

Higher Education in Nepal: Adapting to Change

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Abstract

Higher education in Nepal has undergone significant transformations, evolving from a traditional system rooted in Gurukul learning to a more structured, modern university framework. The establishment of Tribhuvan University in 1959 marked the formal beginning of higher education in Nepal, followed by the expansion of public and private universities. Despite these developments, the education sector is struggling to struggle adapt to rapid social, economic, and technological changes.

This article explores the key challenges facing Nepalese higher education, including outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, limited research opportunities, and a lack of faculty development. The absence of a Federal Education Act has resulted in policy inconsistencies, further complicating governance. Additionally, excessive political interference has weakened institutional autonomy, affecting decision-making and quality enhancement. The exodus of students seeking better education abroad continues to drain financial and intellectual resources, exacerbating the issue of poor education quality characterized by rote learning and a weak research culture.

The article also examines the role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and international collaboration in addressing these challenges. Strategic engagement with the private sector can enhance funding, infrastructure, and employability-focused programs, while global partnerships can improve faculty exchange, joint research, and academic standards.

Drawing from Nepal's historical evolution of higher education and comparative insights from other developing nations, the discussion underscores the urgent need for policy stability, academia-industry linkages, institutional autonomy, and faculty training. Without decisive reforms, Nepal risks falling further behind in the global education landscape. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of strategic partnerships and governance reforms in transforming Nepal's higher education sector into a dynamic, inclusive, and competitive system.

Keywords: quality education, transformation, challenges, empower, knowledge, skills, tools, innovation, creativity, technology, motivation, pedagogy, curricula, collaboration, public-private-partnership, brain drain, better future, political interference, entrepreneurship, spirituality, unethical practices.

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Introduction

Education is a continuous, lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through both formal instruction and informal experience. It enriches the mind, empowers the hands, and touches the heart, fosters personal growth, enables societal contributions, and prepares individuals to navigate expertly through the complexities of life. However, education goes beyond being just a tool for worldly success, and serves as a pathway to inner awakening, mental illumination, and spiritual liberation. Both education and knowledge are seen as journeys toward enlightenment, awareness, and the essence of existence itself. This notion is beautifully expressed in the Atharva Veda, which states: "Awakening is life, slumbering is death" (8.14). Moreover, education drives economic progress of a nation by cultivating skilled workers, and fostering innovation and embedding essential human values in them. It is a transformative force that shapes individuals and societies alike. Nelson Mandela said in 2003 that "education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world". Centuries of human thought have asserted the supremacy of education.

A person's academic journey starts with school education. It serves as the cornerstone for shaping individuals and preparing them for life. It provides the foundation for acquiring essential knowledge and skills in core subjects while fostering character development through values like respect, responsibility, empathy, and integrity. This early stage of education establishes a strong moral base and imparts social and collaborative skills crucial for thriving in both professional environments and society at large. Higher education builds upon this foundation by offering specialized knowledge and promoting critical thinking. It supports personal growth, promotes innovation, and equips individuals for career success. Additionally, higher education encourages civic engagement and provides lifelong learning tools, enabling people to grow up as well as adapt to the ever-changing world. As a significant investment in human capital, higher education contributes to a nation's economic progress, enhances resilience, and strengthens the capacity to address future challenges. By empowering individuals, higher education also reinforces national strength, preparing them both to navigate and excel in a rapidly evolving global landscape. It acts as a powerful catalyst for social mobility, ensuring personal advancement and driving societal transformation.

The trajectory of higher education, therefore, significantly influences the future direction of a nation. Its key stakeholders include students, academic staff, educational institutions, government bodies, policymakers, parents, families, employers, industries, advocacy groups, donors, philanthropists, and international partners. Each of these groups, whether directly or indirectly, plays a crucial role in shaping, supporting, and benefiting from the impact of higher education on individuals and society. This interconnected system emphasizes that higher education is not merely about imparting knowledge but about promoting critical thinking, inspiring innovation, and empowering individuals to create a better future for themselves and their communities.

