

Students' Attitude Toward Pursuance of Higher Education in Abroad Study: A Study Among Grade 12 Students in Pokhara

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ABSTRACT

This article, 'Students' Attitude toward Pursuance of Higher Education in Abroad Study: A Study among Grade 12 Students in Pokhara' is prepared by investigating the pertinent reasons for motivating students going abroad for higher education after completing grade twelve in Nepal. This research is guided by the objectives to study grade 12 students' views about going abroad for higher education and to explore the migration trends in the recent years in the context of Nepal. Field visit, informal interview and the questionnaire are the major research tools for data collection. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods are used to process the received data and they are presented in the tables, charts, graphs, etc. The final data are analyzed both in numerical and theoretical interpretations. The results indicate that a large number of students are willing to go abroad for education or for job purposes whereas some students think about continuing their study here in Nepal after completing grade 12. Only one third students do not have a concrete plan for going abroad currently. Similarly, more than half of the students have a plan to go abroad in future once in their life for education which is a challenging question for our education system in Nepal and it is recommended to bring the applicable policy and create the ample opportunities for students to keep them back in the country.

Keywords: *Higher study, abroad, internationalization, better life, brain drain*

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INTRODUCTION

The recent trend of students' flow of going abroad is increasing day by day specifying the reasons that education is the main purpose. However, the reality is always hidden behind the narrow walls which can be revealed out once we study the cases in the depth. In the context of Nepal the students who pass the twelfth grade can join the University for studying Bachelor Degree either in Nepal or across the globe of their choice.

Students have seen the senior brothers and sisters lurking to the abroad and this becomes the matter of pride to the parents which is highly influential to the recently pass out students of grade twelve. After 12th grade students have to decide either to join the Bachelor Degree in Nepal or get enrollment to the foreign university for higher education. They can apply in the foreign universities once they pass Secondary Level Education (Grade 12) which is the exam conducted by National Examination Board of Nepal.

Grade 12 graduates tend to decide whether to stay in the own country or find the alternative depending on various aspects like the future of the student, possibility of job availability, payment for the labor, etc. One significant factor is the perception of better educational quality and outcomes abroad. Students believe that academic institutions in the countries like the US, the UK, Canada and Australia offer superior education and better career prospects. This belief is particularly strong among Nepali students. Ong. 1991 said "Education and employment are generally considered to be the main factors that motivate people to move to the cities."

The COVID -19 pandemic has also reshaped students' mobility. During the pandemic, the number of Nepali students going abroad halved, but there has been a significant increase in 2022 compared to previous years (Yang, Shen, & Xu, 2022). According to the data given by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, total 110,217 students obtained No Objection Letters (NOCs) to study in the international campuses in abroad. Most of the students left for Australia with 33,991 NOCs which were issued to the students going to join the various courses in abroad. According to the data from government body that 21,544 students obtained NOCs to study in Canada, whereas 21,658 wished to study in Japan. As 10,527 students wanted to study in the UK. According to the ministry, 3,046 students obtained NOC letters to study in Korea. (MOEST 2022)

Likewise, total 112256 students received NOCs in the year 2080/81 B.S. fiscal year. The majority of students 34731 received no objection letters for Japan while second position is taken by Canada with total 15982 students. Likewise the third preference is Australia with 14372 students which is followed by the UK with 13339 students. 11261 NOCs were issued

for The USA and a large number of students followed that in South Korea with 6889 students. India, UAE, Denmark, Finland, France and New Zealand are the major priorities for students while the NOCs were issued for total 66 countries according to the data given by MOEST 2024.

The major driving factor for us to conduct this research is that around two decades ago there used to be very few friends in our circle who used to think about going abroad for higher education because there were preoccupied concepts of living a life in the own country along with own parents. However, the situation has changed a lot in the recent two decades. A large number of students are migrating to abroad day by day either for education or for job provisions. The major source of this research is informal talk among our friend's circle about this devastating brain drain in the context of Nepal that this problem is going on for last two decades to till date, and it can be speculated it will continue till another few decades or more.

Student migration is the movement of students who study outside their country of birth or citizenship for a period of 12 months or more (Spring, 2009). The combination of perceived higher quality education, better career opportunities, financial considerations and the pandemic's impact are major factors influencing students' decision to pursue higher education abroad. International student mobility refers to students studying in a foreign country (Guruz, 2008). According to Castler and Miller (2003), by the last 1980's, there were 66,000 foreign students in the USA, of whom nearly half came from Asia.

