

PRIVATIZATION THROUGH AFFILIATION: TRAJECTORIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION EXPANSION IN POST-1990 NEPAL

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Introduction

In this paper, I look at the trajectories of higher education expansion in Nepal through the ‘affiliation’ mode, which in essence allows a university to provide academic framework, prescribe curricula, conduct examinations and award degrees to students from otherwise independently established, financed and operated campuses in return for the payment of affiliation fees prescribed by the university. Nepal’s first university, Tribhuvan University (TU), was established in 1959 by bringing under its ambit all hitherto existing colleges accredited by universities in India through a combination of teaching and affiliating functions. Over time, affiliation became the hallmark of higher education expansion in Nepal, with the majority of subsequently established universities adopting the model for their nationwide expansion. Whilst affiliation has contributed to meeting the increased demand for higher education, it has also led to many problems in both academic and governance spheres. So why have the newer universities established after 1990 failed to break from the shackles of affiliation? I attempt to locate the answers to this question in a number of arenas, including political and state (dis)engagement with higher education financing, and the espousal of education privatization, that albeit was masked by calls for increased community involvement in the changed post-1990 period. I argue that the affiliation avenue provided a convenient backdrop for massive expansion of the private (and non-state) institutions and fulfilled the increased demand for higher education. It benefited the state (which was unable to invest in expanding the supply of higher education), the new universities (which were established by the state but were not guaranteed state funds for their functional operation), and the private sector (which could, by investing in affiliated colleges, generate significant profits whilst providing ‘service’ to the people and the nation).

Affiliation has been used as a model of university organization in various countries at various times, and has its origin in the collegiate

university system practiced in the UK and some other countries of the British Commonwealth. However, while it has been discarded or significantly transformed in the country of origin, affiliation continues to remain a salient feature of universities in South Asia, where it has been adopted as the “master principle of university organization” (Singh 2013: 477). Even within South Asia, the problems associated with affiliation have been widely recognized and countries have sought to deal with them in various ways. For example, Bangladesh has taken measures to separate affiliating and teaching functions of universities by creating a new National University of Bangladesh in 1992 to manage colleges that were affiliated to various other universities. Currently, only the National University of Bangladesh is responsible for all affiliated colleges and the other universities have been converted to purely teaching universities (The World Bank 2014). Likewise, in India, there are strong calls for abolishing the affiliation system and creating separate structures to manage affiliated colleges (Tareen 2011; Singh 2013). India has taken measures to promote affiliated colleges with a tradition of academic excellence as autonomous colleges since 1986, and since 2000 to grant the status of deemed universities to private institutions (Powar 2011). However, these steps have made little dent on the growth of affiliated colleges that continue to account for the majority of undergraduate enrolments in the country.

Whilst the issue of affiliation largely concerns South Asian countries, privatization of higher education has become a global phenomenon, with the private sector becoming prominent even in areas where it was until recently peripheral, and accounting not only for the majority of enrolments, but also contributing to an increasingly diversified higher education. Scholars have also tried to explain the various forms privatization may assume in higher education. For instance, Tilak (2003) distinguishes between “total,” “strong,” “moderate” and “psuedo” privatization, while Umakoshi (2004) uses the typology of “private-peripheral,” “private-complementary” and “private-dominant” to explain the extent to which higher education has been permeated by the private sector. This increasing privatization is often attributed to the massification of higher education, in which there is an increased demand for access but the state (the traditional provider of higher education) is either unwilling or unable to pay the increased costs of higher education (Tilak 2003; Altbach 2005). Further, such “unanticipated” surge of private higher education has been greatest where state role and engagement

with planning of higher education seems to be minimal and where the state has been “circumscribed, notably amidst post-communist or neoliberal change” (Levy 2006: 237).

I have structured the rest of this paper as follows. After laying out the context for the development of higher education in Nepal, I discuss the engagements of major political parties and state public policies with higher education reforms in the post-1990 period. I then follow the actual trajectories of these reform agendas by describing how the political and state policy intents were realized in practice. Finally, I draw out some conclusions and implications for the future of higher education development in Nepal.

Understanding Higher Education Expansion Post-1990

Nepal has a relatively short history of higher education. The first institution of higher education (Tri-Chandra College) was established in 1918 through affiliation with first Calcutta and later Patna University of India. In the subsequent years, some more colleges affiliated to Indian universities were established in various parts of the country. Discussions for the establishment of a national university in Nepal were first initiated in 1948, which focused, inter alia, on the nature of the university to be established – teaching or affiliating, or both (NNEPC 1956). In the mid-1950s, when Nepal embarked on systematic development of a national education system following the political change of 1951, the option laid out for the establishment of a university was a combination of “teaching” and “affiliation” functions. According to the report of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission, this third type of university that “...consists of a centrally located group of colleges plus outlying colleges, all responsible to the same university...holds the most promise for Nepal” (NNEPC 1956: 129). Subsequently, TU was established in 1959 as a teaching and affiliating university by bringing all existing colleges (affiliated to various Indian universities) under its ambit. Over time, TU continued to grow in size by incorporating technical training institutions under various ministries, and by granting affiliations to colleges established through private and community initiatives in various parts of the country. With the implementation of the National Education System Plan in 1971, all affiliated colleges of TU were converted into its constituent campuses, and TU enjoyed a brief spell of full-fledged teaching university. However, this policy was quickly revoked after 1980 as the unusually high demand for enrolments surpassed the capacity of TU constituent campuses, opening

the door once again for the emergence and growth of affiliated private and community campuses (NEC 1992).

TU was the only university in the country until a second Mahendra Sanskrit University (renamed Nepal Sanskrit University after the second *jana āndolan* of 2006) was established in 1986 by removing four small Sanskrit campuses from TU. However, until 1990, TU was the only university in the country providing higher education in multiple disciplines. Thereafter, the pace of university establishment accelerated, such that within a period of two decades seven universities and three university-like institutions were created, all through separate acts approved by the Parliament. In 1991, Kathmandu University (KU) was established, followed by Purbanchal University (PU) in 1994, and Pokhara University (PokU) in 1997. Likewise, Lumbini Bouddha University (LBU) was established in 2005, Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU) in 2010, Mid-Western University (MWU) in 2010, and the Far-Western University (FWU) in 2010. A number of specialized, university-like institutions in medical education were also established after 1990.¹ Further, a large number of universities are in the pipeline, pending parliamentary approval of their acts. Even with the establishment of these universities, however, TU continues to account for nearly 88 percent of all higher education enrolments in the country (UGC 2014).

