

## **Declining trends of students' enrollment in the faculty of education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the declining trend of students' enrollment in the Faculty of Education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus over a five-year period, spanning from 2075 to 2079 B.S. (2018–2022). Drawing on institutional data, the research highlights a significant reduction in the number of students enrolled in the B.Ed first semester, with figures dropping from 140 in 2075/2076 to just 80 in 2079/2080—an overall decrease of 42.86%. A detailed semester-wise and subject-specific breakdown reveals that Health Education remains the most popular specialization, consistently enrolling the majority of students, while other subjects such as English, Nepali, and Population Education experience notably lower and declining enrollment. The study identifies key socio-cultural and institutional factors behind this downward trend. Notably, approximately 75% of the enrolled students are female, and a considerable number discontinue their studies due to early marriage, which imposes domestic responsibilities and limits their educational continuity. Additionally, confusion and lack of awareness surrounding the semester system—particularly its continuous assessment model, credit structure, and academic rigor—have contributed to student dissatisfaction and dropout. These findings underscore the urgent need for strategic interventions aimed at improving student retention and engagement. Recommendations include raising community awareness about the importance of girls' education, providing orientation programs on the semester system, and implementing student support mechanisms. Addressing these challenges is crucial for reversing the enrollment decline and ensuring equitable access to higher education in the region.*

**Keywords:** Student enrollment, Early marriage, Semester system, Higher education, Academic retention

## Introduction

In recent years, a noticeable decline in student enrollment across various campuses in Nepal has become a growing concern. Although comprehensive nationwide data for the most recent academic years is lacking, education experts and campus administrators have consistently expressed alarm over this trend (Linkha, 2021). Several media reports and expert analyses highlight that many higher education institutions in Nepal, including Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus (JMC), are facing a significant reduction in student numbers. In light of this situation, the current study seeks to explore the reasons behind the declining student enrollment specifically in the Faculty of Education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus. The primary objectives are: (1) to identify the causative factors contributing to the decline in student enrollment, and (2) to analyze the enrollment trends from the academic year 2075 B.S. to the present.

Education plays a critical role in individual and societal development. It distinguishes human beings from other species by equipping them with the intellectual and practical tools needed to navigate and contribute to society. Historically, both western and eastern philosophies, along with ancient, medieval, and modern educational thinkers, have significantly contributed to the evolution of education systems around the world (Paudel, 2067; Sifuna, 2006). While many nations began their educational development under resource constraints, progress has typically aligned with the prevailing social and economic conditions.

Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus offers programs in Education, Arts, and Management; however, this study is focused exclusively on the Faculty of Education. This faculty aims to prepare competent teachers, educational researchers, curriculum designers, planners, and administrators to serve the nation's educational needs (Andersen, 2008). The decline in enrollment within this faculty, therefore, raises concerns not only for the institution but also for the broader education sector in Nepal.

Student enrollment is a fundamental pillar of any academic institution. It directly influences the institution's revenue, planning, resource allocation, and reputation. A robust enrollment process, involving strategic outreach, admissions, and registration, ensures the vitality and sustainability of academic programs. Conversely, declining enrollment can limit an institution's capacity to maintain quality, invest in infrastructure, and offer diverse academic opportunities. Moreover, enrollment patterns influence the diversity and inclusivity of the academic environment. A higher enrollment rate contributes to a more vibrant and multicultural student body, enriching the learning experience through diverse perspectives and collaborative engagement. In a globalized world, such diversity is critical for fostering innovation, critical thinking, and cultural understanding.

As educational institutions navigate increasingly competitive and resource-constrained environments, effective enrollment strategies have become essential. These strategies may include digital marketing, community engagement, scholarship opportunities, and targeted outreach to underserved populations. Understanding the local context of declining enrollment—

such as at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus—is thus crucial for developing timely and effective interventions.

