

A Study on the Employability of Bachelor of Arts Graduates from Tribhuvan University in Makawanpur District

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Abstract

This study analyzes the skills gaps in Bachelor of Arts (BA) students from Tribhuvan University, Nepal, concerning employability from the perspective of stakeholders such as NGOs, industries, schools, local government, and students. Drawing on qualitative narrative analysis of data gathered

from needs assessment at Makwanpur Multiple Campus (2025), the study outlines five major gaps in the humanities curriculum: deficiency in professional writing and communication skills, technology and digital skills, experiential learning and practical training, interactive and creative teaching competencies, and market and community need responses. Stakeholder anecdotes, such as an NGO coordinator's frustration with graduates' failure to prepare reports and a principal's frustration with inefficient pedagogical practices, are complemented by graduate case studies, such as a sociology graduate who became a juice vendor and a rural development graduate who is a cashier. Grounded in Human Capital Theory and Employability Theory, the study comes to discover that a theory-driven curriculum reduces graduate's employability readiness and places training costs on employers. The study proposes curriculum changes like mandatory internships, computer skills classes, and employer participation to enhance employability and make education responsive to Nepal's socio-economic requirements. The findings further provide an idea of requirement to bridge the incompatibility between academic training and employment market demand within Nepal's higher education system.

Keywords: higher education, humanities graduates, lack essential proficiency, misalign curriculum with job market, unemployability

Introduction

The study shows the bitter reality of Nepal undergoing the incessant issues of the incompatibility between the teaching-learning curriculum and the demands of the market for the skilled manpower. The higher studies pass-outs are unable to employ their learned capacities according to the need of the current markets. The study selects the largely circulated prominent university, Tribhuvan University as it stands out to be appropriate study area and the students who are the representatives of the current problem relevant to the topic. The study focuses on particularly the BA graduates from the Tribhuvan University.

Nepal's higher education system, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, faces a critical challenge in aligning academic training with labor market demands (Bajracharya, 2021). Despite producing thousands of graduates annually, Tribhuvan University's Bachelor of Arts (BA) programs have come under scrutiny for their inability to equip students with employable

skills (Sharma, 2024). Recent reports indicate declining enrollment rates (Bajracharya, 2021) and growing dissatisfaction among employers (Baral, 2023; Thapa & Keshar, 2022), who argue that graduates lack essential competencies such as digital literacy, project management, and practical fieldwork experience. This mismatch between education and employment has led to widespread underemployment (Sharma & Paudel, 2023) with many BA graduates forced into low-skilled jobs such as retail, ride-hailing, and informal sector work (Basnet, 2022).

The existing studies highlight structural weaknesses in Nepal's education system (Regmi, 2021; Witenstein & Palmer, 2013), there remains a significant research gap in understanding the specific skill deficiencies that hinder graduates' employability (Dahal et al., 2025). Most literature focuses on macroeconomic factors like job scarcity (World Bank, 2022) rather than curriculum-level inefficiencies (Bhurtel, 2016). Few studies examine employer perspectives or compare Nepal's humanities curriculum with regional models that have successfully integrated vocational training (Bista et al., 2020). Additionally, there is limited empirical research on how Nepal's federal education policies translate into classroom practices (Gandharba & Gaire, 2022), particularly in rural campuses where resource constraints exacerbate skill gaps (Dahal et al., 2025).

Employers in Nepal find that graduate students from humanities and social sciences often lack practical skills necessary for the workforce (Bhandari, 2023). This skills gap is attributed to several factors, including outdated curricula, insufficient practical training, and a lack of soft skills. These deficiencies hinder graduates' ability to meet industry demands and adapt to professional environments. The following sections detail specific skills that are lacking and the reasons behind these gaps. There is a general neglect of workplace learning in Nepal, with employers and educational institutions failing to collaborate effectively. This results in graduates lacking the practical skills that employers demand (Paudel & Parajuli, 2023). The current curriculum in Nepal inadequately addresses the country's socio-economic needs due to several systemic issues. Despite the recognition of education as a key driver for socio-economic transformation, the curriculum remains largely monolithic and disconnected from local contexts. This disconnection hinders the potential for educational reform that aligns with Nepal's unique socio-economic landscape (Rapacha, 2014; Wagle et al., 2019; Bhandari, 2023).

