

# HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMIC STANDARD IN NEPAL

*A Comparative study on Public and Private Higher  
Education Institutions of Tribhuvan University*

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## **ABSTRACT**

A comparative study is carried out in Tribhuvan University in order to examine the academic standard of Nepalese higher education. The reason behind selection of TU is that it is only university which holds around ninety percent of higher education students in Nepal. Moreover TU is multi-campus University having both public and private campuses throughout the country.

The main objective of the study is to compare academic standard of public and private campuses of chosen University. The study is guided by three research questions. Based upon the research question, this study aims to define academic standard and its understanding in Nepalese prospective; the way HEIs adopting academic standard and its consequences.

The entire study is based upon qualitative study design. Semi-structured interview and secondary analysis is used as strategic tool for data collection.

This study revealed that academic standard of academic institutions is defined in relation to accreditation process in Nepal. From various criteria, this study has used few visible criteria to compare academic standard of public and private higher education institutions. These criteria are graduation rate, student enrollment in bureaucracy, student engagement in professional field, student involvement in research work and; physical facility and quality human resources.

Analysis of collected information revealed that graduation rate of Nepalese higher education is not enthusiastic. More than 50% of student appeared in annual examination become fail. Graduation rate of the public institutions is even less. Failure rate of students more than 50% certainly arises question mark in the academic standard of HEIs of Nepal. Similarly student involvement in professional field, engagement in bureaucracy, student involvement in research work, physical facility and quality human resources are also not satisfactory in Nepalese context. On these criteria public campus are a bit better but status of private campus is worrisome. It is found that private campus has invested their resources only to make high graduation rate neglecting other factors influencing student achievement and outcome.

Finally, it is concluded that Nepalese higher education has to go through big reform in order to increase academic standard. Private institutions has to look academic standard with wide view as their academic standard is even more bothersome compared to public HEIs.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AFU	Agriculture and Forestry University
COE	Control of Examinations
DMC	Damak Multiple Campus
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FWU	Far-Western University
FY	Fiscal year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEI	Higher Education Institute
ICT	Information Communication Technology
KMC	Kailali Multiple Campus
LMC	Lumbini Multiple Campus
LOI	Letter of Intent
MBC	Motilal Bahumukhi Campus
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MWU	Mid-Western University
NC	Nawa-Nepal College
NESP	National Educational System Plan
NOMA	Norwegian Medicines Agency
NUFU	The Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education
PRT	Peer Review Team
PSC	Public Service Commission



RIA	Reliance International Academy
SHEP	Second Higher Education Project
TU	Tribhuvan University
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dolor

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

Higher education quality and need of effective quality assurance mechanism is highly relevant topic in the recent academic arena. Consequently, various regulatory bodies are set up to underpin measures of quality such as perfection, excellence, value for money, fitness for & of purpose and transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993). This is driven by some regulatory techniques (Blackmur 2007, 31-33) such as minimum academic standard, rewards/penalties based on performance, hazard/warning based on complain or analysis against criteria & other risk communication strategies, restriction of entry to the system and other regulatory instruments like information gathering & processing, consumer participation in governance, authority exercise over matter of attributes and standard.

In the recent years, the worldwide massification of higher education forced knowledge economy to move towards learning, creative and open economy (peters 2010, 67). It changed the traditional nexus between higher education and states, and as a result higher education has been considered as a commodity and engine of economic growth. It further increased the importance of higher education which paved way to policy makers to widen the boundary of higher education through national strategy. Consequently, within the last few decades it is seen that higher education has significant private share globally. History of most of the countries from Latin America and East Asia to emerging economy such as South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia depicts increased enrollment in higher education through private participation (Agarwal, 2007: 60).

Leaving behind exception of Nordic country like Finland, other European countries like UK, Germany and France have also private share in higher education. South Asian country like Nepal also lies in the latter row. Accordingly, there has been rapid quantitative development of higher education all over. However, privatization and thus the quantitative development of higher education groomed difficulties in maintaining quality and integrity in absence of strong regulatory mechanism in the developing world. As a response, Korean government tightly

regulated two steps liberalization approach to make higher education more competitive and accountable (Agarwal & Kim, as cited in Agarwal 2007: 61). Of all the quality issues in relation to public and private higher education, the issue of academic standard is a dominated one. Academic standard denotes the level of academic achievement attained by higher education graduates, its maintenance and improvement (Dill 2007:1). According to Brennan et al (as cited in Dill 2007), academic standard is consistent with the emerging focus of higher education policies on student learning outcomes which is reflected in specific levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that student achieve as a consequences of their engagement in a particular education program.

Maintaining academic standard has always been a challenging issue for policy makers in Nepal. Since 1979/80 TU started providing affiliation to private colleges to conduct various programs at different levels (TU, 2015). This effort in the beginning acted as a catalyst to bring awareness and education in the Nepalese society. At the same time enrollment rate rocketed without expansion and improvement of adequate classroom, library, laboratory, academic equipment, water supply/sanitation, manpower and other important facilities (UNESCO, 2008).

HERP (2014) writes that existing Nepalese curricula primarily focus on examinations which do not foster communication and problem solving skills among students. There is the practice of such programs which have not been revised for quality and relevance for years now. Neither there is proper planning for infrastructure development, nor is utmost care given for the safety of majority of infrastructures constructed in the past. All the above factors and use of substandard materials have caused poor teaching learning environment yielding high failure rate at all level. This has impacted the standard of education negatively (CEDA, 2007: 42).

Nepal witnessed massive privatization since 1990 which gave birth to varieties of higher education institutions and programs in large scale. It deteriorated the quality of higher education. As such, University Grant Commission Nepal was established in 1993 that highlights the need and demand for accreditation to meet the statutory requirement, satisfy professional obligation and meet stakeholders' participation. Introduction of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) under Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) in the year 2007 is considered as important aspect of Nepalese higher education reform (UGC, 2012: 1-3). Following this, QAAC has established system of awarding conditional decision of accreditation

(yes or no) based upon pre-determined minimal criteria for a specific period of the time. These minimal criteria are equivalent to minimum academic standard. Moreover accreditation process accomplished through process of peer review using defined criteria/benchmarks derived from generic and discipline related. However, academic standard is mainly evaluated through generic criteria as it is equally applicable to all universities colleges and programs. The eight generic criteria prescribed by UGC (2012: 09) are:

- Policy and procedures
- Curricular aspects
- Teaching-learning and evaluation
- Research, consultancy and extension
- Infrastructure and learning resources
- Student support and guidance
- Information system
- Public information

QAAC has 17 members including UGC chairman, member secretary, QAA division director, representative of the professional councils, representatives of the universities, ministry of education and student unions, dean and department heads, prominent professors (UGC, 2012). Now this committee is fully functioning to maintain academic standard and accredit quality of higher education.

Though late, initiation has been taken to upgrade the standard of Nepalese higher education. But the tragedy is financial management has always been a big challenge. Statistics show that of the total budget government allocated 15.65 % in education in FY2013/14, which is less by 0.35% and 1.35% compared to FY2012/13 and FY2011/12 respectively (MOE, 2014: 04). While in FY2014/15, out of total budget 86.03 billion is allocated in the overall education sector, of which higher education shares 6.52 billion. This is only 7.57% of the total education budget of the country (MOF, 2014: 37-38). This indicates national budget share in the education is decreasing each year and higher education has not been kept in the national priority.

UGC is the authorized body to distribute government funding to the universities and community campuses in form of operational and developmental cost. In the FY2012/13 UGC received 631.17 million rupees from government sources and earned 2.53 million rupees from

miscellaneous sources. Out of this total budget of 633.70 million rupees administrative expense was 1.19 million rupees and same amount of budget was invested for the quality improvement in the higher education. This accounts around 0.187% of the total expenditure of UGC. Of the total quality improvement fund, 62.18% was spent for study visit and only 37.81% was accorded for research, workshop and seminars, fellowships and trainings (UGC, 2014: 20-26).

As Zechalin (2010: 256) mentioned in the strategic planning of higher education, “higher education institutions around world have been struggling under two types of pressure: first is the financial, as the provision of public fund is decreasing the second refers to the political and social demands on higher education which has been increasing.” Nepal is also experiencing similar problems. The recent peace process and political movement of the nation raised awareness to each and every group of society which increased the social demand of higher education. As a response, numbers of Higher Education Institutions increased to address hiked student enrollment. But improper financial arrangement impacted academic standard and quality of teaching and research on higher education adversely.

First, assuring academic standard practice in Nepal is in pragmatic stage. It has very short history. On the other hand, financial constrain is a prominent problem and leaves remarkable effect on teaching-learning, research, manpower planning and project development. Most of the budget allocated by the government goes to the administrative expense like salary and allowance, staff management and manpower development. Only handful of budget left out of these expenses is supplied to academic development which is like a drop in the ocean. So, most of the higher education programs are only paper-planned. They are not implemented for years due to the budget shortfall. It leaves terrible impact on quality and academic standard of higher education.

As such, I am keenly interested to have comparative study on academic standard of private and public HEIs of Nepal. Although there are six full-fledged public universities, three private and four deemed universities but Tribhuvan University is only the university which bears both public and private higher education institutions in the country. It is the multi-campus University which runs program through 60 constituent campuses, 38 central departments and 1053 private affiliated colleges spread all over the country (TU, 2015). The recent statistics of the TU (2015) shows that in the current academic session 2014/15 total numbers of students enrolled into various programs is 4, 05,341. Out of which the 63.45% of students enrolled in the private

affiliated campuses and rest are enrolled into constituent campus and departments. So, this comparative study is employed in the TU, which represents the academic standard of Nepalese higher education institutions.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) under University Grant Commission (UGC) is the supreme body to plan and implement overall quality related matters in the Nepalese higher education. This study therefore is carried out on the periphery of the QAAC and seeks to answer the following research question.

1. What is higher education academic standard? And how it is understood in Nepal?
2. How public and private HEIs are adopting to current academic standard in Nepal?
3. What are the positive and negative consequences of the ways the public and private HEIs adopt to academic standard?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This is the comparative study among public and affiliated (private) campuses of Tribhuvan University. The main objective of this study is to compare the academic standard of public and private campuses of the Tribhuvan University.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Although various researches and studies about academic quality are conducted in different parts of the globe, quality assurance practice in Nepal is new phenomenon as formal monitoring body was established few years back in 2007. Among various perspectives of academic quality, research about academic standard is even more lacking. In such situation, this research provides insight and understanding of overall academic standard of higher education institutions. The result yielded from this research may also be basis for further studies to the Nepalese higher education arena. More importantly, this research is expected to benefit concerned authorities of Nepalese higher education to plan and implement higher education policies and improve different aspects of academic standard of university education.

