



Problems and Challenges of Community Campuses in Gandaki Province

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Abstract

This study explored the problems and challenges faced by community campuses in Gandaki Province, focusing on both QAA-accredited and QAA in process campuses. Using a qualitative research design with a descriptive phenomenological approach, data were collected from ten purposively selected campus chiefs through open-ended questions. Thematic analysis revealed that financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified full-time faculty, low student enrollment, and high dropout rates are determined problems across campuses. Faculty motivation, professional development, and research engagement were found to be limited, while weak governance, political interference, and insufficient community support further weaken institutional effectiveness. Campuses also face challenges in aligning academic programs with labor market needs, implementing modern teaching methods, and supporting long-term growth. QAA-accredited campuses generally demonstrate better governance, faculty quality, student engagement, and infrastructure compared to campuses still undergoing accreditation. The study recommends dedicated funding, income-generating programs, faculty recruitment and development, modernization of curricula, ICT integration, research support, strengthened governance, and active community engagement to enhance sustainability, academic quality, and student success. These findings provided critical insights for policymakers, campus administrators, and stakeholders to improve the performance and resilience of community campuses in Nepal.

Keywords: Challenges, enrollment, financial constraints, higher education, problems

Introduction

Community campuses in Nepal are non-profit public higher education institutions that are founded and developed by local communities, frequently with assistance from local stakeholders (such as educators, social workers, politicians, and civil society, especially linked to Tribhuvan University (TU) or other national universities. They are partially financed by the community, with minimal government support. They are established to offer affordable and accessible education, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions. In response to the limited access to higher education in rural and impoverished areas, community campuses in Nepal began to emerge in the mid-20th century. Since the majority of colleges were situated in major cities like Biratnagar, Pokhara, and Kathmandu, students from more rural areas were denied access to education. By organizing community resources, local leaders, social activists, educators, and parents took the initiative to start universities to remedy this imbalance. One of the main goals of community campuses is to guarantee that all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, have access to higher education. Community Campuses were established on the basis of the objectives, such as promoting local ownership and involvement in education, decreasing the movement of students from rural to urban locations for schooling, and improving underprivileged and oppressed populations, offering inexpensive education. Community campuses in Gandaki Province mainly affiliated with Tribhuvan University and other institutions play an important role in providing accessible higher education in Rural and Semi urban areas. However, they confront variety of challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. The primary objective of examining these issues is to identify key barriers to quality education delivery, equitable access and institutional growth. In order to support policy recommendations for increasing fund for infrastructure development and academic reforms for sustainable development of community campuses.

Recent Studies (UGC Reports) indicate that community campuses face significant challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. Low student attendance and elevated dropout rates serve as indicators of serious issues related to engagement and retention, exacerbated by inadequate facilities and limited funding. Additionally, teacher retention is compromised by low motivation levels and insufficient opportunities for professional development, leading to a lack of commitment and weak mentorship connections with students. The motivation of teachers to educate is often insufficient, resulting in pass rates that are only marginally above the national average. These challenges are further intensified by the declining interest of both the community and students in community colleges. Financial

constraints severely limit the campuses' ability to implement necessary improvements and create a conducive learning environment. Political factors obstruct the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality, complicating efforts to tackle these issues. To overcome these challenges and enhance student success, community campuses require increased funding, comprehensive professional development for educators, strategic planning, and strong community engagement programs. These findings are consistent with the results, which underscore the intricate relationship between various factors affecting academic success and the vital role of well-managed teacher support and resource distribution for effective learning.

