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Leveraging Diasporic Power for Nation Building

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> A king is respected in his own kingdom
> whereas a scholar is respected everywhere.
> - *The Chanakya Neeti*

In September 2016 when Prem Baniya, a journalist and literary figure who had gained celebrity for his televised Nepali language talk show titled "Glory Be To Dignity" left the country to live in the United States, the Nepalese public erupted in an intense debate. Some argued that he was just another hypocritical intellectual who sank into the quagmire of personal opportunity abroad. Others defended him by saying that the political situation in Nepal had inspired despair even among the likes of Baniya, who was beloved for his many speeches challenging the political brass for their lack of patriotism (a reference made in the name of his television show).

Yet others rationalized that while a developing nation cannot stop its skilled manpower from being attracted by a globalized world, society at home might in the long run benefit from Baniya's gain in knowledge and perspectives. They argued that his work could bolster a positive image of Nepal abroad, while the country could potentially benefit from his contributions to journalism elsewhere and a wider appreciation for the arts of Nepal. This argument, which evokes the popular Sanskrit verse cited above, notes that an intellectual who leaves home can bolster respect for the society from which he or she has come wherever he or she goes in the world.

The hotly debated and unusually publicized departure of this one public intellectual exposed the tip of a longstanding discourse about brain drain versus brain gain, a debate that arose in response to the increased global mobility of people in economically less developed parts of the world. The debate has taken different forms depending on time and context, but the underlying issue is linked to the social role and the responsibilities of the intellectual. The terms of the debate were defined strictly in nation-based terms during the period of developing nationalisms over the past two centuries.

When an intellectual crosses political or national borders, his or her role and responsibilities suddenly become undefined (both literally and in terms of the mathematical metaphor of being divided by zero). In nation-based socio-political and intellectual/professional paradigms, the identity, ethos, and respect for the "foreign scholar" are often as romanticized as that of the scholar in the *Chanakya Neeti* of ancient India, but there is always as well an underbelly of rejection, ambivalence, and confusion surrounding the intellectual's place and value to the new society. Thus, the mobile intellectual's unmooring from a national location can result in a double-edged sword, a reality on which public

discourse has not yet focused (perhaps typically because the focus is on how the receiving land can benefit from the gain, not on the experience and perspective of the in-coming outsider).

The debate on the "sending" or the "losing" side of brain drain often mirrors covert or overt resentment of highly-skilled migrants in the usually more developed destination countries. However, neither side of the issue has been addressed in a substantive manner in the scholarship of higher education. While the underlying power dynamics have been addressed theoretically within literary studies and political science by scholars of post-colonialism, literary critics have focused on the inability of creative writers to understand or to authentically represent their homelands, the people, and the cultures that they have left behind (Rao, 2004). Traditional and social media abound in conversations about the mobile intellectual, but the public ambivalence, volatility, and multi-dimensional nature of perception in the media is yet to be substantively discussed in higher education scholarship. For this reason, it is important that we begin to ask questions. We need to understand the challenges that these intellectuals face and the obstacles that institutions, societies, and individual advocates can help them in countering. The need is especially significant when migrating intellectuals cross civilizational boundaries.

How can institutions and societies from which intellectuals leave overcome public resentment so as to tap into the potential benefits for higher education at home resulting from the departing intellectuals? In other words, how can willing intellectuals at home pass over the roadblocks created by public discourse and resistance among scholars and others at home in order to explore pathways of collaboration and contribution? Similarly, what implications can scholarship draw for discussions about policies and practices in transnational higher education from the local/foreign power dynamics erupting among intellectuals who leave when these intellectuals start to work in receiving countries?

While the benefits of transnational collaboration made possible through collaboration with these transnational scholars are increasingly recognized in the abstract in receiving societies, the tensions, uncertainties, and changing attitudes that these scholars face in their new institutions are a different matter. Put together, how may higher education institutions tap into the unused resources of these mobile intellectuals, connecting them with institutions back home and inviting them to contribute on transnational terms to institutions in their destination countries?

The author argues that members of the educated diaspora not only serve as intellectual ambassadors in destination countries but also create bilateral and multilateral traffic in "soft power" that benefits all sides. Thus, he will critique the dominant view that losing or gaining scholars physically or intellectually is a zero-sum game, a view that fundamentally misses the very definition of the intellectual—and instead posits that both sides must reconceptualize the "scattering" of the diaspora intellectual as a process whereby the potential impact on the world of higher learning, both at home and abroad, is increased.

