

REASON OF NAPALEASE STUDENTS TO CHOOSE INDIA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: The regional mobility of higher education students in South Asia is limited and basically only India is the only one country hosting international students in South Asia. The largest contributor of Indian international students is Nepal and it is increasing every year. The author analyzes the primary data and secondary studies on the reasons of Nepalese leaving country for higher education, how the trends of Nepalese students going abroad for higher education and share of India and what problems Nepalese students are facing while staying in India. Mainly Nepalese students have chosen India due to the reputation of Indian higher education institutions in one hand in other hand tuition fee is also one major factors to decide India as the destination for higher education. The students of Nepal experienced rigid and complex process of admission, lack of reliable and transparent sources of information while applying for the study in India.

Index Terms – Regional mobility, Destination of higher study, Higher education, SDG4, Intellectual horizons

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education has 10 targets, and one target 4.3 is entirely focused on higher education. The Inchon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015) has mentioned the flow of students moving abroad to enhance academic credentials. The comparability, recognition and quality assurance of qualifications has become a growing area of concern, in particular in countries where administrative systems are weak. At the same time, mobility in tertiary education is an asset and an opportunity and should be enhanced to develop students' competencies and global competitiveness. The education mobility is fundamental to regional prosperity, while equal access to quality higher education is essential for peace and stability. This vision is at the core of Sustainable Development Goal 4, known as the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda (UNESCO, 2015). SDG4.b also talks about scholarship for higher education. The effective student mobility will help to achieve the SDG4 goal by 2030.

The enrolment in higher education has experienced explosive growth across Asia over the last 20 years. This is the result of high birth rates, increasing school participation rates, and the perceived importance of advanced education in subsequent life opportunities (UNESCO, 2014). To accommodate these enrolment increases, higher education systems have had to 'expand out' by constructing new universities, hiring new faculty members, and allowing and encouraging the entry of private higher education providers. Many governments see universities as centres of research that will yield positive economic returns to the country. University research is typically done at the graduate level (master's and doctoral). Hence, expanding graduate education is viewed as a means of increasing the economic competitiveness of the country (UIS, 2014, Altbach & Lulat, 1985).

The South and West Asia expansion of higher education is remarkable. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at tertiary level of South and West Asia was 6.51 in 1997. It has reached 24.9 in 2017, which is almost 18.4% point increase in 20 years. In terms of absolute number of enrolment, it was 6.1 million in 1997 and has reached 33.4 million in 20 years, with an average of 1.4 million increase every year.

The 2nd SAARC Education Ministers Meeting held in New Delhi on 31 October 2014 adopted the New Delhi Declaration on Education that agreed to develop a shared vision and joint initiatives for the implementation of the post-2015 education development agenda. The meeting emphasised the importance of regional collaboration, which allows governments and partners to work together to respond to common persisting and emerging issues and challenges relating to education development. It emphasised on facilitating mutual recognition of qualification, mobility of students and faculty, utilisation of common advanced centralised research facilities/services for universities in the SAARC region, networking with centres of excellence, and encouraging channels of communication on a regular basis (SAARC, 2014).

International student mobility has been a prominent phenomenon in higher education across the world. International student mobility contributes to revenue generation, cultural exchange, knowledge acquisition, technology transfer and innovation as well as quality enhancement (UNESCO, 2013). There are multiple reasons to promote regional mobility. First, foreign students not only bring financial contribution to the country but also bring their socio-cultural values. They help in creating harmony between countries. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the number of internationally mobile students has witnessed a 135% increase from 1.7 million in 1995 to 4.0 million in 2013.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

India has been one of the main destinations of foreign students since 600BC due to its prestigious universities (Altekar, 1965, Waydande, 2017 and Yeravdekar and Hans, 2018). However, interest in recent decades has been mainly for academic purpose and the economic, political and cultural reasons are the main contributing factors (Chen, 2007 and Agarwal and Winkler, 1985) to choose the destination for higher studies. The international mobile students can facilitate harmony between sending and receiving countries. Studies have shown that students choose to go abroad to pursue higher studies for a number of reasons. For some, it is a chance to broaden cultural and intellectual horizons. Others go abroad to avoid the frustrations of under-resourced universities at home. Many have no choice but to go abroad to pursue a particular field of education or type of academic programme because such opportunities do not exist in their home country (UNESCO, 2013). The increasing number of foreign students indicates the state of quality of education in both the sending and receiving countries.

III. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The sub-regional (South Asia) mobility is very low due to various reasons (UIS, 2019) including the mutual recognition system among SAARC countries (SAARC, 2016). India hosts 94.9% sub-regional students, yet the number is very low, 46,703 in 2017 (UIS 2019), which is 8.9% of the total student mobility from South Asia.

IV. DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

International (or mobile) students are defined as students who have crossed a national border and moved to another country with the objective of studying. Two operational definitions are used in the international dataset developed by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Eurostat:

- Students who are not usual residents or their country of study i.e. those who have recently moved to the destination (host) country from somewhere else
- Students who received their prior qualifying education in another country, indicating that they have crossed a border

GER: (Gross Enrolment Ratio): Number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is the 5-year age group starting from the official secondary school graduation age.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- What are the trends in inward and outward mobility from the SAARC countries particular focusing on Nepal?
- What factors are important and contribute more to select India and institution?
- What are the experiences of other countries to attract international students?

VI. METHODOLOGY USED

Based on the preliminary research and ease of access of students, the study has selected Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune and Jalandhar as the four cities to cover in India, along with Kathmandu in Nepal. The primary data collection for this research study was conducted from August 2018 to October 2018 by IIE and Karak. In the Quantitative phase, the total sample size was 205 respondents from India and 52 from Nepal. The web-based survey carried out using the Survey Monkey tool, remained open for over two months. The survey items were developed based on a review of previous questionnaires (Neice and Braun, 1977; Zikopoulos and Barber, 1986; Austin, 1988; Gagnon and Cocolas, 1988; Olson, 1992; Webb, 1993; Pooch and Love, 2001). The secondary data collected by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) are used to analyse regional mobility. The study has applied the Mixed Method Concurrent Triangulation Design-Multilevel Research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and concurrent triangulation mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). While primary data collected by IIE and Karak was used analyse the factors affecting Nepal to India student mobility, the study made use of secondary literature review and data to look at mobility within the entire SAARC region.

VII. ANALYSIS OF DATA

South Asian countries constitute 23.5% international students from Asia and the Pacific and 10.2% from the world. India has a dominant presence in the South Asian region and hosts foreign students from all over the continent. Table 2 shows the percentage of inbound mobility to India from the other SAARC countries. In 2017, the total number of foreign national students enrolled in India was 46,703 of which 43.3% are from SAARC countries. These international students come from 166 different countries across the globe. The highest share of international students are from the neighbouring countries of which Nepal is 22.5% (51.9% of total SAARC), followed by Afghanistan 9.5%, Bhutan 4.8%, Nigeria 4.7%, Malaysia 3.5%, and Bangladesh 3.3% (UIS, 2019).

Table 1: Percentage of inbound mobility to India from SAARC countries, 2017

Country of origin	Destination countries			Remarks
	India	% other than India	Total students studying abroad	
Afghanistan	4,423 (15.5%)	84.5	28,515	
Bangladesh	1,526 (2.7%)	97.3	55,787	
Bhutan	2,253 (51.5%)	48.5	4,375	
India			3,05,970	
Maldives	226 (7.5%)	92.5	3,002	
Nepal	10,494 (21.2%)	78.8	49,451	
Pakistan	30 (0.1%)	99.9	52,297	
Sri Lanka	1,269 (6.7%)	86.4	19,041	Sri Lanka hosts 1,313 students
Total	20,221 (9.5%)	90.5	2,12,468	

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), 2019, data accessed on 10th April 2019

More than 90% students from South Asia going abroad for higher studies are not choosing South Asia as their destinations. The international mobile student's numbers within region are not increasing dramatically in recent years. Its growth is nominal and seems natural growth.