The 1990s and thereafter is an interesting period for the study of education reforms in Nepal. This period assumes particular significance as: (a) the country underwent a people's movement that replaced the 30-year monarchical rule through a partyless Panchayat system by a multiparty democracy; (b) the country became part of the global 'Education for All' (EFA) movement and committed to universalize free primary and basic education; (c) mobilization of resources (both internal and external) for large scale reforms in public education (particularly school education) reached new heights; and, (d) the political left rose to prominence for the first time in the entire political history of Nepal. More specifically in higher education, the post-1990 period witnessed significant increase in university enrolments and the number of higher education institutions (see Table 1). Between 1991 and 2013, student enrolments in higher education increased by more than 600 percent (7 times), and number of higher education institutions (universities

¹ These include the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (established in 1993), National Academy of Medical Sciences (2002), Patan Academy of Health Sciences (2009) and Karnali Academy of Medical Sciences (2013).

and their campuses) increased by 540 percent (6.4 times). The growth in enrolments was mainly the result of increased access to, and completion of school education that was made possible by the state commitment to the EFA. Further, a lack of significant expansion in non-university tertiary education (primarily technical and vocational education and training, which in essence was perceived as second class education for those failing the national School Leaving Certificate examination), meant that the higher education sub-sector had to accommodate the increased flow of secondary graduates.

Table 1: Overview of Higher Education Expansion and Financing of Education

	1975	1991	2000	2013
No. of students	22,665	79,432	220,000	500,717
No. of campuses	79	198	332	1,268
Share of education in total budget (%)	10	11	12	16
Share of higher education within the education budget (%)	35	21	11	8

Source: Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission records

However, the government funding for higher education (both as a percentage of the total annual education budget and as a percentage of the gross domestic product, GDP) continued to decrease drastically even as the share of the education sector budget increase in both absolute and relative terms. The share of higher education in the total education budget decreased from 35 percent in 1975 to eight percent in 2013 even as the share of the education budget increased from ten percent to 16 percent during the same period (Table 1), leading to a real fall in per-student funding for higher education. Amidst decreasing government allocation to higher education, however, the state committed to expand opportunities to higher education by establishing new universities, as described above. I attempt to locate this contradiction between higher education expansion, on the one hand, and decreased state funding to higher education, on the other, by focusing on how the dominant political parties and the state policies have engaged with higher education reform after 1990.

Political Engagements with Higher Education

There is relatively little public manifestation of political party intents with respect to higher education reforms in the post-1990 period other than their election manifestos. And, even in the manifestos, political parties have accorded relatively little space to higher education reforms other than the intent to establish new institutions. In this section, I look at the election manifestos of the major political parties² to understand their visions of higher education. Annex 1 summarizes the higher education related commitments of the major political parties since the 1991 parliamentary elections.

Focus on Establishing New Institutions

The major political agenda in higher education concerns primarily with establishing new universities in various regions, and in the would-be states after the declaration of federalism. For instance, the Nepali Congress (NC), the party that has led the government for the longest cumulative period since 1990, stated that the NC government would open new universities in the East and the West (manifesto for the 1991 parliamentary election), establish multi-disciplinary universities in the Mid- and Far-Western Regions (manifesto for the first Constituent Assembly (CA) election in 2008), and make provision for open university and also establish at least one university in every state (manifesto for the second CA election in 2013). Likewise, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) [CPN-UML] stated that it would establish an agriculture university, technical colleges in all development regions, and specialized research institutions related to industrialization, tourism, water resources, environment and geology (manifesto for the 1999 parliamentary election). Some of these commitments were carried forward to the first and second CA elections (in 2008 and 2013, respectively), in which the CPN-UML reiterated its desire to establish and standardize agriculture, forestry, open, technical and industrial universities in accordance with the multi-university concept, and make higher education research-oriented. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [UCPN-M] also pursued the path

² The major political parties that have been at the helm of power since the political change of 1991 are the Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) [CPN-UML], Rastriya Prajatantra Parties (RPPs) and more recently the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [UCPN-M]. A number of Tarai Madhes-based parties have also been part of the various coalition governments, including after the first Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in 2008 although they have not led such governments.

of establishing new universities by stating that it would emphasize technical and polytechnic education, science and technology education, establish open and other universities, ensure at least one university for each autonomous state, and also establish specialized teaching and research institutions in the areas of agriculture, forestry, engineering, medicine, information and communication technology (ICT), etc. (manifestos for the first CA in 2008 and second CA in 2013).

We can also see a high degree of correlation between the stated intentions of political parties to establish universities in various regions/sectors and the actual establishment of the new universities – PU in the East (1994), PokU in the West (1997), AFU (2010), MWU in the Mid-West (2010) and FWU in the Far-West (2010). Likewise, a number of specialized, degree-granting institutions in medical education were established. However, what was unclear in the political manifestos was with respect to how these universities would be established and operated, and this lack of clarity has continued to pave way for the privatization of higher education through the affiliation mode, something that I will discuss in the proceeding sections.

Greater Role for Non-Public Initiatives

The second agenda concerns the role envisaged by political parties for the community, non-governmental and private sectors in the establishment and operation of higher education institutions, which itself has to be located within the broader discourse of education (more specifically school education) privatization (Bhatta 2014). On the political front, although on surface there appears to be some contradictions regarding the place of private education institutions, their respectable place in the education arena, particularly in the context of the private schools' role in providing high quality education, seems to have been duly recognized by all the major political parties. While political parties have expressed concern with respect to the rampant expansion of private education institutions, excessive commercialization of education, and exacerbation of the 'class-divide,' the solution for political parties lies in better control and regulation and infusion of social responsibilities within the private sector. Even in the case of the left parties (who have traditionally called for nationalization of all private education institutions), provisions related to education privatization seem

to have gradually shifted from blatant ‘nationalization’ to ‘better control’ and ‘better regulation.’³

Few political parties have engaged with the issue of privatization in higher education, and such engagement is not of the type seen in school education (e.g., staunch criticism of commercialization and class-divide). But it is interesting to see some traversing of ideas across the actors particularly in relation to envisaging a greater role for the private, community and non-governmental initiatives in the financing and management of higher education expansion. In this regard, the NC envisaged strengthening of private campuses (1994),⁴ supporting private and community initiatives in establishment and operation of higher education institutions (1999), expansion of technical, employment-oriented education through private participation (2008), and greater autonomy in internal resource mobilization and management (1999, 2013). The CPN-UML also emphasized greater autonomy and freedom for higher education institutions (1991, 1999) and flexibility in the establishment of higher education institutions (1994). Both the parties also emphasized the need to regulate the private sector by setting minimum criteria/standards for establishment of higher education institutions, and through regular monitoring and supervision, including monitoring of tuition fees.