## **1.5 Limitation of the Study**

As mentioned earlier, this is the comparative study between public and private campuses of the Tribhuvan University. Essential primary and secondary data related to academic standard are limited to QAAC authorities of the UGC. Although the result reflects the situation of Nepalese higher education but this research has not covered the academic standard of other private universities of Nepal. Moreover, to make the research controlled and manageable, this study has focused only QAAC.

## **1.6 Terminologies**

Accreditation:

Accreditation is the process by which authorized body evaluates the quality of the higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational program in order to formally recognize it as having met some predetermined minimal criteria or standard (UGC, 2012)

Higher Education:

Education continues to higher secondary level (class 11/12) provided from Universities, deemed universities and affiliated campuses. In this study higher education refers to education that is acquired from Tribhuvan University.

Higher education institutions:

Academic institutions providing higher education, they include universities, deemed universities and affiliated campuses. In this study higher education institution refers to public and private colleges of Tribhuvan University.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

Activity of the research work from beginning until accomplishment is presented in an organized form. It is the sequential representation of activity and procedure of the study which includes chapters, and topics and sub-topics including in it. I have organized this study into the following chapters.

## Chapter one: Introduction

Illustrates introductory information inside the subtopics background of the study, research questions, objective of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, terminologies respectively and ends with organization of the study.

## Chapter two: Baseline information on Nepalese higher education

This chapter starts with brief overview of Nepal and the main portion contains the higher education system of Nepal.

## Chapter three: Review of the related literature

Chapter three is the main body of this research work. This chapter includes literature review of higher education quality assurance. Main focus given in this section are the academic standard, accreditation, quality assurance practice of the country in relation to the global scenario and improvement vs. accountability issues.

## Chapter four: Research methodology

This chapter contains research methodology and data collection tools and technique of the research work.

## Chapter five: Result and discussion

Chapter five contains result and discussion of the research work.

## Chapter six: Conclusion

In the final chapter of the study conclusion is presented.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BASELINE INFORMATION ON NEPALESE HIGHER EDUCATION**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Tribhuvan University is the backbone of Nepalese higher education. It holds not only the history of higher education but bears major share for the prosperity and development of higher education of the country. It is full-fledged public university which accounts around ninety percent of student enrollment. It has largest student graduation rate (88.5%), largest staff organization, big physical infrastructure, many teaching hospitals, a numbers of workshops for engineers, four research centers and many affiliated academic foundations throughout the country (UGC, 2014). In this chapter the information related to higher education mostly represents the Tribhuvan University. The chapter covers information on country background, historical background, education system and steering, funding, privatization and internationalization of Nepalese higher education.

#### **2.2 Country Background**

Nepal, a land locked country enclosing the area of 147181 sq. km lies in South East Asia. To its North lies the gigantic China while it is surrounded by India in East, West and South. It is rich in cultural and traditional diversity having distinct cultural practices and rituals. There is great geographical diversity where the altitude ranges from 80m in lower Terai region to 8848m of Mt. Everest. Geographical region comprises of Terai Region (60m-305m), Hilly Region (upto 3000m) and Himalayan Region (above 3000m). This is a huge diversity found in the width of 26-32km.

Nepal is gifted with perennial rivers, enchanting lakes, snow-capped mountains, hills and cliffs, dense forests and springs emerging from glaciers. These all aid on providing enormous beauty to the country. More than 6000 rivers flow throughout the year and those rivers are also utilized to generate hydroelectricity. About 27% of total land of Nepal is covered by green forests. It is a home to wildlife and supports many ecosystems. Certain areas are conserved and 9 national parks and 3 conservational areas, 3 Wildlife reserves are formed to provide in-situ conservation to various wildlife and endangered species. Tourists are spell-bound with these natural beauties and tourism industry is flourished here.

Tourism industry contributes 9.4% of total GDP of Nepal whereas Agriculture remains the major economic activity providing 37% of GDP while from Industry is 20% and from Services is 45%. Latest data shows national literacy rate of the country is 65.9%, average life expectancy at birth is 64.1%, poverty head count rate is 25.2% and per capita GDP (USD) is 717 (CBS, 2013: 4-7).

### **2.3 Historical Background**

Formally, the history of Nepalese higher education starts with the establishment of Tri-Chandra College in 1918 during the Rana regime. Before the establishment of this college, most of the Nepalese students used to have higher education from India and only few from Europe and America. Rulers then used to send students abroad in case they needed any kind of specific education. Evidence shows that Bir Samser Rana, the third prime minister of Rana dynasty sent students to India and Japan for engineering education during his ruling period ranging from 1885 to 1901, from government level. Towards the end of his reign in 1899 he established a medical school in order to fulfill need of human resources in the Bir hospital, Kathmandu (sharma, 2015:26). Till 1898, *Ranipokhari Sanskrit pathasala* (Sanskrit college) used to provide Sanskrit education at intermediate and higher level, but there was no system of examination and certification. When India started catering examination service for Nepalese students too, students started visit Governmental Sanskrit college Banaras India for examination purpose (Sharma and Sharma, 2043bs: 102-103). During that time, Sanskrit education was the only means of higher education in the country. Nevertheless, there were few technical schools for sub-overseer and chemical technology but they were not in organized form and were in access of minority elites of the society.

Establishment of Tri-Chandra College is regarded as the breakthrough in terms of Nepalese education system. Its establishment marked the commencement of many higher education institutions throughout the country. In the first phase Padma Kanya College, Patan College and Durbar College were established. Later, community colleges came into existence in different parts of the country. Nepal National College and Amrit Science College in Kathmandu, Thakur Ram College Birjung, RR College Janakpur, Mahendra Morang College Biratnagar and Tribhuvan College, Palpa are among few.

In the beginning all HEIs were set up according to the curriculum of Kolkata University. Later, they were affiliated to the Patana University, India (sharma, 2015:10-11). Next to the affiliation

of Tri-Chandra College to Patna University, National Sanskrit College affiliated to Sanskrit University of Banaras, India was established in 1948 to import Sanskrit education (Bhattarai, 2014).

In 1954, second education plan agreement between his majesty government and the USA provided financial aid for teaching learning material development to Tri-Chandra College, and also to establish college of education. It also sent a team of teachers to the Oregon University for higher education training. As an effort, college of education was established in 1956 and it was authorized as supreme level higher education institute by his majesty of government to award higher education degree and diploma until the establishment of university in the national level (Sharma, 2015: 96-109). A high level university commission was set up which promulgated Tribhuvan University act in 1959 and university was established the same year (UNESCO, 2008: 18). In order to coordinate growing number of colleges and to provide financial assistance, committee on higher education was established in 1957. It played vital role during the initial stage to improve teaching learning of Nepalese higher education (College of education, 1959).

In 1971 Nepal implemented the National Educational System Plan (NESP). As per NESP all existing colleges became a part of one national university, and affiliated colleges became constituent campuses, making it a teaching university. Later, on 1972 college of education became institute of education of Tribhuvan University (Sharma, 2015: 135). TU renewed its role of affiliation with the aim of addressing the need of increasing number of students seeking admission to college. Thus, from 1979 it started giving its affiliation to private campuses as well (UNESCO, 2008: 19). Thus, with the establishment of Tribhuvan University, the era of struggle in higher education believed to be ended, and it opened ways forward to spread wings for the prosperity of Nepalese higher education.

In 1982, a royal commission was set up which suggested multi-university concept to bring improvement in higher education through competition. Accordingly, Nepal Sanskrit University was established after 27 years of establishment of TU, in 1986. Establishment of Kathmandu University in 1991 landmarked grooming of other private universities in the country. Similarly Purbanchal University and Pokhara University were established in 1994 and 1997 respectively. (Simkhada, 2010:44, UNESCO, 2008: 19). By the end of 90s, Nepalese higher education witnessed significant ballooning with two governmental and 3 private universities. Quite later in

2005, Lumbini Bouddha University was established aiming to focus on research and promotion of Buddhism at Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Buddha.

In the year 2010, three more universities vis. Mid-western University, Far-western University, and Agriculture and Forestry University were established in different parts of the country (MWU, 2015, FWU, 2015, AFU, 2015). Currently, the number of universities in the country totals nine. BP koirala institute of health science, national institute of health science and Patan academy of health science are University like institutions for medical education, termed as deemed University. There is one more deemed university established recently in 2013 - Karnali academy of health science. This institution is in progress to run academic programs.

## **2.4 Education System in Nepal**

Department of education (2013/14) has divided school education as basic education and secondary education. Grade starting from 1 to 8 is basic and 8 to 12 is secondary education. Basic education is further divided into primary (1-5) and lower secondary (6-8). Secondary education has also two parts, namely secondary (9-10) and higher secondary (11-12/13). Pre-primary education is rife in private sector. Higher education consists of three/four/five years of bachelor's degree, two years of master's degree, two years of MPhil and a Ph.D. Language of instruction and examination is both Nepali and English. Examination is held once at the end of academic year for most of programs, while it is half yearly for some. From the academic year 2015, TU has started semester system in university campus, and plans to implement this to all campuses throughout the country by the forthcoming academic session.

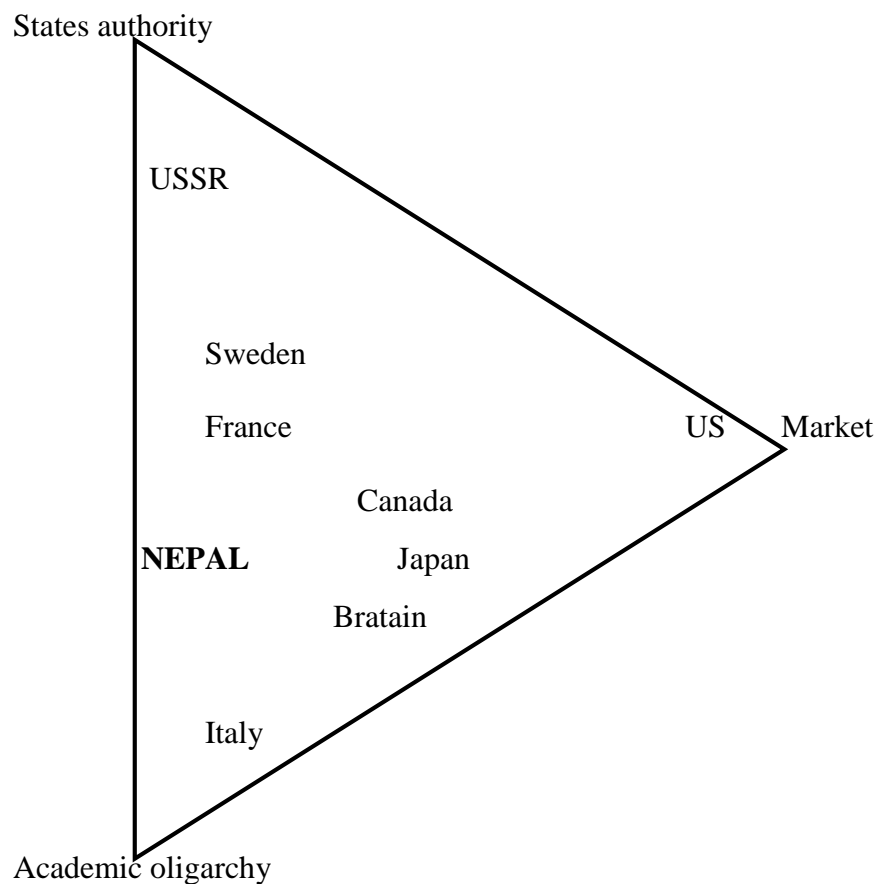
## **2.5 Steering of Higher Education**

Steering is a specific approach adopted by government to control and influence policies and issues related to higher education. Olsen (as cited in Gornitzka & Maassen 2000: 270) divides steering model into four categories- sovereign state steering model, institutional state steering model, state supermarket steering model and corporate-pluralist state steering model. Among them Nepal seems to be following institutional steering model for university governance. Gornitzka & Maassen (2000: 270) summarizes institutional steering model as:

In this model University and college have a special responsibility to protect academic values and traditions against the whims of shifting political regimes, shifts in coalitions

and short term interest of interest groups... the role of the higher education is to uphold its traditions and socio-economic and cultural roles, to protect academic freedom... the government does not interfere directly with higher education.

