

## Perceptions of Academicians towards Instructional Practices of Music Education in Tribhuvan University

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**Citation:** Pokharel, R. (2021). Perceptions of Academicians towards Instructional Practices of Music Education in Tribhuvan University *Journal of Fine Arts Campus*, 3(2), 1-10.

**Abstract:** Music is a subject through which one can express their feelings in an artistic way including melody and rhythm. The aim of the research was to study the perception of academicians towards the present context of the curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation system of music education at Tribhuvan University (TU). The qualitative research design was employed in the research. 23 academicians from TU were purposively selected for data collection and data were analyzed by descriptive and word cloud methods. The finding indicates that the teaching methods, examination system, and methods of designing curriculum are traditional in music education on TU. Additionally, the participants of this research suggested that the stakeholders should be serious, sensitive, and careful to adopt modern instructional practices in music education-related programs. Furthermore, modern technologies and changing aspects of society should be incorporated into the curriculum and pedagogical practices. The finding of this research is applicable to improving the current policy and practices of music education programs on TU.

**Keywords:** Constituent campus, social science stream, professional stream, course-curriculum, teaching methods, evaluation system

### Introduction

A good system of music education helps a country to develop economically and culturally (Green, 2012). It is a performing art integrated in the curriculum of different institutions academically in recent days worldwide. It creates opportunities for the jobs of music teachers, music performers, musical instrument manufacturers or dealers, music composers, organizers of concerts and programs (DiCola, 2013), music programmers and recordists, film industries and Multi Media as well. In several countries of the world music education has been given a proper base in the national educational policy (Heimonen, 2006). It is compulsorily prescribed in the curriculum of every school and college (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010). Various music and dance events have been taking place in different parts of Nepalese societies on the occasion of different festivals. Songs, musical instruments and dances are connected with various religious, social and cultural activities (Bellia, 2018). Music of Nepal covers the genres ranging from raaga-based music, folk music, traditional music and a range of modern styles (Darnal, 2004, p.83). The musical activities have been under practices in different ways in Nepal since ancient period however, it is not integrated in the curriculum of school education as formal subject. In the sense of higher education, Tribhuvan University (TU) has introduced music education as a separate discipline for long time.

Music represents the vocal, dancing and other instrumental activities (Herbst, 1997). In this context, music education represents the integration of this subject in instructional practices at educational institutions. The instructional practices of music represent the nature of curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation system followed by the institution for teaching music related subject (Huang, 2004). The curriculum represents the entire academic activities with subject matter of the particular discipline.

## Nepalese Context

Tribhuvan University was established in 1959 as the first national institution of higher education in Nepal aiming to produce skilled manpower (TUTODAY 2013-2014, p.3). It started music education in 1960 (Acharya, 1997 p. 141). At present the university has Central Department of Fine Arts that is providing music education in master in fine arts (MFA), master in philosophy (MPhil), and doctorate in philosophy (PhD) programs. Additionally, the university has three constituent colleges as Lalitkala Campus, Ratnarajya Laxmi Campus, Padmakanya Multiple Campus and one affiliated college named Sirjana College of Fine Arts under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The university introduced music as separate discipline after a year of its establishment in 1960 (Acharya, 1997 p. 141) by intermediate program for women only from Padma Kanya Campus. After three years of academic experience, success and positive response from the students the college started bachelor level in Vocal, Dance and Instrumental music. Moreover, the women's college also started the formal education in Folk and Traditional Music. However, the music education was started in school level with the establishment of the Padma Kanya High School in Kathmandu where music maestro Pt. Ganga Dutta Parajuli had been involved as the first classical music teacher since 1947 (Tuladhar 1979, p.75-76). Thus, music education was recognized as an academic subject and became institutionalized.

Ratna Rajya Laxmi and Lalitkala campus of TU included Music as a subject and started a formal education of classical system of music respectively in 1973 and 1976. Ratna Rajya Laxi Campus is a constituent college of TU where Music is taught in Bachelor of Arts under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. On the other hand, Lalitkala campus is the only constituent college for music and Fine Arts where also Music is taught in the Bachelor of Fine Arts under the same faculty of TU. In 2009, music education in the Intermediate Level was phased out and all the constituent colleges of TU also followed the same. After phasing out music education from Intermediate Level of TU, Sirjana College of Fine Arts continued Intermediate (+2) in Music with the TU curriculum under "Higher Secondary Education Board of Nepal" and it also started Bachelor program of Music under the same Faculty of TU in 2014. In 2009, TU opened the Central Department of Fine Arts where Master of Fine Arts courses in Vocal and Instrumental Classical Music are taught. Music education in TU is to follow Bhatkhande's system for practising Raaga, Tala, Geet and Gat and Nepali language is the medium of Raaga Bandish (composition).