Policy Engagements with Higher Education

In this section, I examine the state policy engagements with higher education in the post-1990 period as manifest in the various national education commission reports, periodic development plans, and foreign aid-funded reform projects in higher education. By looking at these documents, we can discern that the post-1990 policy agendas in higher education have focused mainly on three aspects: (a) greater reliance on cost-recovery strategies to pay for regular and operating expenses of existing state-funded higher education institutions; (b) establishment of multiple, regional universities

³ It should be noted that the post-1990 period has also witnessed organized political opposition to education privatization (particularly from the student organizations affiliated to different left political parties), against the removal of proficiency certificate level (PCL) from the university, exorbitant fees in private schools and foreign affiliated private schools. In spite of this, private school expansion has continued unabated in the post-1990 period.

⁴ In its 1994 and 1998 election manifestos, NC stated that some of its major achievements in higher education were the establishment of private medical colleges and KU in the private sector.

though rightsizing of TU; and, (c) enhanced role for private, community and non-state initiatives in the expansion of higher education.

Cost-sharing and Cost-recovery

The restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 accelerated Nepal's espousal of neo-liberal reforms, with the subsequent periodic development plans laying a strong emphasis on market-led reforms and privatization. The education sector could not remain buffered from such ideological orientation. Given the significant cuts in state funding to higher education amidst increasing enrollments, the post-1990 development planning emphasized the importance of cost-sharing, cost-recovery and privatization in higher education. The Eighth Plan (1992–1997) called for pursuance of policies aimed at making higher education institutions economically self-reliant in the context of insufficient government resources amidst increased enrollment pressures and high administrative expenses (NPC 1992). Likewise, by highlighting TU's excessive reliance on government funds and lack of initiatives aimed at cost-recovery, the Ninth Plan (1997–2002) stated that “emphasis will be given to dissociate higher education from relying on government grants only to rely on cost-recovery, people's participation, private sector participation and government grants” to decrease the pressure on government resources (NPC 1997: 570). The Tenth Plan (2002–2007) followed suit by stating that the government will “adopt the principle of cost-recovery in the investment of education sector, implementing the system of reducing the share of the government as the level of education increases” (NPC 2002: 458). This emphasis on enhancing cost-sharing and cost-recovery has continued unabated in the subsequent periodic plans formulated in the aftermath of the second *jana āndolan* of 2006. For example, the Three-Year Interim Plan (2007–2010) stated that the non-implementation of the cost-sharing principle in higher education remains a major challenge (NPC 2064 v.s.: 253) and that block grants will be provided to higher education institutions based on cost-sharing (NPC 2064 v.s.: 259).

There are, likewise, strong recommendations related to cost-recovery and the role of the private sector in the reports of the various National Education Commissions formed to guide the education sector reforms after 1990. The report of the 1992 National Education Commission stated:

Since...the beneficiaries of higher education are the upper and middle classes...the social demand for higher education should not be met out of the tax money collected from the general public of a poor country like Nepal....Let those who benefit from the expanding educational opportunities pay the greater part, if not the whole, of the main segments of the operational costs. (NEC 1992: 46)

It argued that given the competing claims for scarce government resources, public funding for education should concentrate on primary and basic education and that in the case of higher education “...the present system of full government grant should be abandoned in favor of the private ownership” (NEC 1992: 64). The Commission made these recommendations especially in the context of TU’s technical institutes, suggesting that policies should be aimed at increasing internal resource mobilization to bear the recurrent expenditures. Likewise, the report of the 1998 High Level National Education Commission lamented at the meager student fees, lack of implementation of the cost-recovery principle and TU’s excessive dependence on government grants, and the fact that even universities established through the private (KU) and community (PU) initiatives were receiving government grants (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 99). It recommended the universities to adopt concrete steps to become economically self-reliant and autonomous by mobilizing internal and external resources, and adopting cost-recovery measures to reduce dependence on government grants (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 103).⁵

Another set of recommendations put forth by the Education Commissions relates to the implementation of decentralization and autonomy in the TU system so as to enhance internal resource mobilization. In this regard, the 1992 Commission stated that while the provision of public grants to higher education institutions was unavoidable, it was necessary that “every university and college under it should have independence of action in chalking out programs...to foster a spirit of competition in mobilizing economic resources” (NEC 1992: 50). Likewise, the 1998 Commission reiterated the lack of progress in implementation of policies aimed at fostering decentralization and autonomy in the TU’s institutes and campuses. Following in the footsteps of the 1992 Commission, it recommended the need for granting academic, administrative and financial autonomy to TU’s

⁵ The report further recommended that publicly funded technical institutes/campuses should be required to meet at least 20–30 percent of their operational costs through regular student fees, and that provision should be made to enrol additional 45 percent students on full fee paying basis to address the financial crisis faced by such institutes (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 117).

constituent campuses and technical institutes in particular so that they can generate internal resources and expand their education programs (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 104, 118–120).