Nepal's higher education sector, led by institutions like Tribhuvan University (TU), has a central role to play in preparing the country's workforce, through programs like the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Humanities and Social Sciences (Bajracharya, 2021). But declining enrollment and rising concerns about the relevance of the curriculum raise serious questions on whether or not such programs are sufficiently equipping students to confront the demands of the present job market (Bajracharya, 2021; Karna, 2023). Numerous stakeholders claim that university graduates lack the skills, and they end up in jobs not related to what they studied (Poudel & Upadhyaya, 2023). This research investigates the employability issue of TU's graduates based on the mismatch between the education provided and the skills that employers require.

Nepal has the widespread stark issue of employability of graduates (Yadav, 2022), with widespread unemployment and underemployment of humanities graduates posing a cause of economic inefficiency as well as frustration among them (Bhandari, 2021). Various researches' results show that the curriculum of humanities and social science remains very theoretical

(Poudel & Upadhyaya, 2023), with inadequate technology integration and collaboration with industries, media, research organizations, and other potential employers.

This study is riveted on Human Capital Theory and Employability Theory, which provide a robust foundation for analyzing Nepal's graduate employability crisis. Human Capital Theory, pioneered by Becker (1964), posits that education enhances an individual's productivity and labor market value by developing their skills and knowledge. When curricula lack practical training, graduates' human capital remains underdeveloped, limiting their job prospects and economic contribution (Becker, 1993). Employability Theory, advanced by Hillage and Pollard (1998), expands this view by emphasizing that education must equip learners with a blend of technical competencies, soft skills, and adaptive traits to secure and sustain employment. If academic programs fail to align with employer needs, graduates face persistent underemployment (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Together, these theories justify examining Nepal's curriculum gaps through the lens of workforce readiness and systemic inefficiencies.

Despite previous studies acknowledging the employability issues faced by Nepal's humanities and social science graduates (Yadav, 2022; Sharma, 2024), we continue to face important gaps in our understanding of specific practice skills that are lacking across the various sectors, and how the curriculum fails to respond to the changing workplace in these sectors. Previous studies have either noted skill mismatches in general or have been limited to formal sector approaches (Adhikari, 2005; Bhurtel, 2016; Paudel & Parajuli, 2023). We have a shortage of nuanced, multi-stakeholder analyses that directly compare, for example, educator intent versus employer expectations versus learner lived experiences (Acharya & Sigdel, 2023). This study fills these gaps by comparing specific skill deficits with curricular deficiencies and foregrounding lived experience stories to highlight systemic barriers that are greater than the individual.

Overall, the study aims to examine nature and extent of practical skill deficiencies among humanities and social science graduates from Tribhuvan University in Nepal. It further focuses on investigating the compatibility between academic curriculum content and actual workplace requirements.

Methods

This study applies a qualitative-based approach to examine the professional skill gaps of Tribhuvan University graduates from humanities and social science faculties based on data collected from needs assessment conducted at Makwanpur Multiple Campus in 2025. The research design focuses on stakeholder voices through thick narratives to reveal underlying gaps between academic preparedness and employability requirements. Data collection employed multi-methods to ensure all-round insights: workshops and seminars had NGO, school, industry, local government, and community representatives on board to discuss graduate skill gaps; semi-structured interviews provided detailed feedback on curriculum gaps; focus group discussions enabled group-level identification of gaps and potential solutions. Participants were selected purposively which included NGO coordinators, school principals, industries proprietors, local officials, students, and alumni, to ensure varied perceptions.

For data analysis, narrative techniques were employed to synthesize stakeholder commentary, and responses were coded thematically to identify recurring skill gaps such as communication,

digital skills, and experiential learning. Results were anonymized to preserve participant confidentiality while communicating specific curriculum vulnerabilities. Ethical rigor was maintained through informed consent, confidentiality measures, and deletion of personal identifiers. This qualitative research offers a rich contextual understanding of curricular limitations, with the potential for targeted reforms to improve graduate employability outcomes.

Findings

This section presents a qualitative analysis of the perception of lack of practical skills of Nepali University graduates in the Humanities using data obtained from a needed assessment at Makwanpur Multiple Campus in 2025. The descriptions and reports from this analysis are organized into five central themes, each representing a major gap in the curriculum; stakeholders, including NGO, industry, schools, local government representatives, students and Makwanpur grades were able to identify systemic problems which are limiting the outcomes of graduates of Makwanpur or any other Nepali university. Each of the five themes represents document analysis and will create a suggested set of recommendations for the stakeholders which will be grounded in the Human Capital Theory and Employability Theory. The discussion section will highlight how these skills gaps are restricting their employability and earnings and barriers are hindering their ability to plan for careers. The needs analysis highlighted critical gaps in the curriculum and the urgent need for an update to curricula in response to the socio-economic conditions and demands of the labour market in Nepal.