### **Literature Review**

This study aims to explore the trends and causes of declining student enrollment at the campus level, with a particular focus on the Faculty of Education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus. Among the relevant literature, Tika Ram Linkha's (2021) article titled '*Trend of Student Enrollment*' stands out. Although his study specifically focuses on declining enrollment in the subject of Geography, it provides valuable insights into enrollment fluctuations. Linkha concludes that if the current trend continues, student enrollment in Geography could eventually diminish entirely. However, unlike his study, which is limited to a single subject, this research takes a broader approach by examining overall student enrollment in the Faculty of Education, including subject-wise trends. Therefore, this study is expected to offer a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issue.

The phenomenon of student dropout has also been discussed extensively in educational research, with varying definitions and perspectives. Jamil, Atta et al. (2010) define "dropout" as students leaving campus for any reason other than death, which includes suspending their studies or leaving without completing their academic programs. This definition encompasses students who discontinue their education due to health issues or other personal circumstances. Quiroga, Janosz et al. (2013) describe dropout as the act of leaving formal education before completion, emphasizing the multifaceted reasons behind such decisions. Their work highlights the influence of social, political, and economic contexts on student retention in different countries.

Muhammad and Muhammad (2011) identify several causes of dropout in their study, such as indifferent attitudes, geographical inaccessibility, lack of motivation and understanding, negative teacher behavior, corporal punishment, and forced labor. However, their study primarily focuses on the reasons students exit the system after enrolling, rather than the factors influencing initial enrollment rates. Blue and Cook (2004), in a study conducted at the University of Texas at Austin, investigated high school dropout rates and identified key factors such as family income, emotional and social challenges, race and ethnicity, academic pressure, and institutional shortcomings. Their findings further support the notion that enrollment and retention are deeply interconnected and influenced by a wide range of variables.

While these studies provide essential context, the current research emphasizes enrollment trends rather than dropout rates, especially within the Faculty of Education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus. By narrowing the scope to one faculty yet broadening the focus to overall enrollment trends and their causes, this study aims to contribute original and actionable insights to both academic discourse and institutional policy-making.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the causes and challenges associated with the declining student enrollment at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus (JMC). A descriptive research design was employed, utilizing a cross-sectional qualitative survey approach. This design was selected as it is well-suited for exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, and awareness regarding declining student enrollment. It also enhances the depth and contextual richness of the research, offering greater control and meaningful insights into the issue (Lillis & Mundy, 2005).

For this study, I applied purposive sampling and selected 6 participants among the faculty members, staffs and students as per the purpose. A semi-structured interview schedule was used as the primary tool for data collection. This method allows respondents to elaborate on their views, providing flexibility and the opportunity for deeper insights into the research problem. According to Stake (2010), every interview is unique, and the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee may vary, affecting the quality and depth of the information collected. While semi-structured interviews offer richness in data, they also carry a risk of interviewer bias, which may influence the responses.

All interviews were conducted in person by the researcher. Each respondent was asked a set of open-ended questions designed to explore their experiences, insights, and opinions regarding the decline in student enrollment at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section discusses the background of Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus (JPMC), including its establishment, trends in student enrollment in the Faculty of Education, and perceptions of both teachers and students.

### **Background of Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus**

Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus was established on the 1st of Mangsir, 2038 BS (1981 AD). It was formally inaugurated on the 10th of Baisakh, 2039 BS by Queen Santi Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah in the presence of King Deepak Jung Bahadur Singh, Gagan Jung Bahadur Singh, and the founding campus chief, Gajendra Bahadur Singh. The campus is located in Jayaprithvi Municipality-11, Bhopur, Bajhang, near the historic Bhopur Durbar and Satyavadi Secondary School. It lies approximately one kilometer east of Chainpur, the district headquarters, along the Chainpur-Taklakot Highway. The campus was named in honor of Jaya Prithvi Bahadur Singh—a renowned educationist, philosopher, activist, humanitarian, and national hero of Nepal.