Looking higher education governance from the view of Clark's triangle of coordination (Clark, 1983: 140-141) Nepalese higher education governance lies in between state and academic oligarchy. However, bit more tilted towards the side of academic oligarchy. As mentioned by Clark (1983: 140) more power is exercised by academics as Nepalese higher education is deep-rooted with chair based organizational system since time of its origination. University grants commission acts as buffer between country and HEIs, primarily for funding and quality issue. Market influence on higher education is almost absence in Nepalese higher education.



**Figure 1: Nepal in Clark's Triangle of Coordination**

Amendment of Tribhuvan University Act 1992 declared Tribhuvan University as an autonomous institution to make free decision on its functions, rights and establishment, such as teaching and research, award of the degree and diplomas, policy formulation, budgeting and approval of campuses. This act has also provided right to acquire, use, sell, dispose and manage moveable and immovable property of the university. Tribhuvan University aims to protect and develop national culture and traditions. It has 52 members supreme decision making TU senate for its own policy formulation, budget planning and allocation (TU, 2015). It has four independent councils. Chief of the academic and executive council is vice-chancellor of the university. Academic council functions as academic policy formulation, curriculum development and conducting examination and its evaluation. Executive council executes the decision made by university assembly, prepares annual grants, executes all agreements, contracts and lease, drafts the rules and submits to the assembly for the approval. It appoints deans, directors, department heads and campus chiefs. Moreover, it procures human resources on recommendation of service commission. Research council manages research related issues, and planning council advises university for short and long term plan, develops annual programs, implements and evaluates them (TU, 1992 & TU, 2015). After uprooting of monarchy by second democratic movement in 2006 prime minister is the ceremonial chief of the University. Minister of education is pro-chancellor, and vice-chancellor is the executive chief of the Tribhuvan University. Government of Nepal provides feedback and guidance to the university but does not interfere directly on its decision. Ministry of education acts as the liaison body between university and government of Nepal.

## **2.6 Funding of Higher Education**

The chief source of fund of Tribhuvan University is government of Nepal. Other sources of fund include income generated from student registration, examination fee, tuition fee, transcript fee and sales of the stationery. Some portions of fund also come from service sector of the university, namely pharmacy, laboratory and various departments of the university teaching hospitals and veterinaries. Negligible amount of fund is contributed through business like lease of the canteen and tendering of the shop-shutters.

Government of Nepal allocates budget for higher education each year through university grant commission. UGC releases fund under the heading institutional reform grants and research

grants. Reform grants are funded as incentive grants for preparing strategy and becoming autonomous, to the decentralized constituent campuses, and matching fund is for development of physical infrastructure and professional capacity (SHEP, 2007). For implementation of the second higher education project UGC has started performance based funding for universities and community campuses, and formula based funding for universities other than Tribhuvan University from year 2007 (UGC, 2015). Performance based funding in the institutional reform grants head are funded for better performance in term of service delivery, quality and efficiency of the Tribhuvan University and campuses based upon performance indicator (DLI-1 to DLI-7) and set criteria (SHEP, 2007).

Since 2015, formula based funding is also released to autonomous constituent campuses of Tribhuvan University. Research fund is given for promoting research policy, strengthening research management, supporting and sharing of research conferences, training in research methodology and promoting research culture (UGC, 2015 & SHEP, 2007). Funding collected from students in the form of fees is relatively small which directly goes to university account and allocated to local and central level according university budgeting mechanism.

## **2.7 Privatization of Higher Education**

Privatization is latest development of Nepalese higher education. In year 2010, three new universities were established making the total universities of country count ten. Beside expansion of private university, there is accelerated growth of private affiliated campuses in Tribhuvan University as well. None of the faculty and institutions is aloof from this trend although non-technical faculties are growing relatively sluggish than technical disciplines like medicine, engineering, public medicine, nursing, laboratory technology and business administration. Non-technical faculties like education and humanities are least popular among urban youth, hence making space around outskirts and rural areas of the country.

The history of this trend is no longer than four decades. By 1980, late king Birendra formed a commission to control and address the demand of student agitation. That commission recommended the concept of multi-university and privatization on higher education. (Agarwal, 2007 & Bhattarai, 2014). In 1990, the huge political movement and successful restoration of multiparty democracy further filliped privatization of higher education. As an impact, three private universities established in between 1991 to 1997. Numbers of private campuses also

started to grow up. Until 2006, the numbers of private campuses were not hiked so far. Then, numbers of private campuses increased in a geometrical manner.

Data shows that the numbers of private affiliated colleges in the year 2005 were 562, which almost doubled in 2010 to become 1,012. It further hiked to 1,108 in 2012/13 (UGC, 2014: 45). According to TU (2015), currently it has 1,053 private affiliated campuses. At the same time, numbers of constituent campuses are steady for several years. EMIS report of UGC (2014: 45) shows that numbers of constituent campuses in the year 2005 were 86, which increased and became 96 in the year 2012/13. Currently Tribhuvan University has 60 constituent campuses, and this data is static since decades. But private campuses are multiplying each year sharply.

The table below shows yearly change in the numbers of campuses by its type.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012/13
Private	562	697	749	895	1012	1044	1180
Constituent	86	87	87	88	90	90	96

Source: UGC– EMIS Report 2012/13(2014: 45)

**Figure 2: Yearly Change in Number of Campuses**

The major growth is seen not only in the private higher education institutions but the student enrollment is also expanding beyond the capacity of these institutions. TU (2015) accounts out of 4, 05,341 student enrolled in the academic year 2014/15, 63.45% of students are having higher education through private affiliated colleges which was 38.1% in 2006, 53.2% in 2009 and 63.14% in 2012.

## **2.8 Internationalization of Higher Education**

After the settlement of decade long home war and establishment of peace process, many governmental and non-governmental organizations restarted their programs. Freedom of public sector to restart trade and industries increased affluence in individual level. The local supply could not meet the demand of human resources to these industries. All these factors as mentioned by Ziguras & McBurnie (2011: 124) spurred the need and demand of cross boarder education in recent years. It increased the mobility of students, faculties and scholars along with program mobility in the form of twinning, franchise, qualification framework and credit system (Knight,



2013: 374-375). As a response the number of student moving abroad for higher education has increased in recent years.

Data shows that certificate issued for abroad study in 2011/12 was 10,258, which increased to 16,499 in 2012/13 and further increased to 28,126 in 2013/14 (MOE, 2014: 16). It shows that internationalization in Nepalese higher education is increasing each year. Moreover TU has reserved place for international students. Each year many foreign students come for degree or not degree courses. They normally enroll into medical course in Katmandu University and sociology and anthropology in Tribhuvan University (Agarwal, 2007: 43). TU has recently started semester and credit transfer system. Before 2015, foreign students studying here did not use to get credit from TU, but used to earn certificate from their home universities.

In terms of faculties and program mobility, Nepalese universities are continuously collaborating with foreign and domestic universities for research and exchange education. Since 2002 Center for International Relation of Tribhuvan University has worked with Norwegian center for international cooperation in education (SiU, Norway) under NUFU/NOMA project. By 2014 April, TU had bilateral agreements with 134 international universities and institutes for research and exchange programs (TU, 2015). In addition, Kathmandu University has collaboration with more than 100 international universities and institutions and Pokhara University is collaborating with more than 50 international universities and institutions. These universities have also established the system of credit transfer and joint projects in various fields.

In the recent years several foreign universities and higher education institutions have made space on Nepalese higher education sectors. Many academic institutions and colleges are established in affiliation with foreign universities of United Kingdom, India, United States, and Australia and so on. As per the data of UGC (2014: 39-42) altogether there are 81 higher education institutions established under foreign universities throughout different parts of the country. Most of them are located in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur district of central development region. Among them 44 institutions are affiliated to universities of UK, with 19 institutions, second position is hold by affiliated colleges of India. Similarly each of 4 institutions is established under the affiliation of universities of USA, Australia and Malaysia. Moreover, numbers of institutions affiliated to universities of Switzerland, Thailand and Singapore are three, two and one respectively.

## **2.9 Quality Assurance Practice in Higher Education**

In Nepal, QAA process starts with submission of Letter of Intent (LOI) by HEIs to QAAC, as it is an independent agent between government of Nepal and HEIs. Following this, respective institutions pass through self-assessment process and prepare a self-study report. The aim of self-assessment is to measure effectiveness and efficiency of academic quality, and to identify core strength and weakness by the concerned authority of the institution under evaluation. Next step continues with peer review by PRT made by QAAC. The members of PRT include experts of academic field. PRT prepares a report based upon the observation and interaction with the people of HEIs, like students, academic staff and administrative members. PRT report and SSR is then discussed to the technical committee of QAAC (UGC, 2012: 6-7). Thus formed final report is ultimately submitted to UGC with recommendation status.

Expansion of this process is propped up by defined criteria or benchmark. There are eight different criteria based on which accreditation process gets matured. Among these, five criteria such as curricular aspects; teaching, learning and evaluation system; research, consultancy and extension; student support and guidance, and information system are directly linked to student performance and outcome. Rest of three criteria namely, policy and procedure; infrastructure and learning resources; and public information are related with both institutional and academic standard. The category given by UGC (2012, 9-15) under pre-determined criteria which is used as measure to gauge academic standard of higher education institutions, and to decide accreditation status are explained below as:

Under the curricular aspect, issue of academic flexibility, diversity to suit different levels of learners, career orientation, multi-skill development, involvement of stakeholder on curriculum development and updating are gauged. This criterion attempts to seek practice of sustainable curricular to achieve academic excellence.