Education today is no longer defined solely by what teachers deliver but by what students can demonstrate and apply. A degree, while important, does not always guarantee the skills required in the modern job market. Too often, it functions more as a social credential rather than a provider of practical, tech-driven, and skill-oriented education. High scores on fact-based exams do not necessarily reflect a student's intelligence or readiness for the workforce. Instead, students must evolve into knowledge workers equipped with the abilities to analyze, optimize, and synthesize information effectively.

In the current era, factual knowledge alone is no longer the most valuable asset. Success now belongs to those who exhibit creativity, strong problem-solving skills, innovation, teamwork, and the capacity for forward-thinking. These individuals are the innovators, meaning-makers, and pattern recognizers of society. They excel in critical analysis, optimization of resources, and strategic synthesis. As global citizens, they are active listeners, team builders, and solution seekers who bring value to any organization or community. Therefore, our focus must focus toward nurturing these skills to ensure that education remains relevant and impactful in a rapidly evolving world.

History of Higher Education in Nepal

The history of higher education in Nepal began with the establishment of Tri-Chandra College (TC) in 1918 by the then Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher Rana, and it marks a pivotal moment in the country's educational development. Nepal's first university—Tribhuvan University (TU)—was founded in 1959. It offered undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various disciplines, including Management, Humanities and Social Sciences, Natural Science, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine,

Agriculture, and Forestry. Following an affiliation model, TU offered affiliation to a number of colleges across the country, thereby extending higher education opportunities beyond the Kathmandu Valley. Over time, private colleges, particularly in urban areas, emerged to meet the growing demands for education in fields like business, management, science, and information technology. Community-funded colleges followed later, further expanding students' access to higher education.

Before Nepal's transition to democracy in 1951, formal education was largely restricted to the elite class. The first formal school, Darbar High School, was established in 1854 by Jung Bahadur Rana, but it was intended exclusively for boys of the ruling class. Following the historic political changes that reinstated the multiparty system in Nepal in 1990, there was a rapid expansion of universities and colleges. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1993 to oversee and support higher education institutions. Since then, new universities and colleges have been founded almost every year, and Nepal now boasts more than 22 universities and 1144 colleges across the nation.

Nepal's education system has been influenced to some extent by India's, which itself is a legacy of the British colonial rule. During the colonial period in India, Nepal lacked indigenous higher education institutions that prompted many students to pursue their studies in India. The proximity of universities such as those in Calcutta and Patna made them natural choices for Nepali students. These academic ties significantly shaped Nepal's intellectual landscape, with many early intellectuals, bureaucrats, and reformers receiving their education in India. These individuals later played key roles in Nepal's modernization, particularly in fields like law, administration, and education. This cross-border educational influence laid a strong foundation for Nepal's intellectual growth and contributed to the development of its early administrative and educational systems.

Tribhuvan University has recently adopted a policy to merge campuses in remote areas with low student enrollment to optimize its vast infrastructure. This initiative aims to improve exam reliability, ensure timely results, and support the professional development of faculty members. The policy also seeks to align educational offerings with current demands, addressing both student aspirations and job market requirements. However, it remains to be seen whether the academic and political leadership will effectively tackle these issues or continue to operate within an insulated academic

environment. The future will determine whether Nepal's youth will increasingly seek opportunities abroad for a secure and prosperous future or they will be able to find the academic environment conducive to build fulfilling lives within the country. Addressing these challenges is the burning need of the hour.

Present Context

Every day, approximately 3,000 young individuals leave Nepal in search of higher education and better opportunities, disheartened by the lack of prospects at home. The country's leaders, however, engage in fruitless discussions while the situation deteriorates in alarming manner. The greed of corrupt political leaders, combined with endless rhetoric and evasions, has drained the nation's resources—funds that could have been invested in education and opportunities—forcing countless students to seek a future abroad. Despite the critical importance of human capital as the backbone of the nation, the concerned authorities show little seriousness in addressing these issues. Collectively, all parties have failed to provide quality education aligned with the job market, leaving the youths without meaningful employment opportunities.