Ardalan (2019) views that community colleges should be pleased and take glory for providing affordable open-door access to millions of Americans; they also must hold responsibility for leading dynamic and transformative changes that meaningfully increase student success. Community colleges indeed provide access to higher education by joining non-traditional, marginal, low-income, first-generation, and underprepared individuals. Similarly, Ramsden (2003) centers on how to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in universities and colleges. Its core themes are student-centered learning, constructive arrangement, reflective teaching practice, assessment and feedback, motivation and engagement, and instructional role in teaching quality. As Bailey (2002) stated that community colleges account for a significant share of American higher education. About one-half of all students in postsecondary teaching in 1997 were selected in community colleges (NCES, 2000), and over the span of any given year, more for-credit undergraduate replacements were selected in community colleges than in bachelor's degree programs. In numerous community colleges, more students select noncredit courses than credit-bearing courses. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and a portion of the 1980s, community colleges enjoyed dense enrollment growth. But in contrast to the past decades, community college enrollments declined marginally in the 1990s. Add up to drop enrollments peaked in 1992 at 5.7 million students, but stood at around 5.4 million in 1998 (NCES, 2000d). In the meantime, colleges in numerous states confronted declining enrollments, despite the fact that in a few states they turned back up by the end of the decade. According to Groenwald (2018), the numerous competing internal and external influences make leadership in higher education today hard and demanding. The study discussed the particular difficulties of managing several campuses, such as decision-making autonomy, communication, and high-caliber academic activities, knowledge management, culture, and consistency. The article also discusses ways to enhance effective leadership, including setting goals and plans for the

entire system, using technology to facilitate knowledge management, establishing policies for communication and consistency, and forming committees and councils that support the entire system.

As Muhiddin et al. (2023) made an effort to investigate how Malaysian public institutions are now employing green campuses. Even though the majority of Malaysian public institutions had adopted green initiatives, a number of difficulties were discovered. There were ways to advance green campus programs to the front. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and guarantee more sustainable behaviors in the future, communities and university administration should be key players. However, according to recent data, about 41% of US undergraduate students attend community colleges. This suggests that over two out of every five undergraduates attend community institutions. Community colleges saw a revival in 2024 with significant increases in enrollment, retention, and determination rates following a difficult few years. According to the Persistence and Retention report from 2025, enrollment has increased by more than 4%, freshmen enrollment has increased by more than 6%, and dual enrollment continues to rise.

Similarly, Leiderman et.al. (2002) made several recommendations for community group representatives who had collaborated with higher education institutions. The first problem is how important it is to follow through in order to create long-lasting relationships. The second is how community partners weigh the advantages and disadvantages of collaborating with a higher education institution. The third is how community members' perceptions of their college partners are affected by parity. Community partners proposed that collaborations with universities and colleges offer their organizations a variety of advantages. Some recommendations and implications for practice and policy were included in the study's conclusion. As examined by Holland (2005), the current and evolving role of higher education institutions, particularly those operating within the context of combinations, associations, and state systems, is to catalyze change on issues affecting communities and society as a whole. Specifically, the focus of the study was to develop and strengthen an understanding of how higher education might work more effectively with communities, and it is believed that associations or collaborations of higher education institutions, along with community partners, can learn from one another. Cooperation between efforts is vital.

Similarly, Pennington et al. (2006) examined the distinctive problems facing rural community colleges today and the challenges those institutions must address to fulfill their mission in rural America. The challenges found were compared with problems described in the

literature from the last 30 years. It was also stated that efforts have been made to solve the situations supposed as problems. Therefore, if community college leaders have tried to address these problems, they have been frustrated from making important progress by barriers found in the larger social, economic, or political certainties facing most rural communities. As stated by Tyndorf (2019), community college education is corresponding and is not a less respected, non-elite alternative to the dynamic context of higher education. Community colleges provide the higher education desired by local communities and citizens who may not have other higher education opportunities. If policy representatives believe the economy to be for the people and driven by the people, then they need college to complement the higher education market, and they should therefore not be stigmatized; such stigma is unjustifiable. As Ardalan (2019) American community colleges have delivered on their work, open access, and educated about half of all undergraduate students in the United States. These colleges are recognized as primary providers of higher education for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Contemporary community colleges have been facing the challenge of underfunding, and their leaders are expecting to improve student completion rates. As explored by Gaihre et al., (2022), the motivation practices and the contextual challenges for teachers' motivation in community colleges in Nepal. The study revealed that community colleges in Nepal are endeavoring to motivate their teachers to adopt broadly applied good practices as in other organizations of a similar nature. However, community colleges are unable to implement those motivational practices in line with teachers' expectations due to inadequate resources and a lack of systematized procedures. These institutions are increasingly looking for support from their affiliating universities, the University Grants Commission (UGC), as well as from federal, provincial, and local governments. Like Portrayed by Subedi et al. (2018), there are several issues and discrepancies in the current government system and the legitimacy of community campuses, which are proxies of higher education institutions in Nepal. The government needs to have strong and clear legislation to regulate almost all academic and administrative affairs of community campuses. found great variation and inconsistencies in the campus management committee formation process and its mechanisms, the campus chief selection process and its tenure. Likewise, the perception of teachers towards their career development was found to be miserable. Thus, the existing situation paves the way to make an inference that it is high time for the government to prepare a strong legislative framework to control and address issues and disagreements of the overall governance of community campuses of Nepal. As stated by Panthee (2022), public campuses are facing many challenges, which include proper