Finally, he notes the existence of certain roadblocks that, in practice, hinder this potential. He illustrates the resistance and tensions, ambivalence, and changing perceptions of the "defecting scholar" by evoking the case of Nepal while also drawing some broad lessons from the conscious efforts by China and India to curb contemporary brain drain.

Brain Drain versus Brain Gain

"Diaspora" literally means "to scatter about." Used historically to describe the Jewish people in exile, the word in modern times refers to people from any ethnic or national background who live outside the territory to which they historically belong (Carter, 2005). As opportunities and attractions for transnational mobility increase, the tendency of such dispersal from homelands to places across the globe, to civilizations near and far, has become increasingly manifest. Simultaneously, the opportunities of diasporic individuals and social/professional communities to "give back" to their homelands has also increased dramatically, given heightened numbers of practicing intellectuals, emerging means of communication, and the development of affordable transportation.

The increasing predominance of knowledge-sharing as a critical ingredient of socioeconomic development for knowledge-based national/global economies—enhanced and accelerated by rapid advancements in the information technologies—has not yet been adequately theorized in scholarship, not to mention appreciated by the general public, especially the publics of nations that lose intellectuals to the world beyond. Scholars of higher education seem to hesitate to engage the rather discomforting topic of resentment at home and rejection abroad that diaspora scholars may face.

The binary concepts of brain drain (or losing the national asset of intellect and skills) versus brain gain (or the gaining of knowledge and skills when people return or contribute to the homeland) are simplistic. They must be viewed in light of the complex realities of today's globalized world. Diaspora intellectuals today have become a critical global asset to be tapped into by both local and global professional and social institutions and communities. This reality is particularly significant in higher education because transnational scholars not only study issues in particular nations but also issues that cross borders. Thus, their research is relevant both locally and across the various civilizational, national, and cultural borders. As such, higher education scholarship is tasked with finding ways by which to turn the "drain" into "gain," thus disrupting the dichotomy, and conserving, recycling, and putting into productive use the intellectual resources of those who study and make an impact on institutions and issues across geopolitical territories.

While the dominant pattern of intellectual diaspora is one of people leaving underdeveloped countries for more developed ones, the major narrative of the brain drain in less-developed countries like Nepal frequently paints a bleak picture of the country. At the same time, however, arguments in the international development literature suggest that some countries have found a way to regain lost brainpower.

Toward the end of 2015, when the unofficial blockade imposed by India was suffocating Nepal, the Nepali diaspora worldwide was mobilized by its intellectuals who prompted Nepali expatriates in all the professions to take to the streets to demonstrate solidarity for the security and sovereignty of their home country. The spirit of love for the homeland that was reflected in the power of the diaspora indicates that when channeled effectively, it can be instrumental in addressing the challenges at home and raising intellectual and economic resources during a crisis. The expertise gained by the diaspora along with the social, even diplomatic, relationships built up over time can provide a critical nation building asset for a developing country such as Nepal.

Even in times of peace and strong economic growth, governments have invoked the power of their diasporas in support of national development. Both China and India have made conscious efforts to leverage their respective brainpower on the outside. Thus, in a recent plea to the Indian diaspora, Indian external affairs minister Susma Swaraj solicited donations for national development. In a message disseminated via recorded video, Swaraj said: "The money will not be just a donation. It is a way to get connected with the roots. It is a way to pay back to your motherland. It will be a reflection of emotional attachment to the country." (*Times of India*, 2016).

By 2000, more than half of the highly skilled workers in Silicon Valley, the center of American innovation, were foreign-born. Most of them happen to have migrated from either India or China, accounting for over one-quarter of the scientists and engineers in the region. These individuals not only innovate in the United States, but they also combine their research insights with professional and business linkages to create critical nation-building mechanisms for their homelands.

Anna Lee Saxenian, a University of California professor and dean, terms such a process as "brain circulation" rather than "brain drain." Her scholarship focuses on regional economies and the conditions under which people, ideas, and geographies combine and connect into hubs of economic activity. In her 2005 seminal article, Saxenian argues that these engineers and entrepreneurs, aided by the lowered transaction costs associated with digitization, are transferring technical and institutional know-how between distant regional economies faster and more flexibly than most large corporations can manage.

Saxenian further explains how brain drain becomes brain gain:

> [T]he same individuals who left their home countries for better lifestyles abroad are now reversing the brain drain, transforming it into "brain circulation" as they return home to establish business relationships or to start new companies while maintaining their social and professional ties to the United States (Saxenian, 2005: 36).

