

**Original Research**

**Unequal Access to TVET Programmes in Nepal: Impact of Neo-Liberalism**

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**Abstract**

The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system in Nepal, initiated formally in 1989, was supposed to grow speedily and make a significant contribution to the Nepali society. Though equal access to TVET has been set as a priority, a vast and widespread inequality of access to TVET is unquestionably apparent. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to find out the factors hindering equal access to TVET in Nepal. In terms of theory, this paper employs a Marxian perspective to discuss how neoliberal policies have significantly limited and restricted the access of poor students to TVET programmes. Methodologically, this paper is based on secondary data gathered from different credible sources and employs informal reasoning to arrive at the conclusions and back them up. Sources of secondary data include educational policies of the Government of Nepal, different policy papers, various national and international journal articles. The study concludes that the neoliberal economy is responsible for reinforcing unequal access to education by preventing the reshaping public education, which, otherwise, could have created better and relatively equal access of all children, rich and poor alike.

**Keywords:** *school, education, TVET, investment, economic class, neoliberalism*

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## **Introduction**

Education is considered vital to individual accomplishment because it gives individuals opportunities to achieve status mobility (Beutel & Axinn, 2002). Status mobility involves shifting of an individual from one social status to another. Social mobility, therefore, is what constitutes the social growth and transformation of an individual, which also enables them to make contributions to the growth of a society or a nation. It is considered a critical component for the economic growth of a nation as it increases the efficiency of an individual worker and helps the economy to move up beyond simple production process (World Economic Forum, 2016). Education, thus, is important for both the individual and society alike. It plays a significant role to uplift an individual's socioeconomic status and enables a person to live a better life (Javed et al., 2016). For example, a survey conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] in Uganda shows a significant difference in income between the educated and uneducated owner of the home business: the former earns 36 per cent more than the later (UNESCO, 2014). It points to the fact that education is one of the contributing factors for the reduction of poverty and inequalities.

In addition to general education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is one of the important components in today's world as it expands an individual's opportunity spirally. For example, TVET education provides an individual with better chance to get a good job. Those who get better jobs will have a better economic condition, and again their children will get a better education. So, technical and vocational education is indispensable for a country to produce trained and skilled human resources for the job market. With opportunities in the job market, the country can reduce the unemployment rate. A case in point comes from the rate of unemployment after the global financial crisis of 2008/2009. The data of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development shows that after the Financial Crisis unemployment rate rose to 35% in Italy and Portugal, and 50 % in Greece and Spain while remaining below 10% in Austria, Germany and Switzerland (Eichhorst, 2015). These last three countries had dual vocational training system combined with vocational schooling and structural learning on the job (Eichhorst, 2015). Therefore, they did better in terms of handling the rate of unemployment,

indicating a strong role of technical and vocation for generating and maintaining employment.

Equal opportunity in TVET education has been emphasised for quite a long time. However, the bitter reality of our country is that everyone does not have the equal or even comparable opportunity of technical education. The reason for this, as Bhattarai (2014) argues, is that the technical education is mostly urban-centric, limiting the benefits to the youth living in accessible locations only (as cited in Baral, 2019). Similarly, Paudel (2019) states that the entry criteria for formal TVET, which requires applicants must have at least the Secondary Education Examination [SEE] degree, has restricted the access for the majority. Furthermore, the majority consists of children from low-income family because as per the report of Nepal's Ministry of Education (MoE) the school dropout rate is higher in the children of the bottom three wealth quintile compared to the upper two wealth quintiles (MoE, 2016a). Besides, the provision of private training institutions of technical education has further widened the gap of TVET opportunities in Nepal. While children from well-off family join private training institutions, the poor children are left behind as they cannot afford the cost of private institutions (Sharma, 2015). Thus the urban-centric training and private TVET institutions, entry criteria to enrol in TVET etc. have reduced the accessibility to TVET for the many.

The long-term TVET programmes have been observed more effective than short-term courses as the employment rate is higher for the former than the later (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2015). However, the total student intake capacity of long-term TVET courses in the country is only around 60000 which seems extremely low compared to around 1600000 students in the higher secondary level (Ministry of Education Science and Technology [MoEST], 2018). The goal of establishing TVET education was to produce skilled human resources so that they could sell their skills in the job market for a better value. However, the aforementioned discussion shows that not everyone has the opportunity to obtain education and make themselves capable. Data shows a very insignificant enrolment in the TVET programmes: of the total students in secondary and higher secondary levels, only about two per cent are in the TVET sector (Parajuli, 2013). Every year, only a limited number of deserving TSLC graduates can pursue diploma and technician certificates depriving 28000 youths getting access to TVET programmes (ADB, 2015). Why is there still unequal access to TVET

programmes in Nepal? Is it random or systemic? Does it have to do with the economic structure of the Nepali society? Does it have to do with neoliberal economic world order?

