

# Enhancing Quality in Nepalese Higher Education: The Role of Community Colleges

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Article Info.	Abstract
<p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Received: March 16, 2025</p> <p>Accepted: May 26, 2025</p> <p><i>Email</i></p> <p>adhikaribr@mbmc.edu.np</p> <p>babujetho@gmail.com</p> <p><i>Cite</i></p> <p>Adhikari, B. R. (2025). Enhancing quality in Nepalese higher education: The role of community colleges. <i>Shweta Shardul</i>, 21(1), 1–10. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15709940">https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15709940</a></p>	<p>Community colleges in Nepal, also known as community campuses, have played a vital role in democratizing access to higher education, particularly for marginalized, rural, and economically disadvantaged populations. Established in the 1970s and affiliated with public universities such as Tribhuvan University and Purbanchal University, these institutions now account for over 30% of the country's undergraduate enrollment. Despite their widespread presence across 73 of Nepal's 77 districts and their contributions to equity and affordability, concerns remain about their ability to deliver quality education. This study examines the role of community colleges in enhancing educational quality in Nepal. Using a qualitative research methodology, it analyzes six key dimensions: access and equity, affordability, institutional capacity, academic quality, graduate outcomes, and community engagement. The findings reveal a complex landscape of both achievement and challenge. While community colleges have been effective in expanding access and maintaining cost-effectiveness, they struggle with outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, underqualified faculty, weak governance, and limited curriculum contextualization. Few institutions offer vocational or Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs, leading to a significant mismatch between education and labor market needs. Based on these insights, the study recommends performance-based funding, expanded technical and vocational curricula, stronger quality assurance mechanisms, investment in faculty development, and enhanced community partnerships. These reforms are essential to reposition community colleges as quality-driven institutions that can contribute meaningfully to Nepal's educational and socioeconomic development. Without addressing these systemic barriers, the potential of community colleges to serve as engines of inclusive, relevant, and high-quality education will remain unrealized.</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> community colleges, STEM, quality education, challenges, educational access</p>

### Introduction

The origin of community colleges in Nepal dates back to the early 1970s, when grassroots movements and local communities—particularly in rural and geographically isolated regions—

began establishing higher education institutions to counter the centralized and elitist structure of university education (Phuyal, 2023; Ghimire, 2024). These community campuses were founded out of necessity, as students from marginalized

backgrounds often lacked both the financial resources and physical access required to attend universities concentrated in urban centers such as Kathmandu. Distinct from conventional public or private colleges, community campuses were initiated, funded, and governed by local stakeholders, including educators, parents, social workers, and community leaders, with the aim of providing affordable and accessible education at the local level (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024). Academically affiliated with public universities such as Tribhuvan University and Purbanchal University, these institutions operate under a shared governance model and a spirit of voluntarism. Over the years, community colleges have become an integral component of Nepal's higher education landscape, significantly contributing to the enrollment of women, Dalits, indigenous populations, and students from economically disadvantaged regions (UGC, 2023; Ghimire, 2024). However, despite their inclusive mandate and rapid expansion, concerns regarding academic quality, institutional sustainability, and modernization continue to challenge their long-term impact (World Bank, 2015; Gupta, 2023).

In Nepal, community colleges, often known as community campuses, are non-profit higher education institutions established and operated by local communities with academic affiliation to public universities such as Tribhuvan University and Purbanchal University. As of 2024, Nepal is home to more than 536 community campuses across 73 of the 77 districts, indicating their widespread presence and growing role in democratizing higher education (UGC, 2023). Despite their contributions to accessibility and equity, the quality of education provided by community colleges remains an area of concern. Challenges such as inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, outdated curricula, underqualified faculty, and weak governance have hampered their ability to deliver education comparable in quality to public and private universities (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024; World Bank, 2015). Many

community campuses struggle to meet the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) standards set by the University Grants Commission (UGC), reflecting systemic limitations in their academic delivery and institutional management (Phuyal, 2023).

Although community colleges play a pivotal role in expanding educational access, growing concern remains that their contribution to enhancing the quality of higher education is limited. These institutions have not kept pace with national and global benchmarks in curriculum relevance, teaching effectiveness, research output, and student employability. With a significant share of undergraduate enrollment (over 30%), their systemic weaknesses have broad implications for the overall quality and competitiveness of Nepal's higher education sector (UGC, 2023; Gupta, 2023). This gap between access and quality, if unaddressed, undermines the core mission of equitable, inclusive, and skill-based education.