Our leaders must abandon their habit of relying on foreign aid and instead focus on creating sustainable educational reforms. The current state of the nation reflects the spiritual barrenness described in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," where society is devoid of coherence and values. Despite differences in political parties' agendas, their tendencies remain the same. Adding to the irony is the constitutional promise of free school education, which remains far from being fully realized.

Hands without skills and minds devoid of creativity cannot earn respect, admiration, or wealth. During the Panchayat era (1960-1990), education was primarily designed to safeguard the monarchy. Post-1990, no significant reforms were introduced; education followed the same old pattern without bringing in any meaningful transformation. Higher education failed to prioritize skill development, cultural values, national needs, and students' aspirations.

Despite decades of changes, Nepal has not achieved the expected positive outcomes in the education sector due to poor implementation, resistance from traditional academic communities, political interference, and insufficient funding. Higher education still struggles with limited interdisciplinary learning, modern curricula, and

technology-driven infrastructure. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of faculty development opportunities, socio-economic disparities, and overcrowded classrooms further hinder progress. As a result, our students are losing enthusiasm for learning. Teachers, too, are merely going through the motions, lacking motivation to inspire their students.

In this context, Sharma et al. observes, "There is widespread disillusionment with the educational system in general. It has not been able to contribute effectively towards solving the problems of poverty, exclusion, oppression, violence, and corruption in our society" (199). The eloquent speeches of our leaders are no longer enough to win people's hearts or earn their trust. People demand swift action and decisive leadership.

In Nepal, many experienced and distinguished teachers have either retired or hold various other positions. Current faculty members are often politically appointed through a quota system. These appointments frequently lack motivation, quality teaching skills, and the ability to create dynamic, engaging learning environments. As Fredricks states, many of these educators lack "the talent, attitude, commitment, and knowledge, making it difficult for them to make teaching visible" (3). Universities have failed to commit fully to their core functions: quality teaching, research, and community service.

The University Vice-Chancellor is a vulnerable figure—appointed by the government but treated as expendable when a new administration comes to power. Tribhuvan University takes pride in graduating a large number of students each year, but it shows little concern for how many of them secure meaningful employment. Many graduates hold certificates of educational achievement but carry the hidden burden of growing unemployment.

Our universities and colleges should serve as fertile grounds for fostering innovation, knowledge, skills, values, and competencies. They are expected to play a crucial role in developing technologically proficient workers, critical thinkers, problem-solvers, effective communicators, and visionary entrepreneurs. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams," that is, our beliefs and dreams shape our future. This is the task of the universities and they must equip students with the necessary tools, knowledge, and critical thinking skills to transform their dreams into reality and bring creative ideas to life.

To prepare students for the complexities of the 21st century, our education system must shift from traditional, teacher-centered methods characterized by rote memorization and standardized testing to dynamic, student-centered approaches. This transition emphasizes participatory learning, real-world problem-solving, and the integration of technology. Inquiry-based and experiential learning can cultivate intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and exploration in students, equipping them with deep technical knowledge, versatile critical thinking abilities, leadership skills, and entrepreneurial capabilities.

Nepal's education system has yet to address critical issues such as brain drain, alignment with national goals and the job market, political interference, outdated curricula, monotonous classrooms, uninspiring pedagogy, unemployment, and underemployment. Instead of fostering a love for learning, the system limits exploration and stifles curiosity. Hattie warns against this, saying, "Let us not crush our students' love for learning through boring pedagogy... do not bludgeon them with mindless 'busy work' and limit the exploration of evolving knowledge to repetitively churned-out recycled worksheets" (261).