From its inception until 2074 BS, JMC functioned as a community-based public campus affiliated with Tribhuvan University. Initially, it offered the Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL)

in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. This level of study continued alone for over 16 years until 2054 BS. As the only higher education institution in the hilly areas of the then Far Western Development Region, it attracted students from Bajhang and neighboring districts such as Bajura, Achham, Darchula, Baitadi, and Dadeldhura.

In 2054 BS, the campus launched its Bachelor's degree program (BA), which ran alongside the PCL until 2061 BS. To meet the growing academic needs, the campus introduced +2 programs in Education, Humanities, and Commerce, as well as Bachelor's degrees in Education (B.Ed), Business Studies (BBS), and later, Master's degrees such as MA and M.Ed. However, in 2070 BS, the +2 programs were phased out due to government policy. A significant shift occurred in 2075 BS when JPMC transitioned from a TU-affiliated public campus to a government constituent campus under Far Western University (FWU). Currently, JMC offers various undergraduate and graduate programs, including B.Ed, BBS, BA, M.Ed, and MDS through a semester-based academic system (Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus Prospectus, 2079 BS).

#### **Student Enrollment Trends in B.Ed First Semester (2075–2079 BS)**

JMC was once recognized as a leading educational institution in Far Western Province, particularly in Bajhang district. Since its establishment, the campus has played a critical role in increasing access to higher education for marginalized groups including Dalits, Janajatis, women, and residents of remote areas. However, student enrollment in the Faculty of Education has shown noticeable fluctuation in recent years, as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Student Enrollment in B.Ed First Semester (2075–2079 BS)*

S.N.	Academic Year	B.Ed 1st Semester
1	2075/2076	140
2	2076/2077	108
3	2077/2078	123
4	2078/2079	95
5	2079/2080	80

*Source: Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus Report (2079 BS)*

The enrollment data of students in the B.Ed First Semester at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus over the five academic years from 2075/2076 to 2079/2080 BS reveals a clear declining trend. In the academic year 2075/2076, the number of students enrolled was 140. This figure dropped significantly to 108 in 2076/2077, marking a sharp decrease of 32 students. Interestingly, in the year 2077/2078, there was a brief rebound with enrollment rising to 123

students. However, this recovery was short-lived as the numbers fell again to 95 in 2078/2079 and further declined to just 80 in 2079/2080.

Overall, the data shows a net decrease of 60 students over the five-year period, which is a 42.86% reduction from the initial enrollment in 2075/2076. This trend reflects a consistent decline in student interest or capacity in pursuing the B.Ed program at the campus, warranting further investigation into the underlying causes.

### Subject-wise Enrollment Trends by Semester in 2076 BS

JMC offers four subjects in the B.Ed program—Nepali, Population Education, English, and Health—and one specialization.

Table 2

Subjectwise students enrollments number in 2076 BS

S.N	Semester	B.Ed				
		Nepali	Population	English	Health	Total
1	1st	26	4	2	76	108
2	2nd	16	4	1	60	81
3	3rd	12	4	1	50	67
4	4th	10	3	1	45	59
5	5th	9	2	1	39	51
6	6th	6	2	1	36	45
7	7th	6	2	1	32	41
8	8th	6	2	1	32	41

*Source: Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus, 2024*

Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus (JPMC) offers four major subjects in its B.Ed program—Nepali, Population Education, English, and Health Education. The subject-wise enrollment data for the academic year 2076 BS, presented across eight semesters, shows a distinct pattern of declining student numbers over time.

In the 1st semester, the total enrollment stood at 108 students, with the majority (76 students) opting for Health Education. Nepali followed with 26 students, while Population and English had 4 and 2 students respectively. As students progressed through the semesters, overall enrollment steadily declined.

