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**Ninth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting for the  
Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and  
Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific**  
*in conjunction with the*  
**Regional Seminar on Regional Harmonization: Establishing  
a Common Higher Education Area**  
Seoul, Republic of Korea  
22-23 May 2007

**Country Report**  
**NEPAL**

**Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and  
Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific  
22-23 May 2007, Korea**

**Country Report, Nepal**

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**1. Introduction**

Nepal is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of bio-diversity due to its unique geographical position and altitudinal variation. The elevation of the country ranges from 60 m above sea level to the highest point on earth, Mt. Everest at 8,848 m; all within a distance of 150 km. Nepal has always allured the world with her majestic mountains, picturesque beauty and the serenity in the hearts of her people. Bestowed with natural richness, Nepal is endowed with the historical and cultural aspects of interest. The historical buildings, temples and stupas of Nepal call the attention of individuals from every nook and corner of the world.

However, in our country, challenges remain far from attaining the goals for development. For, Nepal is rather a complex mixture of many aspects and conditions like extreme poverty, complex geo-political situation and a very little literacy circle. This demands not only hard work but also collective commitment, balanced strategy and priority policy. Steeped in ignorance and having suffered for want of literacy for centuries, we now know that education constitutes the mainspring of development. The significance of Education for all is no less than “the achievement of a better life for all people, grounded in civilized values and human rights and responsibilities” (12, Education for All Global Synthesis). So, to protect the mission of Education for All, with creating women's equal access to education and assimilation of deprived and marginalized people are the greatest challenges for us in the present context. The structure of education in Nepal can be divided into five clear parts.

1. Primary level: from standard 1 to standard 5
2. Lower secondary level: from standard 6 to standard 8
3. Secondary level: from standard 9 to standard 10 (also known as the School Leaving Examinations).
4. Higher Secondary level from standard 11 to standard 12 (under Higher secondary education Board), and
5. University level: Undergraduate and above

Higher education in Nepal started in 1958 with the establishment of Tribhuvan university. At present, higher education in Nepal is offered by six universities: Tribhuvan University (TU), Mahendra Sanskrit University (MSU),

Kathmandu University (KU), Purbanchal University (PurU), Pokhara University (PokU) and Lumbini University (LU) and Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB). In Nepal higher education has been defined as the education from 11<sup>th</sup> grade and onward. However, a recent proposal of the government is that grades from 1 through 12 will be included in school education and the education beyond grade 12 will include higher education. There has been a discussion on this proposal among the academia and the final decision for its implementation is yet to be made.

In addition to this, there are two more academic institutions viz. BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS) and National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMC) that run medical courses of undergraduate and post graduate level.

Apart from this, there are also other institutions such as Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) and Center for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) that run higher education program both at liberal arts and technical education.

#### **Number of Students in Different Higher Education Institutions**

<b>University/ Institutions</b>	<b>Constituent Campuses</b>	<b>Affiliated Campuses</b>	<b>Total Campuses</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
TU	60	348	408	231617
KU	6	11	17	5162
MSU	12	17	29	2834
PURU	3	86	89	8812
POKU	3	23	26	5615
BPKISH	1	x	1	691
NAMS	1	x	1	125
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>254856</b>

*Source: UGC Annual Report 2005/2006*

Out of the total enrolment in these universities, TU accounts for about 90% of tertiary enrolment followed by Purwanchal, Pokhara and Kathmandu universities. Universities deliver their academic programs through publicly-funded constituent campuses and privately-funded affiliated campuses. Affiliated campuses consist of both community campuses and private campuses. Community and private campuses account for 27% and 9% of the tertiary enrolment respectively, and constituent campuses for the rest.

HSEB enrolls about 1,60,000 students at grade 11 every year and CTEVT enrolls 5000 students in its various technical and vocational courses.

In the past, the share of higher education provider was occupied solely by the government run institutions. Since the government adopted open policy of allowing the non-government sector in the higher education, the private sector has been attracted to this and as a result, the private colleges in higher

education have outnumbered the government funded colleges. At present there are 485 privately run colleges under different universities that run undergraduate and post graduate programs in different subjects. Similarly, there are altogether 1197 higher secondary schools that are affiliated to HSEB and out of them 687 are managed by communities in public schools and the rest are managed by the private schools and colleges.