While several studies have examined the quantitative expansion and equity outcomes of community colleges (e.g., female and Dalit student enrollment), few have systematically investigated their impact on educational quality—including teaching-learning practices, institutional governance, curriculum modernization, and outcomes such as student retention and employability (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024). Moreover, there is a lack of empirical research focusing on the enabling and constraining factors that affect the quality performance of these institutions in the post-UGC reform era. As a result, policy discourse lacks evidence-based recommendations on how community colleges can be transformed from mere access providers into quality-driven institutions.

This study aims to critically examine the role of community colleges in enhancing the quality of higher education in Nepal, focusing on assessing both their contributions and

limitations. The first objective is to evaluate the current academic and institutional status of community colleges, particularly through the lens of educational quality indicators such as the relevance of curriculum content, adequacy of physical infrastructure, faculty qualifications, and student learning outcomes (Phuyal, 2023; Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024). The second objective is to identify the structural, financial, and policy-related barriers that hinder these institutions from delivering quality education. This includes examining issues such as underfunding, governance inefficiencies, and the lack of autonomy in curriculum development (World Bank, 2015; Gupta, 2023). Third, the study seeks to explore innovative practices and institutional models within the community college sector that demonstrate potential for improving quality—such as partnerships with local governments or the adoption of new pedagogical strategies (Miklajung RM, 2024; Edusanjal, n.d.). Finally, the study aims to propose evidence-based policy and institutional reforms that can reposition community colleges not merely as access providers but as engines of equitable and quality-driven higher education in Nepal (UGC, 2023).

To achieve these objectives, the study focuses on a set of interrelated variables and measurable indicators that capture the multidimensional nature of educational quality. The first dimension is Access and Equity, assessed by analyzing enrollment patterns among historically marginalized groups—such as women, Dalits, and students from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds—as well as scholarship availability and the geographic reach of community colleges (Ghimire, 2024; UGC, 2023). The second dimension is Affordability, measured through tuition costs, the extent of local government subsidies, and the availability of student support services (Gupta, 2023; World Bank, 2015). The third is Institutional Capacity, which includes indicators such as the availability of physical and academic infrastructure (e.g., science

laboratories, libraries), faculty qualifications (particularly the proportion of faculty with postgraduate or doctoral degrees), integration of information and communication technologies (ICT), and institutional governance mechanisms (Phuyal, 2023; Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024).

Another core variable is Academic Quality, evaluated through curriculum alignment with labor market needs, teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and accreditation status, including participation in the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) process mandated by the University Grants Commission (UGC, 2023; Gupta, 2023). The fifth dimension, Graduate Outcomes, considers indicators such as student retention and graduation rates, employment prospects, and job placement support for graduates (Ghimire, 2024; World Bank, 2015). Lastly, the variable of Community Engagement focuses on the extent to which community colleges interact with local stakeholders—including municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, and local industries—and contribute to broader regional development efforts (Edusanjal, n.d.; Miklajung RM, 2024).

By synthesizing data across these variables, the study aims to bridge the existing research gap between the quantitative expansion of community colleges and their qualitative performance. The ultimate goal is to develop practical, scalable recommendations that can support Nepal's higher education system in becoming more inclusive, relevant, and responsive to both student aspirations and the needs of the national economy.

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literature review methodology to explore the role of community colleges in enhancing the quality of higher education in Nepal. Data were drawn from secondary sources, including academic journals, government and institutional reports, and policy documents published between 2015 and 2024. Key sources include publications from the University Grants

Commission (UGC), the World Bank, and case-based studies of community colleges. The data were analyzed thematically, focusing on six core dimensions: access and equity, affordability, institutional capacity, academic quality, graduate outcomes, and community engagement. This method enables a comprehensive understanding of systemic challenges and reform opportunities. While the absence of primary data represents a limitation, the study offers evidence-based insights grounded in nationally and internationally recognized literature.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the dual role of Nepal's community colleges in both expanding access to higher education and grappling with significant quality-related challenges. Analysis across six key dimensions—access and equity, affordability, institutional capacity, academic quality, graduate outcomes, and community engagement—reveals a complex landscape of achievements alongside persistent obstacles.

