to the impact of capitalistic globalization, ‘mindless incrementalism’, over-politicization, underfunding and poor state of research and overall governance. No systematic efforts are in the making to comprehend and reverse

these trends. The larger indigenization movement which could power the indigenization of education system has been taken over by ethnic entrepreneurs. Rather than promoting openness, intercultural sensitivity, shared spaces and solidarities among stakeholders, it remains fragmented, parochial, highly politicized and motivated by political profits. The development of indigenous higher education system and independent intellectual tradition in such ecology seems a rather distant dream (Khanal, 2015).

Nepal is a landlocked Asian country. Population is about 30 million people and the literacy rate of the total population aged five years and above is 76.3 percent. Where the male literacy rate is 83.6 percent and the female literacy rate is 69.4 percent. Education is one of those key tools which easily achieve wellbeing and prosperity of human.

Higher education means the economic and social development of the country. It helps to promote and encourage a research in different field of education. In Nepal, a student enters higher education after completing 12 years of school level. There are many universities in Nepal which provide higher education in different faculty of management, sciences, engineering, agriculture, humanities etc. As we know, many students in college and universities have been rapidly increase but in Nepal the quality of higher education is very poor and the fees were very high. In present days, course and curriculum in accordance design is very difficult to standard of higher education. In higher education there are many modern and important courses should be required. In every educational sector most of the teacher, staff and students were elected by political influence instead than competitors. Most of the teacher has limited knowledge of that subject and many of them have no practical knowledge and experience in higher education. Sometimes teachers are forced to do this because their salary, financial reward and benefits are very low. Nepal's higher education system is just like multidimensional, such as: lack of resource, political influence, dynamic educational system, flexible, waste of resource, neglect private sector (Upadhyay, 2018).

With the decrease of government contribution to higher education, higher education institutions are having massive problems to sustain their programs and also to survive in this competitive world. Even though the public universities in Nepal have reasonable tuition fee, students from remote areas of the country and also students from lower financial bracket do not have easy access to higher education. With the growing demand of higher education due to demographic growth of 18-22 years cohort, demand of technically groomed graduates from different field, decreasing government financial support are preventing the under privilege students entering into higher education and also creating austerity in higher education finance in Nepal. This depressing situation prepared the field for this study to find a way of proper financing of higher education in Nepal. (Joshi, 2016)

In Nepal, socio demographic characteristics are strongly and significantly related with educational access and attainment. While wealth, geography and gender do matter, further culture-specific attributes must be added to the equation. Poverty remains a, if not the, major barrier to equity in education.

Geography does matter, but its effect is two-dimensional: Children in rural and urban areas suffer from educational inequity. Whereas infrastructure is insufficient in rural areas, urban poor children trade off education against income generation. Although gender differences have decreased with regard to access, girls are still significantly disadvantaged when it comes to higher attainment. The impeding effects of the established attribute trilogy increase further when cross-cutting with additional disadvantaged group characteristics. In Nepal, “bad luck” quite literally “comes in threes” regarding impediments to equity in education due to socio demographic attributes. Increased attention should thus particularly be paid to marginalized population groups, who face socio-cultural (particularly low castes and Muslims), physical (rural students, minority language speakers and children with disabilities) as well as financial barriers, in most cases mutually reinforcing each other (e.g. Muslims are in low castes speaking minority language). Caste, although abolished officially, still strongly pervades Nepalese society and impedes equitable educational opportunities. (Scheuermann, 2013)

Research gap

The above reviewed literature gives the information about the reasons and initiatives that can be taken in account to revitalize higher education worldwide.

This study is a depth analysis of the effectiveness of current educational policies and initiatives in addressing the challenges faced by the higher education sector in Nepal. This includes examining the impact of policies on access to higher education, quality of education and technology in teaching and learning processes.

METHODOLOGY

This study is done with qualitative research via inductive approach. An interview was taken with the respondents. The number of respondents taken for the data was 20. An interview of the spokesman of education ministry Mr. Shivkumar Sapkota was also taken in account. The interview was recorded in a recorder and got further analysed. The other data is from secondary sources i.e. books, journals and articles. Prior to data collections, respondents were provided with the detailed purpose and procedures. Respondents are asked with the consent and agreement to maintain privacy if required. And the data was analysed by gathering a group of people through whom the data was collected.

RESEARCH RESULT

There were 20 interviewees. All interviewees aim to pursue their desired career. The interview questions aimed to identify factors influencing the decision of Nepalese students to pursue higher education abroad. An interview with education ministry spokesperson Mr. Shivkumar Sapkota was also taken on behalf of government. The interview aimed to identify the strategies to retain higher education in Nepal. The interview was taped in a recorder and then further examined.

Factors influencing the decision of Nepalese students to pursue higher education abroad are:

Relevance and practicality of education: Nepal's education system is criticized for being outdated of date and failing to keep up with changing circumstances. There is a gap between academic knowledge and practical application, resulting in a workforce that lacks the skills needed in modern industries Interview find out that , as students shape their future courses, the attractiveness of studying abroad reflects a desire for educational excellence, personal fulfilment and global citizenship a monument of Nepal's ongoing sprit of creativity and aspiration.

