Role of Higher Education in Poverty Reduction

A Case Study of Tribhuvan University, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The given study examines the role played by higher education in the development and prosperity of society. The study unfolds the perceptions of students, scholars and members of academia about the contribution of education in the reduction of poverty. Furthermore, it concentrates on activities and challenges in higher education from the perspective of poverty reduction. This study delivers an understanding of the correlation between higher education and the poverty issue. The study employs a qualitative approach and a case study research design to collect detailed information on higher education's role in poverty reduction. Semi-structured interviews are conducted to obtain views of students, faculty members and the academic leadership regarding higher education's contribution to reduce poverty. Furthermore, the study also analyzes relevant official documents.

The result of the study demonstrates a positive correlation between higher education and poverty reduction since it expands skills and creates employment opportunities. The research reveals that investment in higher education promotes human capital and produces good researchers who can study the reasons of poverty and try to find out the possible solutions. However, irrelevant university curricula, which seemed more theoretical than practical, created a gap between labor market and university graduates. The findings revealed that the gap can be reduced by introducing appropriate curricula and balancing practical cum theoretical knowledge. The results also indicate that different activities (mobilization of local people, utilization of local raw material, advocacy for society, collaboration with agencies, workshops, seminars and research) can be conducted related to poverty reduction. However, there are several challenges such as lack of proper platform, insufficient budget, social trust etc to conduct those activities and political instability is one of the main challenges.

Key words: human capital, higher education, poverty reduction, political instability

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, my husband, my kids and family.

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ACRONYMS

CEDA	Centre for Economic Development and Administration
CERID	Research Centre for Education Innovation and Development
CNAS	Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HCT	Human Capital Theory
M. Phil.	Master of Philosophy
MoE	Ministry of Education
NESP	National Education System Plan
Ph. D.	Doctor of Philosophy
RD	Rural Development
RECAST	Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology
TU	Tribhuvan University
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Education in general and higher education in particular has the potential to be a foundation for economic development and poverty reduction. Omoniyi (2013) asserts that, "Education is the backbone of growth and development of individuals and nation" (p. 181). Education benefits society and people at local, national and international level. Education in general and higher education creates experts in several fields, which is inevitable for economic growth.

Higher education produces skilled human resources for all sectors of development. Therefore, it has a large potential for contributing to poverty reduction. Kiani (2011) emphasizes that, "higher education provides experts to all sectors of the economy and this is the requirement for any economy for poverty reduction strategy" (p. 31).

One of the most prevalent social problems in developing countries is poverty. It is not only an economic problem but also a social problem. To eradicate poverty, it is important to know the structure of society and its problems. In this connection, Kiani (2011) argues that higher education has the potential to study the social conditions, its needs, requirements, obstacles, complications and the ways to solve these problems. Likewise, social science education is needed to formulate better policies, planning strategies for development and poverty reduction at the local, national and global level. This research has been carried out analyzing the possible role of higher education as well as social science education in poverty reduction in a specific national setting, that is, Nepal.

1.2 Statement of problem

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world "with almost one-third of its population living below the poverty line" (UNESCO, 2011, p. 10). The people living below the poverty line are living a miserable life without having access to the basic needs for survival. The poor people are denied access to many facilities, such as health facilities, pure drinking water, sanitation, education, and so forth (Pokhrel, 2015). In order to address such problems, higher education can play a vital role by providing socio-economic benefits to society and people. Higher education can benefit people, for example, with increased tax revenues, savings, better health conditions, reduced crime rates, consciousness about health hygiene and so on.

In the context of Nepal, the number of college graduates is increasing at a surprisingly high level, which can be seen as a possibly positive contribution to human capital. According to EMIS (2017), 423996 students were enrolled for higher education in the campuses of different universities of Nepal in 2017/18. Despite the situation, inequality and deprivation issues are major challenges and have become a social problem for the country's development. Accordingly, the increase in the number of college graduates per se is not sufficient, since proper utilization of human capital is needed.

> *The Nepal Human Development Report 2014 came up with a new focus on human capital. The report proposes a multi-pronged approach to raising productive ability and accelerating human development for which it iterates investing to unlock human potential is the fundamental aspect.*
> *(Pokhrel, 2015, p. 48)*

Involvement of the university graduates in productive activities can be expected to benefit a country economically and socially. Appropriate policies and planning help combat poverty. "Although Nepal records one of the best performances in human development in the last couple of decades, it is unable to move from low to medium HDI group. One of the major causes of this is rampant poverty" (Pokhrel, 2015, p.54). Therefore, deeply rooted poverty in Nepalese society has hindered all sorts of development. As argued above, higher education as a public good can contribute to uprooting the poverty.