In this context, this paper seeks to find out the principal factors that are responsible for unequal access to TVET. For this purpose, this paper comprises six sections. The first section comprises introduction that deals with the background to the TVET and the objective of the paper. In the second section, the paper gives a brief overview of the concept, policies and rationale of TVET in Nepal. The third section engages with some theoretical discussion on economic class and neoliberal agenda and its impact on access to both general and technical education. The fourth section deals with the methodology of the paper; and the fifth presents the discussion of the factors responsible for unequal access to the TVET. Finally, the conclusion and implications are briefly discussed in the sixth section.

### **TVET in Nepal: Concept, Policies and Rationale**

Nepal has a long history of implementation of technical and vocational education. “Informal training, the unorganised, unsystematic lifelong process by which knowledge and skills are acquired through experience, observation and contact with peers and elders has always played a major and traditional role in Nepal” (Basnet & Basnet, 2014, p. 27). However, TVET education in Nepal formally started after the establishment of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) in 1989 (MoEST, 2018). CTEVT is the highest body that makes policies and programme on TVET and implements all over the country through its short term and long term programmes (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2009). For this purpose, CTEVT has been formally authorised to coordinate various agencies, such as FNCCI, I/NGO and other local organisations (MoE, 2009). Formally, established by TVET act in 1989, with the vision of skilling Nepal for people’s prosperity and with the mission of developing a competent workforce for national and international market needs, it has already 429 affiliated and 45 constituent institutes (MoEST, 2018). Among these institutions, some are directly running under government agencies, some are getting support from donor agencies, and few have made their programme financially sustainable by charging certain fees to the trainees (MoEST, 2018). In order to produce skilled human resources responsive to market needs, the CTEVT has set six goals, and among these, expanding

TVET programmes for ensuring access and equity comes first (MoEST, 2018). Thus, the Government of Nepal is trying to institutionalise the TVET sector in cooperation with national and international organisations by making necessary laws and policies.

The economy of Nepal is mostly remittance-based. In terms of a share of gross domestic product (GDP), Nepal was ranked as the fourth-highest remittance-recipient among all countries and the top recipient among south Asian countries in 2017 (Ministry of Labor and Employment [MoLE], 2018). The contribution of remittance in total GDP increased from 21.2 per cent in the Fiscal Year [FY] 2008/09 to 26.3 per cent in the FY 2016/17 (Ministry of Finance [MoF], 2018). Every year, a large number of youths leave the country for foreign employment--which continues to be the most significant motivation for international migration from Nepal (Ministry of Labor and Employment [MoLE], 2018). In the past consecutive fiscal years 2015/16 and 2016/17, the Department of Foreign Employment [DoFE] issued 786,564 permits for foreign employment to over one hundred destination countries (MoLE, 2018). Sadly, a majority of these individuals are compelled to sell their labour for a cheap price because they are largely unskilled. According to the DoFE, 75 per cent of migrant workers who pursued jobs in foreign countries in FY 2013/14 were “unskilled” (MoLE, 2018). If these people had sound technical skills, this could have been greatly helpful to better their earning. In addition, our country needs a large number of trained people to accelerate process development. TVET education was introduced in Nepal to address this problem. In terms of policy formulation on technical and vocational education, the Ninth Plan aimed at developing and extending the TVET:

Technical and vocational education will be developed and extended effectively, and especial emphasis will be given to produce basic, medium and higher-level manpower in the country. In this context, recognised foreign institutes will be encouraged to establish their affiliated institute in Nepal by providing them with various facilities. (National Planning Commission [NPC], 1998).

Similarly, the Education for All [EFA] Campaign that started after 1990 had set six EFA goals and equitable access to life skills programme was one of these. In order to meet this goal, the Ministry of Education and Sports (2003) made a policy to develop technical and vocational education suitable and accessible to secondary school children who need or wish to join the job market. Also, the Government of Nepal felt the need

of national TVET guidelines to systematise the TVET provision in Nepal. To address this need, the Government of Nepal developed the TVET policy (2012) with three clear objectives: (1) expanding access and ensuring inclusion (2) ensuring quality and relevance and (3) coordination of institutional arrangements and information management (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2016).