Limited seats: College admissions are highly competitive due to restricted seating capacity. Limited seats can lead to disappointment and frustration for students who have worked hard to prepare for tests and meets admission requirements. Smart and ambitious individuals may choose to seek further education abroad for greater chances of admission and quality education The interview revealed that the majority of respondents are disappointed by the limited seating capacity. One of the respondents, like many aspiring students in Nepal, shared his challenging journey towards pursuing higher education. He fuelled by a passion for engineering, set his sights on joining Pulchowk engineering college. However the harsh reality of limited seats shattered his dreams of securing admission to his desired institution. Raj's story sheds light on the phenomenon of brain drain, wherein talented and ambitious individuals seek educational and professional opportunities beyond their home country.

Economic considerations: While studying abroad might be costly, some students and families consider it as a long term investment in their future. Scholarship, financial aid and part time work possibilities income countries help lessen the financial load and make studying abroad more accessible to Nepali students. Our findings says that in search of higher education and economic security for their family, must make the difficult decisions to study abroad despite potential financial difficulties. Students are drawn to scholarship, financial aid, part time work prospects abroad as they look for ways to relieve their family's financial burden while pursuing their education goals. Given Nepal's limited higher education resources and budgetary restraint, student's decision indicates a smart approach to securing a better future for themselves and their loved ones.

Return on investment: When assessing the expenses and benefits of studying abroad, students think about the potential return on investment in terms of career advancement, earning potential and overall professional development. Nepalese students face a crossroads between educational goals and economic realities, contending with the dramatic impact of return on investment (ROI) on their decisions to seek further education overseas. As they embark on this transforming journey, the impact of ROI ripples their academic endeavors influencing the course of their future. Nepalese students are tempted to the promise of ROI offered by universities abroad. At the heart of their decision making process is a strategic calculus in which the benefits of studying abroad are balanced against the expense.

Political stability: Nepalese students prefer countries with stable political situations because they are concerned about political upheaval and its impact on their education at home. The ups and downs of political stability has influenced the outlines of society for decades, the pursuit of educational possibilities

overseas has emerged as a fascinating narrative in Nepalese students' lives . Against the backdrop of political uncertainty, structural issues and shifting ambitions, the impact of political stability on the decision to pursue education abroad is the significant, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the country's educational landscape.

Strategy to retain higher education

An interview with education ministry spokesman Mr. Shivkumar Sapkota was also taken on behalf of government. While the interview with the educational spokesperson sheds light on government's approach to revitalizing higher education in Nepal. Strategy carries out and to be carried out by government are:-

Dialogue with educational institutions: The spokesperson emphasizes the necessity to communicating with educational institutions to identify areas for development. This is a realization of the necessity for collaboration and partnership between the government and academic institutions to improve the quality and relevance of Higher Education in Nepal.

Addressing limited seats: The spokesperson stressed the issue of limited seats in educational institutions which can lead to fierce rivalry and encourage students to pursue study abroad. This acknowledgment demonstrates an understanding of the challenges facing the Higher Education System, as well as a willingness to address structural concerns in order to increase accessibility and equity.

16th Five year plan for Human Capital Development: Mentioning the 16th five years plan for Human Capital Development reflects a broader strategic approach to addressing brain drain and retaining students, skilled manpower with Nepal. This long term planning framework demonstrates a commitment to investing in human capital and creating an environment that encourages talent retention and local expertise development.

Providing education loans to students: The idea to grant education loans to students indicates an acknowledgment of financial constraints that students encounter when pursuing higher education. By providing financial aid, the government hopes to make education more accessible and inexpensive, thereby lessening the temptation for students to pursue opportunities abroad.

However, notwithstanding the government strategy, an examination of the spokesperson's answers indicates a potential gap between rhetoric and action in the government's strategy to revitalizing higher education in Nepal. While the ideas demonstrated a recognition of the problem and a willingness to seek solutions, the lack of detailed action plans , deadlines and measurable outcomes raises concerns about the government's commitment to realizing Nepal's intellectual capital. Furthermore, focusing on conversation and planning frameworks rather than taking tangible actions to solve critical challenges like insufficient seats and financial constraints may show a lack of urgency in tackling the core causes of educational exodus and brain drain. Without comprehensive policies and meaningful initiatives, the government risks maintaining the status quo and failing to capitalize on its students' abilities and aspirations.

CONCLUSIONS

Revitalizing higher education demands innovative strategies. Fostering dynamic learning environments, embracing technology, and cultivating global partnerships are essential. To retain and attract talent, universities must prioritize faculty development, enhance research opportunities, and create inclusive spaces that inspire intellectual curiosity. Embracing flexible learning models and staying attuned to industry needs will position higher education as a beacon for diverse, forward-thinking individuals worldwide. Revitalizing higher education in Asia involves improving teaching methods, cultivating strong research collaboration, and enhancing digital learning platforms. By forging strategic partnerships with industries and offering cutting-edge programs, the goal is to not only retain but also attract top-tier talent to Asian academic institutions. Nepalese policy-makers should take into account comprehensive data on all relevant sociodemographic attributes to tailor policies so that they also reach marginalized children. Besides, norms-based socio-cultural barriers to equity in education and perceptions of a low value of education should be addressed. Otherwise it will be hard to achieve core international commitments and adhere to international human rights standards.

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