However, the greatest impetus for cost-sharing and cost-recovery came from the series of higher education projects supported by the World Bank from the early 1990s. The 1995 report, *Tertiary Education in Nepal: An Assessment*, which was the final, consolidated output of the Self-Study of the Tertiary Education Sub-Sector project funded by the UNDP and executed by the World Bank since 1992, emphasized the absence of cost-sharing and cost-recovery mechanisms as an important reason for under financing of higher education. The report stated:

Across all the different levels and types of studies in the university system, the costs of higher education have been mainly financed by the Government. There is an absence of consciousness of the need for cost-sharing and cost-recovery from both the users and providers of the higher education services. The beneficiaries of higher education investments have taken the free higher education for granted...while the university has faced an increasing financial burden...Without significant cost-sharing and cost-recovery, improvement of higher education...is unlikely. (Malla 1995: 4)

In describing the financing scenario of the higher education sub-sector, the same report highlighted the low levels of cost-recovery in the TU system and called for “additional efforts to augment internal revenue through increases in fees and other user charges” (Malla 1995: 53).⁶ Many of the issues raised and recommendations made by the Malla report were included in the [first] Higher Education Project (HEP),⁷ funded by the World Bank (1994–2001), which described the scenario as “low private financing,” “very little cost-sharing or cost-recovery,” “very low tuition” and “heavily subsidized dormitories” (The World Bank 1993: 5) and included a veiled threat to status quo as follows:

⁶ Some of the measures suggested by the report included reducing fee waivers, and increasing fees and other user charges (accommodation, public utilities, etc) to increase cost-recovery. The report recommended that the cost-recovery rate (as a percentage of recurrent costs) should be as follows: 30–50 percent in humanities and social sciences (excluding economics) and education; 50–70 percent in engineering, general science, forestry and agriculture; and, above 70 percent in economics, law, management and medicine (Malla 1995: 60).

⁷ It should be noted that the HEP itself was also influenced by the World Bank’s higher education policies of the time, that focused, inter alia, on cost-sharing, reduce reliance on government, and linking government funds to performance (The World Bank 1993).

If no policy changes are made and the rate of student growth and cost-recovery remains constant, capital and recurrent expenditures will create an unsustainable deficit of NRs. 3.2 billion at the university during the Eighth Plan period...it is clear that the current direction of university finances will compromise the future of the entire sector. If that were allowed to happen, the Government would be forced to shift priority funds to the university, thus potentially endangering priority social sector programs such as primary education, or public health. (The World Bank 1993: 6)

For the World Bank, efforts to increase cost-recovery were closely tied to promoting decentralization and autonomy in the TU's constituent campuses⁸ and by incorporating various types of incentives into the decentralization and autonomy schema as, according to the Bank, "Providing incentives for reforms in the areas of cost-sharing and decentralization in TU proved to be instrumental for acceptance of the reforms" (The World Bank 2007: 8)⁹. Therefore, in both the HEP and the Second Higher Education Project (SHEP; 2007–2014), the World Bank put most of its resources into promoting decentralization and autonomy of TU constituent campuses with the expectation that the financial sustainability of the participating institutions would be improved (The World Bank 1993, 2007).¹⁰ And, despite the limited success achieved in fostering meaningful decentralization and autonomy

⁸ In this regard, the Malla Report had stated that the objective of decentralization of higher education should be to "promote quality, efficiency, equity, pertinence, and resource generation" (Malla 1995: 37), and recommended a four-stage plan of action to culminate in privatization (Malla 1995: 39–45).

⁹ In fact, TU had already started developing and implementing a number of policies aimed at cost-recovery with the appointment of the new vice-chancellor (Mr. Kedar Bhakta Mathema, who was working at the World Bank Office in Kathmandu immediately prior to his appointment as TU's vice-chancellor) in 1991. In an interview in 1994 Mathema stated that TU was trying to enhance internal resource mobilization by increasing student fees (that had remained stagnant since 1971) by 100 percent, cutting down other student subsidies, and giving greater authority and autonomy to campuses to levy other fees and generate funds (Merz 1994: 42) as part of his "mission to bring about changes in the university system no matter how unpopular they are at the beginning" (Merz 1994: 47).

¹⁰ Another major component of these World Bank supported projects was to off-load or remove the heavily state-subsidized proficiency certificate level (equivalent of grades 11 and 12) programs to community and privately financed higher secondary education institutions and free up higher education resources. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the impact of this off-loading on higher education financing, it should be emphasized that state funding for this intermediate level (between secondary education and higher education) was drastically cut in favor of private financing.

in the TU system (further discussed in the section below), it does appear that the World Bank was able to make substantial headway in enhancing cost-recovery.¹¹

Multiple Universities

Local initiatives to establish more universities (after the establishment of TU) can be traced to the late 1960s. However, the idea of establishing multiple regional universities from the TU system has its roots in the deliberations of the Royal Higher Education Commission (1983). It was, however, in the early 1990s that the concept of multi-universities through rightsizing of TU gained wider attention in the policy circles, particularly in the context of excessive growth of TU across the country that resulted in a highly centralized, inefficient and unmanageable higher education structure. Under the policy of multi-universities, the 1992 National Education Commission had suggested the need to establish new universities in the development regions by “integrating the constituent and affiliated campuses of TU” in these regions (NEC 1992: 64), stating further that existing technical institutions and campuses in the regions should be affiliated with these (new) universities. Hinting at the possible political developments related to the establishment of new universities, the 1992 Commission had warned that

...a new university should not be justified on the ground that the local pressure is ‘irrepressible or irresistible’ or that funding from some source is easily available. Any attempts at setting it up on religious, cultural, political or commercial grounds should be discouraged. As far as possible, any new university should be a teaching, residential body...not a registration and examination centre...It should not be an overstretched organism like Tribhuvan University. (NEC 1992: 62–63)

It should be noted that the government had already established PU and PokU in 1994 and 1997, respectively, without following the recommendations of the 1992 Commission and in contradiction to the provision of realizing regional universities through regional clusters envisaged by the World

¹¹ For example, the SHEP document noted that due to decentralization within TU, “full fee programs were introduced in several campuses and internal resource mobilization has improved” (The World Bank 2007: 119). As evidence, it stated that “the cost-sharing rate at Pulchowk Campus (Engineering faculty) has increased to 52%, and similarly to 39% at the Nepal Commerce Campus (Management Faculty) and 47% at the Faculty of Medicine” (The World Bank 2007: 119–120).

Bank-supported HEP that the government had been implementing. This ‘policy chaos’ and ‘lack of clarity’ regarding multi-university and regional universities was raised by the 1998 High Level National Education Commission, which noted:

On the one hand, the government is implementing the plan to make Prithvi Narayan Multiple Campus a regional university by developing it as the lead campus through the World Bank-supported Higher Education Project, while, on the other, the government has established Pokhara University. This shows the lack of coordination and mutual trust amongst the official agencies, and contradictions in implementation. (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 98)¹²

The 1998 Commission reiterated that “the regional universities are the universities to be formed from TU distribution” (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 98) and recommended that the “constituent and affiliated campuses of TU in the general stream should be gradually integrated into the regional universities in accordance with the predetermined terms and conditions and that the legislation of the concerned universities should be amended for this purpose” (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 103). It further recommended that henceforth new universities should be opened only after ensuring the requisite educational-academic infrastructures.