### Access and Equity

Community colleges have excelled in expanding access to tertiary education, particularly for marginalized groups. Operating in 73 of Nepal's 77 districts, these institutions reduce geographic barriers and serve rural, low-income, and underrepresented populations. The high enrollment of female students—66.3% of total enrollment in community campuses—is a significant indicator of progress toward gender inclusion. Additionally, these institutions provide vital opportunities for Dalits, Janajatis, and economically disadvantaged learners, helping to fulfill the national agenda of equitable education.

### Affordability

Affordability remains a core strength of community colleges. With substantially lower tuition fees than private or constituent colleges, and limited reliance on central funding, they offer financially accessible options for students

from poor households. Their cost-effectiveness is partly sustained by modest UGC support (approximately NPR 10,661 per student), which, although minimal, allows campuses to maintain lower fees. Local government subsidies, such as Miklajung Rural Municipality's full tuition support for Bachelor's programs, have further enhanced affordability in some areas. However, these financial models are not consistently applied nationwide, revealing inequities in support distribution.

### Institutional Capacity and Technological Integration

Institutional capacity in most community colleges remains critically underdeveloped. Operating under an input-based and low-volume funding model, these campuses face significant challenges in establishing and maintaining essential infrastructure, including laboratories, libraries, ICT facilities, and conducive learning environments. The disparity in funding is stark—constituent campuses receive nearly 77 times more government support per student than community campuses. Faculty strength is also limited, as many instructors lack postgraduate qualifications and have minimal access to professional development opportunities. This substantial resource gap hampers the delivery of quality education and threatens institutional sustainability.

### Academic Quality

The rigidity of centralized curricula and outdated teaching methodologies weakens academic relevance. Most community colleges offer traditional programs in humanities, education, and management—fields with saturated job markets and limited applicability in today's economy. The lack of curriculum autonomy stifles innovation and local adaptation, while minimal research engagement further limits academic dynamism. Participation in the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) process remains low among community campuses, reflecting systemic deficiencies in both academic and administrative practices.

## Curriculum Relevance and Contextualization

A major challenge for community colleges is the lack of curriculum contextualization. Programs are largely designed and governed by centralized universities such as Tribhuvan University, which limits institutional autonomy and responsiveness to local needs. As a result, courses are often outdated, overly theoretical, and disconnected from regional labor market trends. Community campuses have limited flexibility to develop locally relevant academic content in sectors like agriculture, tourism, or small-scale enterprise—despite these being key employment areas in rural Nepal. Where localized efforts have been made, such as Miklajung’s agriculture- and tourism-focused programs, the results demonstrate strong potential for aligning education with economic opportunities. However, systemic reforms are required to decentralize curriculum governance and promote innovation that reflects local contexts and development priorities.

## Cost-Effectiveness

Community colleges are notably cost-effective compared to other segments of Nepal’s higher education system. Despite enrolling over 30% of the nation’s undergraduate students, they operate on just 4–6% of the total higher education budget. The average government investment per student at community campuses (NPR 10,661) is drastically lower than that at constituent campuses (NPR 821,728), yet they continue to provide broad access (UGC, 2023; World Bank, 2015). This efficiency stems from community contributions, volunteer faculty, and the use of local resources. However, while the cost per student is low, this economy often comes at the expense of quality—manifesting in under-resourced classrooms, low faculty retention, and poor academic outcomes. Thus, maintaining affordability must be balanced with targeted investments to ensure long-term value and sustainability.

## Graduate Outcomes

Graduate performance indicators suggest an urgent need for reform. High dropout rates—driven by financial pressures, labor migration, and lack of student support services—remain a persistent concern. Programs misaligned with labor market needs further exacerbate underemployment among graduates. Very few community colleges offer vocational or STEM programs, and where technical training exists, it is often delivered by institutions outside the community college framework. This disconnect between academic offerings and economic demand has weakened the employability of graduates.

## Community Engagement

Although community colleges are embedded within local contexts, meaningful partnerships with municipalities, NGOs, and industries remain limited. Success stories like Miklajung—where educational programs are aligned with local development priorities such as agriculture and tourism—demonstrate the potential of such collaborations. However, most colleges lack the structural support and governance capacity to establish sustained community linkages. Greater integration with local stakeholders could enable campuses to become engines of regional development and innovation.