management of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) for faculty members of their campuses, and there is a gap between policies and practices in the application of TPD in public campuses of Nepal. The study discovered that teachers of public campuses justify TPD's high significance in the sense that it helps teachers develop many kinds of professional skills, knowledge, and new techniques of teaching. As stated by Neupane (2019) the Nepalese higher education sector had not seen much progress in terms of student enrollment, an increase in higher education programs and institutions, and infrastructure uplift, among others. This paper pointed out the current state of higher education in Nepal in terms of the shiny prospects and also suggests some challenges before offering some recommendations. He also stated that a lot still has to be done in terms of the government investing more in teacher training, management skills, and infrastructure development, although private educational institutions have flourished, and even some public colleges have upgraded their standards. The government should also start reforms on higher educational institutions, engaging students in applied learning rather than the pursuit of theoretical knowledge, and higher education curricula should be revised to entail issues of linguistic and sexual minorities so higher education is impartially possessed to all socio-cultural and economic sections. Like Gurung (2012) focused on just the general trends and information on the historical development of Nepalese education policy. Its main purpose has been to bring attention to the attempts that have been made to develop education and change in Nepal in the last six decades. It is recommended to make a further review and analyze the separate specific issues, such as curriculum, course structures, textbooks, teacher management, exams, government monitoring, and evaluation systems. He argued that, regardless of the problems and challenges, there are opportunities as well. The use of information and communication technology in education has encouraged betterment and improvement in the Nepalese education system. Regardless of the large amount of donor support and funds, the principal challenges such as the inability and lack of competence of various stakeholders and educational managers, as well as inappropriate implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Similarly, Parajuli (2022) explored bachelor 's-level perceptions of challenges in their learning to complete their degrees. Applying the qualitative case study design, the findings indicated that academic challenges include poor study habits, insufficient English language skills, lack of note-taking skills and online study skills, as well as inadequate access to educational resources. Similarly, the study also focused on non-academic challenges such as transportation problems, digital distraction, conflict in career choice, and family support. The findings suggested that students need additional support in study skills

development, English language learning, career counseling, motivation, and avoiding digital distractions to alleviate these challenges for better retention and graduation rates. As Baral (2021) stated that the higher education reform initiative is challenging. The reform agenda should be the long-term agenda for the overall advancement of higher education, as reform is the best means to develop higher education in Nepal. His research has concluded that Nepalese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are not capable of bearing the demand of the global education market, to enhance the capacity of Nepalese higher education research and innovation culture; fairness and the uniformity in teacher selection and recruitment system; and development of a national qualification outline and credit transfer system are major challenges of HEIs. Therefore, strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system in higher education, increasing the pass rate, reforming tertiary institutions to impart quality education, improving property management among universities, and implementing the higher education policy provisions are other major challenges. Gaihre & Khanal (2025) presented an analysis of the perception of motivation among teachers in community colleges in Nepal, using Adam's equity theory of motivation. Using an interpretive phenomenological design, the study revealed that teachers in community colleges appreciated their work, practiced positive attitudes, and had a conducive work environment. Furthermore, community college teachers expected impartial treatment in terms of policies and practices, salary and assistance, administrative actions, chances for professional growth and development, and appreciation from their institutions. As Kaphle (2024) commonly highlights the significance of systematic teaching strategies that cater to students' diverse needs and preferences, emphasizing the dynamic nature of vocabulary acquisition and the need for tailored, adapted instruction for English language learners. Finally, Chapagai (2024) studied to identify the factors influencing academic accomplishment among students on community campuses by applying a descriptive survey research design. The study concluded that home-related factors, campus facilities, the teaching-learning environment and resources, habits of students, teacher-student relationships, and institutional factors meaningfully influence students' academic achievement at the university level.