The idea of rightsizing TU and establishing multiple regional universities also has a strong resonance in the periodic development plans formulated after 1990, especially the Ninth (1997–2002) and the Tenth (2002–2007) Plans. Although the Eighth Plan (1992–1997, during which PU and PokU were established) did not mention anything about the establishment of new universities, the Ninth Plan lamented at the lack of congruence between the concept of regional universities and the plan to develop TU’s main campuses in the various regions into universities (NPC 1997: 568). The Plan adopted the policy and implementing strategy to establish universities in all five development regions in accordance with the multi-university concept, and to also establish agriculture and forestry university and other technical universities possibly from TU’s existing institutions (NPC 1997: 574, 583). Even in the case of already established universities (PU and PokU), the Ninth Plan stated that these universities will be developed into regional universities (NPC 1997: 584) and that the TU campuses will be integrated

¹² For further details on the trajectories of PokU, see Adhikari and Parajuli (2014).

into the regional universities (NPC 1997: 586). The Tenth Plan, whilst mentioning that the Ninth Plan targets of setting-up additional universities at the regional level were not realized (NPC 2002: 452), continued to argue for breaking TU into regional universities, citing that TU's massive expansion had affected its progress and efficiency (NPC 2002: 455). The Plan aimed to convert TU's Institute of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences into a deemed university (NPC 2002: 460). In its delineation of the programs however, the Plan remained silent on integrating TU constituent campuses into the regional universities and only called for "accrediting the affiliated educational institutions of TU to other regional universities...to develop the institutional structure of higher education at the regional level...on cost-sharing basis with concerned stakeholders and communities" (NPC 2002: 458). Even for the development of new universities in the Mid- and Far-Western regions, the Tenth Plan stated that it would develop infrastructure to set up universities in these regions without mentioning anything about TU's campuses in these regions (NPC 2002: 460). After 2007, the concept of multi-universities through rightsizing of TU gradually subsided although the rhetoric to open university in each development region, establish science and technology university, and encourage deemed universities continues to exist in the subsequent periodic plans (NPC 2064 v.s., 2071 v.s.).

Instituting structural reforms within TU was also a major focus of the various higher education projects supported by the World Bank since 1992. Much has already been written about the restructuring of TU envisaged by the World Bank supported reform projects in the post-1990 period (see Martin Chautari 2072 v.s.; Parajuli, Uprety and Onta 2072 v.s.). In this connection, a preparatory project – self study of the tertiary education sub-sector – implemented by TU, UNDP and the World Bank from 1992–1995 had envisaged decentralization of authority and the development of regional clusters of TU campuses that would ultimately gradually evolve into new, autonomous regional universities (Malla 1995). Building on these recommendations, the HEP had included a major program component related to decentralization of TU campuses and development of regional clusters in the West (with Pokhara-based Prithvi Narayan Campus as the lead) and the East (with Biratnagar-based Mahendra Morang Campus as the lead) in anticipation that these campus clusters would gain regional autonomy over time and be ultimately transformed into regional universities (The World Bank 1993). However, the program did not make any headway in

the Mahendra Morang Campus and was subsequently dropped. Even in the case of Prithvi Narayan Campus, no substantive progress was made other than the expenditure of project grants particularly in infrastructure upgrading. The cluster idea was deemed ‘unsatisfactory’ by the World Bank and subsequently dropped in 1999.¹³

Encouraging Private, Community and Non-state Initiatives

Whilst the post 1990 policy agendas emphasized greater cost-recovery and cost-sharing strategies for existing state-funded institutions, they emphasized an enhanced role for private, community and non-state initiatives in the expansion of higher education institutions to cater to the increasing demand for enrollments. In this regard, the Eighth Plan clearly articulated, as part of its general development framework to open sectors related to the long-term development of the nation such as education to the private sector (NPC 1992: 14), the need to expand the provision of higher education, especially technical higher education, by encouraging private and community initiatives (NPC 1992: 74–76). Likewise, the Ninth Plan stated that “emphasis will be given to dissociate higher education from relying on government grants only to rely on cost-recovery, people’s participation, private sector participation and government grants” to decrease the pressure on government resources (NPC 1997: 570). The Tenth Plan followed suit by stating that the institutional structures of various newly established universities would be developed through cost-sharing with concerned stakeholders and communities by encouraging private and non-governmental sectors to establish higher education institutions (NPC 2002: 458, 460). This trend of providing space to the private and community sectors has continued unabated in the subsequent three-year plans and the Thirteenth Plan (2013–2016). For example, the Thirteenth Plan states that the coordination, facilitation and partnerships amongst private, public and cooperative sectors will be enhanced (NPC 2071 v.s.: 21), private and civil society/non-government sector will be treated as “partners in development” (NPC 2071 v.s.: 22) of public sectors,

¹³ In SHEP, the World Bank focused more on decentralization and autonomy of TU constituent campuses with the expectation that the autonomous campuses would gradually evolve into full-fledged universities. However, even in the case of campuses that have been declared autonomous, evidence of academic autonomy is yet to emerge although they enjoy some administrative and financial autonomy. For further details, see Martin Chautari 2072 v.s.

and procedures will be developed for the establishment and affiliation of private sector education institutions (NPC 2071 v.s.: 144).

There are, likewise, strong recommendations related to enhancing the role of private and community initiatives in funding the expansion of higher education in the reports of the Education Commissions and the World-Bank supported projects. In this regard, the 1992 Commission report had recommended for increasing “people’s participation” and “private sector’s involvement” especially in expanding higher technical education, and making such participation the *modus operandi* for the establishment of future colleges and universities (NEC 1992: 86). Likewise, the 1998 Commission had recommended that the private sector should be encouraged to establish institutions in the fields in which they have shown interest (such as medicine and engineering), although also cautioning about the need to control “commercialization” of such institutions (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 116). In the World Bank supported higher education projects too, there was a strong justification for privatization and marketization in higher education by stating that the “introduction of private provision has helped to mobilize significant private funding for higher education – e.g., from 1980 to 2004 the publicly provided share of enrolment has dropped from 100 percent to about 64%” (The World Bank 2007: 2–3). Further, these documents stated that “By charging market-based fees, KU, PU and PokU...have demonstrated that universities in Nepal can improve their financial sustainability” (The World Bank 2007: 2; see also p. 11).