Nepal's higher education system has undergone serious changes during the last two decades owing to the establishment of a multi-university concept that opened the system to private provision, as well as the introduction of decentralization in TU, and introduction of higher secondary education. The universities are more autonomous and they operate academically independently but they receive a substantial financial support from the government through the government body called University Grants Commission (UGC). In case of higher secondary schools, HSEB is responsible for affiliation, curriculum development, program monitoring and examination administration. In addition to this, HSEB also provides some financial support to the community managed higher secondary schools. The following section outlines the role of HSEB in higher education in Nepal:

Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) was established in 1989 under the Higher Secondary Education Act. The Board is involved in running the 10+2 system in the country. Nepal National Commission of Education 1992 recommended the importance of the 10+2 structure in the education system and viewed it as the first step towards specialization. However, it was felt that the 10+2 structure should essentially focus on the need for addressing middle level manpower requirements and for imparting necessary knowledge and skills to those students who want to continue their education at undergraduate level.

The objectives of Higher Secondary Education are to:

- Prepare students for the world of work especially in meeting middle level manpower requirements in different fields.
- Prepare students for general higher education and for professional disciplines.

The main functions of the HSEB are as follows:

- Granting approval for +2 schools.
- Developing and revising curricula and textbook materials.
- Conducting examinations and publishing results.
- Awarding certificates to higher Secondary School graduates.
- Supervising and monitoring Higher Secondary School programs.
- Implementing plans and programs for improving Higher Secondary Education.
- Recruiting technical, professional and administrative staff.
- Designing and implementing training programs for +2 school teachers and other staff.

- Conducting seminars and workshops.
- Undertaking research activities, which focus on various issues in this field.
- Keeping liaison with various national and international institutions.

## **2. Situation analysis of cross-boarder education**

In the recent years, the tendency of going abroad for higher education studies is in increasing ratio. Every year about 5000 students go to the USA for undergraduate and post graduate study and about the same number goes to the other countries in Europe, Australia, China, India and many other countries. There are hundreds of abroad education consultancy services in Kathmandu through which the students establish linkage with the universities and enroll themselves in various academic programs.

Among the various countries, India is one of the most popular destination for the Nepalese students. There are thousands of Nepali students who are studying in many Indian universities. The main programs of study for these students there are medical courses, engineering, business administration and computer engineering. Similarly, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh are other neighboring countries where many Nepali students have enrolled particularly in the medical courses.

There are also many foreign students who are studying in Nepalese higher education institutions. The major programs of study for them are medical courses (in Kathmandu University and BP Koirala Memorial Medical Programs), linguistics and sociology/anthropology courses (Tribhuvan University). There are very few foreign students who are studying at grade 11 and 12.

Regarding the staff and faculty movement, it is very rare that Nepali staff and faculty go to the other countries so often with some exceptions. However, there are many Indian teachers and administrative staff working in different higher education institutions. There are some many Indian professors in KU and BPKIS Medical Education Programs.

## **3. National policies and practices on quality awareness and mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education**

It is often remarked that the policy of higher education is inadequate and improper. But nowhere can we get impressions as to what makes the policy adequate. If we make an attempt to understand initiatives taken by other countries we find them aligning their higher education policy with their national development philosophy defined in a holistic manner.

In Nepalese higher education system, quality has remained an important issue. The universities have their own quality definitions and there are no uniform quality indicators. University Grants Commission (UGC) functions as a coordinating body for all the universities and it has many different roles to

play. Under UGC there are various committees such as Accreditation Committee, Scholarship Committee, Academic Committee, Grants Committee etc. The UGC has played a facilitating role in the enhancement of quality in the university education through research promotion, training/workshop for teachers, visiting programmes, library strengthening, infrastructure support, fellowships and teaching materials supports.

#### **4. International cooperation, bilateral and multi-lateral agreement**

Efforts have been made to enhance the academic quality of higher education in Nepal. Some funds were also provided by the Government through the ADB funded Secondary Education Development Project. The assistance was utilized for Office Building of HSEB, and providing training for some teachers. Some Higher Secondary teachers working in higher secondary schools were trained under this provision. The Government also signed an agreement with the World Bank and the fund was utilized for the development of civil works for +2 schools, colleges, university campus infrastructure, technical assistance, and curriculum development.