Saxenian has studied how Chinese- and Indian-born engineers have been accelerating the development of information technology industries in their home countries—initially by

tapping the low-cost skills available there, and over time, by contributing to highly localized processes of entrepreneurial experimentation and upgrading while also maintaining close ties to the technology and markets in Silicon Valley.

A case in point: after a long period of wailing over lost brain power, India awoke to the possibility that there might be tangible benefits arising from brain gain. They can be spectacular. Recently India surprised the world with a successful operational mission to Mars. India's space program succeeded on its first attempt. The mission was budgeted at 4.5 billion rupees (74 million USD), which, by Western standards, is staggeringly cheap (BBC, 2014). This example is a manifestation of the power of diaspora that benefits nation building in specific ways. Since a large part of the scientific community in the United States consists of Indian-Americans, the sharing of technical insights coming out of thousands of expensive experiments happens informally.

During the 1986-1987 biennium and even more intensely during the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, China pursued a policy of not recognizing its citizens who went to the United States to study. Thanks to Deng Xiaoping's initiative, China began to reach out to its diaspora. It developed more favorable policies, offering higher-ranking positions, more attractive salaries, and better benefits to those willing to return. In 1992, the Chairman of the State Education Commission publicized the slogan "support overseas study, encourage people to return, and give people freedom to come and go" (Li Tieying, 1992: 190). China's entry into the World Trade Organization led to an increased demand for returnees.

In this effort, China is following in the path of South Korea and Taiwan, where thriving economies supported by liberalized policies have turned brain drain into brain gain. China's return flow has picked up despite an authoritarian regime and low per capita income (Zweig, 2006: 66).

Figure 1   Number of returned students, 1978-2004
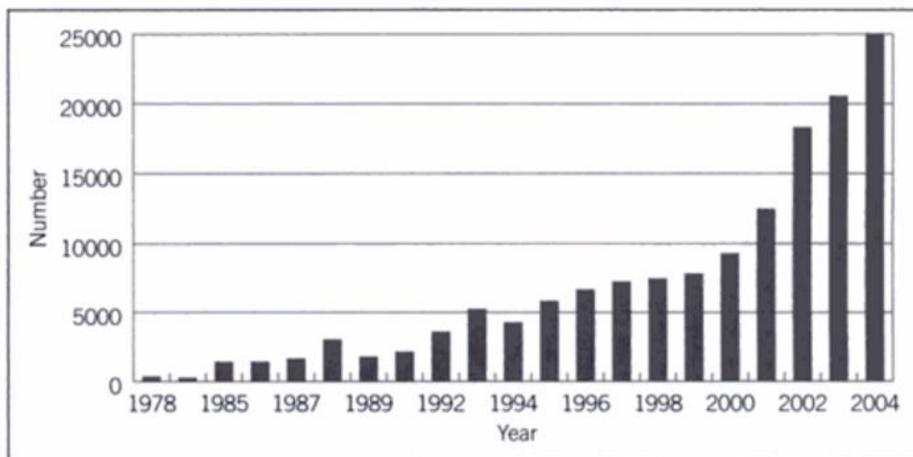
Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*, 2004, p. 781.

Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport (2001, 2008) found that most developing countries are losers in the game of brain drain or brain gain. However, there are many developing countries (about 20 percent according to the sample derived from Beine et al.) that have been able to enjoy benefits coming from remittances and from diasporic externalities. While very few other studies focus on the tradeoff, it appears that scholars who are resilient enough to pursue any modest opportunities for transnational projects regularly confirm that they can bring significant self-realization and social contribution to their home countries. A Nepali expatriate who teaches at the State University of New York, Shyam Sharma, wrote recently about the satisfaction of "visit[ing] a Nepali town every month, without having to pay airfare, or even brave the snow" (2016) through video conferencing to train fellow professors in a small town in western Nepal. "No amount of money," he goes on to quote his trainees in Nepal as saying, "would motivate [us] as powerfully as the desire to help the next generation catch up." These trainees know that educators in Nepal and the world must come to grips with the "knowledge economy" and leverage all possible resources to benefit their nation and the world.

The author worked with other scholars in 2014 to investigate this idea. Using secondary data available from the Institute for Employment Research, they investigated the following question: Is there a relationship between the increasing rate of brain drain in a given country and its economic growth as demonstrated by such indicators as the positive enrollment in tertiary education for increased human development?

The number of male and female educated migrants to OECD countries from Nepal, in the years 1980-2010, supplemented with statistics available from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal and the World Bank, were analyzed in five-year intervals to draw conclusions about the relationship between the out-migration of the educated population and the economic growth of the country.