Lack of Professional Skills in the BA Graduates

The study highlights a huge gap in humanities courses where graduates lack professional writing and communication skills to the disadvantage of their employability. This is always quoted by stakeholders: NGOs, industry, and schools.

Here are the representative examples which support to the justification of the chosen topic. A 39-years old director of an NGO in Hetauda, Nepal, noted hiring a sociology graduate who couldn't prepare effective meeting minutes and donor reports, requiring huge amounts of training that took away from the core projects. Similarly, the manager of a manufacturing firm noted how a BA graduate's poorly written emails to suppliers created communication delays.

These restrictions are acknowledged by graduates themselves. A 29-year-old MA graduate in sociology, who has now started a juice shop, said that report writing was not covered under her course, leading to back-to-back job rejections. Another 32-year-old political science graduate, who has now started a beauty parlor, said that theoretical knowledge (e.g., Western political theories) was stressed at the expense of practical skills like proposal writing.

In the field of education, a school administrator observed that BA graduates struggled with lesson planning and parent communication, requiring additional mentoring. The same NGO worker who graduated with a BA admitted to having received no training in grant writing prior to their hiring employer's provision of it.

These results reveal an acute demand for practical skillsprofessional communication, project management, and report writingshort in the current curriculum. Human Capital Theory argues that competences like communication must be developed by education to increase labor market

value, while Employability Theory focuses on alignment with employer needs. From the research, it is clear that the curriculum of the humanities remains too theoretical and insufficient to equip students with practical abilities needed for success in the workplace.

Deficiency of Digital Literacy and Technological Skills

The study reveals a huge lacuna in humanities curricula, where graduates lack professional communication and writing skills, much to the disadvantage of their employability. The stakeholders, from NGOs to industries and schools, uniformly bemoan this deficiency.

For instance, an NGO coordinator from Hetauda, Nepal, shared that they employed a graduate in sociology who was unable to prepare decent meeting minutes or donor reports, necessitating a lot of training that took away time and energy from priority projects. Likewise, a manager from a manufacturing company commented that a BA graduate's ill-organized emails to suppliers delayed communications.

These deficiencies are recognized by graduates themselves. A 29-year-old sociology MA graduate, who is now managing a juice store, related that report writing was not taught in her degree, so she has been rejected for several jobs. A 32-year-old political science graduate, who is managing a beauty salon, explained that her studies dealt with theoretical knowledge (e.g., Western political theories) instead of practical aspects such as proposal writing. In addition, a principal commented that BA graduate teachers require additional mentoring in lesson planning and parental communication. A BA graduate aged 31 working for an NGO admitted to no experience in grant writing training until their agency provided it.

These findings emphasize the strong need for workplace competencies such as report writing, project management, and professional communication that are lacking in the current curriculum. Human Capital Theory assumes that education should enhance the skills such as communication to add labor market value, and Employability Theory stresses matching employer needs. Based on this research, the humanities curriculum remains too theoretical, neglecting workplace skills required for employment success.

Unavailability of Internship Opportunities and Practical Trainings

The study reveals a significant gap in humanities curricula, where the absence of experiential learning and practical training leaves graduates inadequately prepared for professional demands. Stakeholders including NGOs, government agencies, industries, and students consistently are the true factors to foreground this issue.

The study exhibits representative graduates undergoing the issue of the incompatible condition between their work and employment. Their overall current situation directly links with the rationale of the research topic. A 35-year-old BA graduate has been working at an NGO reported that her degree lacked internship opportunities, leaving her unprepared for tasks like grant writing and stakeholder meetings, necessitating months of on-the-job training. Similarly, a 47-year-old government official observed that a recent graduate could not draft a community survey or engage with residents due to insufficient practical training, delaying a development project.

Likewise, a 33-year-old rural development graduate, now employed as a cashier, attributed his unemployment in the development sector to the purely theoretical nature of his degree, which excluded internships or project proposal training. Another case involves a sociology graduate who faced repeated NGO rejections due to a lack of fieldwork or hands-on experience in her program. An Industry representative (aged 48) criticized the curriculum for omitting practical training, industrial exposure, and case-based learning. Meanwhile, student representatives (aged 22) advocated for mandatory internships and skill-based training to counterbalance theoretical dominance. An NGO stakeholder (aged 41) proposed academic-NGO collaborations to facilitate internships, fellowships, and research opportunities, while local government officials recommended integrating community service and applied knowledge programs.