The community campuses in Nepal, as non-profit public higher education institutions established through local initiatives since the mid-20th century, primarily aim to provide affordable and accessible education in rural and semi-urban areas, which are motivated by community stakeholders, educators, and social activists. These campuses are often affiliated with Tribhuvan University for focusing local ownership, reduced rural-urban student migration,

and empowerment of underprivileged groups, drawing conceptual international community colleges. Despite their foundational role in democratizing access, recent UGC reports and studies highlight significant challenges threatening their sustainability and effectiveness. Inadequate funding with limited government support, poor infrastructure, declining student enrollment, high dropout rates, and low community interest worsen issues of student retention and engagement. Teacher motivation remains low due to insufficient salaries, limited professional development opportunities, and systemic gaps between policies and practices.

While existing research, mainly qualitative and perception-based from 2012 to 2025, provides valuable insights into motivation, governance, and learning challenges, noteworthy research gaps remain. There is a scarcity of large-scale quantitative and longitudinal studies following enrollment trends, dropout patterns, and graduation outcomes, particularly in the context of post-2020 federal developments and potential campus mergers. Empirical comparisons between community and private/constituent campuses are limited, as are involvement studies evaluating the impact of enhanced funding, professional development programs, or community engagement initiatives. Emerging areas such as post-pandemic recovery, digital integration, employability outcomes, and sustainable practices receive minimal attention. Furthermore, the effectiveness of UGC interventions like performance grants and quality assurance accreditation, along with governance reforms under federalism and strategies to lessen political interference, permit deeper investigation. Addressing these gaps through mixed-methods, multi-site, and comparative research could generate evidence-based recommendations to strengthen policy frameworks and ensure the long-term viability and equity of community campuses in Nepal's higher education sector.

Methods of data collection and analysis

The study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive phenomenological approach. Since the aim is to explore and interpret the real experiences of campus chiefs regarding the problems and challenges of community campuses, qualitative inquiry provides the flexibility to capture in-depth perspectives. Context-specific issues, and nuanced challenges that may not emerge through quantitative tools.

A purposive sampling strategy is used to ensure representation of two accreditation-status categories that are central to the study: (1) QAA-accredited community campuses, and (2) currently in the QAA accreditation process. From the total population of 79 campuses, ten campuses ($n = 10$) are purposively selected to allow a focused, comparative, qualitative

exploration of problems and challenges as reported by campus chiefs. Selecting an equal number from each category (5 + 5) allows balanced comparison and sufficient diversity to reach thematic saturation for the two open-ended questions. I have selected five QAA-certified campuses of Gandaki Province and coded QC for accredited campuses as (QC1), (QC2), (QC3), (QC4), and (QC5). Similarly, I have selected five under QAA process campuses and coded them as (C1), (C2), (C3), (C4), and (C5). This study, while providing useful insights into the problems and challenges of community campuses in Gandaki Province, has several limitations that need to be acknowledged.

First, the research is limited to ten purposively selected campuses (five QAA-accredited and five undergoing QAA accreditation) out of the total 79 community campuses in the province. Although this selection ensures representation of both categories, it does not capture the full diversity of all campuses. Thus, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive. Second, the study is based solely on the self-reported views of campus chiefs through two open-ended questions. While campus chiefs are the most knowledgeable about institutional issues, their responses may reflect leadership perspectives more strongly than those of other stakeholders. For a more holistic understanding, the voices of faculty members, students, administrative staff, and local communities would be equally valuable. Third, the study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach without detailed quantitative analysis. This limits the ability to generalize results statistically but allows a richer and more nuanced understanding of the key themes.

The respondents are Campus Chiefs of the selected 10 campuses. They are the key informants because of their administrative role, leadership position, and comprehensive understanding of the institutional problems and challenges. Since the research is qualitative, the following tools have been employed as Open-ended Questions, and these broad open-ended questions have guided the data collection. They are as What are the problems of your campus? And what are the challenges of your campus? The researcher established prior communication with selected campuses and requested participation, and provided campus chiefs with the open-ended questions in advance. The researcher informed the respondents to respond within one week and collected the responses systematically.