Higher education is often criticized for producing mindless automatons, reinforcing stereotypes of monotonous, uncreative labor. Dr. Joshi highlights concerns about faculty engagement and preparedness in the semester-based education structure, noting, "A large number of faculty members are not committed to their profession and lack the knowledge exposure required to teach in a semester system" (16). Dr. Covey also emphasizes that education systems must prepare students for future challenges rather than relying solely on past paradigms, stating, "Our current formal education prepares students primarily for the world of the past, rather than the possible world of the future" (7). They echo Dewey's warning, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." It emphasizes the need to prepare students for the future by providing authentic learning experiences, which our students sadly lack.

Nepal needs leadership that is deeply committed, honest, visionary, and collaborative—leadership that governs with purpose, empathy, and action. Without such leadership, we risk falling into chaos, as William Butler Yeats warns in his poem "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold." As a result, students face rejection, disappointment, and humiliation in the job market. With limited prospects at

home, they are compelled to seek opportunities abroad to fulfill their dreams. They are caught between two worlds, left with no better choice.

Quest for Quality Education

Quality education encompasses the development of skills, values, and critical thinking that prepare individuals for both life and work. It empowers people to think independently, create innovatively, and contribute meaningfully to society. Quality education follows an inclusive, equitable, and learner-centered approach, offering lifelong learning opportunities that equip students with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for personal growth, societal contribution, and global citizenship. It emphasizes the holistic development of students, covering social, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, and cognitive growth, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or geographic location. Quality education aims to meet the diverse needs of learners, educators, parents, communities, and industries through meaningful learning experiences, relevant content, effective teaching strategies, and assessments aligned with learning goals. As VVOB aptly states, "A good quality education provides all learners with the capabilities required to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies, and enhance individual well-being."

In Nepal, many believe that the standard of education, particularly at the higher levels, is steadily declining, which is deeply concerning. Consequently, a significant number of young people leave the country daily in search of better educational opportunities abroad. This alarming trend presents a serious national concern. Without timely and effective intervention, the country faces a bleak future marked by brain drain, economic decline, deserted lands, villages inhabited only by the elderly, abandoned colleges, neglected classrooms, and a disillusioned younger generation. Such a scenario could lead to a future generation that may not forgive us for our inaction. Unfortunately, the authorities concerned remain passive observers. In this context, Greta Thunberg's urgent call for immediate action by political leaders resonates profoundly. She warns, "Our house is still on fire. Your inaction is refueling the flames by the hour." This highlights the need for immediate, collective, and tangible solutions rather than temporary fixes.

Current educational models often suppress the celebration of diverse human abilities and creativity, forcing students into rigid molds instead of nurturing their unique talents and potential. To address this issue, we must tap into students' innate creativity through engaging and inspiring teaching and learning activities. Education should connect with spiritual values while addressing the pressing concerns of the time, thereby enhancing students' self-esteem and intrinsic motivation. It should promote self-directed, independent, and collaborative learning through research and practical application, linking education to students' prior knowledge, skills, experiences, interests, talents, and passions. This approach would enable students to transition from merely regurgitating memorized facts to demonstrating genuine understanding through practical application across various contexts. Our goal should be to cultivate students' imagination and adaptability, allowing them to thrive in a constantly changing world.

Emphasizing the importance of nurturing skills, Howard Gardner observed, "Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often, we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants." Higher education should foster a culture of imagination, where curiosity, experimentation, and visionary thinking shape the future of both education and society. In a speech delivered at Harvard on September 6, 1943, Winston Churchill acknowledged the transformative power of the human mind in shaping the future. He famously stated, "The empires of the future are empires of the mind." This statement underscores the central role of human creativity, intellect, and imagination in driving innovation and progress. The future will be led by intellectual and creative leaders, making it essential to move away from rigid, outdated educational systems, eliminate academic pitfalls, and abandon the factory-like approach to education.