Many Nepalese colleges are struggling due to a large number of students leaving for foreign countries. Admissions have dropped to the lowest levels ever recorded. Tribhuvan University, Nepal's oldest university, has proposed merging its affiliated colleges because of the decline in student enrollment. Some colleges have even closed down specific courses because they can't afford to pay salaries and cover other costs. Additionally, some universities are operating with financial assistance from loans. Nepal has a dependable education system that means parents hope for a better future for their kids but it requires a solid plan from the government side. This can help prevent young people from leaving the country, even though there are many challenges and stresses the government needs to deal with.

The expectation of lifting the economic status through 'earning while learning', getting motivated from one's society, search for practical and applicable education abroad, students' mind-set and global experience, social network with the migrated friends, hopelessness and frustration and lack of faith in conditional improvements at in the home country push the Nepali students out (Upadhyay et al. 2013). This study shows that the nation's political instability,

social injustice, insecurity and uncertainty were the major push factors for Nepali students.

World-systems theory or core-periphery theory is a fundamental unit of analysis for social evolution. Also known as world-systems analysis or the world-systems perspective, it is a multidisciplinary, macro scale approach to world history and social change. In contrast to the nation state, which for decades was the dominant unit of analysis, the main idea behind world-systems theory (WST) is that it takes up a more inclusive unit of analysis, the “world system,” which reflects a particular understanding of history and a set of questions people pose related to it (Chase-Dunn & Grimes 1995). Thus, Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory continues to be a significant theoretical perspective for understanding global economic systems and the persistent disparities among nations. This theory is relevant on discussing the issues of foreign study with the context of Nepal and other underdeveloped countries. This connects to our study on accessing the grade 12 students’ views about going abroad for higher education because it shows why people move to other countries. The respondents hail from the western part of the country from the city called Pokhara. This research is analyzed on the basis of Wallerstein’ World System Theory.

DATA AND METHODS

The population are selected by the random sampling and taken six secondary schools of Kaski district located in Pokhara valley. The researchers visited the field of study area of allocated six secondary schools, conducted informal interview and collected total 228 filled up questionnaire forms from students who were the current students in science course as their major subject. Field visit, questionnaire and interview were the major research instruments for data collection. The primary data were received from the field visit, questionnaire, interview and secondary data were received from the concerned schools and college records.

This research paper presents the data regarding the responses given by the grade 12 students who are currently studying in Science Stream at secondary schools in Pokhara. According to the data, a large number of students are migrating to the abroad countries every year in pursuit of obtaining higher education after completing grade 12 here in Nepal. The respondents of this research were total 228 grade 12 students from Pokhara. In this data collection process the researchers interacted with the students studying in grade 12 majoring in science stream. Students were given the questionnaire list and they took enough time to fill

up the information they wished to pass on.

The respondents were briefly instructed the purpose of collecting this information and how to fill up the questionnaire form but they were not given any hints or clues to affect their answers regarding the research issues. In this process some of the students were found filling up the questionnaire forms themselves but few students were discussing with the friends on exchange of ideas and to get support for filling their forms. The respondents were clearly notified that they were not required to mention their name or gender if they wanted to keep it secret. The privacy of their identity are fully maintained as per the research rule. Students' responses are mentioned in the tables followed by the interpretation on each charts and diagrams as found according to the research. Both the open ended and close ended questions were asked to check the validity about respondents' exact views for going abroad. This research incorporates both the qualitative as well as quantitative interpretations techniques for analysis. The data are presented in the tables, graphs, pie-charts, line graphs, etc. Ethical consideration was received from the respondents and concerned authorities to publish the received data in this research paper.