The preliminary results of these analyses have indicated that no clear patterns have emerged (Gaulee, Ullman, and Bista, 2014). Faini (2003) finds little empirical support for this so-called "revisionist" approach but goes on to employ a different equation, one relating educational achievement to a set of explanatory variables that include migration. These contradictory theories complicate the research conducted and the theory developed by Gary Becker (1964) that clearly established a connection between the education and training of a population and the economic and social benefits that extend specifically to the individuals concerned but are enjoyed by the people and the respective governments as well.

The Case of Nepal

Nepal has a great need for its highly educated manpower; therefore, the resentment cited above is understandable. But what the author is arguing here is that resentment is extremely counterproductive for higher education institutions and higher education in general. Indeed, one can also cite implications of the power dynamics and the social psychology

involved that are more generally relevant to transnational higher education discourse and practice.

What does the case of Nepal hold for higher education scholarship in terms of building partnerships among participants who have different kinds of relationships, including those who share the same interests or view each other with suspicion and those on unequal power footings based on national identity or prestige of other types?

The special case of "family members" of a given nation who dislike their "brothers and sisters" when they leave home is an interesting, intriguing, even somewhat disturbing case; however, this case also serves to highlight other kinds of uncomfortable realities about how intellectuals treat one another across borders. Questions must be asked and answered in the context of both the losing and the gaining societies, especially regarding the very terms, "losing" and "gaining." The intellectual, like knowledge or intellect, is never lost or gained; rather, he or she is shared. The dispersal of intellectuals is a process of growth, not demise. Their scattering from certain places into others is ultimately a gain for the world at large.

A recent report (2014) by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Nepal found that young people aged 16 to 40 comprise fully 40.33 percent of the total population of Nepal. These young men and women deserve attention because they offer the greatest leverage for change in the overall educational level of the national workforce. They also provide the greatest returns on educational investments because of the long work lives they have ahead of them. Instead, what has been happening to this major population sector is that a large majority of it has been systematically dispirited, disillusioned, and declared to be failures. Nepal's education system has been failing a large majority of its students every year, pushing them to despair.

At the same time, those who pass or somehow successfully navigate the system, usually those from well-off families, go abroad citing the need for further study as justification. Leaving Nepal for the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia is a mark of great success among Nepali youth. Not surprisingly, the exodus of young men and women to overseas destinations over the past several decades has led to an expanded Nepali diaspora around the world. The unseen yet most important result, however, is the emergence of a cadre of successful professionals. This diaspora has grown to be an incredibly powerful force, willing to contribute to the development of Nepal.

On the one hand, concerns about the damaging consequences of brain drain must be taken seriously. Indeed, the outrage of the Nepali population regarding the abuse of transnational professional and economic opportunities available to public servants should also be taken seriously. On the other hand, however, it seems unhelpful not to tap into the tremendous amount of potential offered by the diaspora of highly-skilled Nepalis who live around the world. One of the largest groups that may not be making a direct economic contribution to the progress of Nepal is that of professionals in the field of education. From university and college professors to professional scientists and engineers, from nurses and doctors to

researchers in many different fields and many countries around world, the highly-educated Nepali diaspora has far more potential than is being utilized today.

As the number of Nepali intellectuals in the USA is increasing rapidly—and their potential will similarly increase in the future—the Nepali government, Nepali institutions, and Nepali scholars must begin to formulate appropriate policies and practices in regard to these people. Nepali-Americans are forging their unique identity in the United States as a hard-working, happy people. Even as a young group, the involvement and influence of Nepalis in the American democracy is constantly growing, but it was only in 1952 that the first Nepali immigrated to the United States (Dhungel, 1999).

As this table from Dhungel's study indicates, Nepali immigration to the United States is not only a recent phenomenon, but it also began on a relatively small scale.

Table 1
Nepalese Immigrants Admitted to the United States. 1952 – 1993

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1952	1	1967	9	1980	95
1953-55	0	1968	19	1981	83
1956	1	1969	32	1982	97
1957	5	1970	25	1983	105
1958	0	1971	40	1984	75
1959	4	1972	39	1985	63
1960	4	1973	46	1986	86
1961	5	1974	43	1987	78
1962	5	1975	56	1988	106
1963	3	1976	68	1989	134
1964	7	1977	80	1990	184
1965	4	1978	68	1991	174
1966	8	1979	79	1992	206
				1993	296

Total number: 2433
Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Computer file, ICPSR, 1993

Currently, the Nepali population in the United States is comprised largely either of students or of Diversity Visa winners.