Teaching and learning activities in our institutions must connect classroom knowledge to the broader world and future workplace demands. This requires a shift toward participatory approaches, future-focused curricula aligned with the job market, demand-driven outcomes, innovation-led teaching, self-directed learning, and learner-centered methodologies. It is crucial to remember that the future of the world begins in today's classrooms. By prioritizing holistic development, students can be empowered to take charge of their own lives and future. Such a transformation can gradually

reduce their tendency to seek opportunities abroad, encouraging them to acquire business acumen and insights that will help them engage in and contribute to Nepal's mainstream development.

Quality education emphasizes accessibility, equity, and alignment with the needs of individuals and society, fostering empowerment and adaptability in an ever-evolving world. Highlighting the significance of policies and curricula that connect students to practical applications and preparing them for real-life challenges and careers, Dr. Daggett asserts, "What students need to succeed in the 21st century is an education that is both academically rigorous and real-world relevant. This is not just for some students; it is for all students" (187). Addressing this challenge is particularly critical in Nepal's higher education system, especially at Tribhuvan University, where a multifaceted and collaborative approach is essential.

Universities must prioritize research-based learning, critical thinking, and innovation over rote memorization. Continuous faculty development through training and international collaboration is vital to improving teaching standards. Additionally, curricula must be modernized to align with global job market demands and technological advancements. The government must increase investment to ensure adequate infrastructure, research funding, and access to digital resources. Strengthening university autonomy, promoting accountability, and fostering industry-academic partnerships are key steps toward enhancing education quality. Lastly, unnecessary political interference from the government and other stakeholders must be minimized to create a conducive learning environment.

Give priority to research

Research plays a crucial role in advancing knowledge, driving innovation, and fostering national development. It improves academic quality, encourages innovation, better prepares individuals for employment, and strengthens international collaboration. Research should be seen as a powerful tool to address contemporary challenges and provide valuable insights, rather than merely a means to earn promotions by accumulating points. It must be recognized as an essential driver of social and economic progress. However, in Nepal, research is hindered by a lack of funding and resources,

a weak research culture, limited collaboration and networking, and insufficient training. To address this, higher education institutions must increase funding, foster collaboration and networking, offer training opportunities, promote a strong research culture, and support early-career researchers, making research an integral part of the academic environment.

Address Global Challenges

Our higher education system must also focus on addressing the global challenges humanity faces, such as climate change, environmental degradation, the unsustainable use of natural resources, conflicts, deforestation, pandemics, and poverty. Key sectors like agriculture, hydropower, tourism, and the herbal industry are often overlooked, and there is a lack of an investment-friendly environment in the country. Without addressing these gaps, how can we expect to attract foreign investment essential for the nation's development?

Let us unite, think collectively, and work together for the betterment of our nation and humanity. Achieving transformative change requires collective effort, collaboration, and strong political will rooted in integrity and a forward-thinking approach. In a country where the government remains indifferent, the question of who will take responsibility for this situation—and when—remains uncertain.

Bridge the Skills Gap

It is often pointed out that there is a disconnect between companies struggling to find suitable candidates and graduates facing unemployment. Therefore, our higher education system must take a proactive role in addressing this issue by focusing on the following:

Curriculum alignment with industry needs: The curriculum must be regularly revised and updated to reflect the evolving needs of industries, job market demands, and emerging trends. This includes emphasizing relevant skills, technologies, and competencies through new courses on modern technologies and practical business skills, developed in collaboration with industries, to promote relevant skills and receive continuous feedback for improvement.

Focus on practical skills development: Higher education should integrate hands-on learning experiences such as internships and real-world projects by establishing partnerships with companies. This approach will provide students with practical experience and insight into industry practices.

Soft skills training: To enhance employability, we need to focus on developing soft skills such as effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, innovation, creativity, and adaptability. These skills are often underdeveloped in our graduates but are essential in today's workforce.