At the same time, the post-1990 policies also started to differentiate between the various types of ‘private’ campuses and to highlight the contributions of the community and public initiatives in the establishment and operation of higher education institutions. This started with the 1998 High level National Education Commission, which issued a bashing criticism of its predecessor 1992 Commission by stating that the remarks made (by the 1992 Commission) in the context of private (affiliated) campuses were “not so encouraging,” “superficial” and “not driven by a situational analysis of facts” even though 133 such campuses were already in operation (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 133). Using ‘public’ and ‘affiliated’ campuses interchangeably, the 1998 Commission report lamented at the meager amount of state grants to such campuses and recommended that affiliated campuses be categorized into “public” and “private” based on criteria such as funding, fees, community involvement, and management in order to ensure availability of regular

University Grants Commission grants to public affiliated campuses from the perspective of equity (HLNEC 2055 v.s.: 136–137; see also p. 105).¹⁴ Community campuses also occupy an important space in the World Bank supported higher education projects. In the HEP, the World Bank had envisaged that the proficiency certificate level of TU would be offloaded to community-run secondary schools and the ‘satellite’ community campuses and incentive packages were included for such community institution.¹⁵ This engagement increased with the implementation of the SHEP from 2007, with the Bank stating the following:

The community campuses, accounting for 27% of enrollments, receive negligible public sector funding, and as such face constraints for expansion and diversification. Nevertheless, they are increasingly being perceived as attractive candidates for public sector investment. (The World Bank 2007: 3)¹⁶

From Intents to Action – Realities of the Post-1990 of Higher Education Reforms

In this section, I focus on the actual trajectories of higher education expansion in the post-1990 political formations. The first has to do with how new universities were de facto established. Second relates to the growing engagement of the for-profit private sector in aiding this establishment. And, the third concerns the rise of not-for-profit ‘community’ institutions as a cushion for such growing commercialization of higher education.

¹⁴ It should be noted that this recommendation for classification of private higher education institutions into public (not-for-profit) and private (for-profit) was an extension of the recommendations made by the 1992 National Education Commission in the context of private schools (NEC 1992). This recommendation also strongly resonates with the recommendations made by a University Grants Commission study related to the management of affiliated campuses (See Amatya and Gyawali 2058 v.s.).

¹⁵ For instance, in the policy statement jointly signed by the then Education Secretary and TU Vice Chancellor and annexed to the HEP, it is clearly stated that the government policy is to “run higher secondary education institutions mainly with community financing” (The World Bank 1993: 29).

¹⁶ In SHEP, the World Bank had aimed to provide performance and matching grants to ten community campuses, and non-recurrent grants to 200 community higher secondary schools to manage the PCL phase-out from universities.

The Growth of Affiliating Universities

The newer universities after 1990 were established largely in accordance with the manifest intents of the major political parties (as manifest in their election manifestos) and state policies (as manifest in various education commission recommendations and the periodic development plans) to establish universities in various geographic locations and sectors. However, in the absence of operational details laid out in the manifestos with respect to how such universities would be established, for the political parties, such ‘establishment’ seems to have been accomplished with ‘declaration’ of the university – in essence, the approval of the concerned university act from the Parliament and the appointment of office-holders in the key posts (viz., Vice-chancellor, Rector and Registrar or equivalent) – without any guarantee of state funding for their institutional development and operational expenditures.¹⁷ It was instead stated in the preamble of the acts that the universities would be established and operated through community and private initiatives although the key officials would be appointed by the political party in power, including the Prime Minister as the ex-officio Chancellor of the University.¹⁸ Thereafter, in the absence of adequate funding from the state, such new universities were, and continue to be left in the lurch with respect to their functional establishment and operation, resulting in a considerable time lag between the establishment of the university and its functionality. In the case of PU, the university did not receive any grants from the government in the first three years of its approval, and it was only able to establish a BBA program in the fourth year. Likewise, PokU was able to conduct academic program in its constituent campus only after two-and-a-half years. And the LBU could enroll students and conduct classes only after four years of its declaration.

Such routes of new university establishment were in stark contrast to the vision outlined in the National Education Commission reports, periodic

¹⁷ The meager amount allocated by the state to these universities by the government through the University Grants Commission was barely enough to keep the salaries of the key officials going.

¹⁸ The preamble of the Purbanchal University Act states that it would be operated primarily through people/community (*janastarbāta*) and the Pokhara University Act states that it would be operated through maximum participation of the private sector (*nijīśrot*). It should be noted, however, that for the universities established in 2010 (Agriculture and Forestry University, Mid-Western University and Far-Western University), the preambles of the respective university acts clearly mention that they will be established through the investment of the Government of Nepal.

development plans, and the World Bank supported higher education reform projects after 1990, which had envisaged the formation of new, regional universities through rightsizing of TU, or dissociating some of its constituent and affiliated components in those regions. The issue of why TU component campuses could not become parts of these new ‘regional’ universities has been dealt in detail separately (Parajuli, Uprety and Onta 2072 v.s.; Martin Chautari 2071 v.s., 2072 v.s.). Suffice here to say that there was a clear disjunct or even contradiction between the ‘problem,’ ‘policy’ and ‘politics’ streams (Kingdon 1995) regarding how these new universities would be ‘rationally’ established, the reasons for which could be located within TU (that vehemently resisted attempts to dissociate its campuses) and the local politics (that linked new institutions with its social status and protection of political clout). Had these new universities evolved from the TU component campuses as envisaged by the official policy stream, they would likely have had some nominal infrastructure, teachers and students to function immediately with some effect. But in such absence, the considerable time-lag between the ‘establishment’ and ‘functionality’ of the universities was only natural.

In the absence of assured government grants for both capital and recurrent costs of the new universities, the initial government-appointed office holders of such ‘back-pack’ universities¹⁹ understood these institutions as *āfai kamāyera calāunuparne* (earn yourself and operate) and they came under immense pressure to generate own resources. As a result, affiliation became the convenient avenue for these universities to increase their student number and generate the much-needed revenues. By granting affiliation to (mostly privately established) colleges, the central offices of the universities could generate resources by imposing various kinds of levies and fees.²⁰ For example, in the case of PU and PokU (both of which are notorious for

¹⁹ The term ‘back-pack’ (literally denoting office in the bag for lack of physical space) was used by vice-chancellors of various universities during our interactions with them at various times during the course of the research.