Nath (2009) undertook an exploratory study of the Nepali diaspora in the United States. He found that Nepalis are still grappling with the issues of settlement, assimilation, adjustment to their new homeland and identity: "They are trying to create … and [are] also in the process [trying to] define their image as members of the South Asian diaspora" (p. 118). What is changing very rapidly is that the Nepali identity is now manifested in multiple ethnic and cultural organizations based in educational institutions, cities, and states

representing Nepali culture. While Nepali identity brings all Nepalis together, larger cities tend to have various organizations representing differentiated identities, subgroups from the diverse social fabric of Nepal. Nepalis, who are promoting specific cultures, (e.g. Newars, Tamangs, Mahesis, etc.), have their own organizations.

According to a recent report released at the fifth General Assembly of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRN USA), there are more than 251,000 Nepalese in the United States including about 110,000 with permanent residency or citizenship status. The 2010 United States Census listed 59,490 Nepali immigrants. Owing to the undocumented status of many Nepalis in the United States, it is difficult to obtain an accurate number. It is even more difficult to obtain accurate statistics on how Nepalis are involved in various projects in Nepal. Describing such an involvement, even in the highly technical health sector, Devkota, Devkota, and Ghimire (2013) argue that "there is no proper mapping and a clear process of their involvement in Nepal's health sector."

Figure 2. Distribution of the Nepali diaspora in the United States of America

Source: Kafle (2017).
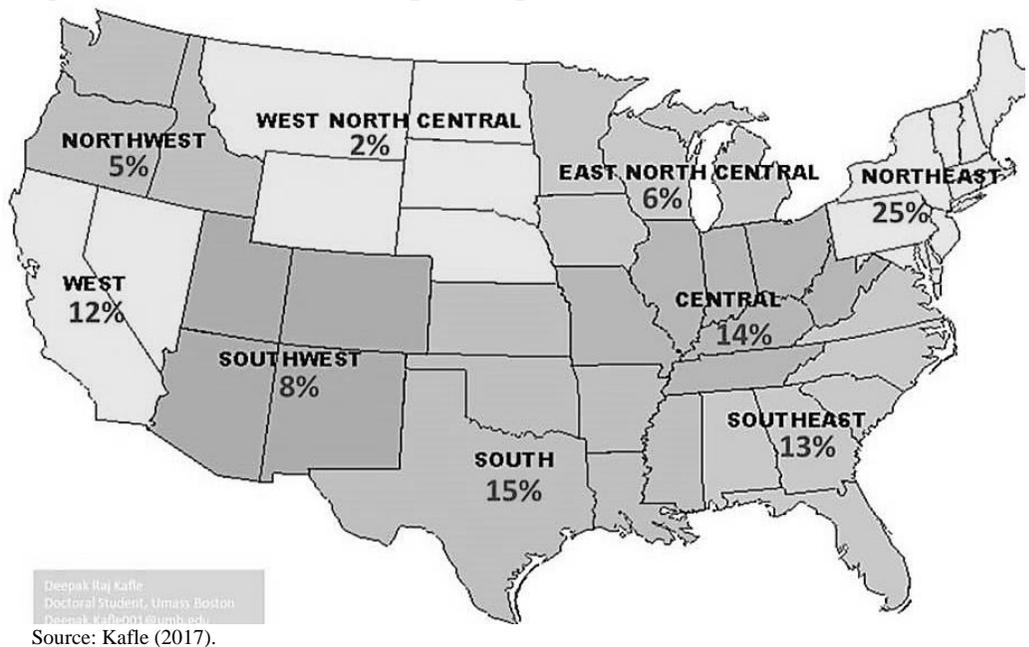
Addressing the Resentment

While successful diaspora members abroad are frequently viewed by the public as models, they are sometimes and ironically viewed as rivals by their Nepali counterparts. While migrants leaving home primarily because of economic hardship are not viewed at home with disdain, they are often discriminated against in the destination countries.

A significant issue that needs to be explored in the context of increasing border-crossing and cross-border collaboration among higher education experts is the reverse dynamic, the resentment in the receiving countries of diaspora intellectuals. To what extent has this phenomenon been influenced by the worldwide rise in ultranationalist movements?

What is being witnessed worldwide is a growing bitterness of division. The surprising Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, the hardline party crackdown in China, the low intensity Russian-Ukrainian war, the failed coup in Turkey, a serious presidential crisis in Brazil, and the ongoing fragmentation of Syria as a result of its brutal civil war—all tell similar stories (Luke, 2016).