Foster collaboration: Strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and industries is crucial to ensure continuous communication regarding workforce requirements and to adapt education programs to meet those needs.

Encourage lifelong learning: To maintain competitiveness in an ever-evolving job market, we must promote continuous learning through re-skilling and upskilling opportunities. This can be achieved through short courses, certifications, and flexible learning options.

Career counseling and job placement support: It is essential to offer comprehensive career counseling, job placement support, and mentorship to help students effectively navigate their career paths. This support should include resume-building workshops, interview coaching, and guidance on emerging job market trends.

Supporting Entrepreneurship and Startup

We must foster entrepreneurship by providing resources such as start-up incubators, funding, and mentorship, empowering individuals to create their own opportunities. In addition, prioritizing workshops on business skills development is essential. Furthermore, it is crucial to collaborate with policymakers and other stakeholders to strengthen the education-industry partnership for job creation and ensure better alignment between educational outcomes and employment needs. Such collaboration will better prepare students for the workforce while helping companies access a pipeline of skilled workers.

Keep Pace with Change

Change is the process of evolving over time, and it is inevitable. Without embracing change, stagnation sets in, hindering growth and progress in personal, professional, and societal spheres. Adaptation is the ability to adjust to new circumstances and challenges. Those who fail to adapt may not survive, aligning with the principle of "survival of the fittest." Life and the environment are constantly changing, and being adaptable helps us navigate and thrive amidst these shifts. Adjusting our strategies is crucial to success.

The world has changed due to technological innovation and the vast information available, creating both risks and opportunities that require us to continuously adapt. The nature of work has evolved to be more collaborative, innovative, and creative. The nature of choice has expanded from multiple options to infinite possibilities. Alternatives such as job location flexibility, freelancing, and the gig economy offer greater freedom. The workplace itself has changed with the rise of remote work, flatter organizational structures, and quicker decision-making. The workforce has also transformed, with diversity bringing different expectations. To succeed in the workplace, it is essential to foster a high-trust culture that attracts, retains, engages, and inspires top talent. To succeed in the marketplace, collaboration and innovation are key to staying relevant in a disruptive world.

Thus, our higher education system must be adaptable to these changes. It should equip individuals with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to embrace transformation, solve problems, and thrive in an ever-changing world. To remain relevant and effective, higher education must rethink its policies, curricula, teaching methods, and the roles of both educators and students. It should evolve into a dynamic, inclusive, and technology-integrated ecosystem that empowers students and educators to succeed in a rapidly changing environment. By emphasizing adaptability, collaboration, and ethics, education can prepare individuals not only to excel in the workplace but also to contribute meaningfully to society.

Curriculum Update:

A curriculum is a structured framework or plan that outlines the educational content, objectives, and methods for teaching and learning. It defines what is to be taught (subjects, topics, or themes), how it should be taught (teaching methods and strategies), and how learning will be assessed (through exams, projects, or other evaluation techniques). Teaching methods are crucial to making learning engaging and inspiring. We must strive to create lessons that captivate, excite, and energize students. In traditional teacher-directed learning environments, students have limited input, engagement, and involvement. The greatest impact on student learning occurs when teachers become learners of their own teaching and when students take on the role of teaching themselves.

A well-designed curriculum is vital for equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to succeed academically and socio-economically. It must be of high quality, imparting relevant competencies that prepare students to thrive in today's world. Regular updates and reviews are necessary to ensure the curriculum aligns with global trends and industry demands, making it adaptable to changing circumstances. Furthermore, an effective curriculum should be dynamic and responsive, fostering motivation and engagement in students, while nurturing a lifelong passion for learning. The integration of 21st-century skills into the curriculum is essential for addressing students' needs and preparing them for both current challenges and future success. Our universities must continuously update their curricula to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world.