Teaching learning and evaluation system deals with transparency in academic process, teaching learning strategy to address individual difference of learner, provision regarding use of ICT, reliable and valid mechanism of students' evaluation, regulation on student absence, illness and other circumstances, and other practice on teaching, learning and evaluation to achieve academic excellence are evaluated.

Research, consultancy and extension criteria measure the information on policy practice and outcome with reference to research, consultancy and extension among faculty and students. Focus on this criterion comprises evaluation of practice of the faculty to publish their (faculty and students) research to academic journal; promotion of research culture and participation in consultancy work.

Highlights of student support and guidance criteria are efforts of institutions to provide necessary assistance to the students for their holistic progression. This criteria focus on information on program, fee structure, financial aid and student support system; monitoring of student progression; mechanism for student counseling and job placement.

Categories evaluated under information system are student progression and success rate; employability of graduates; student satisfaction with their program; teaching effectiveness and institutions performance indicators are involved.

To sum up, whatever may be the criteria; their ultimate goal is to measure academic excellence through good graduation rate, job placement status of particular HEIs, and evaluating other index on outcome and academic achievement of graduates

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The notion of the academic standard arises from the heart of higher education quality. The term “academic standard” has relative meaning which normally refers to minimum threshold or a measure of comparison between two or more academic variables for their performance and outputs. Thus, derived academic performance or output “more or less” can be considered as an index of academic quality. This chapter begins with an attempt to draw linkage between academic standard and academic quality. Chapter continues with models and approaches of quality assurance academic standard. Finally the chapter ends up with conceptual framework of this study.

#### **3.2 Academic Standard and Academic Quality as a Round Track**

The debate of academic quality and standard is in the academic atmosphere since long time, but the idea was in vogue in different forms like inspection or quality control. In the initial phase, authority used to operate these approaches to correct the weakness and ensuring standard in education. However, the concept of academic standard was coined with the establishment of office for standard in education, responsible for primary to college education and further in the UK, after passing foster education act in 1870. Later on, formation of British quality foundation and European quality foundation in 1943 involved actively in promotion of European quality foundation model as business excellence model in which quality in education was included for first time (Doherty, 2012: 75-78). Then after a number of practices, approaches and codes were experimented as a quality assurance tools aiming to improving student performance i.e., academic standard. It influenced academic quality, but was limited within handful of countries of Europe and America.

However, it took long time for quality assurance to be an agenda of discussion in many countries. Since 1980s quality assurance became an agenda of discussion throughout the world (Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). Consequently, policymakers are interested in formulating innovative quality assurance framework that guide to maintain and improve academic standard. Dill (2007, 2-3) points out that with declining academic standard, US developed explicit plan for

assessing students teaching in 1980s. Following this, many countries including France, UK and the Netherlands introduced new national quality assurance policy. Eventually, this trend diffused to other part of Europe, Asia and other parts of the world.

### **3.2.1 Academic Quality**

Because of the vague and multicomponent nature of the academic quality, its concrete definition is unattainable. Many researchers have expressed academic quality as amorphous, non-measurable, or ambiguous concept (Dill & Beerkens, 2010). One of the most cited definitions of academic quality is given by Harvey and Green (1993), which is relative to user in terms of process and outcomes, and their circumstances. They have identified five different but interrelated dimensions to attribute the meaning of academic quality such as: quality as exceptional, quality as perfection or consistency, quality as fitness of purpose, quality as value for money and quality as transformation.

The two dimensions quality as fitness for purpose and quality as value for money are more or less linked to concept of education as product and quality as its optimum utilization. Quality as fitness for purpose supports paradigm that education should fulfill the needs of stakeholders. This view follows; academic quality is addressing different stakeholders like needs of the students and their family, objectives or missions of the institutions and national policy of the country. Quality as value for money is connected with investment in education and its return. According to this dimension academic quality in higher education is better outcome achieved in lower price or less investment. Quality as transformation means qualitative change on students and continuous enhancement of skill and attitude through transformational learning process. This dimension looks quality in education with wider sight, not only limited within curriculum but developing abilities among students for new knowledge production.

However, quality as exceptional and quality as perfection or consistency supports the notion of academic quality equivalent to academic standard.

Another means of defining academic quality is concept of human capital. Human capital produced by specific academic program provides individual as well as social benefits to the country, and this is possible with improved academic outcome of the graduates (Dill & Beerkens, 2010). Academic outcome is linked with the performance of students in an assessment in a

particular subject or development of knowledge, attitude and skills at the end of particular academic program (Coates, 2010: 5 and Dill & Beerkens, 2010), which is equivalent to the concept of academic standard. So, in human capital concept view academic quality as academic standard is articulated in national policy on academic quality.

Similarly, Gola (2003) also expresses the view that academic quality is equivalent to academic standard. He defines higher education academic quality as specifying learning goals and enabling students to achieve academic standard to meet social expectation, student's aspirations, and the demand of government, business and industries, and requirement of professional institutions.

### **3.2.2 Academic Standard**

Academic standard has relative meaning which normally refers to minimum threshold, or a measure of comparison between two or more academic variables for measuring students' performance or outputs. According to DEST (2002, as cited in Coates 2010) "academic standard usually refers to student performance and level of achievement in a particular piece of assessment, in a subject or at the end of a degree". Thus, measured academic standard in terms of outcome on specific assessment refers to agreed level of student performance on indicator of academic quality. The indicators of academic quality may be graduation rate, learning outcome, academic satisfaction, teaching resources, teaching process, academic governance, curriculum, student diversity and so on, which greatly impact academic standard (Coates, 2010: 6).

In sum up, back from the origination of concept to till date, academic quality and academic standard are inevitable to each other. Academic standard is born through the womb of academic quality, whereas academic quality is incomplete without the concept of academic standard. Distal of one is proximal of other and vice versa, in a never ending cyclic fashion. So, academic standard and academic quality are like a round track. As such, next topic is concerned with models of quality assurance as measure of monitoring academic standard as well.

### **3.3 Models and Approaches of Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance is the approach usually acting in between problems and their solutions or improvement. In another word, it is a proactive practice used to prevent any problem before happening. Dill (2007) defines quality assurance in terms of academic standard. According to him quality assurance in higher education is the practice whereby academic achievements

attained by graduates are maintained and improved. Such practice refers to policies, attitudes, actions and procedures in order to enhance and maintain quality (Woodhouse, 1999, as cited in Nicholson, 2011: 6). Quality assurance is further divided into internal and external quality assurance.

Internal quality assurance is quality monitoring mechanism made by individual HEIs to improve their academic quality, whereas external quality assurance is the supra-institutional policy and practice whereby quality of HEIs and programs are assured (Dill, 2007). External quality assurance is the responsibility of states or its agency which is normally operated through national quality framework to assure academic standard.

There are different models and approaches to assure academic quality throughout the world. They are highlighted below:

### **3.3.1 Models of Quality Assurance**

The quality assurance model varies along with the territory of globe. However, Dill (2010: 378) points out three most prevalent model of quality assurance in the world: 1. European model of central control quality assurance by state education ministries 2. US model of decentralized quality assurance combining limited state control with market competition 3. British model of quality assurance by self-accrediting universities. According to him, in the first model state directly involves itself in establishing and monitoring regulations on admission, academic appointment, curricula development and examination. In the second one, market based approach is applied to enhance academic quality. Last, in the British model, state cedes responsibility of quality assurance of publicly supported universities to the academic profession itself.

However each model involves some common operations for the academic quality assurance process. Although the practices are termed as self-assessment, external visit, peer-review, academic audit, quality control or quality assessment, there is similarities in basic elements around the world, from American countries like USA, Canada to European countries like France and the Netherlands, and to United Kingdom (Vught and Westerheijden, 1994: 357-364). Bringing these elements together forms a general model of quality assurance. The common elements are: 1. Managing agent(s) 2. Self-evaluation 3. Peer review 4. Reporting (Vught and Westerheijden, 1994: 365-367). This model developed by Vught and Westerheijden (1994) is

adopted by Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council Nepal, for the quality assurance practice.

Agent(s) is the coordinator between government and higher education institutions which manages quality assurance system in Meta level. It is an independent body free from political pressure and governmental policies. It coordinates in formulation of procedure and formats consulting institutions that can be used by institutions (Vught and Westerheijden, 1994: 365). In Nepal Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) under University Grants Commission (UGC) acts as an agent by facilitating universities to develop quality assurance mechanism and helping them access their strength, weakness, opportunities and threats through information processing system (UGC, 2012).

For academics to accept and implement changes they must trust and own the process in which problems are defined and solutions are designed through self-evaluation. It is crucial for academics to accept a quality assessment system (Vught and Westerheijden, 1994, 365). This element is deducted from Euro-Mercian experiences, which is equally practiced by QAAC as “self-study”. It is honest, confident and self-trusted approach used to measure effectiveness and efficiency of HEIs, and to identify core strength and weakness (UGC, 2012).

The third element named as peer review is done through site visit by external consultants. The external expert may be group of employers, organizations or professional bodies who may visit the site for one or multiple time without bias (Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). The visit may proceed through discussion of self-study report and plans for future innovations with the faculty.

The final and fourth element of general model of quality assurance is reporting of the result and experience gathered through above elements to the concern body. The main objective of reporting is to help institution and study program to improve their level of quality. In the draft version of reporting as well as the final report, counter arguments can be formed if necessary with the peer review team. Reporting of the result of the quality assessment process is taken as an important mechanism of accountability to external constituencies (Vught and Westerheijden, 1994: 367).

In Nepal, QAAC under UGC has been implementing this model to assure academic quality and academic standard of Nepalese HEIs. Quality assurance thus started with accreditation is now



equally used to set academic standard through empirical or normative analysis (Coates, 2010). The elements described above are used as procedural steps for such process. Based on the evaluation, report is submitted to UGC for the final decision regarding accreditation (UGC, 2012).

### **3.3.2 Approaches Used in Quality Assurance**

Apart from external examination system of UK and market regulated ranking qualification framework, benchmark, subject assessment and accreditation, academic audit, and performance contract are known state regulated approach of academic quality assessment (Dill and Beerkens, 2010). Qualification frameworks and benchmarks are the aftermaths increased autonomy of universities. Both the frameworks and subject benchmarks are broad and general, more formative and development, but not regulatory. While the former focuses on student learning outcomes, the latter has been found to be supporting universities plan course design (Dill and Beerkens, 2010: 323).

The introduction of state sponsored instruments like subject assessment and subject accreditation proved to be comprehensive. Since they are sponsored by government, they are designed so as to reflect the public interest rather than the special interest of handful of professional associations. Experiences of different European countries justify that subject assessment helps in the improvisation of teaching, structure and content of curricula with conventional university rules, restricted numbers of universities, disciplines and fields. But inability to expand systems with new fields of study is the major drawback of this system. Unlike this, the history of nations influence by bologna reforms shows that subject accreditations though better address the development of new fields and degrees (Dill and Beerkans, 2010).