### **Theoretical Understanding of Economic Class, Neoliberalism and Education**

In the light of policy provisions and their implementation status, it is pertinent to present some theoretical discussion. Since this paper has analysed children's unequal access to TVET programmes in the context of neo-liberalism, the following paragraphs discuss how neo-liberal capitalism undermines children's equal access to education.

### **Economic Class and Access to Education**

Class refers to the group of people who shares a common relation to labour and the means of production (Marx, 1847). Capitalist society is a class-based society where there is always a struggle between different classes for economic resources, and this struggle divides them into two social classes: "haves and have-nots" (Marx, 1847). When the base is unequal, it brings inequality in every corresponding superstructure, including education. So, in a capitalist society, access to education is unequal, and this inequality is structural. Due to this reason, there is a persistence correlation between social class background and educational opportunity (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). So, in a class-based society, unequal educational access is inevitable. The claim that capitalism provides everybody with an equal educational opportunity and freedom is simply a myth because "class background is the most important factor influencing the level of attainment" (Bowels & Gintis, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008, pp. 603-604). Generally, it is the wealth of parents, not a child's own individual ability and effort that influences educational success significantly.

It is the material condition, not the consciousness that determines the formation of legal and political relation of man and their existence (Marx, 1859). So, it is the economic structure that decides which section of society gets what kind of resources or benefits. In turn, children who get better education are highly likely to get a better job. Those who get a better job will have a better economic condition, and their next generation will get better education again. So, the relationship between income and

access to education seems dialectical—the two variables reciprocally affecting each other.

People can improve their economic condition with proper education. Though access to education is a fundamental human right, economic inequality is another major factor that prevents children from getting equal educational access. The parents' inability to expense on the direct cost of education like tuition fees, technology, books or any other educational material highly affects the children's equal educational access. For example, various studies (Brown & Park, 2002; Dachi & Garrett, 2003; Fentiman et al., 1999) show that the direct and indirect cost of schooling is one of the principal reason for children being out of school or dropping out. So, poverty is the principal barrier that restricts children from getting access in education. In Nepal, "the lower secondary school-age children from the bottom three wealth quintiles are much less likely to attend lower secondary school compared to children in the upper two wealth quintiles (UNICEF, 2016, p. vii). In a nutshell, there is a casual relationship between economic class and educational opportunity. Along with other opportunities, an educational opportunity has to do with the economic structure of society.

### **Neoliberalism and its Impact on TVET Education System of Nepal**

The West adopted an economic policy of neoliberalism around 1970, during President Ronald Regan in the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom. However, the neoliberal agenda became globally dominant only after 1990. Neoliberalism is a political-economic practice that strongly advocates for private property rights, free trade and free-market (Harvey, 2005). It favours minimal state involvement and intervention and gives a high priority to the role of the market in the governance of society so that "a handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life so that they can maximise their personal profit" (McChesney, 1998, p. 7). This resulted in the privatisation of wealth and resources and made a tremendous impact on the education sector among others across the planet.

The public schools in the United States can be taken as examples that do not get federal fund but are operated with the fund collected from out of district property tax. Due to this reason, high-income school districts get revenues higher than those of low-income school districts. When those school districts have different sources of their fund depending on their economic activities, there can be different levels of income among

many of school districts, and thus, resulting in unequal economic resources available for education (Owens, 2018). With the intensification of neoliberalism, a clear division of unequal educational opportunity and corresponding achievement between the high- and low-income students became more obvious.

The significant amount of gap in the test scores between the students of high and low income further strengthen this argument. The gap between high- and low-income students' test score is about 40 per cent larger among children born in the early 2000s than among those born in the 1970s (Reardon, 2011, as cited in Owens, 2018). University education in the US is even worse due to the privatised model of education. Many of them have adopted entrepreneurial practices and act not only as business partners but also as a business in themselves (Levidow, 2005). The decreasing state support to universities has further aggravated the situation resulting in the high charge of tuition fees to the students (Saunders, 2007). As a result, access to universities for the children of a low-income family is very hard. Thus, the implementation of neoliberalism has widened the gap between rich and poor students in terms of both access and achievement in education in the USA.