#### **5. Emergent issues relation to recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education**

There are many issues revolving around the higher education system in Nepal. Some of the pertinent issues that have serious implications in the recognition of studies are as follows:

- I. There are five Universities in Nepal, which are established by their own special acts, and they do not have any uniformity in management systems. For example, the curriculum, affiliation and teacher management are all different in different universities.
- II. The Tribhuvan University (TU) and 61 campuses under it are run by the Government; rest almost 287 campuses affiliated to TU are run by the private sector or community services. This brings more un-uniformity in higher education.
- III. The lack of vocational and technical education has increased the number of educated but unemployed mass. The mass who pass out higher education are only academically educated whose qualification is not easily sold in the competitive market.
- IV. The evaluation system of the five universities is not uniform. This fails to assess the quality in people.
- V. Once a curriculum is set, it keeps on running for years, so, cannot keep in pace with the developing nations in today's world. To add, developing the curricula and textbooks of the higher education level, like striving for integrating subjects like HIV/AIDS, Safe Motherhood, consequences of rapid population growth, family planning and

reproductive track infected diseases and their control measures still lacks.

Similarly, some other issues in this regard are:

- weak contributions of the sector in creating and adopting knowledge to support economic growth and social harmony;
- poor quality and market relevance of education;
- poor access for students from under-privileged households, especially girls, dalits and educationally disadvantaged janajati5;
- inadequate internal efficiency, particularly for the public provision;
- weak financial sustainability of the public provision;
- widening gap between the quality of public and private provisions resulting in segregation of students along income status;
- negligible public funding for community campuses; and
- inability of universities to focus on their core functions given that they offer Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) programs- i.e., higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12).
- political instability in the country for over a decade.
- lack of adequate academic leadership in privately funded higher institutions.
- frequent change in policy due to donor driven projects
- lack of uniform voice in higher education policy among different political forces

## **6. Suggestions for the Ninth session of the Regional Committee**

In order to address the common problems of the participating countries, the Regional Meeting will be very useful.

- I. In the area of minimizing costly education, the government should increase its investment through University Grant Commission. (UGC). The regional meeting should ensure enough allocation in the higher education budget through the pledges by the respective governments.
- II. Politics should not be incorporated in education. Since higher education is a bridge to the youths towards their potential future, the governments should aware the political leaders and students about this backdrop. Further, politicization in the higher

management in the higher education sector should be highly discouraged.

- III. There should be an umbrella organization for the management of all the universities in a country. The acts, rules and laws for all the universities should be established by the same umbrella institution for a uniform management.
- IV. Emphasis should be given on the importance of vocational and technical education. Vocational and technical education can be considered the backbone of any country. The state must identify the importance of this education and highly prioritize this issue. This helps in the development of the economic sector of the country in particular and all in general. These kinds of institution help youths to go to work of world as soon as they complete their education and help them not to go to frustration.
- V. The curriculum should be uniform for all the higher education institutes further creating uniformity in the evaluation system. The curriculum should incorporate subjects like HIV/AIDS, human rights and equity. That is to say that, the curriculum of the higher studies should be up-to-date with the global context and ever-changing world.
- VI. There should be a mechanism of sharing experiences and expertise among the different countries where cross-boarder education is an issue. This can be done through regular meetings, seminars, and exchange of expertise in curriculum development, textbook writing, joint research projects and documentation of the best practices.

**Questionnaire** *(Responded by Mr. Devi Prasad Barakoti, HSEB, Nepal)*

### **1. National Level Changes in Recognition of Qualifications and Quality Assurance/Accreditation**

Have there been any recent changes in the laws and regulations relating to the recognition of qualifications? If so, please describe. Have there been any recent changes in the laws and regulations relating to the quality assurance and accreditation? Does the new legislation/regulation relate to cross-border providers of higher education? If so, give examples. What impact do these changes have on the implementation of the regional convention(s) which your country has ratified or signed?

**Answer:** No, there haven't been any changes in the laws and regulations relating to the recognition of qualifications. Due to instable political scenario there have been no recent changes to the quality assurance and accreditation. The new legislation has not effectively been able to regulate the cross border providers of higher education but is actively working on the matter. Regarding the changes on the implementation of the regional conventions our country is a developing one and has not seek quite a lot of opportunities to have the interaction and conventions to the other institutions so far.