Performance contracts or performance based funding is another tool of state regulation which respects institutional autonomy, diversity of institutions and linked distribution of funding to real output and performance of academic institutions rather than inputs and processes. However the experience of Catalonia shows that this measure fails encouraging the staffs to abide by the agreed targets. Thus, this needs to be supported by government mandates based on quality information provision and external quality assessments (Dill and Beerkans, 2010).

Last of all, academic quality audit is a systematic method of gathering facts through joint conversation between diff parties like faculty, stakeholders and peer reviewers to grab the sole goal( Balague et all, 2014: 529 and Dill & Beerkens, 2010:326 ). This method is superior to other external quality assurance instruments on the grounds that it is a continuous process which emphasizes institutional responsibility in assuring academic standards, and it values the diversity in system and universities' autonomy. Unfortunately, it fails to provide information that would guide students and parents select particular academic program or college (Dill and Beerkens, 2010).

### **3.4 Analytical Frameworks**

In Nepal academic standard is synonymously used for academic quality. Good academic standard of a specific college is largely understood as high graduation rate of that college. College ranking published in various national academic magazine are primarily based upon student pass rates in the annual examination.

Such, rankings are mainly initiative of some private colleges of the country. National public college ranking is governed by UGC for their administrative purpose, which is taken as highly confidential. Individually and internally, there is vast difference in assessment system, teaching strategy, use of the teaching resources and academic governance between public and private sector although same national higher education policy is employed to all higher education institutions of Tribhuvan University. Formally, both types of academic institutions adopt same mechanism for quality assurance and academic standard.

In practice, exam-centered teaching learning strategy is adopted throughout the private colleges of the country. Most of the private colleges have developed internal policies that help to make high graduation rate in order to satisfy parents and to cover different magazines and national newspapers. In advertisement, they equally expand research culture, students' involvement in governmental sector and good physical facility as their quality feature, which normally very rare in reality.

In reality, they use substandard teaching material such as guess-paper, teacher-note (popularly known as capsule in Nepal) and lesson summery. It only increases graduation rate beneficial for upcoming academic enrollments. But never support in research culture, quality education and

holistic development of graduates graduated from private HEIs. Resulting outcome in prop with densely and competitively diffusing such practice within private sectors superficially looks as if academic standard is pivot of private campuses of Tribhuvan universities.

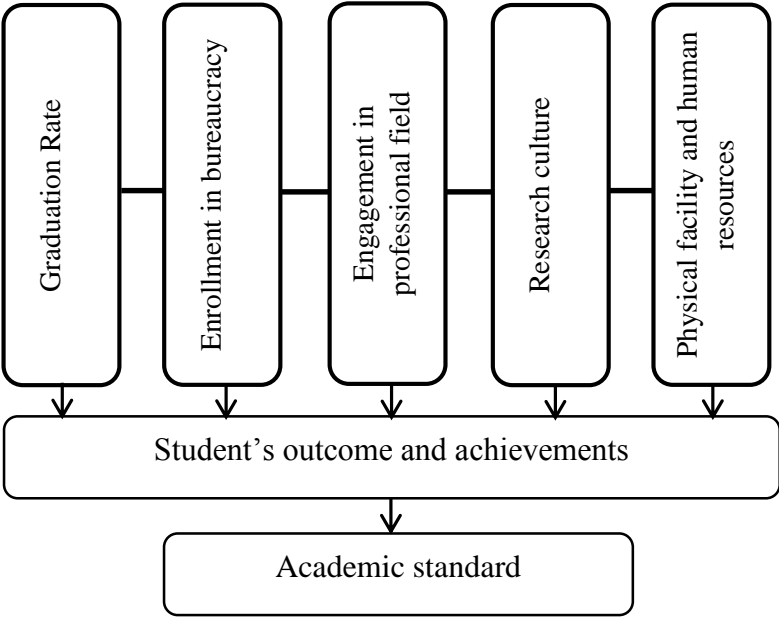
Practically, public campuses claim that they adopt quality guideline of QAAC. But full implementation is lacking, which is shown by the performance of students each year. Public campuses are enriched with big laboratory, standard teaching-learning material, qualified faculty and sufficient governmental aid, examination result is not enthusiastic as student graduation rate is relatively lower compared to private campuses. Only handfuls of professors are involved in research work. Most of the experienced teaching member visit private college as part-time service and majority of them have established private college near by their service station. In terms of physical facility and infrastructures, public campuses are rich throughout the country leaving behind exception of some private colleges of capital city and some other towns. Well-equipped laboratory, big library and wide playing ground are almost unavailable in private higher education institutions of Tribhuvan University.

All these factors has impacted that most of the top level governmental officials of this time are from public campuses whereas most of the private graduates are either involved in self-employment, engaged in different disciplinary job or migrated abroad. Recently, around 3500 fake doctors, engineers and pilots arrested by central investigation bureau are the products of private campuses of remote terai region of Nepal (CIB, 2016). The numbers of student involving in professional job out of total graduates are also less from private colleges. Most of the merits of public service commission are also from public campuses of Tribhuvan University.

Examining above mentioned facts graduation rate is slightly more in private colleges. This has made illusion that academic standard is better in the private colleges of Tribhuvan University. However, broad overview reveals that academic standard of higher education institution is better in public campuses of Tribhuvan University.

Basic concept of this study suggests, five areas studied in this research determine student outcome and achievements. Higher the student outcome better is the academic standard of higher education institutions. These areas are Graduation rate, Graduates enrollment in bureaucracy, Student engagement in professional field, Research culture and Physical and human resources of the institutes

Researcher in this study assumes that except graduation rate, other components are found better in public academic institutions. Furthermore, each component framed below are gathered and analyzed to find academic standard of public and affiliated HEIs of TU. Hence, comparison is made to answer objective and research question.



**Figure 3: Analytical Framework**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Researcher in this study uses the data and information provided by QAAC, concerned campuses and other related bodies to compare academic standard of public and private institutions of Nepalese higher education. This research moves forward with collection and analysis of data to a validate finding. Thus, to collect, analyze and hence draw a valid conclusion, adoption of proper research methodology is must.

Research strategy and design, data collection instruments, sample and sampling procedure, data analysis, and validity and reliability employed in this study are explained in this chapter.

#### **4.2 Research Strategy and Design**

Research strategy is the methodological orientation of the study. Generally, it involves qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approach. Qualitative research is framed in terms of words rather than numbers and vice-versa in quantitative research, whereas mix method research resides in the middle of this continuum (Cresswell, 2012). However, this superficial definition cannot cover the epistemological and ontological orientation of the research strategy.

Bryman (2012: 35) differentiates quantitative and qualitative research strategy beyond the fact of measurement and quantification, but in terms of the connection between theory and research, epistemological and ontological consideration. According to him quantitative research plays deductive role in between the theory and research, and tests the theory. Epistemological orientation of the quantitative study is positivism and ontologically objectivism. On other hand, qualitative study is inductive hence generates theory; epistemologically it follows interpretivism and ontologically it follows constructionism.

Research design is the detail framework for collection and analysis of data. Research design may be experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study or comparative according to the nature of the study and choice of the researcher.

In this study qualitative research strategy especially is used to grasp detailed insight on academic standard of public and private HEIs. Study is not focused on quantifying of information, but

concerned with interpretation of experience of the people working with academic standard area, and considerable emphasis is placed on the views and perceptions of the respondents (Pant, 2009: 22). Moreover, comparative research design is employed to construct conclusion between private and public higher education institutions of TU.

### **4.3 Data Collection Instruments**

Proper use of data collection instrument is the basis for accurate information and to achieve precise result. Choice of instrument varies with research strategy and nature of the data. Semi-structured interview and secondary data analysis is taken as data collection instruments in this study.

As academic standard is influenced by multiple factors of student's achievements and outcomes, it cannot be studied in a narrow boundary. According to nature of this study, other inquiry like structured interview, close ended questionnaire etc. cannot convey all the dimensions related to academic standard. So, semi-structured interview is chosen to acquire unlimited and explanatory views from respondents. Further secondary analysis in this study shed light upon the information acquired from the respondents.

#### **4.3.1 Semi-structured Interview**

Semi-structured interview is widely used instrument in qualitative research which offers open and explanatory enquiry in the field of study. It emphasizes greater generality in formulation of initial research idea. Bryman (2012: 471) writes, unstructured and semi-structured interviews often referred collectively as qualitative or in-depth interview. This is highly flexible and may not bound to follow specific schedule, often rambling to cover rich detailed answer.

As per the qualitative nature of this study, primary data is gathered through semi-structured interview to keep more of an open mind about the desired contours needs to know about, so that concept and theory emerge out of the data (Bryman, 2012: 12). An interview guide is made covering the specific topic of academic standard and deals in a flexible fashion to flow the rhythm of respondent. Semi-structured interview is supposed to reveal descriptive, informative and more insightful findings for this study.

### **4.3.2 Secondary Analysis**

Information that is not overlaid by semi-structured interview is collected through secondary document analysis. Secondary analysis is the analysis of data by researcher who might not have been involved in those data collection which may either be qualitative or quantitative data (Bryman, 2012: 312). For this qualitative study, documents of UGC and QAAC such as annual reports, self-study report of campuses, EMIS reports, brief guideline of quality assurance and academic standard, journals, research papers, policy papers, UGC web-sites, reports and data of second higher education projects and other publish and unpublished material of UGC are considered.

Secondary analysis is an important approach for getting information under qualitative research, as it offers high quality data. The data to be analyzed are extracted through rigorous sampling procedure and it covers wide range of the samples which is mostly generated by highly qualified researchers. Moreover in all types of social research, use of secondary data enhances the optimum use of data (Bryman, 2012: 312-315). In this research, secondary analysis facilitates deeper study of the subject matters that is not covered by semi-structured interview.

## **4.4 Sample and Sampling Technique**

### **4.4.1 Sample**

Sample is the collection of unit or element taken from the entire group of people, events or thing of interest of the researcher, termed as population (Pant 2009, Bryman 2012). The unit or element may either be people, organizations, documents, or departments.

In this study, I have chosen six campuses of Tribhuvan University as a sample. Among six campuses three are public campuses and rest are private. Public campuses are taken from eastern, mid and western region of the country. Campuses are chosen in such manner to preserve heterogeneity and to avoid biasness.

Similarly, private campuses are also taken from capital city to remote region of the country. The region of selecting private campus in such manner is as same as reason of choosing public campuses.

The campuses taken as sample are Damak multiple campus, Reliance international academy, Motilal bahumukhi campus, Lumbini multiple campus, Kailali multiple campus and Nawa-Nepal college.