Advancing Towards Solutions

To align our higher education system with the global job market in the 21st century, curricula, educators, teaching methods, students, and policies must be adaptive, interdisciplinary, and focused on skill development. This requires policies that support regular curriculum updates to incorporate emerging technologies and promote interdisciplinary learning, blending fields such as the humanities, social sciences, and business. We must establish a continuous education system that facilitates reskilling and upskilling, offering micro-credential degrees to keep pace with the rapidly evolving job market. Strong partnerships with industries should be fostered to ensure alignment with current workforce needs.

Additionally, it is essential to guarantee access to quality education and technological resources for underrepresented and marginalized communities, providing digital literacy and infrastructure support. We should prioritize transferable skills like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, adaptability, and problem-solving, while focusing on digital literacy, data analytics, and coding as foundational competencies. Hands-on learning should be emphasized through simulations, real-world projects, and internships. Technology-driven collaborative tools, such as AI tutors, virtual labs, and global online classrooms, should be leveraged to enhance learning experiences.

Educators must be trained to enhance instruction and adopt the role of facilitators rather than mere content providers. Ongoing professional development in pedagogy, technology, and industry trends is crucial, along with equipping educators with emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills to mentor a diverse student body. Cultivating a growth mindset to promote lifelong learning, encouraging peer-to-peer learning, and fostering global collaboration through digital platforms should be priorities. Participation in hackathons, forums, and conferences should be encouraged. Furthermore, we must limit excessive political interference from government, faculty, and students, and adopt strict monitoring policies to ensure quality education. A scientific and fair enrollment policy should be implemented, in line with international university practices, to ensure fairness in admissions. Results should be published on time, and the unethical and unregulated distribution of programs driven by profit motives must be eliminated. The recruitment and promotion of part-time, contractual, or politically favored personnel based on political quotas should be stopped, with merit, competence, and competitive selection processes prioritized instead. Finally, disparities between foreign and domestic universities in admission processes, examination systems, and ethical standards must be addressed, ensuring fairness and consistency across institutions.

Focus on Knowledge Economy, Entrepreneurial Skills, Innovation and SpiriScience

Our higher education system must prioritize the knowledge economy, entrepreneurial skills, and innovation. To enhance the intellectual capabilities of our students, we need to focus on quality education, research, and technological advancements that generate

economic value. The goal should be to produce smart entrepreneurs who can transform knowledge into economic activities by creating new products, services, and businesses. The knowledge economy is an economic system driven by intellectual capital, innovation, and information, which fuels growth, productivity, and competitiveness. It thrives on education, research, technology, and skilled human resources. Innovation involves applying new ideas and technologies to improve efficiency, products, or services. Driven by the knowledge economy, innovation materializes through entrepreneurial activity, boosting productivity, creating new industries, and improving living standards. Economic development occurs when knowledge, entrepreneurship, and innovation converge to produce sustainable growth, employment, and social progress. Effective development strategies should integrate technological advancements, entrepreneurship incentives, and knowledge-sharing platforms. The knowledge economy fuels entrepreneurship, which drives innovation, resulting in both economic and social development. Countries that successfully integrate these elements achieve long-term sustainable growth and competitiveness in the global economy. This vision can only be realized when our leaders set clear goals, inspire action, and celebrate their team's success. Leadership is defined by vision and wisdom, not age. Our higher education must focus on these aspects with dedication, aiming to make Nepal an educational hub.

Additionally, our higher education should also focus on SpiriScience— a fusion of spirituality and science. This balanced approach merges both inner and outer knowledge, integrating the exploration of the outer universe with the understanding of the inner self. It bridges the gap between scientific inquiry and spiritual insight, combining logic and intuition to create a complete and successful life. SpiriScience can help us harmonize modern science with ancient wisdom, making our education system more holistic.

