

Abstract: As South Asia was caught up with fever to establish Open Universities in the 1970s, Nepali educationists also started lobbying for one in Nepal. Their efforts led to incorporation of appropriate national policy in the Five-Year Plan of 1980. This policy stood and got further strengthened for the next 30 years but actual establishment of such university remained as an elusive dream. On such backdrop, Government of Nepal and Non-Resident Nepali Association came to an agreement to collaborate for the establishment of Open University in Nepal in 2010. Amidst a series of ups and downs, this collaboration endured and resulted in a tangible outcome. Open University of Nepal Act 2073 came to effect in July 2016. In the last few months, the government has taken initiative to appoint the university executives and it has become certain the Nepal is finally establishing its national open university this year. However, whether this university will be open, universally accessible, and bearer of high quality education as aspired by its campaigners is still not fully certain. This presentation will deliberate on the assumptions, aims and aspirations that led to the above mentioned collaboration, the stressors that have emerged since, and the challenges that lie ahead in the establishment and operation of the aspired Open University of Nepal.

About the Presenter: Dr. Pramod Dhakal is the lead proponent and campaigner of Open University of Nepal in the diaspora Nepali masses. After much informal presentation among scholarly community, his ideas was first adopted by Canada Foundation for Nepal in 2006, by Non-Resident Nepali Association - Canada in 2008, and Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) International Coordination Council (ICC) in 2009, and the first-task force was created within NRNA-ICC in 2009 under his leadership. This team successfully established collaborative relationship with a number of prominent universities that are leading the open education movement and negotiated with the Government of Nepal, which led to signing of a resolution of agreement between the Government of Nepal and Non-Resident Nepali Association in 2010 for the establishment of Nepal. He has since leading the effort in various capacities and has been the Chair of Open University Taskforce in NRNA. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree from IIT Roorkee India and M.Sc. and Ph.D. Degree in Electrical Engineering from University of Saskatchewan, Canada. He brings 20 years of experience in engineering research, product development, scientific consulting and innovation ranging from entry level positions to Senior Engineer, Senior Scientist and Senior Consultant in leading companies in the world like IBM, Nortel and British Aerospace. He was also a former faculty member and Head of Electrical Engineering Department at Institute of Engineering, Tribhuvan University.