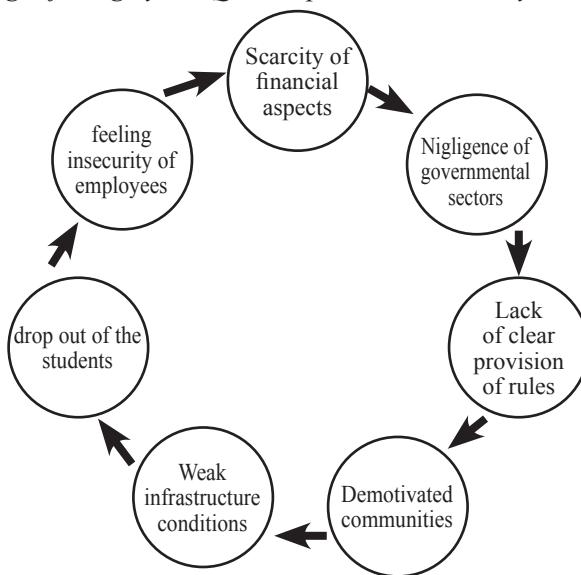
Thematic analysis is used to analyze responses. The steps are included as transcription of responses, categorization of codes into broader themes, and interpretation of themes to identify common problems and challenges. Examples of potential themes such as governance and leadership, financial sustainability, quality assurance and accreditation, infrastructure and

resources, faculty management and human resources, student enrollment and retention, and policy and external support

In keeping with its qualitative research design, the study used a descriptive phenomenological framework. While analyzing variations based on QAA (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) status as a crucial regulatory variable, this method focuses on examining and characterizing the existing experiences of campus chiefs regarding difficulties in community campuses. In the context of a developing country like Nepal, the framework can be thought of as a multi-dimensional model of institutional difficulties and quality improvement in community higher education institutions (HEIs). It found academic quality, sustainability, and campus success as results of structured internal and external elements, with QAA accreditation catalyzing advancement. To arrange the results, the study uses a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach with thematic analysis. The conceptual structure is directly derived from the experiences of campus chiefs and structures the problems, challenges, and differences between QAA-accredited and QAA-in-process community campuses.

Figure 1

Problems and challenges facing by the QAA-in process community campuses



Results and Discussions

QC1 Campus, despite its long-standing contribution to higher education, faces a number of problems and challenges that affect its overall growth and effectiveness. One of the major

problems is the low motivation of faculties in conducting research work. Alongside this, the high student dropout rate has become a significant concern, reflecting issues in student engagement, economic difficulties, and limited career linkage. Similarly, the campus struggles to attract highly qualified human resources into teaching professions, as many prefer other sectors with better opportunities and facilities. Economic constraints further limit the campus's ability to upgrade its services, maintain quality education, and support academic activities. Additionally, unhealthy competition with other academic institutions in the region diverts focus from collaboration and collective educational progress.

In terms of challenges, QC1 Campus is struggling to bridge the gap between education and employment, as many programs are not adequately aligned with labor market needs. The lack of sufficient physical infrastructure has also restricted the campus from modernizing its learning environment and expanding opportunities for students. Another key challenge lies in creating strong community ownership and trust, which is vital for the sustainability of the institution in a community-driven educational model. The campus also faces difficulties in introducing new, market-oriented subjects and programs due to financial and program limitations. Furthermore, the absence of adequate financial support for faculty members to pursue higher education and professional development remains a barrier to academic excellence. These combined problems and challenges require collective efforts from management, faculty, students, the community, and policymakers to ensure the campus's sustainable development.

QC2 Campus is struggling with multiple institutional problems, such as low enrollment, inadequate and outdated infrastructure, high dropout rates, and poor academic results. Students show limited motivation toward higher education, while both faculty and students are rarely engaged in research activities. The campus also faces shortages of financial and human resources, insufficient use of modern teaching methodologies, and very few staff capacity-building programs, all of which are worsened by rising operational costs.