The report also identifies weak curriculum alignment with regional employment needs and insufficient provisions for regional studies and internships. These shortcomings reduce graduates' employability and hinder the development of relevant human capital.

Absence of Innovative and Interactive Teaching Skills

The study indicates that humanities curriculum does not equip graduates with innovative and interactive approaches towards teaching and thus restricts them in their capacity to educate and guide in educational and community settings. School and NGO stakeholders continuously report such a failure.

For instance, a 52-year-old school principal from a community school characterized a BA graduate teacher who employed only textbook lecture methods and was not able to implement group activities or innovative teaching methods and required major additional training. Similarly, a 46-year-old school principal from an institutional school noted that humanities graduates lack the ability to design innovative lessons but employ spoon-feeding, disengaging the students.

Moreover, a 30-year-old history graduate employed in a call center said that their degree did not prepare them to have hands-on experience in student communication or utilization of teaching materials and ultimately lost interest in teaching altogether. A 36-year-old community school principal lamented the course as too textbook-oriented and devoid of experiential learning techniques. Leaders of the student unions emphasized the role of experiential approaches such as group discussion and case study discussion.

The problem is broader than in schools. A 39-year-old NGO manager noted that humanities graduates are not able to conduct workshops efficiently as they lack sufficient creative interaction skills. NGO stakeholders suggest integrating qualitative and participatory research methodologies in the curriculum to enhance community-based participation.

The findings agree with broad concerns that current practices in education are not equipping 21st-century learners. Human Capital Theory agrees with this, adding that good pedagogical skills enhance the productivity of labour. Without curriculum reforms, graduates will continue struggling with learning and teaching in education and community roles.

Failure of Addressing Market and Community Needs

The current curriculum in the humanities in Nepal does not address market or community needs, resulting in uncompetitive graduates who lack the ability to integrate into the socio-economic reality of the country. Industry players (e.g., a 51-year-old respondent) state that the curriculum is poor in practice skills like project management and data analysis, and for this reason, graduates are less employable. Local government officials (for instance, a 40-year-old respondent) point out its inadequacy in integrating local language, culture, and knowledge of society, making graduates less competent to effectively tackle issues in the community.

Dissatisfaction is even voiced by graduates. A 33-year-old rural development graduate who is employed as a cashier complains that his degree did not impart basic skills such as writing proposals or managing funds, resulting in low-earning NGO employment. Similarly, a 32-year-old graduate in political science who runs a beauty parlour recounts that her education omitted local government structures, forcing her to explore self-employment. A 21-year-old undergraduate student adds further that the curriculum omits present market demands, such as freelancing, Artificial Intelligence, and online platforms, rendering graduates unfit in the modern job market.

The report concludes that the curriculum was launched without assessing the prevailing demands and without coordinating with local employment demands. Such inefficiency devalues graduates' human capital and job opportunities. The complete narratives from stakeholders, NGOs, industries, schools, local government, and students show a humanities curriculum that is theoretical, outdated, and disconnected from Nepal's employment market and wider community needs. Students graduating and employers in a variety of sectors have contending gaps in: professional communications, digital literacy, experiential learning, creative pedagogies, and market requirements.

Discussion

The above-mentioned authentic experiences of five graduates and stakeholder's narratives justify that Curriculum of Bachelor of Arts, introduced by Tribhuvan University disagrees with the demands of the modern job market and societal needs. The finding of the current study aligns with cross-country evidence of a mismatch between higher education curricula and labor market demands. Similar to Greece (Paleocrassas et al., 2002), where employment mismatch increased as a consequence of curriculum integration, and Ethiopia (Demissie et al., 2021), where unemployment was influenced by curriculum relevance, the Tribhuvan University Bachelor of Arts program also appears to be mismatched to the needs of today's job market and society. This means that curriculum reform is needed in order to make graduates more employable and applicable in a changing economy. The five identified deficiencies lack of professional communication and writing skills, digital literacy and technology skills, experiential learning and practical training, creative and interactive teaching skills, and alignment with market and community needs collectively underscore a systemic failure to prepare graduates for employment. The lack of professional communication skills among graduates aligns with studies by Singh (2024), who found that Nepali university graduates often struggle with report writing, formal correspondence, and workplace communication align with human capital theory, which posits that education must enhance skills to increase labor market

value (Becker, 1964), and employability theory, which emphasizes the need for skills and attributes that meet employer expectations (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). The implications of these gaps are far-reaching, affecting graduates career trajectories, employer operations, and Nepal's socio-economic development.