While patriotic feeling is cherished by all, it can become dangerous when people intensify it and begin to spy on one another in a competition to determine who is the most nationalistic. The tendency to label sets of people, especially those living outside the country, as "not-so-nationalistic" is becoming a new norm for Nepalis. A recent decision of the Minister of Public Administration, Mr. Lalbabu Pundit, to ban dual citizens from serving in the Nepali bureaucracy has gained popular support. While such decisions may have had practical purposes, policy makers should not forget the positive power of their national diaspora which can be channeled in support of national prosperity and security.

Negative perceptions are often complicated by power dynamics (e.g. within professions, departments, etc.). Whether to treat western or foreign educated intellectuals as a cut above the locals creates confusion and backfires owing to perceived competition. When the government tries to bring back diaspora expertise and thus applies the same prejudicial treatment to local counterparts, the system backfires again. Misconceptions abound. How do professionals succeed abroad? Are diaspora members aware of the pernicious effects of politics in education? Who, on either side, assumes that mistrust is all about money? How should the government and society tap into the potentials of both sides and, thus, create the right environment and incentives for all?

One welcome step has been taken by the Nepal Government in officially recognizing the Nepali diaspora. A new "Non-Resident Nepali Act" signifies that Nepal is reaching out to Nepali diaspora members by providing for the legal protection of Non-resident Nepalis. The Preamble to the Act reads that "…it is expedient to provide for the legal provision to motivate nonresident Nepalis to take part in [the] all around development of Nepal by enhancing their attachment to Nepal" (Nepal Law Commission, 2008).

What follows is one particular approach to analyzing the resentment and rejection of diaspora scholars by home communities. Because many people in developing nations are jumping straight from a subsistence agrarian economy into the heart of the knowledge economy (particularly individuals such as teachers and researchers), they often have difficulty appreciating the very basis and mode of production in what for them is a new economy. They fail to value knowledge as the product of their work.

Sharma (2016) illustrates this issue in an article that he wrote for *Republica* by citing the example of a high school teacher: "Leaving his parents' agricultural economy behind, [Gokul] had jumped straight into the heart of the new knowledge economy as a public-school teacher. But he didn't even realize that his teaching was his cash crop, that his continued learning was irrigation for it" (n.p.). Sharma goes on to discuss the issue more broadly: "Gokul's story can be used to explain why quality in education in the public sector has stagnated and lagged behind the demands of our times" (Sharma, 2016.)

The dramatic changes in the ways large numbers of people in traditional societies now make a living and transact knowledge seem even more confusing because higher learning is also blurring traditional boundaries of nation states, ethnic divisions, social class statuses, and the prestige of professions or disciplines. Higher education and knowledge are simultaneously global, national, and local (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002). Owing to the emergence of knowledge along with the advancement of information technology, the cross-border or global dimensions of activity are growing every day. Despite the general trend in favor of an increased international engagement for higher education, the actual levels of engagement with the knowledge economy are far from being uniform among nations and regions. With its large concentration of world class research institutions, the United States of America is still a magnet for world-wide talent, enrolling 100,000 international doctoral students each year. At the same time, many Asian countries are rapidly developing their strengths in science. Owing to these major changes in world higher education and research, multiple channels of knowledge exchange have opened across the world (Marginson, 2010).

Challenges Facing the Foreign Scholar

As is evident in the case of Nepal, intellectuals who have gone abroad must deal with many issues including being resented at home. As noted above, these intellectuals may also have difficulty in being able to truly contribute their best while they are being rejected in their new homes. The possibility of being sandwiched between resentment at home and rejection abroad is quite real. Persons caught in this vise need to situate themselves in favorable contexts, explore particular power dynamics, and identify pathways around roadblocks once they are understood.

What are the major dynamics and roadblocks that impede the global scholar?

The first roadblock is of course outright rejection, for instance, the exclusion of non-nationals from certain types of employment opportunities (e.g. jobs related to national security following the 9/11 tragedy in the United States). In addition to legal restrictions, there may be outright discrimination by the host society that discourages foreign scholars from even seeking opportunities in the host country. Then there is the implicit rejection of the knowledge or experience of foreign intellectuals. They therefore are forced to reinvent themselves in local terms. A Russian scholar reflecting the theoretical perspectives of socialist fellow scholars back home might need to elaborate a substitute perspective more

in conformity with American values, even if his or her socialist perspective might provide a better grounding for his or her scholarship. Possibly the Russian socialist perspective might introduce something new that could help American colleagues rethink the issue at hand in productive ways.