Each sample in this study is selected keeping the objective of study in mind. So that samples are selected considering following self-made criteria that answer the research question of this study.

The criteria are:

For semi-structured interview-

Participants are selected from members of QAAC board which includes QAA division director or people assigned by him. Sitaram Dahal, QAA division officer of UGC is the respondent from UGC. He is closely working with PRT and SSR report of public and private campuses since long time.

A number of respondent selected from Tribhuvan University according to nature of this research. Campus chief or official assigned by him are taken as respondent from each campus. In addition, Mohashin Mohommad, technician of statistics section is selected from COE in addition to get inquiry on graduation rate and its trend. One respondent also taken from PSC, Nepal.

The respondents taken from each campus are the researcher involved in self-study report conducted by QAAC since few years.

All the participants are experienced person in the field of quality assurance and working not less than five years in their respective institutions.

In this way, all together 21 respondent were taken for semi-structured interview. They include three experts from each campus, one from UGC, one from COE and one from PSC.

For, secondary analysis,

The published or unpublished document must be related to quality assurance academic standard.

Published document must be source of UGC, QAAC, TU, MOE or other authorized organization such as World Bank, PSC or UNESCO.

Unpublished documents of only QAAC or TU.



Such documents include PRT reports, SSR reports, annual reports of UGC and annual report of TU. These documents have given information on physical facility of each campus, Human resources, student involvement in research and innovation, student engagement on professional field and so on. These documents have not given the exact definition of academic standard.

#### **4.4.2 Sampling Technique**

Sampling is a systematic technique of selecting sample for pre-defined research work. Sample is selected in a systematic order either through probability or non-probability sampling technique. Selection of which depends on the choice of researcher and nature of study.

Probability sampling is usually employed in the quantitative study which is attained through some mechanical operation of randomization (Pant, 2009: 212). In such technique, sample is randomly drawn from large population and findings are generalized from sample to the whole population. The main advantage of this technique over non-probability sampling is that it reduces biasness in the selection of the sample (Bryman, 2012: 195-206).

However, non-probability sampling is an appropriate technique for qualitative sampling, where sample selection is not determined by chance or mathematical procedure, but rather by personal convenience or judgment of the researcher (Pant, 2009: 216). Among the four sub-types of non-probability sampling such as convenience, purposive, quota and snowball sampling, purposive sampling is widely used for qualitative study.

Purposive sampling is the one which selects sample by using the researcher's subjectivity and his judgment or intuition with reference to the goal of the research. The selection of sample is deliberate and purposive, but not random (Pant, 2009:217, Bryman, 2012: 418). As it is a form of non-probability sampling, the chief limitation is that findings cannot be generalized to the population.

Therefore for this qualitative study, purposive non-probability sampling is the best suitable technique. As Bryman (2012: 418) mentioned in his book, samples in this study are selected in a strategic way according to the relevancy of the research question. Each sample is selected with reference to self-made criteria which are listed in chapter 3.4.1.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis is the important part of research work, which involves process of making sense and drawing meaningful conclusion from the collected raw data. It also differs according to the nature of research. Quantitative analysis usually implies mathematical and statistical operations which are not followed in qualitative analysis. Out of different approaches varying from general to specific used in data analysis for qualitative research, one common thing is all of them are based on textual analysis (Pant, 2009:306). However, careful selection of most appropriate technique is important to come up with reliable findings.

One of the major procedural demarcations in data analysis approach of quantitative and qualitative research is made on the basis of order of data collection and analysis. Pant (2009: 306) writes, normally in quantitative research data analysis is started at the end of data collection, however in qualitative research, data collection and data analysis can be performed at a same time and depends upon the researcher's impression as it is the researcher driven activity.

Hence, secondary document analysis as a data collection instrument also implies a data analysis approach concurrently in this study. However, for the further treatment of primary information collected through semi-structured interview, and data collected through secondary document analysis, three steps process of qualitative data analysis is implemented as suggested by Miles and Huberman, 1994 ( as cited in pant, 2009). It includes Data reduction, Data display and Conclusion drawing.

The extensive amount of data collected in a qualitative study is condensed into an appropriate size without diverting its meaning through correct and careful use of several interrelated process referred as data reduction. In this study transcription and category development method is employed to reduce the data into appropriate form.

Reduction and summarization of textual data in a compact form using visual display is data display. It can be table, figures, diagrams, quotes or comparative matrix (Pant, 2009: 306). Comparative matrix is used to display data in the current study.

Conclusion drawing is the final stage of qualitative data analysis. In this step interference and valid conclusion is drawn from displayed data. Pant (2009: 307) summarizes conclusion drawing accordingly.

First, the interpretation of data needs to be checked for common biases of the researcher. Second, qualitative researcher should establish credibility in data analysis by demonstrating their results which are reliable and valid. Seeking feedback from external expert reviewers strengthens credibility.

With regard to this study, the raw data are transcript, categorized, and displayed with comparative matrix. Further it is checked multiple times and submitted to the supervisor for review. Finally, conclusion is drawn including feedbacks of supervisor.

#### **4.6 Reliability and Validity of the Study**

Reliability is concern with consistency or stability of the research (Bryman, 2012 and Creswell, 2011). Stability, internal reliability and inter-observer consistency are three prominent factors involve on reliability. Stability is non-fluctuation of result over time. It means, if we administer a measure to a group and then re-administer it, there will be little variation over time (Bryman, 2012: 169). Internal reliability is consistency of the degree to which the indicators that make up a scale. Inter observer consistency is consistency of the result in case of the involvement of multi-observer in a research activity.

Validity refers weather a measure of a concept really measures that concept or not (Bryman, 2012). On Creswell (2011) viewpoint validity determines whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of researcher, the participant or the readers of an account. Internal validity is good match between observation and theoretical idea of the researcher, whereas external validity is degree of generalizability of the finding.

In this study, to maintain reliability and validity following procedure are done.

Respondent chosen in this study are the expert of the concerned field. Information is gathered in one to one meeting directly and few by telephone conversation. All information is formal and official.

Multiple interviewees are taken from single higher education institutions and their information are compared, re-asked and confirmed.

Transcripts are checked multiple times to avoid mistake during transcription process.

By avoiding terms conveying dual meaning.

Carefully choosing reliable documents and processing carefully through each step.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents finding of this study. Result obtained in this study is through interview of the concerned authority which is given in above chapter. The findings is further shaded light with secondary data obtained through secondary analysis.

#### **5.2 Chief Results and Discussion**

##### **5.2.1 Higher Education Academic Standard in Nepalese Perspective.**

Academic standard being a chief component of academic quality, its nature is also somewhat similar to academic quality. As mentioned earlier, single definition of academic quality cannot cover all of its vague and multicomponent dimensions. Similarly, in a single sentence all of the paradigms of academic standard cannot be attained. Researchers of this field have defined academic standard in relation to minimum threshold, academic variables, student performance, subject assessment and academic indicators and so on. Although researchers have shared different views on factors and norms that determines academic standard, all of them have a common agreement that academic standard is linked with students' achievements or outcomes.

Academic quality as fitness for purpose as per widely accepted Harvey and green (1993) measure, should fulfill missions of academic institutions, or set objectives which support the notion of academic standard. The main objective of education in today's world is to meet national aspirations, increase job employability and support livelihood through high graduation rate with the help of quality education. Supporting this, Gola (2003) defines higher education academic quality as specifying learning goals and enabling students achieve academic standard to meet social expectations, student's aspirations, and the demand of government, business and industries, and requirement of professional institutions.

In Nepal, academic standard is found to be defined in line with academic accreditation process. Respondent from QAA were asked to depict official definition of higher education academic standard in Nepalese prospective, if any. The respondents replied:

*“Exact definition of higher education academic standard is not sentenced in any official document yet. However it is defined in relation to accreditation process. Among the areas set by QAAC, some are purely based upon academic standard of higher education, which impacts the student outcome or achievements. ....*

*..... Instantly, graduation rate reflects academic standard of certain HEIs, but in Nepalese prospects is more meaningful if we define it in relation to research work, job employability and professional engagement. In such, QAAC process evaluates overall aspect of HEIs to judge academic standard of students of institution under evaluation.”*

He further added:

*Superficially, student pass rate is most observed measuring tape to evaluate performance of students in the country. At times most of private institutions always work out to increase student pass rate by ‘hook or crook’, the reliability of this very tool in measuring academic standard can’t be accepted blindly. Thus, a valid mechanism should incorporate not only graduation or pass rate, but also job placement rate, students’ enrollment in bureaucracy, etc. in order to measure the academic standard.*

As per this interview, there is no single hard and fast definition of academic standard at any official document or with authority level. The term academic standard is encircled in mission, vision and objectives of many governmental documents like SHEP, QAAC guideline, HERP, budget speech and five year plans and so on. Moreover, Strategy and efforts are drawn on those documents to improve higher education academic standard but its clear definition is not seen. However all the interviewees are in a single point that an academic standard measures the achievement of students through standard evaluation process. QAAC accreditation process is also a measure of evaluation in policy level. Same question asked to respondents of Kailali multiple campuses replied:

*“In general, institutions meeting requirement and thus accredited by QAAC is said to be institution having good academic standard. Current practice shows those students graduated from accredited institution are believed to be academically standard. However, it is measured in terms of immediate and long-term result obtained by the higher education institutions in a particular piece of student evaluation. Apart from*

*immediate result like graduation rate, long-term evaluation like numbers of candidate employed through examination of public service commission, number of student in bureaucracy from particular type of higher education institution (public or private), number of research paper approved and published in a journal, student engagement in professional field and so on are used to measure academic standard of students. Higher the student success rate in such evaluation better is the academic standard of students and that of institution.”*

It is not only case of Nepal; definition of academic standard is determined by assessment process own by authorized body of quality assurance of certain country. Harvey and Green (1993), also agree that it is relative to user in terms of process and outcomes, and their circumstances.

From the institutional level, QAAC accredits academic institutes fulfilling academic and institutional standard. Let's explore QAAC accreditation process in order to understand academic standard from the viewpoint of QAAC.

#### **QAAC Accreditation Process:**

Scrutiny of QAAC guideline (UGC, 2012) for accreditation process reveals that there are eight different criteria based on which accreditation process gets matured. Among these, five criteria such as curricular aspects; teaching, learning and evaluation system; research, consultancy and extension; student support and guidance, and information system are directly linked to student performance and outcome. Rest of three criteria namely, policy and procedure; infrastructure and learning resources; and public information are related with both institutional and academic standard. These criteria given by UGC (2012, 9-15) are identified as pre-disposing factors for student's outcome and used as measure to gauge academic standard of higher education graduates. Academic institution meeting above mentioned criteria are accredited.