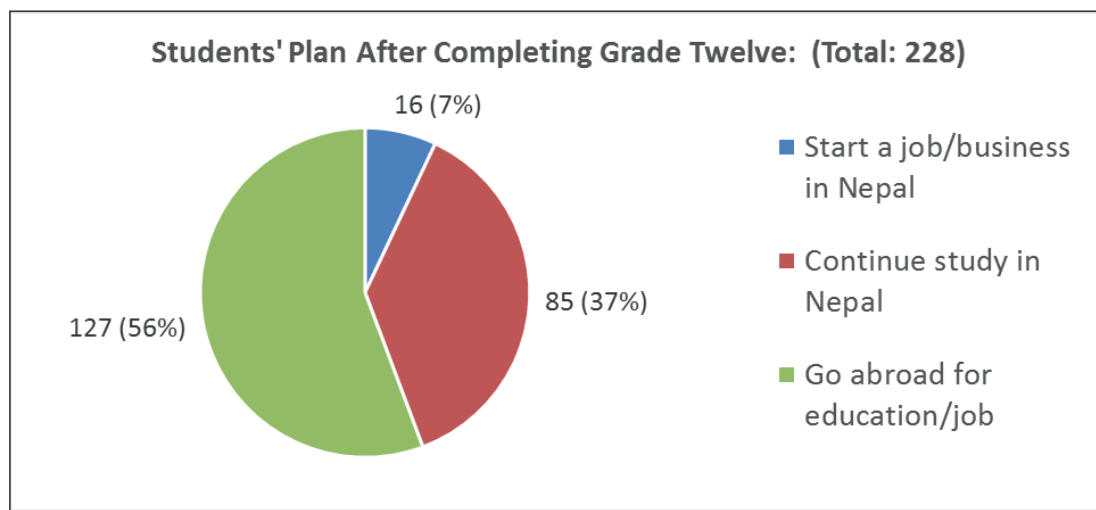
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In field visit and informal interview, the respondents were asked about their future plan once they complete grade 12 in Nepal. They informally answered that most of them do have a keen interest to fly abroad for higher study in abroad. Some of they even told their family and friend circle real story how the seniors are earning money in abroad and their life is well set up. The researchers provided them a questionnaire list to fill up the form which included various open and close ended questions. One of the major questions asked was: What is your plan after you complete Grade 12 in Nepal?

Total 228 students were the respondents of this research. It is clear that more than half number of students wish to go abroad for education or job whereas only 85 students thought about continuing their study here in Nepal. Surprisingly, only 16 students have a clear plan to start a job/business in Nepal after completing their +2.

Figure 1

Students' Plan after Completing Grade Twelve (Total: 228)



The pie chart reveals that out of total students 228, more than half percentage (56%) of students wished to go abroad for education or for job purposes whereas only 37% students think about continuing their study here in Nepal. Surprisingly only 7% students do have a plan to start a job/business in Nepal after completing their +2. It shows that a large number of students have already developed their mindset of going abroad for higher education. One of the students responded in such words: “I don’t see any reason to stay here. No job opportunities, no good salary, nepotism, favoritism prevails. I have no one.” Another student responded: “Yes, I have thought about going abroad for higher education because of the recent trends in our community for better education, life and settlement in the abroad countries.” These responses prevail that students do have a long term plan of going abroad not only for education but also for settlement.

However, there are some students who wish to stay in Nepal and continue their education here. One of the students responded this: “It is not as easy as we think for foreign studies. First, we have to be perfect in our own country and only think for foreign studies, if we want to get more professional education.” Another student responded: “I have thought for going abroad not after twelve but for post-graduation. I would prefer abroad because it provides more facilities, more exposure and international recognition.” From the above mentioned responses it can be assumed that, the students who are willing to stay back in Nepal for studying Bachelor Degree are planning to go abroad for Master’s Degree.

The students were asked about their specific plan to go abroad for educational purpose. The question which was asked was: Have you thought about going abroad for education? The

students had to answer objectively whether ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Here students responded that they have firm plan to go abroad once in their life may be for Bachelor Degree or Master Degree or for PhD. This data contrast with the data in figure one because in figure one 56% students have a plan to go abroad right after grade 12 and that number has increased in table 2 that 69 % students have a plan to go abroad in future.

Table 1

Students’ Plan about Going Abroad for Educational Purposes in Future

Responses	Numbers	Percent
Yes, I have a plan to go abroad for my education	158	69.0
No, I don’t have any plan to go abroad for education	70	31.0
Total	228	100.0

The above given table presents the number of students having a plan to go abroad for education in future or in some point of life representing the views of grade 12 students studying in various campuses of Pokhara valley. Their response ‘Yes’ is 69% which is more than the two folds of the total number of 228. Whereas only 31% students do have a concrete plan of not going to abroad currently but some students have responded they are planning to go abroad after completing Bachelor’s Degree. These responses seem valid as 56% of students are willing to go abroad just after completing +2 from the figure 1 and here 69% of students are having a rough plan of going abroad once in a life that might be either after twelfth grade or Bachelor’s Degree. Thus, we can imagine that how the condition of our country Nepal would be if this number continues every year.

The students were asked to mention their reasons of going abroad when they ticked ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. The internalization of Nepali students caused the problem of brain drain in the country. This can be verified by the responses given by them here. Some sample qualitative responses filled up by the students are as follows: The participants are indicated with the word ‘Participant 1’ followed by the serial number as ‘P1’.

P1 reported that he/she has thought about going abroad countries for education to learn more and gain more knowledge, experience and also for better opportunities

P2 said that he/she has thought about going abroad for education because of the recent trends in our community for better education, life and settlement in the abroad countries.