So, the failure to translate, transform, and transact ideas on transnational terms, compromising them, watering them down, or even discarding them in order to "fit better" into the new environment could undermine both quality and opportunity in scholarship. Even more significantly (and often painfully), discarding one's foreign identity and expertise while bringing back bits and pieces of it can cause a scholar to become very unproductive and even to appear to be phony as well as confused. The ambivalence and possible resentment arising from being rejected can be sufficiently frustrating to cause a person to abandon any attempt at contributing. Such sentiments could undermine a person's honesty, originality, and nuance as applied to his or her work.

The second roadblock is linked to the larger political changes occurring and the adverse economic or professional environment created by them. Given the lack of political stability and mature leadership in Nepal, scholars at home may see themselves as rivals of their counterparts in the diaspora. Such a perception prevents them from initiating calls to their counterparts to contribute at home. Decreased opportunities for scholars at home can undermine their self-confidence. They may feel threatened by the expatriates. Might the institution that employs them as well as society, students, and other stakeholders be viewing the counterparts in the diaspora as being better qualified? To make matters worse, the expatriates may make mistakes inadvertently by not being aware of relevant power dynamics and critical perceptions thus turning professional opportunities into social landmines.

The lack of concrete models is another obstacle. One cannot claim that there are no success stories in Nepal. What is lacking is a proper mechanism by which to document and publicize even small success stories. For example, the activities of the Summer Advantage Program implemented at the Midwestern University need to be documented and made available to other institutions that might emulate them. Without such a mechanism, the old discouraging narrative of the "kasari game" will prevail. Frequently many *bona fide* social project initiatives fail. The situation is like that of offering a new kind of food to a person without first preparing him or her for what is coming.

Fourth, the lack of appropriate government and/or institutional support can discourage potential initiatives. Even though everything does not have to be done by the government, government support is necessary at least at the policy level so as to provide necessary resources, approval, and legal infrastructure.   In fact, governments and education institutions may also explicitly or implicitly discourage scholars from engaging in transnational engagements. For example, few universities and colleges prioritize or even recognize the work that their faculties do with academics in other countries. Other than for

the exceptionally dedicated, the lack of institutional recognition for professional service through transnational collaboration can become discouraging very rapidly.

There are practical challenges as well. For example, it is difficult for scholars to find time, resources, and confidence to join and contribute. In transition as they are, they need to learn new ways of life, a new language and culture, and the norms of the host society. These necessities may even cause the mobile scholar to have to unlearn much previous learning. Hence, while they are learning how to fit into the new culture, they may not be able to maintain contacts with their respective professional communities back home. When they are settled and want to reconnect, they may not know where to start or with whom to start working. In such a situation, the risk of taking the flak of rejection or resentment may outweigh the willpower to be helpful to the home country.

Pathways and Solutions

It is now time for Nepali scholars and researchers in the western world to initiate conversations on how to accommodate and spread the news of small success stories thus recognizing their stakeholders and developing the soft power of networking and the creation of momentum by reaching out to fellow Nepali across the borders.

Diaspora scholars cannot afford to simply focus on roadblocks. Scholars of higher education working across borders must explore potentials and possibilities for collaboration and exchanges. The number of globally mobile scholars has been increasing at unprecedented rates. There are both opportunities and challenges in international higher education that this group of scholars can and should help to address as well as unique opportunities that they can create.

The case of Nepal can serve to illustrate how intellectuals who are sandwiched between spaces they may have left and spaces in which they may not be easily accepted can turn themselves into productive assets by undertaking research and scholarship in higher education in an interconnected world. If scholars can invest the right ingredients into their work as transnational scholars, taking the right approach by using the "sandwich" situation positively, the fact of being sandwiched may become less a liability and more an advantage.

An example of how a few expert scholars from Nepal and the United States of America reached out to each other and collaborated productively across borders is described below.

Using information technology, the Midwestern University, a relatively new, small, but fully publicly funded institution in western Nepal developed its "Summer Advantage Program," the object of which is to host returning expatriates during their summer visits to Nepal. Colleagues of the returnees from other countries are also invited as visitors to take part in the academic events. Accordingly, Midwestern University invited five professors from the United States, including three Nepali expatriates and two American scholars (one of Japanese origin) to Surkhet, where Midwestern University is located, for a weeklong series

of academic activities. This education summit, called "Transformations," involved five tracks. The goal was to implement the semester system in Nepal and the task was to train faculty, engage students, and involve senior administrators (including the Vice Chancellor, who actively participated in the conference).