A QAAC Accredited institution means a higher education institution having accepted level of academic and institutional standard. The detail examined under each criterion is given below:

Under the curricular aspect, issue of academic flexibility, diversity to suit different levels of learners, career orientation, multi-skill development, involvement of stakeholder on curriculum development and updating are gauged. This criterion attempts to seek practice of sustainable curricular to achieve academic excellence.

Teaching learning and evaluation system deals with transparency in academic process, teaching learning strategy to address individual difference of learner, provision regarding use of ICT, reliable and valid mechanism of students' evaluation, regulation on student absence, illness and other circumstances, and other practice on teaching, learning and evaluation to achieve academic excellence are evaluated.

Research, consultancy and extension criteria measure the information on policy practice and outcome with reference to research, consultancy and extension among faculty and students. Focus on this criterion comprises evaluation of practice of the faculty to publish their (faculty and students) research to academic journal; promotion of research culture and participation in consultancy work.

Highlights of student support and guidance criteria are efforts of institutions to provide necessary assistance to the students for their holistic progression. This criteria focus on information on program, fee structure, financial aid and student support system; monitoring of student progression; mechanism for student counseling and job placement.

Categories evaluated under information system are student progression and success rate; employability of graduates; student satisfaction with their program; teaching effectiveness and institutions performance indicators are involved.

In such, in Nepalese prospective academic standard is better student achievement or outcome in long term evaluation rather than immediate result like pass out rate or graduation rate. It means better the student outcome, better is the academic standard of that institution. Such outcome are measured in terms of student appointment in governmental service after succeeding certain level of university degree, student engagement in a field matching their academic degree, good performance of student in public service commission, student expansion in research work and extension service and so on. In addition student outcome is impacted by physical facility and quality human resources of academic institution as well.



### 5.3 Reviews on Key Indicators

Above discussion suggests that academic standard in Nepal is based upon the criteria of accreditation process. In this research, some of the indicators present within criteria are taken for study purpose. These indicators may be student appointment through PSC, research and publication and student engagement in their field, graduation rate, physical facility and human resources of HEIs.

#### 5.3.1 Graduation Rate

Graduation rate is the numbers of student passed out of the total student appeared in the certain level of examination. Semester system of examination is in pragmatic stage in Tribhuvan University. Annual examination is only mean of student evaluation in TU to till date. However, data shows that there is not remarkable difference between graduation rate of public and private HEIs of TU.

To compare graduation rate, data were collected from TU controller of examinations and some of the private colleges of the country. To avoid bias, graduation rate of bachelor lever (final year) examinations were collected from remote to urban part of the country. Graduation rate of public HEIs shows that they have almost uniform type of result all over the country. At the same time, such gaps of private institutions are wide. The private HEIs situated at remote area has very low graduation rate whereas located at urban area (capital city) has near about 100% student success rate in annual examination. Table shows that result of RIA is in between 80-90% each year, as it is highly expensive private college located at central Kathmandu.

Year(BS)*	Public HEIs				Private HEIs			
	DMC	LMC	KMC	Total	NC	RIA	MBC	Total
2069	47.85	31.28	48.16	<b>41.14</b>	37.73	93.87	22.85	<b>54.01</b>
2070	44.69	48.44	33.61	<b>41.24</b>	25.00	97.77	23.21	<b>48.87</b>
2071	30.76	40.00	43.17	<b>40.16</b>	10.44	82.75	34.61	<b>47.08</b>

\*2071 BS – 2014 AD

**Figure 4: Graduation Rates of Public and Private Campuses**

Even the stakeholders of private HEIs accept that the variation in graduation rate shows that there is not uniformity in academic policy, human resources, teaching and learning strategy, evaluation and examination system, and research and extension service. This is reflected by better result of private HEIs situated at capital city and poor result of institutions at urban area from the same piece of student evaluation.

Although, public HEIs has a bit less graduation rate, but result is almost similar from eastern region to remote western region of the country. Mohoshin Mohommad, technician of statistics and examination section of COE explains possible reason as:

*Same examination at the same time is employed to both type of institution throughout the country. All the public campuses follow same kind of organizational structure, governance, staffing, human resources, research work and teaching learning strategy. It varies based upon institutions in the private sector, which impacts on student outcome”.*

Examining graduation rate private institutions seems a bit better. However difference is not so wide.

### 5.3.2 Student Enrollment in Bureaucracy

According to public service commission (2014), 9565 students were appeared in qualifying examination of officer 6<sup>th</sup> level for Nepal government in 2013. Out of them 2192 were qualified. In the same examination, 3339 out of 13215 were qualified in year 2012 and 3719 out of 9186 were qualified in year 2011. The success rate is 22.9%, 25.2% & 40.4% in the year 2013, 2012 and 2011 respectively (PSC, 2014: 48, PSC, 2013:44 & PSC, 2012: 43). This examination is taken to those students graduated from university and wish to enroll into Nepal bureaucracy each year. This result reflects the status of academic standard of Nepal.

Year	Students appeared in exam.	Passed students	Success rate
2013	9565	2192	22.9
2012	13215	3339	25.2
2011	9186	3719	40.4

**Figure 5: Student Success Rate in PSC Qualifying Examination**

Interview was taken to member of PSC and asked to compare academic standard of public and private HEIs of Nepal. He responded:

*Taking into account the official data of PSC, overall academic standard of Nepalese higher education is not satisfactory. About 60% of graduated student get unsuccessful in the qualifying examination of PSC each year...*

*..... if you ask about public and private institution separately we don't have exact figure, but most of the officials recruiting in government job through PSC examination belongs to public campuses of TU.*

He further elaborates the reason:

*First, private HEIs always focus on quantity rather than quality. Their prime objective is to increase enrollment and graduation rate at any cost. It gives good output but bad outcome for long-term.*

*Second, mostly students of private HEIs are from good socio-economic status. For them, joining bureaucracy is only one option among several choices like self-job, abroad settlement and so on. Most of the Public HEIs students are of lower socio-economic status and laborious in nature. They have limited options and hence, education is only the mean of improving their living standard. So, they work hard for PSC examination.*

*Third, academic and human resources of most of the private HEIs are insufficient and improvised whereas, government has invested big share of money to improve physical infrastructure of public Campuses. Moreover, public sector receives periodic grants and aids from philanthropic works, which is unusual for private HEIs.*

*Last, most of the postgraduate private campuses are established in last decade. In some extent it also impact on number of successful candidates from private campuses. All these factors ultimately influence student achievements.*

Above finding suggest that number of student enrolling in Nepal bureaucracy is less from private HEIs compared to public one. Taking enrollment of student in bureaucracy as an indicator, academic standard of private HEIs is lower.

### 5.3.3 Student Engagement in Professional Field

Teaching is the most adopted profession in Nepal. It is assumed that more than seventy-five percent of the graduates engage in teaching field once in their life (Thapaliya, 2013). Private colleges are providers of employment to large masses of graduates from different field like medicine, nursing, engineering, agriculture and management and so on. There are huge numbers of graduates who choose different profession unfamiliar to their academic qualification. A student graduated from physics very often seen in the job of medical marketing which are normally two unmatched fields. Medical marketing needs the knowledge of either management or pharmacy which is never fulfilled by the knowledge of science in physics. Same kinds of trend are frequent in journalism, development projects, banking, business and industry sector of the country.

Such mal-professional human resources are the product of private HEIs in most of the cases. For instance, most of the Health Education teachers in boarding high schools are either science or English graduates. They believe that science and English graduates have better English than other fields. Additionally, they choose private HEIs graduates rather than public, keeping in mind that English fluency of private one is a bit better. They never care the field-specialization. Same situation is frequent for social studies as well. In both cases producer and consumer of such mal-professionals are private sectors. Same trend is prevalent in banking, business and marketing sector. There are large masses of employer working in private bank graduated from Nepali literature, Political science, Social science and other non-related discipline. However, extra-disciplinary engagement is very less in technical education like medicine, nursing and engineering.

A question asked to Interviewee, to explain nature and possible cause of extra-disciplinary engagements of the graduates. He responds as:

*Obviously, graduates choosing different field for their occupation are more observed from graduates of private HEIs (leaving behind exception of technical education). There may be several causes: For example, in the capital city there are more than two dozen private colleges, where neither students nor teachers are seen taking class regularly. But more than twenty students appear final examination each year from each HEIs. The number is elevating each year. Actually, what they do is they just get admitted into*

*college and start/continue their job for a year. At the end of academic session they attend examinations and institutions makes them pass anyway. For public HEIs, running pseudo-institution is not possible apart from few students not attending regular class.*

*..... In such, student cannot get job related to his field because of the lack of expected academic standard or he/she continues previous job even after graduation. In both condition graduates retain in extra-disciplinary field. This culture is relatively more in graduates of private HEIs.*

In case of the professional engagement, respondent suggest that data is higher in public campuses. Graduates mostly working extra-disciplinary field are from private campuses.

#### **5.3.4 Student Involvement in Research Work**

CERID is the research center of Tribhuvan University related to Education. It publishes three research journals annually (CERID, 2015). Its prime objective is to undertake the research activities in various critical issues of higher education and disseminates experiences and information by publishing research reports and journals. From the piles of author and co-author published article from various HEIs, student involving in research publication is very less.

Question asked about research and publication tendency of students to interviewee of public campus reply:

*Every master student is obligated to prepare master thesis in second year of the program. Among them one thesis from each department is awarded in quality basis and published in University journal. There are some other students who publish article in their own effort as well.*

Most of the interviewee from private HEIs, accept that none of the students have published thesis or article to University journal yet from there institution. They elaborate possible reason as:

*It is the resource problem, financial as well as time and human resources. Grant is supplied by government for students of public campuses. We do not facilitate with grant. It impacts on quality. Students' research papers we accept is not accepted by central department because of quality constrain.*

But, respondent from UGC has different response on it. The response is:

*Budget is not research obstacle of private campus as they collect huge amount of tuition fees from student. In fact, they are benefit oriented. They do not work hard on research. Sub-qualified thesis supervisor with less pay are mobilized for formality. They do not guide students correctly. It neither improves research quality nor promotes research culture. Private HEIs are relatively weak on academic research.*

Same as other indicators, in research and publication as well private campuses are far back from public HEIs. It means we conclude that academic standard of private campuses are lower than public campuses.

### 5.3.5 Physical Facility

Thapaliya (2013) reveals that infrastructure and resources have distinct and separate influences on educational outcome. Broad school premises, playground, enriched library helps to build sound academic environment. These capital and human resources are crucial for students' attainment. He further elaborates that private sectors has excellent academic achievement up to higher secondary level because of its good physical facility and human organization. But condition of higher education is just opposite. Except few private HEIs of capital city none of them have wide playground, good building and rich library facility.