Nepal-India mobility of higher education students:

According to UIS, the highest share of foreign students of Indian come from the neighbouring countries, of which Nepal is 25.0% of the total, followed by Afghanistan 9.5%, Sudan 4.8%, Bhutan 4.3%, Nigeria 4.0%, Bangladesh and Iran 3.4%, Yemen 3.2%, US 3.1% and Sri Lanka 2.7%. While there are more female students coming from Nepal than male, a considerably higher number of male students come from Sudan (92.5%), Yemen (91.5%) and Afghanistan (88.9%).

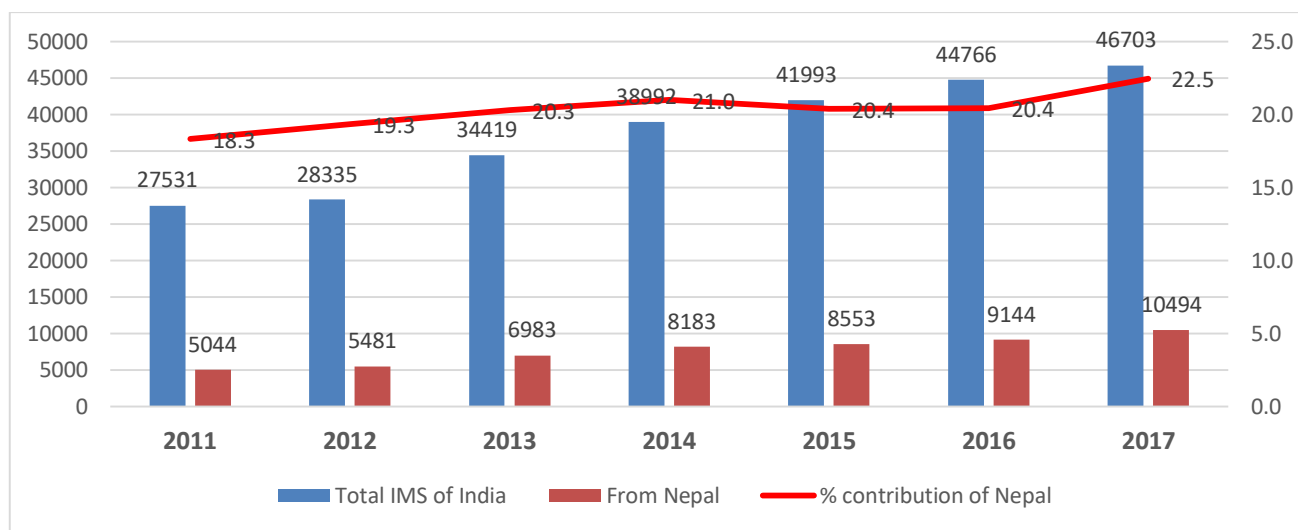


Figure 1: Students from Nepal to India by year (Source: UIS, 2019)

Many Nepalese college students express disappointment in the courses and degrees offered at Nepal’s universities (Kölbel, 2013). Students believe Nepalese diplomas and degrees to be insufficient or worry that such credentials will not be well-received in other countries. Students are also frustrated by traditional teaching and learning styles, which do not emphasize creative or critical thinking skills (Bista, 2017). For Nepalese students, the educational system available in their country lags behind the sort of 21st century education available in other countries (Nikku, 2013). The number of Nepalese students studying abroad in the last few decades has steadily increased.

Most students from Nepal who chose India as their first destination for further study were at the graduate level (ISCED 6: 72.5%) followed by the post-graduate level (ISCED 7) with 26.5%. Only 1.0% of the respondents were studying at the Ph.D. level. This proportion is not very different from the total number of Nepalese students studying in India.

VIII. FINDINGS

The students choosing India as their final destination based on many criteria and ranking and reputation of Indian institutions are one of dominating reasons. However, the courses institutions offers which ultimately help to enhance career path and tuition fee are some other dominating factors to contribute to decide the institution and country further study. Other than closeness and ease of entry to India, the reputation of institutions is the main deciding factor for Nepalese students. However, there are other push-pull factors that contribute directly and indirectly towards the decision of a country.