²⁰ Some of the major categories of levies and fees include: application and feasibility study fees; security deposits; fees for granting of initial program(s); annual/biennial program renewal fees; per student annual fees; student registration and examination fees; and campus monitoring costs. Levies are also charged for change of name or location/address of the affiliated campus. Further, the affiliation fees are much higher for technical programs such as medicine and engineering, and management programs compared to humanities and social sciences and education. Personal communication with the concerned offices of universities.

affiliation), almost 100 percent of their operating expenses are met through internal sources, and since both of these universities do not have substantial number of students in their constituent campuses, revenues generated from affiliation constitute the bulk of this internal source (CEDA 2007). In the case of PokU (for which data is available), the contribution of revenues generated from affiliation increased from 31 percent (NRs. 15.6 million) in 2003/04 to 46 percent (NRs. 259 million) of its total annual income in fiscal year 2014/15. It should be noted that PokU already had seven affiliated campuses when its constituent campus was being set-up in 1998/99. Similar is the case with PU. As a result, the ratio of constituent-affiliated campuses and the students enrolled in them, both are biased towards affiliated (see Table 2). In the post-1990 period, the various universities' own, constituent campuses increased by only 29 percent (1.3 times) as against over 800 percent (9 times) for affiliated campuses. As a result, the share of students enrolled in constituent colleges declined from 66 percent (2000/01) to 36 percent (2012/13). The benefits of affiliation to the university also went beyond the generation of additional revenues. It contributed to the expansion of the university across the nation, increase in student size, and expansion of programs/disciplines that it itself could not provide.²¹ However, granting of affiliations posed no additional liabilities (such as ensuring the maintenance of minimum quality standards through faculty training, dissemination of the new curriculum, etc) for the host (affiliating) university other than conducting external examinations and issuing degrees/certificates to the students.

Affiliation also provided significant monetary and social incentives and benefits to the political and other actors involved in securing affiliations. There have been allegations of substantial under-the-table monetary transactions and gives-and-takes involved in granting affiliations, which are significantly higher for professional programs such as medicine and engineering, particularly in the context of approving affiliations to institutions that have not fulfilled the minimum eligibility criteria or requirements for operation. Absence of an overall framework or guideline on affiliation has meant that this continues to happen at the discretion of individual universities (more specifically officeholders of these universities who are in turn appointed by the political parties in power). It should be noted that financial irregularities in the granting of affiliations was one of the key reasons stated

²¹ It is widely alleged that this practice was started by KU, which gave affiliation to many medical colleges when it did not have its medical faculty or school.

by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority for its raid in the central offices of TU, PU and PokU in August 2014, and subsequently for the suspension of the key officials in some of them. It is also the key reason for the ongoing public fiasco related to the regulation of medical education in the country (see Mathema *et al.* 2012 v.s.).

Privatization through Affiliation

Secondly, affiliation provided a convenient backdrop for a rapid privatization (and commercialization) of higher education in the post-1990 period. Concomitant with the growing privatization of higher education, efforts were made in the 1990s to classify affiliated campuses into ‘public/community’ and ‘private’ to distinguish not-for-profit institutions from for-profit ones, and provide nominal government grants and subsidies to public ones to encourage their growth. However, the growth of for-profit, private affiliated campuses has significantly outnumbered that of not-for-profit community campuses. Between 2000/01 and 2012/13, private campuses increased by 716 percent compared to only 132 percent for the community campuses. Further, of the total 427 community campuses, 99 percent (422) are affiliated to TU and the remaining five to PU. PokU and KU have no community campuses.

In this manner, affiliation paved the way for a rapid commercialization of higher education, which manifested itself through proliferation of ‘high-value’ professional programs that are easily sellable in the market. These include programs in medicine, engineering and business administration/management in which the majority of the students are enrolled (see Table 3). For example, more than 80 percent of the campuses affiliated with PokU and PU offer programs in medicine, engineering and management. In the case of KU, eight of the 15 affiliated campuses offer programs in medicine, and more than 50 percent of the total KU graduates are from the medicine faculty (UGC 2014). In contrast, very few private affiliated campuses offer programs in the humanities and social sciences that have much lower market value, and those that do provide programs in applied humanities and social sciences

Table 2: Constituent-Affiliated Campus and Student Ratios in Big Four Universities, 2012/13

University	Campuses			Students		
	Constituent	Affiliated	Constituent-Affiliated Ratio	Constituent	Affiliated	Constituent-Affiliated Ratio
TU	60	981	1:16.4	196,985	303,732	1:1.5
KU	6	15	1:2.5	4,878	8,076	1:1.7
PU	3	126	1:42	854	24,942	1:29
PokU	4	49	1:12.3	1,747	22,633	1:13
Total	73	1,171	1:16	204,464	359,383	1:1.8

Source: UGC 2014

Table 3: Distribution of Students across Subjects in Big Four Universities, 2012/13

University	Management			Science & Technology		Education		Humanities & Social Science	
	Engineering & Medicine	Management	Science & Technology	Education	Humanities & Social Science				
TU	2.0	33.5	3.3	43.8	16.2				
KU	67.1	13.8	7.4	4.2	7.4				
PU	31.9	33.3	6.7	22.0	2.9				
PokU	27.8	63.2	7.8	0.0	1.2				

Source: UGC 2014

(such as development studies, social work) rather than the basic humanities.²² This is in stark contrast to the community affiliated campuses that offer low value programs. Data suggests that of the 422 community campuses affiliated to TU, only 3.3 percent (14) offer a program in Science and Technology and only one provides a program in Engineering. The rest provide programs in Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Management. Further, only about 20 percent (83) offer a post-graduate or masters program. The same is the case with the five community campuses affiliated with PU.²³ What is noteworthy is that such community campuses are located in rural and remote areas and attended by the poor, contributing to a phenomenon similar to the ‘pauperization’ of public schools (Bhatta 2009).

