

NEPAL

Country Summary of Higher Education

Background:

Historical background and recent expansion: The establishment of Tri-Chandra College in 1918, in the public sector, marks the beginning of modern higher education in Nepal. After the advent of democracy in 1951, a number of new colleges (public as well as community) were opened. By 1965 there were 5 public colleges with total enrolment 5,000 and 51 community colleges with a total enrolment of 10,000. The first university in Nepal, Tribhuvan University (TU), was established in 1958. In 1971, all community colleges were nationalized and became part of TU. At present there are six universities¹. The share of private sector, including community (commonly know as public) colleges, in tertiary is around 40%. The funding to all universities are channeled through the University Grants Commission (UGC) (BPKIHS receives grants from the Ministry of Health). There are about 600 campuses in Nepal. About 253,889 students were enrolled in these colleges in 2005/06, of which. 91% were in TU.

Tertiary education system: The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) is responsible for the education sector in Nepal. But BPKIHS, NAMS report to the Ministry of Health (MOH). Funding and monitoring of higher education is the responsibility of University Grants Commission. Universities in Nepal enjoy significant autonomy. Academic programs of bachelor's degree and above are regarded as higher education in Nepal. However, universities continue to offer proficiency certificate level (PCL) - programs equivalent to higher secondary education (grades 11 and 12). Duration of bachelor's program is 3 to 5 years and masters level – 2 years. Universities have constituent and affiliated campuses (colleges). Constituent campuses receive public funding and universities oversee their academic, administrative and financial management. Affiliated campuses do not receive public funding and universities are responsible only for supervision of their academic programs and examinations. In addition to public and private, there are some campuses funded and managed by the communities. Community colleges receive very small amount of financial support for capital costs from the government through the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Quality assurance system: The existing organizational systems looking after the quality of higher education institutions in Nepal are; i) UGC; ii) universities / academies / partially decentralized institutions and programs; iii) six professional councils; and iv) professional societies. Recently, a quality assurance and accreditation council (QAAC) has been established in UGC to look at the issues of quality assurance and accreditation in the country.

Strategic Plan for Tertiary Education: Nepal has been preparing strategic vision for the education sector, including higher education through national commissions. TU has developed its 20 years strategic vision in 2000. Other universities also have developed strategic plans.

Ongoing and planned policy reforms: These are: i) decentralization within universities, particularly in TU. TU has adopted Autonomous Institute / Campus Rules in 2006; ii) formula-based funding for universities; iii) phase out PCL from universities; and iv) introduction of means tested student financial assistance program which will allow meritorious and needy students from the bottom welfare quintiles could be benefited.

¹ TU, Sanskrit University (SU), Kathmandu University (KU), Purbanchal Univeristy (PURU) and Pokhara University (POKU), Lumbini Buddha University, and two autonomous institution with degree granting authority – BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS) and Nepal Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS).

Summary Data Tables:

Table 1: Higher Education in Nepal: Enrollment, Institutions and Expenditure

Enrollment*	Total Enrollment	253,886
	Girls Enrollment	35%
	Community Colleges	31%
	Private colleges	9%
Total Public Expenditure on Education**	% of GDP	3.81%
	% of Govt. Budget	16.80%
Total Public Expenditure on Higher Education	% of GDP	0.4%
Number of Higher Education Institutions	Universities	6
	Institutions	2
	Colleges	567
	Total	575

* Academic Year 2005/06; ** FY2007/08

Table 2: Region-wise pass % in TU constituent and affiliated colleges

College type	Eastern	Central	Valley	Western	Mid-Western	Far-Western
Constituent	26	32	33	31	28	33
Affiliated UGC grant rec.	25	36	42	28	26	28

Issues:

Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access is limited with the gross enrolment ratio of about 6%.
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bottom two quintiles' share in HE is less than 2%. Currently higher education enrolment is expanding primarily in the private sector. This is likely to restrict even more the access to higher education for poor segments of the population.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barring a few private and public institutions, the quality of education is poor. The quality assurance and accreditation system is not in place except for a rudimentary system in place in professional education like engineering and medicine.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration between employers and academic institutions is weak, and so is the R&D in these institutions. As result, barring few premiere institutions the relevance of higher education to the job market needs is poor.
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barring a few, public institutions are not sustainable financially. Government spending in higher education is low – about 7% of public expenditures in education.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although Nepal has initiated the process of decentralization as a means of improving governance, overall the governance of public higher education is still weak.