Table 02: Factors that helped Nepalese students to choose institution/college in India

Factors	% of respondents who answered Very Important
Tuition fee	60.5
Location	63.9
Good infrastructure	65.9
Reputation of faculty/institution	69.8
Quality of the programme	69.8
Prospects of career	72.2
Wanted course	75.6
Reputation/ranking	82.9

Source: Researcher’s calculation based on IIE and Karak data

India’s characteristics had the most important influence on these students’ choice of country, followed by the external push-pull factors, and finally by other contextual factors (Chen, 2007). Proximity of Nepal to India, reputation/ranking of institute(s), ease of getting information of Indian higher education institutes, together with ease of entry in India have been ranked as the most important country pull factors by 77.4%, 73.6% and 8.6%, respectively. Also, 64.7% of the respondents have mentioned that Indian degrees are better for their future and career. Interestingly, financial aid and not getting admission elsewhere are not being considered as important factors by the students who are studying in India. The other contextual factors also help to decide a country for further study abroad.

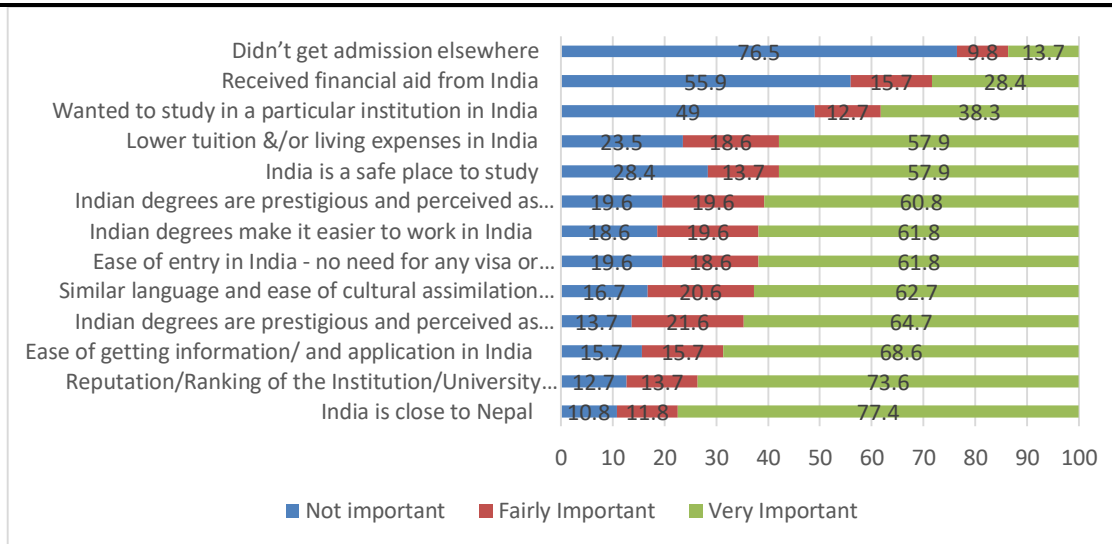


Figure 2: Percentage of pull factors (host country) influencing ISM from Nepal to India (Source: Researcher's calculation based on IIE and Karak data)

The aspiring students who are planning to come to India, 32.7% students mentioned the complex and rigid admission process is one of the major issues they are facing. It is also notable that 28.4% students did not face any challenges during the search and application process for admission in India. The students have also reported of the annual overlap of the admission process in Indian higher education institutes and the declaration of results of Nepal Senior Secondary board exams. This often resulted in Nepalese students, aspiring to study in India, having to 'drop-off' a year and enrol in the subsequent academic session in India. Only 19.6% of the respondents stated that during the admission process they found a lack of adequate information regarding institutions and courses at the search, selection, application and enrolment phase.