1.3 Purpose of the study and research questions

This study is concerned with the role of higher education in poverty reduction. The study intends to examine the potential of higher education as a tool for individual citizens, society and the government in reducing poverty. The main purpose of the study is to study the perceptions of faculty members, students, and members of the academic leadership of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Sociology and Rural Development Disciplines) at Tribhuvan University (TU) about the role of higher education in poverty reduction. Furthermore, the study aims to study how academic leaders, faculty members and higher education students interpret poverty reduction activities and challenges encountered while carrying out those activities. The study also focuses on how poverty reduction is interpreted in the academic literature.

Based on the above considerations this study addresses the following research questions:

1) How is poverty reduction interpreted in the academic literature in the area of higher education studies?

2) How do academic leaders, faculty members and students interpret the relationship between higher education and poverty eradication?

3) What challenges do academic leaders, faculty members and students encounter in their activities aimed at contributing to poverty reduction?

1.4 Significance of the study

"Poverty is the world's current greatest threat to peace and stability more than terrorism and other highly publicized struggles" (Omoniyi, 2013, p. 177). Many poor people die of hunger due to poverty. "More than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive" (Sachs, 2009 as cited in Omoniyi, 2013, p. 177). Poverty has been an obstacle to development in many low-income countries. Nepal is considered the least developed country having a high poverty, persistent inequality and people are deprived of basic facilities such as economy, health and education (Pokhrel, 2015). One of the great reasons behind this condition is unemployment in Nepal. Accordingly, Ukwueze and Nwosu (2014) argue that, "unemployment is central to poverty and that higher education is a key factor in job creation" (p. 2). Higher education prepares graduates with skills and knowledge that can enhance more productivity. In this sense, education brings a positive contribution to socio-economic development (Tilak, 2006). Hence, higher education is an underestimated institution, which countries can rely on to diminish poverty and accomplish social and economic goals (Ukwueze & Nwosu, 2014). Higher education can be a significant tool to reduce poverty and achieve economic growth in developing countries like Nepal. "There is no comprehensive program of development that can take place without human resources, and there are no human resources without education and well-studied plans that train them and prepare them according to the needs of the society" (Kiani, 2011, p. 31). Therefore, this study is significant because it tries to study how selected academic leaders, faculty members and students of higher education interpret the role of higher education in poverty reduction.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The study consists of eight chapters. The first chapter begins with an introduction followed by the statement of the problem. The very chapter deals with the purpose of the study, research questions and significance of the study. The second chapter deals with the higher education system in Nepal that begins with a brief history followed by the current situation of the higher education system in Nepal.

The third chapter presents a review of the relevant literature for the study. It covers the literature of poverty, different views on it, private and public benefits of higher education followed by roles of higher education that play poverty reduction. Similarly, the fourth chapter presents the overall theoretical framework that includes introduction to Human Capital Theory, higher education as human capital and Human Capital Theory as an analytical framework.

The fifth chapter discusses the various aspects of research methodology. It addresses the various research approaches as well as deals with the rationale for choosing a qualitative research approach to carry out this study. The subsequent sections review the research design, methods of data collection, sampling procedures, validity and reliability concept and the ethical issues to be considered in the study. The sixth chapter presents the presentation and analysis of data collection, while the seventh chapter discusses the major findings of the study. The last chapter concludes the study based on the purpose of the study and the research questions. It also presents some recommendations which are useful for further research.

2 HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NEPAL

2.1 Historical background of Nepalese higher education

Nepalese higher education has a short history. The modern higher education system in Nepal began with the establishment of Tri-Chandra College during the Rana Regime in 1918 (Education Management Information System, [EMIS], 2014). However, Tri-Chandra College was under the control of an elite group and most of the common people were deprived of education. There was no progressive development in higher education during the Rana Regime because of its unwillingness to educate people (Khaniya, 2007).