Conclusion

In the preceding sections, I have described how the major political parties and state policy documents engaged with higher education reforms in the post-1990 Nepal. This was a period characterized by increasing student enrolments amidst decreasing government budget to higher education, and loud socialist rhetoric surrounding the accessibility and affordability of education at all levels amidst the adoption of neo-liberal policies aimed at cost-recovery and greater role for the private and non-state actors. Given that the major political parties did not have their own substantive agendas related to higher education other than the intent to establish new institutions, the political parties latently adopted the dominant policy agendas related to marketization and privatization of higher education as reflected in initiatives such as greater cost-recovery in publicly funded institutions, and private and community led expansion of new campuses. However, even in the dominant policy agendas, necessary legislative frameworks and functional modalities for the involvement of private and community actors in the provision of higher education were not worked out. In such a context of “uncoordinated multiplicity of choices and constraints” (Levy 2006: 219), the affiliation mode provided a convenient backdrop against which the popular aspirations for higher education could be met without any substantial investment by either

²² For example, PokU, which offers a total of 43 programs across different disciplines, has only three programs in humanities and social sciences (BA; MA, MPhil and PhD in English; and, MA in Population, Gender and Development).

²³ Of the PU’s five community campuses, two provide a program in management, one in arts and four in education.

the state or the private sector. Such a provision fulfilled the desires of the private sector that could graduate students against a fee without having to substantially invest in teachers or infrastructure. And it provided the much needed revenues to newly established universities that could not finance themselves without resorting to increasing their student numbers from which various types of fees could be raised in the name of affiliation. This is similar to the Indian scenario in which the “policy ambivalence regarding private higher education” (Powar 2011: 341) and the “lack of a firmer restraining political legal framework” (Gupta 2004: 14) has led to higher education hanging between the conflicting interests and varying powers of the state and the market (Tilak 2013), and private higher education being “suspended between over-regulation...and discretionary privatization” (Kapur and Mehta 2004: 2).

Affiliated campuses in general, and community affiliated campuses in particular, also served to mask the de facto privatization of higher education that happened at an alarming pace after 1990 giving the false impression that it was a peripheral phenomenon because the universities per se were being established by the political parties and the governments led by them. However, irrespective of their central role in ‘establishing’ the university, it was the private sector (understood here broadly as all non-state actors and resources, including the corporate and community) in its for-profit and not-for-profit avatars that actually rendered these universities ‘functional’ and was thus the mainstay of higher education expansion in the post 1990 period. Is the Nepal case an exception to the global experiences regarding the role of privatization in the expanding the provision of higher education? This is obviously not the case. In fact, it fits neatly with the experience elsewhere where private higher education “often emerges or grows on the margins of what is allowed, in a gray area that the policy did not foresee” (Levy 2006: 239). But what is salient about Nepal is that such de facto privatization has been astutely covered under the guise of affiliation. And, as the private sector becomes more dominant, it will also become more organized, making it increasingly difficult for the state to regulate privatization in higher education.²⁴

²⁴ Such difficulties in regulating the private sector are already evident in Nepal’s school sector in which state attempts to fix fee ceilings, draft legal frameworks and impose taxes have been defied or met with stiff resistance by the highly organized private sector (Bhatta 2014).

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Annex 1: Engagement of Major Political Parties with Education Privatization and Higher Education in the Post-1990 Period

A. Nepali Congress

1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses concern at education disparities between public and private schools. • Make higher education affordable and accessible so as to ensure equal access to higher education (HE) for all meritorious students
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch special program to improve quality of education in rural and urban public schools • Special incentives to enhance access of girls and other marginalized groups to access HE • Encourage strengthening of private campuses • Initiate process of strengthening and specialization of TU and newly established universities
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses concern at the decreasing quality of public education and increasing opportunities for the rich to access private schools • Create equality of opportunity by encouraging community management of public schools • Provide support to private and NGO sector to establish and operate technical higher education institutions (HEIs) on non-profit motive. • Provide autonomy to colleges in the areas of mobilization of resources, management and operation • Make provision for fair fees in schools and colleges and ensure regular supervision and monitoring of private schools and colleges • Expand PU and PokU as regional universities and establish agriculture and forestry university • Provide special economic assistance to community and public campuses in remote and backward areas
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of education in public education institutions to decrease the increasing disparities between private and public institutions • Compulsory provision of social responsibility for private sector • Expand technical and employment-oriented education through state and private participation • Establish multi-disciplinary universities in Mid- and Far-Western regions
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure security for private schools by evaluating the contribution of private sector to improving the quality of education in the nation • Encourage private sector's social responsibility towards poor and marginalized groups • Establish at least one university in every state • Make provision for open university • Promulgate Umbrella Act to ease the establishment of universities by communities and private sector • Free, compulsory education up to higher secondary level • Encourage community schools and universities to mobilize resources through well-wishers and ex-students on top of government grants

B. Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)

1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourage commercialization of education, provide equality of opportunity and enhance education quality • Provide freedom and autonomy to HEIs • Make provision for free HE for women
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set appropriate standards for private education institutions • Reduce educational disparities between private and public schools • Ensure minimum criteria and standards for establishment of HEIs and make provision to ensure that all Nepalis can open HEIs by adhering/fulfilling these criteria
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set appropriate standards for private education institutions to operate according to national education objectives • Ensure equality between private and public schools • Ensure minimum criteria and standards for establishment of HEIs • Ensure academic freedom and autonomy for HEIs • Formulate Umbrella Act for universities • Establish technical colleges in all development regions • Develop specialized research institutions related to industrialization, tourism, water resources, environment and geology, etc • Establish agriculture university
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free education up to higher secondary level • Establish agricultural, forestry, open, technical and industrial universities in accordance with the multi-university concept
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate disparities and production of dual citizenship by improving the effectiveness of education in public schools • Free education up to higher secondary level • Standardize agriculture, forestry and technical universities as per the concept of multi-universities • Make higher education research-oriented

C. Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End rampant commercialization in education • Make education up to grade 12 free for all • Emphasize technical and polytechnic education • Establish open and other universities to ensure access of youth involved in the revolution • Establish at least one university in each autonomous state • Establish specialized teaching and research institutions in the areas of agriculture, forestry, engineering, medicine, ICT, management, etc • Special priority for science and technology education at all levels
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control increasing commercialization and evil/mal-practices in education • Establish at least one university in each autonomous state, and delineate the jurisdiction of federal and state universities • Promote universities as sites for research-based education

Source: Election manifestos of NC, CPN-UML and UCPN-M for the 1991, 1994, 1999, 2008 and 2013 parliamentary and CA elections