## Music Education Programs in TU

At present, TU is running three programs in higher education in Music I.e. Bachelor, Master and MPhil/Ph.D. Level in its central department of fine arts, constituent and affiliated colleges under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The research-oriented programs like M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Music education have been introduced in different subjects of music like vocal, instrumental, and dance. An educational program should fulfil the requirements that are needed for a specific degree run by the institutions or the governing bodies. Education in the country that also determines the learning progress of subjects in all the stages of formal education. It refers to any formalized projects, programs, presentations, instructional materials, activities undertaken by an institution. It can also provide a structure in terms of the order in which courses should be completed in the duration of a degree.

### **Bachelor Program: Bachelor in arts (BA) and bachelor in fine arts (BFA)**

With the aim of providing practical and theoretical knowledge of classical Music in more depth either in singing or playing musical instruments based on Raaga and Taala as well as folk Music of Nepal, TU has been providing Bachelor program of music education since long. As the constituent colleges of TU Padmakanya, Lalitkala and Ratna Rajyalaxmi campus have been running Bachelor courses respectively since 1963 (Acharya, 1999, p. 141), 1979 and 1999. Sirjana College, a private affiliated college of Fine Arts also started Bachelor course in Music in 2014. Regarding the examination systems TU conducted examinations during the period from 1959 to 1971 for both Intermediate and Bachelor courses biennially at end of the course (Upadhyaya, 2014, p. 33). In 1971, His Majesty's Government of Nepal introduced "National Education System Plan" (NESP) as a land-mark in the development of modern higher education system in Nepal (Upadhyaya, p.15). In 1971, the structure, curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation system of higher education got a shift from biennial to Semester system (Dhakal, 2013, p. 60).

After phasing out Intermediate level from TU in 2009, one can take admission in B.A. or B.F.A. in Music (Vocal and Instrumental) coming from any discipline of Higher Secondary (+2) Levels with Music as one of the subjects or any other discipline equivalent to Higher Secondary Level. As far as the duration of the course is concerned, Lalitkala Campus and Sirjana College of Fine Arts have introduced 4-year Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music respectively in 2013 and 2014 (TU course of study of BFA Music- 2013/14). Padmakanya and Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus were following the 3-year Bachelor of Arts in Music course under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences till 2020. As per TU rule, they have been following 4 years course since 2021. The courses acquaint the students with the theoretical and practical knowledge of classical music (vocal or instrumental), knowledge of *Raaga* and *Taala*, introduction to different musical instruments as well as folk music of Nepal.

### **Master Program (MFA/MPhil/ PhD)**

As the only institution in Nepal the Central Department of Fine Arts of TU at Kirtipur is conducting Master of Fine Arts course in Classical Vocal and Instrumental (Tabla, Sitar) Music. The course has been designed for the students who wish to prepare themselves professionally in the field of Music. After getting B.F.A. and B.A. or an equivalent degree in Music from TU or from any other University or equally recognized Fine Arts institutions a student can be eligible for the admission of M.F.A in Music in TU. After master degree in music, student can join in research programs of MPhil /PhD in music (vocal, instrumental and dance). The Master of Fine Arts course in Music is designed for students who wish to prepare themselves professionally in the respective fields of Fine Arts. Other objectives are to prepare themselves for research work and as well as creative work in the field of music.

In order to achieve this goal, the department has designed to give classes on the following different areas such as, Practical music classes, Theoretical music classes, research and methodology and creative work classes. The objective of the course is to produce good performers, artists, researchers and teachers, music critic to encourage the study of music as a vocation, to institute degree course in performing arts.

The focus of the literatures mentioned in the research focused on the historical perspectives of music education in Nepal hence researcher raised the novel issues regarding instructional practices of music education in Nepal. The main objective of the research was to study the perception of academicians towards the present context of curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation system of music education in Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

## Methodology

Qualitative research design was applied in the research. The research was carried out among university music academicians of bachelor and master level of TU, Nepal. Since the study is qualitative, 23 academicians were purposively selected for the interview. The self-constructed tool was employed for data collection. The validity and reliability of the tool was ensured by sending tool with concern experts in the field of music. The suggestions and feedbacks given by the experts were incorporated in the tool before data collection. The tool consists of 3 open questions related to the practices of music education in TU. The curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation techniques were considered under instructional practice of music. The data were analyzed by descriptive ways as per response categories and theme of the responses.

## Results and Discussion

The results were presented in the thematic ways as curriculum of music, teaching methods and evaluation system of TU based on the responses of the participants.

### Curriculum of Music Education in TU

The view of respondents on the current structure of curriculum was collected by the interview. Most of the respondents suggested that the curriculum of the music should be practical based rather than theories whereas Regelski (2005) and Rogers (2004) also have similar suggestions. Additionally, Turner et al. (2008) emphasized on the connection of content with life events and same arguments were found by the respondents in this study. Some respondents suggested that the honesty of implementation is main issue in curriculum implementation however Dane and Schneider (1998) focused on integrity but that study was limited to school level. The strong argument of the respondent was found towards the integration of music related content up to school level by which students can get fundamental knowledge of music before joining bachelor program because presently the music is free subject at this level (i.e., any students can join having intermediate certificate in any subject).