P3 answered by saying ‘Yes’, and said, “Looking at the current situation I don’t see the future of studying in Nepal. Education system of Nepal is not so much practical based.”

P4 had responded that since his/her childhood, he/her had always dreamed of supporting

and being the backbone of own country as a professional and skilled manpower in order to aid in the development of his/her country Nepal.

P5 answered as having no plan to go abroad because he/she wants to develop own country.

Thus, the large number of students are carrying pre-set up mindset to go a abroad for higher education showing various direct and indirect reasons like better opportunities, knowledge and settlement. The students who wanted to stay back in Nepal have mentioned that it's their inner desire since childhood to stay in own country.

The students were asked to mention the countries of their preference if they apply for abroad study and responses are as follows:

Table 2

List of Countries that Students Wish to Go Abroad for Higher Education

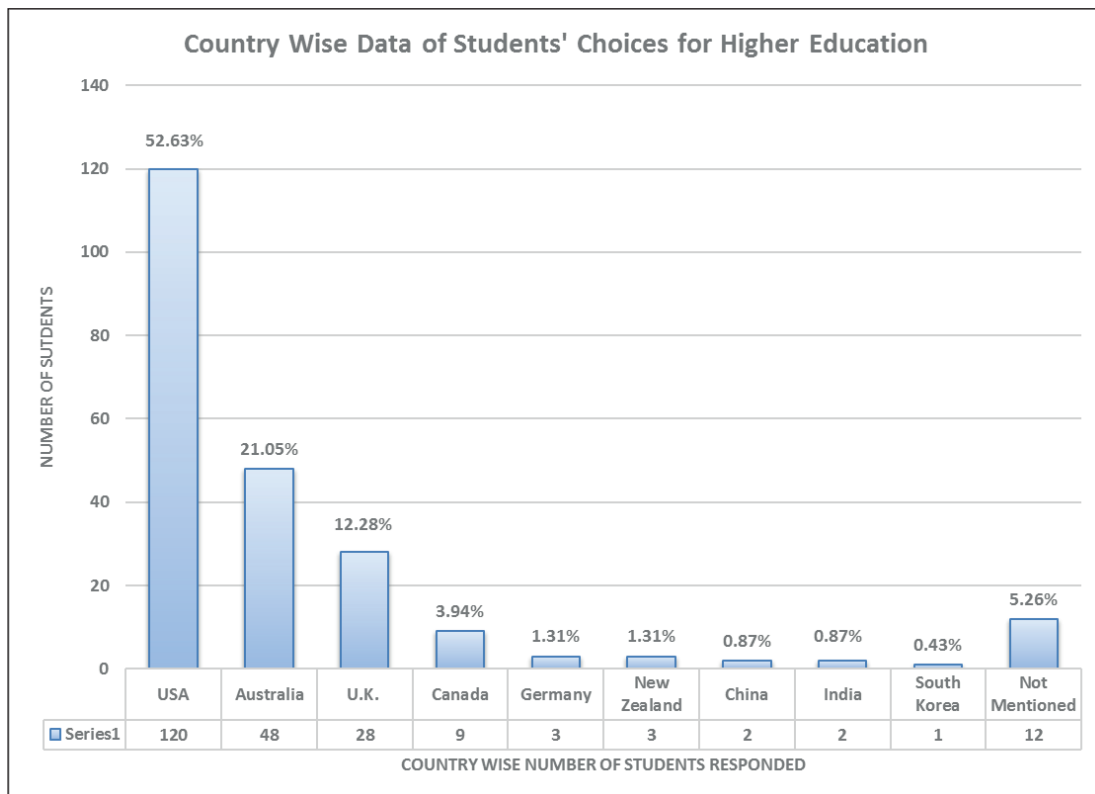
Destination Country After Grade 12	Number of Respondents	Percentage
United States of America (USA)	120	52.63
Australia	48	21.05
United Kingdom (U.K.)	28	12.28
Canada	9	3.94
Germany	3	1.31
New Zealand	3	1.31
China	2	0.87
India	2	0.87
South Korea	1	0.43
Not mentioned	12	5.26
Total respondents	228	100.0

The above table exhibits number of students wishing to migrate to various countries for the purpose of higher education when they complete twelfth grade. It shows that the highest number of students are planning to go to the USA for studying which is 120 in number out of 228. The second and third preferred destinations are Australia and the UK with 48 and 28 students respectively. Nine students wanted to go Canada which could hold the fourth preferred destination. Other destinations are Germany, New Zealand, China, India and South Korea. However, so many Nepali students are migrating to Japan every year, no students wanted to go Japan as it requires Japanese language proficiency which is not a piece of cake for the students studying in 12th standard. One of the main reasons for choosing the above given countries can

be English language requirement that modern students possess good English skills.