By the 4th semester, total enrollment dropped to 59, with Health still leading at 45 students, while Nepali, Population, and English decreased to 10, 3, and 1 students respectively. This downward trend continued through the final semesters, with the 8th semester recording only 41 total students—32 in Health, 6 in Nepali, and 2 and 1 in Population and English, respectively.

The consistent decline across all subjects and semesters indicates a pattern of student dropout or transfer, which could stem from academic, economic, or motivational challenges. Notably, Health Education remains the most popular specialization, attracting the highest number of students throughout. This data highlights the urgent need to assess retention strategies and improve academic support, particularly in subjects like English and Population Education, which consistently enrolled the fewest students.

### **Reasons for Declining Enrollment at JPMC**

Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus has been experiencing a significant decline in enrollment under the affiliation of Far Western University, due largely to misinformation about the semester system and negative public perception.

### **Key Findings from Interviews**

One of the participants 'Hari' noted that early marriage, academic irregularity, exam phobia, brain drain, and cultural vulnerability are key reasons for declining enrollment. The persistent decline in student enrollment in the Faculty of Education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus can be attributed to several interrelated socio-cultural and academic factors. The most prominent causes include early marriage, academic irregularity, exam phobia, brain drain, and cultural vulnerability. Each of these factors is discussed below:

#### ***Early Marriage***

In the local context, early marriage remains a common social practice, especially among female students. Once married, many students face familial responsibilities and social expectations that limit their ability to continue higher education. This often results in students, particularly women, dropping out of academic programs before completion.

#### ***Academic Irregularity***

Irregular attendance, poor academic engagement, and lack of continuity in studies are significant problems among students. These issues may arise from personal challenges, lack of motivation, or financial difficulties. Academic irregularity leads to underperformance, backlogs, and ultimately, withdrawal from the program.

#### ***Exam Phobia***

Many students experience fear and anxiety related to examinations, commonly referred to as exam phobia. This psychological barrier affects their performance and confidence, sometimes discouraging them from appearing in exams or continuing their studies, contributing to dropout rates.

### ***Brain Drain***

A growing trend among youth is the pursuit of opportunities abroad—whether for education, employment, or migration. This brain drain significantly reduces the number of students enrolling in local institutions like Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus, as students opt for perceived better prospects overseas.

### ***Cultural Vulnerability***

Students from marginalized or culturally sensitive backgrounds often face additional barriers such as discrimination, language challenges, or lack of social support. These issues can result in a sense of exclusion, reduced academic performance, and a higher likelihood of dropping out.

Each of these factors highlights the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the declining enrollment issue. Addressing them will require targeted interventions, both at institutional and policy levels, to create a more supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Another two participants 'Gopal and Shyam' emphasized that over 75% of students are girls, many of whom leave the program due to early marriage. Additionally, a general misunderstanding about the semester system has discouraged continued enrollment. They acknowledged that the rationale behind the system has not been effectively communicated to students and their parents.

The declining trend in student enrollment at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus, particularly in the Faculty of Education, is influenced by both social and systemic factors. Two prominent causes stand out: the high rate of early marriage among female students and widespread misunderstandings about the semester system. Each of these factors described below:

#### **High rate of early marriage among female students**

Approximately 75% of the students enrolled in the Faculty of Education are girls. However, many of them are compelled to discontinue their studies due to early marriage. Once married, these young women often face family responsibilities, social expectations, and restrictions that make it difficult or impossible to continue their education. This social practice remains a significant barrier to academic persistence and is a major contributor to the declining enrollment rate.

#### **Misunderstanding about the semester system**

The introduction of the semester system has also negatively affected student retention. Many students and even some parents lack a clear understanding of how the semester system works, including its continuous assessment, attendance requirements, and academic rigor. This unfamiliar structure can seem overly demanding, leading to confusion, dissatisfaction, and eventually, dropout. The perception that the semester system is too difficult or complicated discourages both new admissions and continued enrollment.



These two factors social pressures tied to gender roles and systemic challenges in academic implementation—illustrate the need for both cultural awareness and institutional support. Addressing them is essential to reversing the downward enrollment trend.