Besides this the academicians also suggested that all of the curriculum of each level should be developed on international standard (Chung, 2011) with appropriate methods of instruction and use of instructional technologies whereas Joshi et al. (2021) also focused on technological adoption however the study is limited to mathematics teachers. Additionally, music is professional subject, hence the aim of the curriculum should focus to make students as good artists (Green, 2006). Hence the reformation of the curriculum is necessary. For making better content, the components of light music course in which classical music as the foundation should be incorporated.

Present scenario of music industries of Nepal has included worldwide social media, sound technology, and music programming hence upcoming practices of TU should include novel and changing context of music in place of running traditional course. The respondents also highlighted that the professional market values of the learners should be addressed by music curriculum (Schippers, 2009). Curriculum should be dynamic as per the demand of time. Some suggested that the number of *Raagas* should be limited with technical knowledge. Some views came that Nepalese traditional music should be included in the course rather to focus on classical music. Few selected *Raagas* should be included in the curriculum according to the levels of the students.

One suggested theoretical knowledge has to be focused because there should be the options of being musicologists in case the students are weak in practical subjects. It is better than previous days, but should include more contents as per present requirement. The detail of the

theme of the respondents is presented in Figure 1 and some English language translated arguments of the respondents are mentioned after this paragraph.

Respondent 3 said, "This curriculum is okay and no need to change just to implement honestly." Respondent 5 said, "We should keep 32 *thaat* in place of 10 *thaat* for covering all *Ragaas*." Respondent 13 said, 'Curriculum is okay but a suitable environment is required where students can make themselves laborious' Respondent 14 said, 'the number of *Raagas* should be limited and should focus their intensive study. Courses should be simpler and easier which can create the interest among the students.

Respondent 20 stressed that 'The present curriculum has not been structured after observing the level and status of the students. The designers of the course include the topic whatever they know about the music and the students are compelled to follow that. I totally disagree'. Respondent 22 says in his words 'We are still in traditional system but we have to do advance work in this field and we should create a new music Faculty. Then we can do lots of things related to the curriculum'.



Figure 1 Views of academicians towards curriculum

### Perception towards Teaching Methods

Most respondents agreed that the instructional method of the university is traditional and should integrate modern and novel student-centered methods of teaching. They emphasized to integrate new trends such as, audio, video, live concerts with the new technologies in the teaching methods which argument is in favor to the findings of Sife et al. (2007) and Cascone (2000). Material centered method like audio-visual guidance (Leow & Neo, 2014), musical concerts and performances would be beneficial for the students. The respondents also argued that the novel and digital pedagogical practices are not applicable in the university because of low investment, lack of training, lack of infrastructure and resources, and unclear policy of the university, a recent case study also concluded alike (Poudel, 2021). Besides that, the university should free from politics and those teachers having good performance, regular, better outcomes of the students and dedicated to their job should be awarded whereas Fisher et al. (1981) and



mark sheet. For quality education, the practical evaluation system must be fair, effective, reliable, and qualitative. In other subjects of the same Faculty in TU, they can tackle 30 students within an hour however music students need half an hour for each student hence separate managing body should be formed in TU to tackle this situation. Dollinger et al. (2008) found that the high attendance rate of the students has positive impact on learning performance hence we should have same practice in evaluation system.

The practice of formative and summative evaluation system must be in practice for actual judgement of learning performance of the students whereas Crisp (2012) and Curry (2016) also in favor to this argument. If some students do not come regularly into the class, their daily presence with private teachers might be considered. Respondent 6, told that 'It is not to be limited within his knowledge of contents. The candidate's ability of creativity, analytical power and his overall personality should be examined'. Stage performance should be started from the Bachelor Level. Examiners for the practical examinations should be selected from the group of senior professors.

TU should organize trainings for those who are listed in TU as practical examiners for developing their skills and knowledge as per new trends. Written exams should be held after practical exams. There should be the examination committee (by expert team) for the practical exams and it should be held on the open stage with full of audience. Theory examination should be based on the merit of the students not on memorizing of the lessons. 'Practical examinations should be based on the performance of the students. In the practical exams at least three experts are required and among them one should be internal and remaining will be external. If two create any debate, the third one will help for taking decision. In the present time many students are victimized of the examiners so there should be a committee of 3 to 5 experts for final practical exams along with the students' stage performance' said 13 and 14 respondents respectively. Exam system has to be strict and the examiners should be knowledgeable and expert.

From the side of the college internal exams will be taken in every three months. 17 no. respondent suggested that 'We learnt from the past experiences of Padma Kanya campus about practical exams i.e., five different question papers to be distributed among five students. After the exam the sets of questions would be changed by other five questions so that there would be no chance of repetition of the same questions for the next students. For practical exams, examination committee should be formed. The present exam system is not so much transparent. In the class, there should be the regular exam. Practical exams should be taken by observing the stage performance of the students. And there should be the criteria about the expert and listeners. There should have compulsory stage performance for all levels. The chance of question setting should be provided to all academicians of TU Practical including viva exams should be conducted by 3 to 4 members of the examination committee.



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