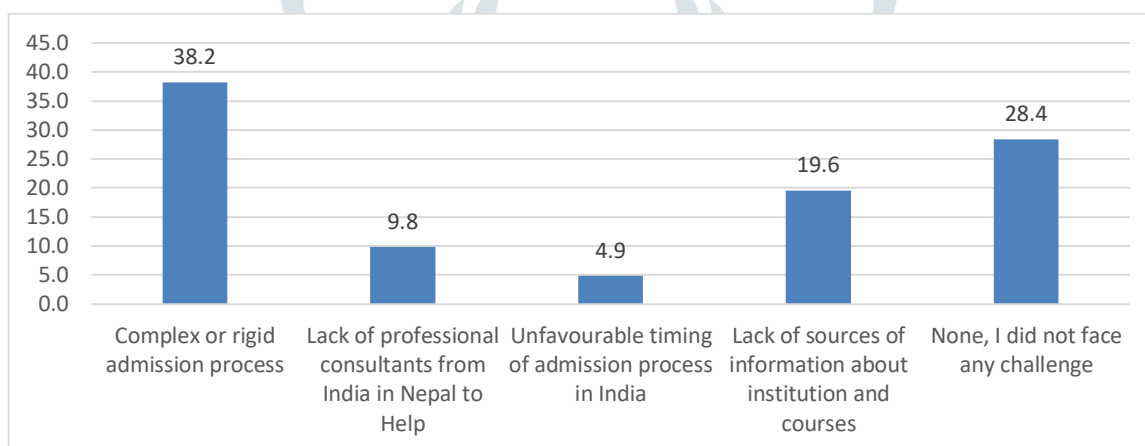


Figure 031: Challenges faced during the search, selection and application stage (Source: Researcher's calculation based on IIE and Karak data)

The most important challenges the students faced was in finding residential accommodation (9.8%), facilities and infrastructure (5.4%), insecurity and discrimination (5.4%), tuition cost (11.2%) and living conditions, food, and culture (13.2%) while studying in India.

Most of countries in the world has recognised the value of international students and started developing systems to attract foreign students. At the same time also introduced the quality control mechanism of higher education. In Australia, the Education Services for Overseas Students Act – The ESOS Act, sets out the legal framework governing delivery of education to overseas students studying in Australia on a student visa (UNESCO, 2013). The economic success attracts more and more students from all over the world to undertake study and research in China. Second, the quality of higher education in China has improved and the country has signed protocols with more than 34 countries in mutual recognition of academic degrees and qualifications (UNESCO, 2013).

Many countries from East Asia are aggressively working to become education service provider in the Asia region e. g. Republic of Korea, Malaysia, China, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines etc. The UK, Australia and United States are already hosting 34% total international mobile students. The Singapore government has also formulated policies to require colleges and universities to aim for a foreign student population of 20 percent to promote the internationalization of education in Singapore ("Foreign Students in Singapore", 2009). Similarly, the government of Malaysia seeks to promote Malaysia as a regional education hub and to attract more international students. These countries are working together with private sector to attract foreign students. The higher education policies are revised to become 'education hub'. Many cases, self-funding student numbers are increasing. In Thailand 78.2% foreign students are on self-funding and 13.4% are on Thai government scholarship.

The Government of India (GoI), having acknowledged the importance of attracting foreign students to India to bring diversity to Indian classrooms and realising that education is 'soft power', launched the initiative- Study in India. The aim of Study in India is to encourage more foreign students to choose India as the destination for higher education through multiple progressive measures such as: increase in contribution of international students in the form of direct spends, indirect spends, spill over effects; improved

educational quality amongst many others. The programme promises to provide a fee waiver and scholarship to meritorious foreign students from across 30 countries globally, primarily in Asia and Africa, including Nepal, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Rwanda amongst others.

IX. CONCLUSION

The growth of Nepalese students studying in India is growing 11.0% annually which is higher than India's total international growth by 3.2 percent point. India's average annual growth rate of international students is 7.8% from 2011-2017. If same growth rate goes it will be 40,909 Nepalese students will be in India for higher studies by 2030 which is four times higher than present number. However, it also depends on the higher education policies of Nepal and India. The above analysis shows a competitive market of international students and India needs to learn from these countries which are becoming new education hub of the region by improving quality of Indian higher education institutes and other related education reform including making ease of visa process for other than Nepalese students.

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