Similarly, two participants from students' cluster 'Man and Satya' viewed that issues such as staff shortages, uncooperative faculty, poor infrastructure, attraction to foreign employment, poverty, and a lack of parental education and awareness.

Moreover, one of the participants 'Kailash' added that irregular teacher attendance, lack of coordination among staff, ineffective enrollment campaigns, and poor professional dedication have all contributed to the declining enrollment. He also noted the burden of requiring students to pay full semester fees upfront.

### **Conclusion**

The data presented on student enrollment trends at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus from the academic years 2075/2076 to 2079/2080 offers valuable insights into the evolving dynamics within the Faculty of Education. Several key conclusions can be drawn:

**Declining Enrollment in the B.Ed Program:** There has been a noticeable decline in the number of students enrolling in the B.Ed first semester—from 140 in 2075/2076 to 80 in 2079/2080. This trend suggests a diminishing interest in or access to the B.Ed program, potentially influenced by changing career aspirations, the availability of alternative academic or vocational pathways, and shifting demand for teaching professionals in the job market.

**Overall Enrollment Trend:** When combining B.Ed and M.Ed enrollments, the total number of students in the Faculty of Education declined from 151 in 2075/2076 to 105 in 2079/2080. This downward trend indicates broader challenges—such as reduced student intake, external socio-economic factors, and shifting educational preferences—that affect overall enrollment in teacher education programs.

**Implications for Strategic Planning:** The declining trend, particularly in the B.Ed program, underscores the need for the campus to reassess its academic offerings and student engagement strategies. Adapting to students' evolving interests and the changing demands of the education sector could involve revising curricula, introducing flexible program formats, strengthening career counseling services, and launching targeted outreach initiatives.

In conclusion, enrollment trends at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus reveal decreasing interest in traditional teacher education programs like B.Ed, alongside fluctuating interest in advanced degrees such as the M.Ed (CPL). These patterns highlight the importance of strategic interventions to revitalize student enrollment and ensure that the Faculty of Education remains relevant, competitive, and responsive to the future of education in Nepal.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the declining and fluctuating student enrollment trends in the Faculty of Education at Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus, several strategic measures are recommended to address the identified issues and enhance future enrollment:

### **Strengthen Awareness and Outreach Campaigns**

Many students and parents may still hold misconceptions about the semester system and the value of teacher education programs. The campus should actively engage in awareness campaigns through local media, schools, and community events to promote its programs, clarify the benefits of semester-based education, and showcase successful alumni.

### **Introduce career-oriented and market-responsive programs**

To align with evolving career interests, the campus should consider offering new, interdisciplinary, or specialized programs that combine education with fields like ICT, early childhood education, or educational leadership. This would attract a broader range of students with diverse professional goals.

### **Enhance student support services**

Academic counseling, mentoring, and exam preparation workshops can help students overcome common challenges such as exam anxiety, irregular attendance, and lack of motivation. Additionally, financial support or scholarship programs targeting economically disadvantaged or female students can improve retention and enrollment.

### **Improve infrastructure and teaching quality**

Addressing student complaints about inadequate facilities and staff behavior is crucial. Investing in classroom resources, digital tools, and ongoing teacher training can significantly improve the campus environment and student satisfaction.

### **Foster coordination among staff**

Promoting collaboration and accountability among teaching and non-teaching staff is essential. Regular staff meetings, performance reviews, and professional development programs can help build a more student-centered academic culture.

### **Collaborate with local stakeholders and government**

Partnerships with local schools, municipalities, and the Far Western University can support joint enrollment drives, internships, and curriculum enhancement. Government support in terms of funding and policy clarity on semester systems should also be advocated.

By implementing these recommendations, Jayaprithvi Multiple Campus can revitalize its academic reputation, attract new students, and contribute more effectively to the educational advancement of the region.

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