### **2. Key Challenges Related to the Content of the Convention**

In your region, what are the key substantive issues that would require attention in the review of the /updated Regional Convention? What would be the best way for these issues to be addressed in the framework of the UNESCO Regional Conventions on the recognition of qualifications? Please identify and describe.

Examples of issues include the following:

- International Qualifications (including joint degrees, double degrees, IB),
- New and Non-traditional qualifications (including vocational education, recognition of prior learning/life/work experiences),
- Distance and On-line Education (Domestic and International),
- Intermediate Qualifications and Credits ( study abroad qualifications)
- National Qualifications Frameworks
- Qualifications awarded by International/Crossborder Providers
- Numerus Clausus (quota systems)
- Professional qualifications through the higher education system
- Recognition for Employment
- Entrance Exams
- Quality assurance of programmes and or institutions
- accreditation of institutions

**Answer:**

Some of the additional challenges are mentioned as follows:

- Quality issues in multi-university context.
- Developing quality indicators for the degrees awarded by different institutions.
- Balance between global and local knowledge.

**3. What are the repercussions of the developments described above in your region with regard to the criteria and procedures used for the assessment and recognition of qualifications and the mobility of students, staff and researchers?**

**Answer:**

Due to the advancement of communication technology and globalization, people are now free to move from place to place not only for study but for employment opportunities. In order to address these changes in higher education system, we now need to revisit the total educational scenario in higher education including human resource preparation and development.

**4. What are the repercussions of the above on the development described above in your region with regard to the criteria and procedures for quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation procedures?**

**Answer:**

Revisiting the accreditation procedures and modification of the existing accreditation procedures are very crucial and steps in this regard should be immediately taken.

**5. Key Issues for Implementation of Convention**

What are the important issues and obstacles facing the implementation of the current or future updated version of the regional Convention? What amendments or new provisions would enable a more effective and efficient implementation process?

**Answer:**

Political situation of any country is very much responsible to have the sustain development throughout the nation. Development of the higher education in

developed countries is fairly systematic mainly due to the long lasting political stability. This can be clearly observed in countries like China and the US. Thus, commitment at the political level is the foremost and the key factor that should be looked into for the implementation of the current or future updated version of the regional conventions. Minimizing the fees, overall review of the curricula, stability of the government are some of the factors that ensures the effective and efficient implementation process.

## **6. New Definitions, Elements, Principles**

Do new or additional definitions, elements; principles need to be introduced into a revised convention? Please identify and describe.

### **Answer**

Terms such as “cross boarder education” and issues such as the balance between global knowledge and local knowledge might need to be elaborated in the meeting in order to create a common discourse among the participating countries.

## **7. Link between Recognition of Qualifications and Quality Assurance/ Accreditation of Higher Education Programs and Institutions.**

Should the issues of quality assurance and accreditation also be addressed in a revised Regional Convention? What would be feasible and appropriate ways to address these aspects?

The States Parties of the Lisbon Recognition Convention for Europe are committed to provide information on the assessment of higher education institutions and programmes.

The Bologna Process goes step further and requires its signatories to establish a national quality assurance system by a set date.

Would it be useful that the revised convention for your region contains a similar stipulation?

### **Answer:**

Yes, the beginning point could be the development of common quality indicators for different countries

## **8. Public Responsibility**

Should the conventions have a commitment on the public responsibility to higher education? What should that commitment cover: information on higher education quality and opportunities? Commitment for funding? Any other?

**Answer:**

Government alone can't conduct the education and without public support. Thus, shared responsibility has to be there between the community and the government. Private sectors should also be encouraged to have their role in education.

**9. Inter-regional Dimension**

What mechanisms or strategies for inter-regional collaboration in the framework of the UNESCO Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications would be feasible and effective?

Is there a need for international recommendations, guidelines, codes and what would be their objective? How would they address issues beyond regional and national frameworks?

What would be the steps to create an International Network of Information Centers on Qualifications Recognition and Quality Assurance (e.g. By linking existing networks such as the ENIC/NARIC with emerging ones such as the APARNET in Asia and the Pacific)?

**Answer:**

Common approach on the key issues such as quality indicators and curriculum framework needs to be worked out on the Regional meeting. The interaction between the various persons in education field will enrich the horizon of the mutual needs and necessities. In addition to this, the countries need to prepare an action plan for the future and it should be shared among the countries. Follow up meetings in different stages are also essential in order to foster mutual learning.