A part of the twenty-year educational transformation plan of Midwestern University, this event was the culmination of monthly web-based training sessions led by Shyam Sharma in which ten faculty members at Midwestern University participated. The author was involved in facilitating the training and situating it in the broader framework of the mission of the university. This collaboration among scholars in the United States and Nepal also gave rise to a variety of other conversations and initiatives for implementing and enhancing the semester system, promoting research and scholarship, integrating writing with research and innovative teaching/learning approaches, and internationalizing higher education in Nepal. A webinar series called WACAP (Writing Across the Curriculum and in the Professions) offered training to ten teachers on how to integrate writing and communication skills in teaching across academic departments. Based on this "training of trainers" program, the ten teachers have also started training other teachers.

Given its broader context of implementing new teaching/learning methods across the university, the project broadened its goals to include updating and improving teaching/learning, incorporating educational exchange, developing academic support facilities (such as a writing center), and integrating emerging technologies for enhancing teaching/learning.

The conference in question was organized within this broader framework. At its heart were five parallel programs led by the five visiting scholars and coordinated by their counterparts on the ground. Working groups produced tangible materials, including outlines for syllabi and assignments, handouts and guidelines for teaching and academic service, and recommendations for program development and policy updates.

When scholars across nations can combine their knowledge, energy, and resources, even small initiatives can make significant impacts. If the institution and its leadership provide support or simply boost the morale of those who are involved, the initiatives can quickly grow into impactful missions. As seen in the case of the interest of Midwestern University in tapping into diaspora expertise, institutions can reach out to their national diasporas around the world, creating a network of free but powerful intellectual resources.

An important nation-building step for developing nations should be the recognition of their own diasporas as stakeholders in the nation-building process. While it is impossible to contain or to force human resources to remain in one place owing to the forces of globalization, these same forces, if complemented by information technology, make it possible for developing countries to enjoy many benefits from their diasporas, particularly in the field of education. The constitution of Nepal now includes a provision for non-

resident Nepalese citizenship. It needs to be implemented in such a way that facilitates the free flow of capital and ideas in a seamless manner.

Conclusions

The case of Nepal may be used to illustrate some of the implications for transnational educational engagements that tap into the energy and resources of mobile scholars. Clichéd as it may sound, Nepal is at a crossroads: the political conflicts of the past twenty years have ended. The country has a new constitution, and the population is starting to be invested in democratic institutions and new economic opportunities. The forces created by globalization are prompting transnational higher education exchanges and collaboration. But uncertainty and pessimism are also rampant. The constitution exists on paper, but will it be respected in practice? Will the political chaos created by the conflict which followed the end of the monarchy ever end? Will increasing numbers of educated minds in Nepal continue to leave for better opportunities abroad?

Individual scholars are perhaps the most important agents in transnational educational collaboration and exchange. Emerging technologies make communication across the world easier to use—including videoconferencing, collaborative documents worked on simultaneously around the world, internet-based telephones, wi-fi based connections, and mobile devices. Collaboration is free or cost effective, intimate, and rewarding. In this age of social media, individual scholars can spread the word, inspire others, rally support, and put pressure on institutions and society to do more to provide educational development and innovation.

Higher education institutions are the greatest beneficiaries of transnational educational collaboration and exchange. If institutional leaders or even individual faculty or staff members are passionate about educational progress through partnerships with nationals living abroad, they can easily locate scholars and experts and contact them personally. Asking for insights and resources to enhance and enrich curricula, for example, can be accomplished through consultation with diaspora scholars who are usually willing and eager to contribute. Clearly the emerging professional diasporas originally resident in developing countries can provide unique opportunities for the economic and social development of their homelands.

The public in both the receiving and the gaining countries and in the sending or the losing countries tend to view the mobile scholar in stereotypical terms, as if he or she were a question of loss versus gain. Given the rise of nationalistic fervor around the world, it is difficult for people to imagine intellectual resources as inherently capable of crossing borders. Much depends on individual initiative and resilience, goodwill, and the desire to give back to both host and home countries. It may be that for the time being, the vagaries of migration and politics may prevent a prominent figure such as Prem Baniya from serving his homeland from abroad, but the sheer rise in the number of diaspora scholars across the world could obviously benefit higher education in such countries as Nepal which face an

unprecedented brain drain. Such collaboration should be increasingly valued because it is in the interest of both host and home countries.

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