The progressive development in higher education started only after the establishment of democracy in 1951. Establishment of democracy was a remarkable achievement in Nepalese higher education too, because many colleges and training centres were established during the period (Khaniya, 2007). According to a UNESCO (2008) report, several Liberal Arts colleges of Sanskrit, Science and Commerce were established during the 1950s. Yet, the new horizon in Nepalese higher education began after the establishment of TU in 1959 (Khaniya, 2007). It was the first university in Nepal. UNESCO (2008) mentions that until the establishment of TU, the Tri-Chandra College and seven other colleges of Nepal had to follow the syllabus of Patna University, India, and the final examinations were also conducted by that university. TU was the single university in Nepal for a long time and it took the overall responsibility for higher education.

The consolidation phase began with the establishment of the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971 (UNESCO, 2008). After the establishment of NESP, all the existing colleges of Nepal became a part of TU and affiliated colleges became the university's constituent colleges. According to Khaniya (2007), all the 53 colleges and training centres of that time were brought under TU. It remained a single university for many years. EMIS (2014) mentions that, "It took almost two and half decades for the government of Nepal to adapt the multi-university concept" (p. 4). In 1979, again TU renewed its role to give affiliation to private campuses (UNESCO, 2008). As a result, private campuses emerged in the field of higher education to meet the students' demands to get admission to colleges. The involvement of the private sector immensely increased opportunities to access higher education (Khaniya, 2007). Furthermore, UNESCO (2008) states:

In 1982 a Royal Commission was set up to review the organization of higher education in Nepal and make recommendations regarding its future structure. It suggested a multi-university concept to downsize TU and bring quality improvement in higher education through competition among the universities. (p. 19)

The government of Nepal went with the recommendation of the Royal Commission and a separate university was established for Sanskrit Education, which is known as Nepal Sanskrit University at present. In 1992, the National Education Commission was formed which came up with an idea of one university in each Development Region This new concept of having at least one university in each development region was brought to provide higher education to qualified students living in all development regions and decentralize higher education management. This idea of having regional universities brought the concept of multi-university (Khaniya, 2007), which prioritized to have more universities in Nepal. As a result, Mahendra Sanskrita University (converted into Nepal Sanskrita University after 2006) was established in 1986. After 1990, a number of universities: Kathmandu University (established in 1991), Purvanchal University (established in 1995), Pokhara University (established in 1997) and Lumbini Boudh University (established in 2005) were established (Baral, 2007).

According to the report of EMIS (2020), there are eleven universities and four autonomous medical academies at present. These autonomous medical academies are equivalent to a university. The establishment of regional universities in a short period shows the progressive development of Nepalese higher education.

2.2 Current universities and medical academies of Nepal

As indicated above, there are at present eleven universities and four medical academies in Nepal (EMIS, 2020). Table 1 summarizes the number of universities and medical academies with their constituent and affiliated campuses.

Table 1: Higher Education Institutions in Nepal

S. N.	University/Academy	Campuses			Total
		Community	Constituent	Private	
1	Tribhuvan University (TU)	529	61	551	1141
2	Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU)	4	12	2	18
3	Kathmandu University (KU)	0	9	15	24
4	Purbanchal University (PU)	5	5	106	116
5	Pokhara University (PokU)	0	9	58	67
6	Lumbini Bauddha University (LBU)	0	1	8	9
7	Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU)	0	10	7	17
8	Mid-Western University (MWU)	0	18	0	18
9	Far Western University (FWU)	0	15	0	15
10	B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS)	0	1	0	1
11	National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS)	0	2	0	2
12	Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS)	0	1	0	1
13	Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS)	0	1	0	1
14	Nepal Open University (NOU)	0	1	0	1
15	Rajarshi Janak University (RJU)	0	1	0	1
	Total	538	147	747	1432

(Adapted from EMIS, 2020)

Table 1 includes a summary of higher education institutions in Nepal. The table shows that universities have two types of campuses, that is, constituent and affiliated. The constituent campuses are directly managed and administered by the concerned universities. Affiliated campuses which run independently are further divided into community and private campuses. "Private campuses are those campuses that are managed by private institutions, or individuals, promoters/shareholders whereas the community campuses are supported by local communities" (EMIS, 2014, p. 4). TU has most constituent (60) and affiliated (1080) campuses among all the universities. There are altogether 1432 higher education campuses and out of this total number of campuses, 147 are constituent, 538 are community and 747 are private campuses (EMIS, 2020).