Physical facilities of HEIs are tabled below:

Particular	Public HEIs			Private HEIs		
	DMC	LMC	KMC	NC	RIA	MBC
Area	5.0	6.5	4.0	0.5	0.6	3.0
Building	RCC	RCC	RCC		RCC	RCC
Playground	2.0	1.8	2.0	None	0.06	0.8

**Figure 6: Physical Facility of Public and Private HEIs**

The table above shows that physical facility of public HEIs is better than that of private HEIs. Dr. SP Neupane, Campus chief of MBC commented on relationship between physical facility and academic standard as:

*Result shows that there is not remarkable influence of physical facility on graduation rate. Graduation rate of private sector is better even the resources are very limited compared to public sector. But, it hampers in research, in practical classes and overall skill development of students. It obviously lowers academic standard of students.*

### **5.3.6 Quality Human Resources**

As stated in the upper segment of this chapter, academic standard is influenced by a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Among these several factors human resources involved in the particular academic institution is one. When academic standard is gauged in terms of quality human resources, public HEIs are seen one step forward compared to private HEIs.

Normally in Nepal postgraduate degree is required to serve as lecturer in HEIs. Data collected from each institution studied in this thesis shows that most of the public HEIs has failed to stay upon this criteria. The table below shows that numbers of lectures with their academic qualification. All the lectures of Public HEIs have qualification above postgraduate degree with some Ph. D. In other hand, in private HEIs it is found that there are some lectures who are teaching student without preferred postgraduate degree qualified to become lecture in HEIs. Lectures having Ph. D. qualification are almost none in such institution throughout the country.

Qualification of teachers definitely impacts academic standard of students. Comparing the table below we can conclude that academic standard of private HEIs is relatively lower than public HEIs in Nepal.

<b>No. of Instructors</b>	<b>Public HEIs</b>			<b>Private HEIs</b>		
	DMC	LMC	KMC	NC	RIA	MBC
Under-graduates	0	0	0	6	0	5
Post-graduates	51	56	44	6	40	11
Ph. D.	5	7	3	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	56	63	47	12	40	17

**Figure 7: Human Resources in Public and Private HEIs**

#### **5.4 Pro and Cons of Current Practices For Academic Standard**

We come to know that accreditation is the only mechanism practiced for academic standard and quality issues in Nepal. First, accreditation itself is in controversy that the criteria and guideline follow by it is weather enough to measure academic standard or not. Second, this mechanism too is not thoroughly executed by every section. If accreditation process was implemented thoroughly, private colleges were not mushroomed without bountiful criteria they supposed to meet. Even some campuses meet relatively very less criteria are accredited and are under operation.

Public institutions have government funding, are rich in terms of manpower, conduct research and studies as well. But their outcome is also not satisfactory as compared to resources invested for them. The graduation rate of public institution is always down relative to private one.

However, an institution accredited means that has accepted level of academic standard. As revealed earlier national guideline is same for all institutions regarding academic standard. But internally, Private institutions always focus for high graduation rate shadowing other factors that influence students' outcome. Public campuses work out evenly with all factors that may leave impact on student achievement like job employability, research involvement, physical facility and human resources. This kind of dual trend in public and private institutions has few positive and more negative consequences. They are paragraphed below.

According to CBS (2013), number of student awarded with higher education degree (bachelor and masters) is 1% of total population. It was below 1% in the year 2002. Similarly Literacy rate of the country also rocketed since last decade. It is because of the increasing number of higher education institutions up to remote strata of the country. Currently, country is dependent in academic manpower, which was occupied by Indian teachers in the past. These are the some positive consequences of increase in numbers of campuses though their academic standards are not satisfactory so far. More than 90% of them belong to TU and majority of newly established campus are from private investment. High graduation rate of private campus encouraged student to enroll into higher education. It has enhanced the importance of education in the public level.

On the other hand day by day increasing unemployed graduates and increasing number of youth migrating to abroad for the search of work shows that there is something wrong in education and



qualification. It is more serious that annually large numbers of Nepalese graduates migrate Arab and other third country for job and most of them work as unskilled even they have University degree. The numbers of graduates involving in unrelated field is also expanding inside the country as well. These are the negative consequences of high graduation rate with low academic quality.

Recently central investigation bureau has launched an operation to find out mal-professional in different sector of close public concern and found that around 3500 mal-professional were working without proper qualification. Most of them were private product with proper University degree but fail in council examination like medical and engineering council. This is also cons of lower academic standard that student easily pass University examination but fail in professional council evaluation in several attempt.

Employment opportunity in research and innovative sector is very less in Nepal. The biggest employment market of graduates in the country is teaching sector. Studying and teaching is very big vicious cycle of graduates. Almost every graduate goes through teaching once in his life. It is seen that a graduates from less standard institution produces same quality of large number of student in his life.

## **CHAPTER: SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The last section of this study is divided into three sections: summary, conclusion and recommendation respectively. Summary section deals with sum up of chapters of this study. Conclusion section represents the finding of the study at a glance. And the last section of this chapter recommends concerned authority for the betterment of academic standard of higher education academic standard of Nepal.

#### **6.2 Summary**

The study of this thesis is based upon Tribhuvan University. TU is the old and leading higher education institution of Nepal. It holds major portion of higher education of the country. So, TU was taken to study academic standard of Nepalese higher education academic standard. Objective of this study was to compare academic standard between public and private campuses of this University. Following the objective, study was guided by three research questions: First, what is higher education academic standard? And how it is understood in Nepal? Second, how public and private HEIs are adopting current academic standard in Nepal? And third, what are the positive and negative consequences of the way public and private HEIs adopt to academic standard? In order to compare academic standard of TU, qualitative study design is employed in this study. Semi-structured interview and secondary data analysis were selected as strategic choices.

Higher education of Nepal has jumped big step since the first college was established in 1918 with less than a dozen of students of elite ruling family of the country. The affiliation, organizational structure and management of the college of that time were rooted to Indian University. In a century, country owns around a dozen of university with own organizational structure and management (Sharma, 2015: 26). Now, higher education of Nepal has experienced all global practices on education like internationalization, privatization and so on.

As the expansion of the academic arena is wider country has made controlling, regulating and improving mechanism side by side. University grants commission is example of such body to

regulate and control academic standard. However, academic standard of Nepalese higher education is not satisfactory. Higher education of Nepal has to go big institutional reform in order to achieve international level of educational quality and standard.

Reviewing literature it is found that academic standard is controlling part of academic quality. Academic quality and academic standard is a continuous and cyclic process. Academic standard refers to academic performance or outcome of particular student in a particular level, measured through specific evaluation. Such evaluation may be graduation rate, engagement of student in professional field, learning outcome or student involvement in research work or so on. These evaluation tools on the other hand are indicators of academic quality. In this way literature review of this study has termed the relationship of academic quality and academic standard as cyclic tract.

Reviewing the global trend academic standard or quality is assured either internally or externally. Internal quality assurance by individual HEIs and external quality assurance is done through policy and under national framework of the government or its authority. However, in practice three models: European model, US model or British model of quality assurance are adopted throughout the world at this time.

Results in this study were drawn with the help of information taken from authority of the TU and concerned campuses with the help of semi-structured interview. In addition secondary data analysis was considered to shed light upon it. It is found that there is no single and separate definition of academic standard as it comes with academic accreditation process in Nepalese context. Majorly and superficially, graduation rate is understood as academic standard in the country. But QAAC and respondent of campuses of this study put forward the view that academic standard depends on student outcome in broad sense and few criteria of individual campuses as well. Regarding student outcome, academic standard is measured more meaningfully in terms of student enrollment in bureaucracy, student engagement in professional field and student involvement in research work. It is also determined by physical facility and quality human manpower of individual campus as well.

Measuring academic standard in terms of these criteria found that public campuses of Tribhuvan University are somehow better than private campuses.

### 6.3 Conclusion

Conclusion of this study is based upon the results and discussion of the previous chapter. Results of this study are aftereffects of the inquiry of three research questions made in the first chapter. There were three guiding research questions: 1. what is the higher education research standard? And how it is understood in Nepal? 2. How public and private HEIs are adopting to current academic standard in Nepal? and 3. What are the positive and negative consequences of the ways the public and private HEIs adopt to academic standard?

Academic standard is student performance and level of achievement in particular piece of assessment in a subject or at the end of a degree (DEST 2002, as cited in Coates 2010). Various indicators of academic quality are used to measure academic standard of the students and institutions. In Nepal, separate definition is not found to define academic standard although quality control mechanism exists in the country. Respondent replied that academic standard in the country is defined in line with accreditation process. QAAC accredits the academic institution periodically based upon pre-made criteria. Among them some area are purely based upon higher education academic standard. Such criteria mainly measure student outcome and achievements. So, in Nepalese context graduates from an institution having high professional engagement, high bureaucracy enrollments and high rate of involvement in research work are said to be students and institutions having good academic standard. Graduation rate is also one of such indicator to measure academic standard. In addition physical facility and human resources also impacts academic standard.

Apart from this distinct elucidation of academic standard given by QAAC, private HEIs adopt their own practice to define academic standard. Most of the private providers mainly define graduation rate as a tool to measure academic standard and make internal strategy to achieve high graduation rate accordingly.

Study shows that academic standard of public HEIs is better in evaluation of long-term achievements of the student like enrollment in bureaucracy, involvement in research work and enrollment in professional field . But in short term evaluation through graduation rate, private campuses are somehow ahead.

## 6.4 Recommendations

Results of this study elicit that academic standard of Nepalese higher education is not satisfactory. Public campuses are provided with governmental fund and huge amount of external aids. But there is not expected reform since past several years. Private sector is even more worrisome and illusionable. Externally, graduation rate has misapprehended students and parents to invest and enroll into private HEIs. But private providers have not given attention on long-term achievement of student. If this situation remains alive for long time it will ruin whole higher education system of country. Upgrade of academic standard is not possible without prodigious higher education reform.

This study recommends QAAC and TU as follows:

Till the date academic standard is viewed from the eye of accreditation process in Nepal. QAAC should make distinct guideline and definition for higher education academic standard.

QAAC should retain their autonomy and independency in decision making process. QAAC should not influence by other stakeholders like MOE and particular HEIs. Haphazard accrediting practice should be stopped.

HEIs not meeting criteria for operation should be banned. Higher education should be made service oriented rather than profit oriented.

Uniform guideline in fee structure, evaluation, human resource and physical facility should be employed for private providers and cross checked periodically.

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## APPENDIX-I

### Interview Guide

Name of Respondent:

Name of HEI:

Date:

1. How Academic standard be defined in relation to Nepalese higher education?
2. What method is used to assure quality and ensure academic standard to higher education in Nepal?
3. What are differences in policy/procedure that private and public HEIs adopt to ensure academic standard?
4. What is the way private and public higher education institutions adopt to ensure academic standard?
5. How the academic standard is measured (Indicators) in case of Nepal?
  - 1.....
  - 2.....
  - 3.....
  - 4.....
  - .....
  - .....
6. Which institutions performing better academic standard in Nepal? What do you think?