Figure 2

Students' Preference to Migrate to Various Countries for Higher Education



The data show the percentage of students' preference for higher education to various countries. The USA holds 52.63% of preference which is about more than half of the total students are targeting America as their first priority for education. A huge number of students (21.05%) chose Australia as their education destination. UK and Canada also hold the recognized destination preference for students with 12.28 % and 3.94% respectively. Some of the other countries like Germany, China, India, New Zealand, South Korea are also mentioned by few students as their priority. Some of the responses given by the students are as follows:

The Participants provided the reasons for preferring specific country of their choices which are mentioned below as Participants followed by the numbers.

P1 preferred to go to the USA because of the various reasons like quality education, job availability, use of technology, modern teaching learning activities and many more.

P2 chose Australia as his/her top priority because his/her brother resides in Australia.

On top of it, it is well known for its academic excellence, financial aid and personal growth.

P3 likes to study in the UK since his/her relatives are living there and it will be easy for him/her to adjust in that environment. Furthermore, we get practical knowledge which surely helps him/her getting good job and enhance the life.

P4 wanted to study in South Korea because it is easy to get visa there and the university fee is very cheap compared to other countries. But has a plan to study in the USA when he/she finishes Bachelor level in South Korea.

From the above mentioned responses we can derive some conclusion like most of the students have a plan to go abroad for higher and quality education and for good future. Some students even think that they can learn the work from abroad and return to own country to explore the opportunities. Our system is unable to recognize the skills of a person and moreover the opportunities are lacking. Many Nepalese students are going abroad for higher education because they are tired of witnessing the political instability has negative impacts on education section. In abroad we can get the job as soon as we finish our education. Practical knowledge can be gained and many productive & qualitative experiences can be taken to implement our obtained knowledge.

Students receive part time jobs which aids in paying the fees of universities on their own. After completing the education as compared to current situation of Nepal, abroad has more job opportunities and the education system in abroad is more practical based then theoretical. As well as students see many health facilities too. Once the students complete their education, they get job opportunities which helps to progress their economic condition. At the current situation at Nepal many youngsters tend to listen to others where they all recommend youngsters to go abroad for higher education.

In the response of the question: 'Why do you think that many Nepalese students are going abroad for higher education?' the students provided mixed responses which are interpreted and provided here. The first respondent thinks that in abroad people will get the chance to acquire many experiences with the works and high skills as well as education which he/she could use to explore his/her knowledge and thoughts. The second respondent is certain about getting the various employment and education opportunities that attract Nepalese students go abroad. It also may be due to poverty, lack of employment opportunities, corruption and political instability that forces Nepalese youth to choose abroad for study. The third respondent sees a trend of studying abroad can be attributive to several reasons, including the desire for higher quality education, greater employment opportunities and exposure. The limited seats for

scholarship, political instability and limited access to quality education are the major reasons for going abroad. Finally the fourth respondent said that students don't see a good future in Nepal and feel neglected by the government.

Likewise, students go abroad for strengthening their financial conditions. There is no certainty to get scholarship in Nepal and people cannot afford the education but paying some money they can easily go abroad and work hard which provides them good income. Many Nepalese students are going abroad for higher education due to more available subjects, flexible time schedule, experienced teachers, course completion in allocated time, no disturbances due to political reasons, valuable degree which is given more priority in market, etc. Along with these, going abroad opens the gate for green card, PR which ensures permanent residency and a life there which everyone wants. The level of education is better in abroad, courses are reused and updated. The degrees are internationally recognized.

CONCLUSION

It is certainly the various employment and education opportunities that attract Nepalese students go abroad. It also may be due to poverty, lack of employment opportunities, corruption and political instability that forces Nepalese youth to choose abroad for study. To minimize this number, students have recommended the concerned authority to provide more scholarship opportunities, employ qualified and experienced teachers, make the universities free of politics, complete courses in allocated time, provide newer and more subject and options for students to choose their own subjects and time to study instead of being fixed by universities. This kind of large outflow of students to foreign countries has mainly hampered the colleges here in Nepal. The admissions are very low that even in the recognized university in Nepal, Tribhuvan University has called for a merger of its affiliate colleges due to low number of students' admissions. There are enough colleges which have phased out certain courses, being unable to pay salaries and cover other expenses for running the programs with the few number of students.

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