## Synthesis of Gaps

The findings highlight several critical gaps:

- o **Funding Inefficiency.** Current funding is not linked to performance or quality improvement.
- o **Governance Deficits.** Lack of institutional autonomy and absence of a unified policy identity limit reform.
- o **Academic Stagnation.** Outdated and generalized curricula dominate, with weak links to workforce demands.
- o **Faculty Limitations.** Few training opportunities and poor retention of qualified educators.



- o **Limited Technical Focus.** Vocational and applied programs are largely missing from community college offerings.
- o **Fragmented Community Ties.** Community engagement remains sporadic and uncoordinated.

### Implications and Way Forward

To reposition community colleges as quality-oriented institutions, systemic reforms are required. These include:

- o Transitioning to performance-based funding models.
- o Diversifying academic programs toward STEM and vocational areas.
- o Strengthening participation in national quality assurance mechanisms.
- o Investing in faculty development through scholarships and training grants.
- o Institutionalizing community partnerships through localized planning and co-financing.

By addressing these challenges, community colleges can evolve from mere access providers into institutions that deliver relevant, inclusive, and high-quality higher education, contributing meaningfully to Nepal's development agenda.

### Performance and Challenges of Community Colleges

The performance of community colleges in Nepal must be assessed through a multidimensional lens that considers both their systemic limitations and their pivotal contributions to expanding educational access. Despite their grassroots foundations and potential for social inclusion, these institutions face persistent challenges that hinder their capacity to deliver quality education. One of the most critical areas is institutional capacity, particularly regarding funding, infrastructure, and qualified human resources.

Community colleges primarily rely on input-based funding from the University Grants Commission (UGC), calculated based on enrollment numbers, program offerings, and geographic location. This is supplemented by student tuition fees and occasional local donations (Gupta, 2023). However, the literature consistently confirms that this funding formula is inadequate for improving educational quality or ensuring long-term sustainability (World Bank, 2015). For instance, while community campuses enroll over one-third of Nepal's undergraduate students, they receive only 4–6% of the total higher education budget (UGC, 2023). The World Bank (2015) further reports that government per-student support at community campuses is roughly one-seventh of what constituent campuses receive, with UGC data showing average investment per student at community campuses is only NPR 10,661, compared to NPR 821,728 at constituent institutions. This stark disparity severely limits the ability of community colleges to invest in laboratories, libraries, ICT infrastructure, and faculty development—key components of institutional capacity.

Closely tied to these constraints is the issue of academic quality. Most community campuses lack curricular autonomy, as course content and examinations are controlled by affiliating public universities such as Tribhuvan University. Consequently, there is little room for innovation or local adaptation (Phuyal, 2023). Outdated teaching practices, infrequent curriculum revisions, and limited research engagement characterize the academic environment at many community colleges (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024). This has led to concentrated enrollment in traditional disciplines such as education, management, and humanities, with very few programs offered in science, technology, or vocational fields. As Phuyal (2023) observes, approximately 88% of students at community colleges are enrolled in low-employability fields, highlighting a critical misalignment between academic offerings and labor market demands,

and raising serious concerns regarding long-term graduate outcomes. Furthermore, many campuses fail to meet UGC's Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) criteria, reflecting systemic weaknesses in both academic and administrative standards (UGC, 2023).

However, despite these quality-related challenges, community colleges have made significant contributions in terms of access and equity. More than 30% of Nepal's undergraduate students attend community colleges, underscoring their reach and importance (UGC, 2023). The expansion of these institutions into 73 out of 77 districts has reduced geographical barriers to education, especially for rural youth. Notably, about 66.3% of community college students are women—many benefiting from the “chori-buhari” policy promoting female enrollment (Ghimire, 2024). These statistics highlight how community colleges serve historically marginalized groups, including Dalits, indigenous populations, and economically disadvantaged students, making access and equity a major strength of their institutional mission.

In terms of affordability, community colleges present a compelling alternative to both private and constituent colleges. With relatively low tuition rates and minimal government support, they remain accessible to lower-income families. Although the limited public subsidy (around NPR 10,661 per student) leads to financial austerity, it also helps keep fees low (Gupta, 2023). Several local governments have introduced initiatives to further enhance affordability. For example, Miklajung Rural Municipality fully subsidizes bachelor's programs at its local community campus while offering skill-based training to residents—demonstrating how targeted subsidies and community engagement can foster inclusive educational ecosystems (Miklajung RM, 2024).