Foster Public-Private-Partnership (PPP)

The term 'Public-Private Partnership' (PPP) refers to the collaboration between government agencies and the private sector to deliver services. This collaboration can take various forms, such as management contracting, where a private partner takes responsibility for managing public assets, including financial and human

resources, staff management, long-term planning, leadership, support services, and professional services. Another model is service contracting, which involves private sector involvement in activities such as building design, maintenance, and staffing for areas like information technology in education. Additionally, contractual twinning arrangements involve private universities partnering with public institutions.

In the context of Nepal, PPPs are particularly relevant for expanding equitable access to education and improving educational outcomes, especially for marginalized groups. They play a vital role in strengthening the higher education system by combining the strengths of both the public and private sectors. Through PPPs, service centers such as research facilities, libraries, and digital learning hubs can be built and upgraded and curriculum updates and faculty training can be supported by private sector investments, particularly in remote areas. Furthermore, PPPs contribute to quality improvement and innovation, and address skill gaps. They also help ease the financial burden on the government by attracting private investment and grants, foster research collaboration, and contribute to better policy and governance. However, the private sector often feels uncertain in the absence of a comprehensive federal Education Act, which provides a clearer framework for their participation.

Recognizing the Contributions of Retired Professors

Effectively engaging retired professors in academic pursuits is essential, as they are invaluable assets to our nation. Their extensive knowledge, experience, and expertise should be leveraged in various academic endeavors, including research, teaching, conducting seminars and workshops, mentoring young scholars for academic careers, and contributing to decision-making as part of a 'Think Tank'. Furthermore, they can significantly contribute to faculty development programs, curriculum revisions, and offer valuable insights on policy-related matters.

Conclusion

To achieve meaningful outcomes, collaborative efforts among stakeholders and effective public-private partnerships are crucial. Reforms must address gaps in scientific policy frameworks, governance structures, and teaching-learning approaches. These reforms should broaden students' vision, inspire hope, ignite imagination, instill a love for learning, and cultivate a mindset of learning how to learn and think critically.

Additionally, they should develop self-confidence, expand intellectual and spiritual horizons, and enhance personality for personal growth.

Higher education should transform students from disoriented projectiles into guided missiles—rockets capable of adjusting their course according to changing circumstances. Until these issues are resolved, Nepal's higher education system will continue to struggle to meet global standards and contribute to the nation's broader goals of prosperity and peace. Above all, without visionary, honest, independent, and committed leadership in higher education, significant progress cannot be made in areas such as quality education, research and innovation, infrastructure development, global competitiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility.

A comprehensive and collective approach, supported by effective policy, investment in infrastructure, and a shift in traditional academic culture and mindset, is essential to adapt higher education to the demands of the 21st century. Aligning actions with words is crucial, as failing to do so diminishes credibility and impact. Progress requires change, and without a willingness to change perspectives, achieving meaningful transformation is impossible.

Driving new pathways in higher education is vital for Nepal's socio-economic progress, global competitiveness, and preventing youth from seeking opportunities abroad. Enhancing accessibility, ensuring quality, fostering research and innovation, aligning education with labor market needs, promoting internationalization, and improving governance are essential steps toward building a robust higher education system. These transformative changes will equip youth with the skills, knowledge, values, and opportunities needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world, driving the nation toward a prosperous and sustainable future. Nepal's challenge is not a lack of potential but a lack of focus—not a shortage of opportunities, but a need for discipline. While the past cannot be changed, the present offers an opportunity to shape a different future through committed action.

Challenges in higher education can be resolved through collaborative discussions. However, actions like strikes, padlocking, sit-ins, processions, blockades, and entry restrictions—often carried out by students, staff, and faculty members—do more harm than good. Such unethical practices significantly damage the reputation and academic

standards of universities, and Tribhuvan University (TU) is no exception to it. For higher education to achieve progress, the right individuals must be appointed to the right positions at the right time, minimizing political interference and fostering a free and autonomous academic environment. If it were easy, everyone would do it. But meaningful change requires dedication, resilience, and the courage to take the right steps.

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