In Nepal, the Seventh Amendment of Education Act (MoE, 2001) made legal provision for establishing private schools. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the opening of private schools was rapid as the Government of Nepal adopted the liberal economic policy and opened the door for private investment in education along with other sectors. The World Bank, one of the neoliberal international agencies, which is promoting privatisation, marketisation and deregulation globally (Levidow, 2005) came in the forefront to advocate the private investment in education in Nepal. It urged the Government of Nepal to not to make public education free (World Bank, 1994) and further prescribed that incentives should be provided to the investors for the establishment and operation of private schools (Regmi, 2016). Consequently, it unleashed the unregulated mushrooming the private schools both in the urban, semi-urban and even in the rural areas of the country (Rijal, 2014). By 1998, due to the neoliberal policies, there was significant growth in private schools (Carney & Bista, 2009, as cited in Thapa, 2011). The privatisation of the education system was not limited to general schools but also extended to technical education.

After the implementation of neoliberal policy, the Government of Nepal gave high importance to the private sector in TVET education as a solution to prevailing major educational problems. The Government of Nepal asserts that to expand the opportunities of the TVET, the cooperation of the private sector, NGO, local body and development partners is necessary (NPC, 2017). In the same line, the School Sector Development Plan also states that to develop and sustain the technical and vocational education, a strategic partnership with the private sector is fundamental (MoE, 2016b). Thus, the Government's policy to seek financing from the non-governmental sector to expand the TVET services throughout the country allowed the profit-making private sector to establish and run the TVET centres (Parajuli, 2013). With the rise of CTEVT affiliated private schools, people who could afford that education started to send their children to those schools. However, those people who could not afford the CTEVT programmes were left behind. It will not be an exaggeration to say that privatisation of technical education has actively limited or denied access to children from low-income families.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Perspective**

This study is based on the paradigm of historical realism according to which social reality is historically constructed and shaped but has objective existence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, in line with this paradigm, the unequal access in the TVET programme is a historical phenomenon that which came into existence and became intensified after the neo-liberalisation of education in Nepal. This paper has critically studied the Government's laws and policies related to education and the TVET, recommendations and conditionalities of international aid agencies. It has made use of secondary data available in reports, books, journals, etc.

With the classical Marxian perspective, the paper has analysed how the neoliberal economic policy the Government has been implementing has undermined the access of children from lower financial background to the TVET.

### **Access to TVET Education in Nepal: Hindering Factors**

Along the following lines, I discuss the significant findings of the study in regards to exploring the hindering factors in ensuring equal access to TVET education in Nepal.

## **Underinvestment in TVET**

Considering the value of education, the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] has put forward its aim on getting equal educational opportunities for all irrespective of their sex, race or caste. The SDGs 4 talks about ensuring inclusive education and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). To meet the goal of sustainable development in education, the government should give priority to technical education as it will play a major role in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth (ADB, 2015). However, underinvestment in technical and vocational education poses a major challenge to achieve this goal. The TVET has always been treated as sub-component of school education and has not been provided sufficient fund to operate effectively. It receives 1.2 % of the education budget and about 0.3 % of the total budget (ADB, 2015). This seems to be extremely negligible in terms of given needs of technical and vocational education. Generally, the TVET is considered expensive as it requires high-cost facilities, material equipment and maintenance (Kingombe, 2011). However, in the context of Nepal, lack of necessary investment in this sector can easily be seen as it is still struggling with the problem of access, equity, relevance and quality (Parajuli et al., 2020).

Considering the importance of investment in TVET for its expansion and consolidation, the School Sector Reform Plan [SSRP] had stated about the requirement of a large financial investment associated with technical capacity and necessary physical infrastructure including equipment and teachers' preparation (MoE, 2009). However, underinvestment in TVET is intact and is causing several problems, one of which is that teachers are very low-paid. Public institutions cannot pay good or attractive salary due to budget constraint, and the private sector does not pay well either as a key component of capital's plan for education is to cut its labour costs (Harvey, 2005) which eventually deteriorate the quality of education even for those who can afford it. In addition, the TVET institutions also suffer from the shortage of the TVET teachers as the teachers get relatively better remuneration and benefits from other private sectors and development field and shift their career towards it rather than teaching in public institutions (Kanel, 2015).