The lack of professional communication and writing skills, as highlighted by different stakeholders, reflects a curriculum that prioritizes theoretical knowledge over practical competencies. Previous research by Bhurtel (2016) also noted that graduates often struggle with workplace communication due to limited exposure to real-world writing tasks during their studies. Similarly, Dhungana (2022) emphasized that the existing curriculum overly emphasizes theory, leaving little room for developing essential professional skills. Globally, higher education systems increasingly integrate professional writing and communication training to meet workplace demands, yet Nepal's curriculum remains rooted in outdated, lecture-based methods (Pokharel, 2022). This misalignment exacerbates unemployment and underemployment among humanities graduates, contributing to economic inefficiencies. Similarly, the absence of digital literacy and technology skills, highlights a curriculum disconnected from the digital economy. Graduates unable to pursue freelancing without AI training, face limited career options in a tech-driven market.

The reports highlight the need of the minimal use of technology in the teaching process and stakeholder demands for digital skills, AI, and data science underscore this gap. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the mismatch between graduate skills and market demands (Bajracharya, 2021), particularly noting the lack of AI literacy as a barrier to entering freelance and digital careers (Pandit et al., 2024). In contrast to earlier findings that emphasized general ICT skills, current trends stress the urgency of specialized AI and data competencies for employability (Pandey & Dhand, 2024). The reports call for mandatory internships and community service programs highlights the need for practical training. Globally, universities integrate internships and project-based learning to bridge theory and practice (Omelianenko & Artyukhova, 2024), but Nepal's curriculum remains theoretical, reducing graduates labor market value.

The absence of creative and interactive teaching skills, noted by graduates' students in teacher's reliance on rote learning, and graduate completed student in history shift to a call center due to pedagogical unpreparedness, limits graduate's effectiveness in education and community roles. The reports critique of inadequate teaching methods and stakeholder demands for interactive teaching methods align with global trends toward student-centered pedagogies (Tang, 2023). This gap, rooted in a textbook-centric curriculum, reduces graduate's human capital in educational settings (Batra, 2005). Finally, the curriculums misalignment with market and community needs, as criticized by industry and local government representatives, leaves graduates uncompetitive. The reports note of a curriculum implemented without studying current needs and calls for collaboration with employers highlight this disconnect. This misalignment drives graduates into unrelated fields and hinders Nepal's development, as graduates cannot address local issues like governance or sustainable development. These findings collectively reveal a curriculum that fails to prepare graduates for Nepal's socio-economic realities, requires urgent reform to enhance employability and societal impact.

Conclusion

The stakeholders' narratives and graduate case studies paint a stark picture of humanities curriculum at Tribhuvan universities that is heavily theoretical, outdated, and disconnected from the demands of the job market and society. The five critical deficiencies lack of professional communication and writing skills, digital literacy and technology skills, experiential learning and practical training, creative and interactive teaching skills, and alignment with market and community needs have profound implications for graduates, employers, and Nepal's socio-economic progress. Graduates students participated in the research forced into unrelated careers such as juice selling, cashier work, beauty parlors, ride-sharing, or call centers, illustrate the personal toll of an education system that fails to equip students with practical skills. Employers, from different sectors face operational inefficiencies, training costs, and project delays due to graduate's unpreparedness. These gaps, rooted in a curriculum that prioritizes theory over practice, diminish graduates' human capital and misalign with employer expectations the urgency of curriculum reform is undeniable. Universities must integrate practical, skill-based courses to address these deficiencies. To tackle the lack of communication skills, courses on professional writing, report drafting, and public speaking should be mandatory, using simulations to mirror workplace tasks. Digital literacy can be enhanced through training in data analysis tools. Experiential learning requires mandatory internships with NGOs, industries, and government offices, as suggested by students and employers. Creative pedagogy can be fostered through courses on educational psychology and interactive e-teaching methods, supported by practicum experiences. Finally, aligning the curriculum with market and community needs demands collaboration with employers and local bodies to include skills like project management, local governance, and sustainable development. The reports call for collaboration with industries, media, research institutions, and other employers and regular curriculum updates every 3-5 years provides a roadmap for reform. By implementing these changes, Nepali universities can empower graduates to meet the demands of a dynamic job market and contribute meaningfully to society. Failure to act risks perpetuating a cycle of unemployability, as seen in the cautionary tales of graduates' participants, and others. The question remains: will Nepal's higher education system modernize to produce job-ready graduates? or will it continue to churn out degrees that lead to livelihoods outside graduates' academic aspirations? The voices of stakeholders and concerned authorities need to make an appropriate attempt to bridge these gaps and unlock the potential of humanities education in Nepal.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

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