Yet, one of the most critical areas where community colleges have underperformed is in vocational and technical training, a

sector crucial for bridging the education-to-employment gap. Although community colleges are ideally positioned to offer localized, skill-based education, in practice, most technical programs are operated separately by institutions under the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT). Studies show that while community colleges dominate the access narrative, they have largely neglected technical and applied education, revealing a significant gap in academic relevance and graduate employability (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024). Addressing this gap is essential for aligning higher education with Nepal's labor market demands and economic development goals.

Despite these shortcomings, the regional development potential of community colleges remains significant. By educating local youth in their communities, these institutions help retain human capital in rural areas and reduce pressure on urban centers. Some colleges actively collaborate with community schools, agricultural cooperatives, and health centers to develop curricula responsive to local priorities (Edusanjal, n.d.). In Miklajung, for instance, the integration of higher education with rural development programs in sectors like agriculture and tourism illustrates how community engagement can transform educational institutions into engines of regional growth (Miklajung RM, 2024). Although such initiatives remain limited, they suggest viable pathways for enhancing both academic quality and societal relevance.

### **Quality Challenges in Nepalese Higher Education**

Despite significant strides in expanding access, Nepal's higher education system continues to face persistent quality-related challenges that hinder its ability to meet national development goals and global standards. One of the core issues is the outdated and rigid curriculum, which often lacks relevance to labor market demands and fails to equip students with practical, employable skills (Gupta, 2023; World

Bank, 2015). Teaching methodologies remain largely traditional, with limited integration of student-centered and experiential learning practices. This problem is further exacerbated by a shortage of qualified faculty—many of whom lack advanced academic training and professional development opportunities (Phuyal, 2023).

Moreover, infrastructure deficiencies, including inadequate laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities—particularly in rural institutions—contribute to a substandard learning environment (UGC, 2023). Institutional governance issues, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and a lack of autonomy in academic decision-making, further erode quality assurance efforts (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024). Additionally, the slow and inconsistent implementation of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) framework across universities and affiliated colleges limits accountability and continuous improvement (Ghimire, 2024). As a result, many graduates struggle to secure employment or pursue further education, signaling a growing disconnect between higher education outcomes and societal or economic needs. Addressing these systemic issues is essential for transforming Nepal's higher education into a more equitable, relevant, and quality-driven system.

## **Key Quality Challenges in Nepalese Higher Education**

### ***Curriculum Relevance and Contextualization***

Many community colleges in Nepal follow outdated curricula that lack alignment with current labor market demands, technological advancements, and global educational standards. This disconnect limits the practical skills and employability of graduates, while also restricting opportunities for local innovation and contextualized learning.

### ***Traditional Teaching Methods***

Higher education remains dominated by lecture-based, rote learning practices, with minimal use of interactive or student-centered pedagogy.

### ***Inadequate Faculty Qualifications***

A significant proportion of faculty members lack postgraduate or doctoral degrees, and professional development opportunities are scarce.

### ***Poor Physical and Technological Infrastructure***

Many institutions, particularly community colleges, suffer from inadequate laboratories, libraries, internet access, and classroom facilities.

### ***Weak Institutional Governance***

Centralized control, political interference, and a lack of autonomy hinder effective decision-making and academic innovation.

### ***Limited Implementation of Quality Assurance Measures***

Although the QAA system exists, its adoption is slow and inconsistent across institutions, limiting accountability and performance monitoring.

### ***Mismatch Between Education and Employment***

Graduates often struggle to find relevant employment, pointing to a persistent disconnect between academic programs and labor market needs.

The findings of this study reveal that Nepal's community colleges have made substantial progress in expanding access to higher education, particularly for marginalized populations, including women, Dalits, and rural learners. Their broad geographic reach, low tuition costs, and grassroots governance have significantly contributed to equitable participation. However, this expansion in access is undermined by ongoing quality challenges.