The condition of underinvestment of the TVET schools and colleges of Nepal is not accidental but structural, so we need to look at this issue within the structure of society.

After 1990, the Government of Nepal adopted the policy of neoliberalism, one of the principal components of which included structural adjustment that cuts down the funding of public sectors. The Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) include forced privatisation, public spending cuts and lowered taxes (Deborah, 2011). When the government started to cut down its investment to public sectors, education became one of the victims. Thus, the neoliberal policy made twofold effects in education of Nepal. On the one hand, it allocated a very nominal budget for TVET education in public institutions; on the other hand, it let the establishment of private institutions. In terms of access, this further aggravated the gap between well-off and low-income families in Nepal (Mathema, 2013). Inequality in access resulted in inequality of outcome by widening the already existing gap as well-off get a better opportunity of education which, in turn, betters their chance of employment and income.

### **Expensive and Long-Term Training**

Children with the strong financial background are likely to succeed in life than those of less privileged one: undoubtedly the affluent class can invest more on their kids' education than the worse-off class—which eventually leads to better outcomes for their children (Macheb et al., 2017). Therefore, the economic background of the students is decidedly responsible for their overall academic access, opportunity and achievement. As family income has a decisive impact on children's access to school education, a considerable number of children are seriously affected in Nepal because 25% population in Nepal are living below the national poverty line (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2011). Similarly, there is a huge disparity in primary enrolment across wealth quintile, with a significant gap in the poorest quintile (76.2%) compared to the richest quintile (83.3%) (Government of Nepal [GoN], 2016). The disparity in enrolment makes a direct impact on access to the TVET as the inadequate level of general education restricts them to attend TVET programmes (ADB, 2015). In a nutshell, certainly, there is no denying that economic inequality necessarily means inequality in access to education.

Similarly, in comparison to other studies, technical and vocational education charges high cost to students. For example, the direct cost of three years PCL Nursing (Staff Nurse) is Rs. 475000, the charge of PCL in General Medicine is Rs. 404,000 and Diploma in Pharmacy is Rs. 337,800 (CTEVT, 2020). This makes it impossible for

students of poor economic background to afford these expenses, and consequently, they are deprived of the opportunity.

In addition, poor students cannot afford the opportunity cost of long-term courses (ADB, 2015) because a low-income parent cannot sustain without engaging kids in the household and other money-making work. Youngsters of low-income parents seem obliged to undertake jobs to support their study. Thus, household poverty compels students to leave their study and get engaged in some works for earning (UNESCO, 2010). The situation is worse in the mountains of Nepal, where children join their parents for income-generating work and leave the village for months which eventually lead their absence in school as well (Groot, 2007). Therefore, with regards to access to technical and vocational education, family income is a powerful determining factor. Many policies have been made so far regarding the equal educational opportunity of students irrespective of their caste, class or ethnicity (GoN, 2014, 2016) but the goal is far from being accomplished.

### **Regional Disparity**

Regional disparity is one of the powerful barriers among others in access to TVET education. Though the government has committed to making technical and vocational education accessible for all the poor and marginalised people, the people living in the remote have not been able to join this program. One reason for this is that most of the institutions are urban centred, and a few of them which are out of the city are also located only in the local urban centre (Lama, 2016). The TVET education is recognised to be a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015). However, this is far from being realised because 44% of TVET institutes are in the Central Development Region. In contrast, only 6% of institutes are in the Far-Western Development Region (CTEVT, 2012, as cited in Khanal, 2013). In addition, there exists a large difference in the number of technical schools/institutes in Diploma Level Program between Province 3 and Province 7, where the former has 208, and the latter has only 34 (MoEST, 2017).

Furthermore, almost all private institutions are urban-centric because the motive of private institutions is to accumulate profit by providing TVET programs. They only invest in those areas where they can make more profit. This is the reason private investment in TVET sector does not give much attention to hill and mountain region as

they are mostly concentrated on a well-facilitated or resourceful area like the capital city and Terai region (Lama, 2016). Privatisation, thus, has perpetuated the unequal access to technical and vocational education.

The targeted group for the TVET program should be those who are less privileged and financially poor as this program is recognised to be a crucial vehicle for social equity, inclusion and sustainable development (Marope et al., 2015). However, this is not the case in our context as the beneficiaries of these programs are from the developed regions leaving the intensely needy groups beyond the reach of such programs (Lama, 2016). In addition, there is a positive correlation between the cost of training and distance between home and institution. The high operational cost of TVET becomes further higher to those students who have to commute relatively longer distance to the institution. Thus, unaffordable cost and unequal distribution of training centre pose a major barrier to get the full access of this program for those targeted group (Khanal, 2013).