The challenges of QC2 Campus are equally critical, with many students dropping out due to weak economic backgrounds and limited public support for the institution. The lack of market-driven academic programs, the shortage of highly qualified faculty with MPhil and PhD degrees, and insufficient government grants continue to hinder its growth. Furthermore, the growing trend of students opting for foreign study or employment has sharply reduced enrollment, making it increasingly difficult for the campus to sustain academic quality and ensure long-term development.

QC3 Campus faces several pressing problems that directly affect its growth and quality of education. The lack of adequate funding has limited its ability to expand infrastructure and

attract qualified faculty, leading to difficulties in retaining staff. Similarly, limited infrastructure, low enrollment, and high dropout rates reflect both academic and motivational challenges among students. The absence of sufficient research opportunities and policy support has further weakened academic innovation. On top of this, brain drain and growing competition with other institutions have put pressure on the campus to remain relevant, while curriculum rigidity and language barriers add further complexity to the teaching-learning environment.

Alongside these problems, the campus must also tackle significant challenges. Ensuring financial sustainability is critical, especially while adapting to rapid digital transformations in education. Strengthening governance and leadership is necessary to improve decision-making and resist political interventions that can hinder academic progress. Enhancing the relevance of the curriculum, building strong research capacity, and creating a favorable environment for faculty retention are equally important. To overcome these challenges, the campus needs to balance modernization with inclusivity, attract community support, and position itself as a competitive and innovative educational institution.

QC4 Campus faces significant financial constraints, heavily relying on student fees, which limit its ability to run programs, expand infrastructure, and manage extra classes. Student enrollment is declining due to dropout, migration, and socio-economic barriers. Physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sports grounds are inadequate, while digital and technology-based teaching is poorly managed. The campus also suffers from a shortage of teaching materials, a weak research culture, limited industry collaboration, outdated professional development for faculty, and insufficient student support services. Additionally, there is a lack of employment-oriented and market-relevant programs, leaving graduates less prepared for the labor market.

The campus faces the challenge of sustaining quality education amid rising competition and declining student numbers. Attracting and retaining students, launching market-oriented programs (like BBA, BCA, BIM, IT, and MA in Sociology), and maintaining financial sustainability are pressing concerns. Effective use of ICT, fostering research and innovation, and developing qualified faculty are critical for academic growth. Administrative efficiency and good governance need strengthening, along with expanding national and international collaborations. Finally, maintaining community trust and stakeholder engagement is essential for long-term development and support.

QC5 faces significant problems that impact both its academic and operational effectiveness. Limited financial resources constrain the development of physical infrastructure and academic programs, while low student enrollment and high dropout rates reflect challenges

in attracting and retaining students. The campus also struggles with limited research activities and low motivation among faculty and students, and weak governance and management further hinder its overall progress.

The campus must focus on key challenges such as sustaining financial stability and retaining qualified human resources. Adapting to digital transformation, improving academic quality and relevance, expanding programs, and building strong community ownership are crucial for long-term growth and enhancing the campus's role as a credible and effective institution of higher education.

In summary, while all campuses share common issues of finances, enrollment, and research, each has distinctive concerns: QC1 emphasizes employment linkage, QC2 focuses on student retention, QC3 on governance and curriculum, QC4 on ICT and modern programs, and QC5 on motivation and community engagement

C1 is struggling with significant financial limitations, which hinder the campus from adequately developing its academic programs, purchasing necessary resources, and maintaining its facilities. The poor physical infrastructure further compounds these difficulties, as classrooms, laboratories, and other essential facilities are not sufficiently equipped to support effective teaching and learning. These problems restrict the campus's ability to provide quality education and limit the overall student experience.

C1 also faces pressing challenges related to student engagement and academic quality. The campus struggles with low student enrollment and a high dropout rate, indicating issues in retaining students and sustaining interest in higher education. Moreover, the teaching staff faces motivational challenges, and there is a shortage of qualified teachers. This combination affects the campus's capacity to deliver high-quality education, adopt innovative teaching methods, and improve academic outcomes, thereby posing long-term challenges for its growth and reputation.