Across six key dimensions—access and equity, affordability, institutional capacity, academic quality, graduate outcomes, and community engagement—systemic deficiencies remain evident. Institutional capacity is notably weak, with inadequate infrastructure, underqualified faculty, and insufficient funding, all of which constrain the delivery of high-



quality education. Academic programs remain heavily concentrated in traditional disciplines with limited labor market relevance, while rigid curricular structures inhibit innovation and local responsiveness. Furthermore, ineffective governance and inconsistent participation in the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) process reflect deeper structural and policy-level shortcomings.

Although community colleges have demonstrated localized successes—such as in Miklajung Rural Municipality, where educational programs are aligned with regional development needs—these cases remain isolated rather than widespread. The study emphasizes that without strategic reforms in funding models, curriculum modernization, faculty development, and community engagement, the sector will continue to struggle to meet the demands of a dynamic and competitive higher education landscape. Thus, the dual role of community colleges—as both access providers and potential quality institutions—remains unbalanced, with an urgent need to bridge the current gap between inclusion and excellence.

## Conclusion

Community colleges in Nepal have played a transformative role in expanding access to higher education, particularly for rural, disadvantaged, and marginalized populations. Their broad geographic presence and commitment to affordability have enabled thousands of students—many of them women, Dalits, and first-generation learners—to pursue tertiary education within their own communities. These institutions have become critical platforms for promoting educational inclusion and social equity across the country.

However, the expansion of access has not been accompanied by equivalent improvements in quality. Community colleges continue to face major challenges related to inadequate funding, outdated curricula, limited faculty development, insufficient infrastructure, and constrained

institutional autonomy. These limitations have hampered their ability to deliver education that is academically rigorous, responsive to labor market demands, and aligned with national development priorities. Additionally, the limited availability of technical, vocational, and STEM programs has restricted the employability of graduates and weakened the connection between education and regional economic development.

This study has shown that while community colleges have succeeded in fulfilling their foundational mission of expanding access, they have yet to realize their full potential as quality-driven institutions. To bridge this gap, it is essential to reform existing funding structures, update academic programs to include technical and vocational pathways, invest in faculty capacity building, and strengthen engagement with local governments, industries, and communities. These efforts must be complemented by robust governance reforms and quality assurance mechanisms that uphold academic standards while fostering institutional innovation.

In conclusion, Nepal's community colleges are uniquely positioned to address both educational and developmental disparities. With strategic reforms and sustained policy support, these institutions can evolve from basic access providers into dynamic centers of academic excellence and social transformation. Their advancement is crucial not only for achieving national education goals but also for building a more inclusive, skilled, and equitable society.

## Policy Recommendations

To address these interlinked challenges, the following reforms and interventions are recommended:

### *Increase and Reorient Funding*

Community colleges should transition from input-based grants to performance-based funding. As proposed by Gupta (2023), a block grant model, combined with incentives for

enrollment, research, and QAA certification, can enhance both equity and quality. The government should also increase the share of the higher education budget allocated to community campuses.

### **Expand and Update Curricula**

Greater emphasis on vocational, technical, and STEM programs is needed to align educational offerings with local and national labor market demands. Courses in agriculture, tourism, health sciences, and ICT should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders (Phuyal, 2023), thereby enhancing academic quality and improving graduate outcomes.

### **Strengthen Accreditation and Governance**

All community campuses should be required to participate in UGC's QAA process, with accreditation linked to funding eligibility. Introducing greater institutional autonomy, or even establishing a dedicated community college university system, could empower these institutions with clearer governance structures and a stronger policy voice (Gupta & Shiwakoti, 2024).

### **Invest in Faculty and Infrastructure**

National and provincial governments should provide structured support for faculty development, including postgraduate training, fellowships, and teaching innovation grants. Infrastructure improvements—particularly in ICT, laboratories, and learning spaces—are essential for strengthening institutional capacity and academic delivery.

### **Strengthen Community Engagement**

Local governments should be encouraged to co-finance community colleges and collaborate in developing training programs in agriculture, handicrafts, health, and tourism. Planning mechanisms involving rural municipalities, NGOs, and employers can improve the local relevance of programs and enhance institutional sustainability (Miklajung RM, 2024).

### **Promote Equity-Focused Policies**

Community colleges should expand targeted support for marginalized students, particularly women, Dalits, and first-generation learners. This support may include stipends, transportation allowances, academic counseling, and family engagement programs aimed at improving student retention and success (Ghimire, 2024).

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