### **Minimal Scholarship, Stipends and Salaries for Trainees**

The Government of Nepal brought the TVET policy (2012) to address the issues of equity and inclusion in the TVET program so that no interested will be prevented from getting technical education (UNDP, 2016). The aim of this policy was to ensure the inclusion of disadvantage group by providing scholarships and other incentives so that they can get access to TVET programs and services (UNDP, 2016). However, the provision of scholarship for TVET students is not encouraging. There is the provision of three types of scholarship: special scholarship, classified scholarship and merit-based scholarship (CTEVT, 2019). Under the special scholarship, 75 students from constituent schools receive monthly Rs. 5000. In classified scholarship, each institute is liable to afford classified scholarship to three students for their total quota being 40 or more and two for the institute with 30 quota programs. The merit-based scholarship is provided to one best performing student in each program of the entrance exam from among all the competitors who fill the form as full fee payers in the respected schools and colleges. (CTEVT, 2019).

Provision of financial aid to study plays an important role in the enrolment and completion of both general and technical education. In Nepal, a larger number of populations are in school-going age as the UNICEF (2017) shows that forty-two per

cent of the population in Nepal is under eighteen years of age. However, the aforementioned scholarships programs are very nominal compared to the huge number of needy students. The provision of the nominal scholarship is actually an outcome of neoliberal policy which incorporates minimum investment and involvement of government in any public sector (Levidow, 2005). In addition, to get the long-term impact of any program, sustainability of the program is very important. Due to the high cost of fee and low availability of scholarships, students' enrolment is very low in some schools. This makes it hard for schools to pay for teachers and bear other costs. This eventually makes them hard to run the program as they cannot collect enough money from the students. Therefore, another factor responsible for unequal access to TVET education is the provision of nominal scholarship and stipends for the students.

Earlier studies (Parajuli, 2013; Bagale, 2015; ADB, 2015; Lama, 2016) have also discussed the barriers to TVET programs in Nepal. Bagale (2015) argues that the inadequate budget for this sector poses a threat to its sustainability. Besides, the author argues that the TVET sector in Nepal is not inclusive as this program is beyond the reach of a vast majority of the women and marginalised people. Similarly, Parajuli (2013), ADB (2015), Lama (2016) show minimal budget allocation, lower participation rate and urban-centric institutions, respectively as the major challenges.

Further than these studies, the present study tried to dig out the underlying factors of unequal access to TVET in Nepal. It explored how a vast majority of children from the poor economic background are behind in TVET programs due to low investment, high training cost and, minimal scholarships and incentives in this sector. Similarly, it pointed out how profit-oriented institutions are reluctant to open its training centres in rural areas as rural areas yield less or no profit. On the basis of the aforementioned findings, this paper has demonstrated that making a large investment in the TVET programs, provisions of low-cost training and scholarships, and rural-based training institutions go against the core principle of neoliberalism, the Government is currently implementing.

### **Conclusion**

The establishment of the formal TVET education in Nepal has already crossed three decades. After 1990, the Government of Nepal adopted the neoliberal economic policy with an emphasis on privatisation of education, creating a huge impacted on the

technical and vocational education system in Nepal. This resulted in a very poor and negligible investment in public TVET institutions and the corresponding rapid growth of affiliated private TVET institutions. A vast majority of the students is falling behind in terms of getting equal access to technical and vocational education. To sum up, there are four principal reasons for unequal access to TVET: underinvestment; expensive and long-term training; regional disparity; and minimal scholarships and stipends for trainees. These reasons are not accidental but are attributable to a larger and overarching process, namely, the neoliberalisation of state and economy in general and of education in particular. The neoliberal economy is responsible for reinforcing unequal access to education by preventing the reshaping public education, which, otherwise, could have created better and relatively equal access of all children, rich and poor alike. Moreover, the Government's initiation to make inclusive and universal education has not achieved an expected result as it tried to reform the education system within a neo-liberal economic framework which perpetuates unequal access to education. An economic policy that ensures an equitable distribution of resources among its citizens is needed to ensure the equal or equitable access of children to TVET programs.

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