C5 faces several issues that hinder its academic quality and student success. The shortage of qualified full-time faculty, resulting from financial constraints, directly impacts teaching and learning. Many students prefer urban centers with better career and skill development opportunities, which can lead to lower retention rates. Limited morning-only operational hours restrict full coverage of the curriculum, while students' home responsibilities and comfort zones reduce their dedication and academic performance. Additionally, the rural setting limits community support and awareness of higher education, and some students' focus is further weakened by plans to seek opportunities abroad.

The campus must overcome financial and structural limitations to attract and retain qualified faculty and improve student enrollment. Expanding operational hours and enhancing curriculum delivery are necessary to ensure academic outcomes. Boosting student engagement and motivation, particularly among those considering studies abroad, is critical. Strengthening community awareness and support for higher education can help build a more conducive learning environment. Overall, the campus faces the ongoing challenge of raising educational quality while adapting to socio-economic and geographic constraints.

C4 is struggling with financial constraints, which limit its ability to expand or improve facilities. The campus also faces inadequate infrastructure, making it difficult to provide a conducive learning environment. Moreover, there is a shortage of full-time qualified staff, which affects teaching quality and overall academic performance.

The campus is experiencing a decline in student enrollment, which further strains its financial stability. Persistent financial crises make it difficult to sustain operations and development. Additionally, limited support from the local government poses a challenge in mobilizing resources and improving campus facilities.

C1 is struggling mainly with financial instability, which limits its growth and academic development. Declining enrollment and high dropout rates reflect students' lack of confidence in the current curriculum, while irregular attendance and growing attraction towards foreign employment further weaken its academic environment. The inability to offer job-oriented and practical education, along with limited adoption of modern teaching strategies, has reduced its relevance. Adding to this, insufficient public concern and weak government support have made the situation more challenging.

The campus now faces the challenge of managing sustainable financial resources, attracting and retaining more students, and regaining public trust. It needs to motivate students towards the existing curriculum while also introducing skill-based, job-oriented programs that link education with employment. Minimizing student migration and ensuring active involvement and accountability of federal, provincial, and local governments are equally important for securing the future of the campus.

C3 is confronted with a range of structural and financial problems that affect its overall functioning. The campus depends heavily on limited student fees and government grants, restricting its capacity to invest in infrastructure, academic resources, and quality education. Inadequate physical facilities and insufficient space make it challenging to accommodate growing student numbers and meet modern learning needs. Operational inefficiencies

linked to Tribhuvan University's affiliation framework further impact teaching quality and administrative effectiveness. Many students, particularly from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, face barriers in continuing their education, contributing to high dropout rates. Compounding these issues, delays or difficulties in affiliation renewal threaten the campus's credibility and the recognition of its academic programs.

The campus faces several pressing challenges that require strategic attention. Achieving sustainable financial management is essential to ensure consistent funding for operations and development. Expanding and upgrading infrastructure is crucial to provide modern learning environments and accommodate increasing student enrollment. Improving teaching quality and academic programs remains a key priority to deliver relevant and effective education. Supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds is necessary to enhance retention and academic outcomes. Finally, maintaining compliance with university standards and fulfilling affiliation requirements is vital to preserving the campus's reputation and guaranteeing continued recognition by Tribhuvan University.

The five campuses - C2, C5, C4, C1, and C3 share common challenges related to financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and shortages of qualified full-time faculty, all of which hinder the quality of teaching, academic programs, and overall student outcomes. Low student enrollment, high dropout rates, and limited student engagement are recurring issues, reflecting difficulties in retaining students and maintaining motivation. Rural locations and weak community support further exacerbate these challenges, limiting the campuses' ability to expand resources or modernize facilities.

Despite these similarities, there are notable contrasts. Some campuses, like C5, struggle with limited operational hours and students' preference for urban centers, whereas C2 and C3 face additional pressures from regulatory and affiliation processes. Aanbookhaireni Multiple Campus is particularly challenged by declining student confidence and the need for job-oriented programs, while C4 contends with weak local government support. Overall, while all five campuses are working toward meeting QAA standards, differences in location, governance, and resource availability create unique challenges that shape their approaches to improving academic quality and institutional sustainability.

QAA-accredited campuses in Gandaki Province have successfully met the Quality Assurance and Accreditation standards, which reflect their commitment to maintaining academic quality, robust governance, and adequate infrastructure. These campuses generally have better-qualified faculty, more organized teaching schedules, and stronger research

and extracurricular programs. Student retention and engagement tend to be higher, and the campuses enjoy greater recognition and trust from the local community. In contrast, campuses undergoing the QAA process are still working to meet these standards. They often face challenges such as insufficient full-time faculty, limited physical and learning resources, lower student motivation, and operational constraints, which hinder their ability to fully implement curriculum and assessment practices.

While accredited campuses benefit from a structured quality framework and improved accountability, QAA-process campuses are still in the stage of identifying gaps and implementing reforms. Accredited campuses can leverage their status to attract students and faculty, develop innovative programs, and secure community and financial support. Meanwhile, campuses in the QAA process face the dual challenge of managing existing operational issues while simultaneously aligning their systems with QAA requirements. This contrast highlights the impact of accreditation not just on internal quality measures but also on external perception, student satisfaction, and institutional growth potential.

The findings of the study revealed that community campuses in Gandaki Province, whether QAA-accredited or in the process of accreditation, face a common set of institutional problems and emerging challenges. Financial constraints are the most persistent issue, limiting the development of infrastructure, the recruitment of qualified faculty, and the implementation of modern academic programs. Most campuses struggled with inadequate physical facilities, outdated or insufficient teaching-learning resources, and poor integration of ICT in education. Low student enrollment and high dropout rates remain critical problems across campuses, largely influenced by migration, weak economic backgrounds, and poor linkage between academic programs and employment opportunities. Faculty motivation is generally low, with limited involvement in research, professional development, and innovation. Many campuses also faced shortages of full-time qualified human resources, which directly affects academic quality and program delivery. Weak governance, political interference, and limited community ownership further undermine institutional performance.

In terms of challenges, sustaining financial stability, improving academic quality, and meeting accreditation requirements are major concerns. Campuses undergoing the QAA process are still struggling to align their systems with quality standards, while accredited campuses face the challenge of maintaining and enhancing the standards they have achieved. Expanding market-oriented and employment-focused programs, introducing digital and research-based learning practices, and retaining students emerge as pressing needs for long-

term sustainability. Additionally, improving governance, strengthening leadership, promoting community trust, and appealing for external support are critical for both categories of campuses. While accredited campuses show comparatively better organization, recognition, and resource management, those in the QAA process are still in transition, balancing institutional reform with persistent operational limitations. Overall, the findings indicate that despite contextual differences, the core issues of financial instability, infrastructure gaps, human resource shortages, and deteriorating enrolments. The campuses should promote future research on challenges and comparative studies between accredited and non-accredited institutions, and include perspectives of students and faculty, and a weak research culture should be shared across institutions and demand strategic, collaborative intervention.

Conclusions

The study recommended that community campuses receive dedicated funding from provincial and local governments to ensure financial sustainability and initiate income-generating programs such as short courses, consultancy services, and facility rentals. Campuses were advised to collaborate with local stakeholders, NGOs, and private partners to mobilize additional resources and recruit sufficient full-time faculty to reduce reliance on temporary staff. Regular professional development programs on ICT, research, pedagogy, and classroom management were suggested, alongside incentive schemes and career progression mechanisms to retain qualified staff. Infrastructure development, including well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and student support centers, was emphasized, complemented by expanded digital facilities such as Wi-Fi, e-libraries, and educational management systems. Programs were recommended to be modernized to meet local needs and labor market demands, while research cells with mini-grants were proposed to encourage faculty and student research. Quality assurance mechanisms, internal assessments, academic audits, and feedback systems were advised, along with outreach programs and scholarships to improve access, retention, and employability, particularly for marginalized communities. Flexible learning options, strengthened governance through skilled Institutional Management Committees, transparent financial management, and participatory decision-making processes were highlighted. Strategic planning, QAA accreditation, and sharing of best practices from high-performing institutions were encouraged to enhance institutional credibility. Campuses were advised to actively engage alumni, local governments, and communities through social audits, public consultations, and resource mobilization campaigns. Finally, provincial authorities were

recommended to provide fiscal incentives and policy support, while campuses implemented regular monitoring and evaluation and pursued national and international partnerships to ensure sustained growth, quality improvement, and community-centered development.

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