2.3 Financing of higher education in Nepal

Financing is one of the important and challenging issues of higher education. Woodhall (2007) states, "A major challenge faced by governments everywhere is the reform of finance of higher education (HE) in response to pressures of rising private demand for HE and heavily constrained public budgets" (p. 3). In terms of financing of higher education in Nepal, EMIS (2014) indicates that, "Universities of Nepal receive financial support from the government channeled through the Ministry of Education (MoE) and it is managed and distributed by the University Grants Commission" (p. 43). Table 2 presents the financial situation of higher education institutions in Nepal from 2005/06 to 2014/15.

Table 2: Higher Education budget as a percentage of national and educational budget

Year	As % of National Budget	As % of Education Budget
2005/06	1.5	9.1
2006/07	1.4	8.9
2007/08	1.4	8.1
2008/09	1.3	7.9
2009/10	1.3	7.9
2010/11	1.5	8.1

2011/12	1.6	9.5
2012/13	1.4	9.31
2013/14	1.28	6.64
2014/15	0.8	6.6
No data are available after 2014/15		

(Adapted from EMIS, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016)

Table 2 points out that the government allocation for higher education was 9.1% of the total education budget in the year 2005/2006. It was just 1.5% of the national budget. However, the relative share of the budget for higher education declined gradually in the following years from 2006/2007 to 2010/2011 (8.9%, 8.1%, 7.9%, 7.9%, and 8.1%). The budget for higher education was better in the year 2010/2011 in comparison to 2009/2010. It increased marginally in the year 2011/2012 and it was 9.5%. Again, the relative size of the budget slightly deteriorated in the year 2012/2013 and it was 9.31% concerning the total education budget. The budget for higher education was very much reduced in the year 2014/15. It was 0.8% of the national budget and 6.6% of the total education budget. The report of the EMIS (2012) remarks that, "financial support provided to the universities is very much insufficient for providing quality education. Universities are very much in need of the substantially high level of financial support from the government" (p. 60). The inadequate budget for higher education institutions of Nepal hinders for providing quality education.

The World Bank (2000) mentions that, "financial dependence on the state means that funding levels fluctuate with the ups and downs of government resources. This process is exaggerated by the fact that higher education is perceived as something of a luxury in most countries" (p. 54). Nepalese higher education institutions mostly depend on government resources for the higher education budget. EMIS (2013) states that, "the allocation of the fund to the universities depends on the nature of the university" (p. 43). Universities also collect different fees from the students. The annual report of the UGC (2013/2014) states that:

UGC funds to universities are made in the form of the block grant, which is of two types: operational and developmental. The operating funds for TU and NSU are estimated based on the salaries and basic logistics provided to the teachers and other staff members. The autonomous TU constituent campuses (Currently 4) have been receiving earmarked grants from UGC based on the faculty and administrative positions on the campuses (Irrespective of vacant or fulfilled). In the case of other universities (KU, PU, and PoKU), the funds are provided based on the funding formulae agreed with the university (p. 22).

UGC is, therefore, responsible for distributing funding for higher education institutions in Nepal.

2.4 Tribhuvan University

TU is the first university of Nepal established in 1959. As indicated above, the expansion of Nepalese higher education started with its establishment (Khaniya, 2007). TU was established to produce skilled human resources for the overall development of the country and also for the reservation and development of the historical and cultural heritage of the nation (EMIS, 2014). Moreover, TU consists of five institutes, four research centers and four faculties. The institutes are Institute of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, Institute of Forestry, Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science and Institute of Science and Technology respectively. These institutes provide specialized technical courses such nursing, computer and information technology, engineering, pharmacy, radiology and so forth. The four faculties offer the courses in humanities and social sciences, management, law and education. The four research centers of TU are Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), Research Centre for Education Innovation and Development (CERID), Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), and Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology (RECAST) (EMIS, 2012).

TU is the largest university of Nepal in terms of the number of students, teachers and campuses. EMIS (2014) adds, "TU covers 81.58% of the higher education campuses, and 87.9% of students" (p.1). TU has more constituent and affiliated campuses in comparison to other universities. The campuses under TU offer courses on bachelor's and master's level. The university also offers courses on Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) degrees in some disciplines. Proficiency certificate level courses are offered only in nursing. TU is an autonomous public university, which receives funds from the government of Nepal.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the concept of poverty. Further, it presents the literature on the benefits of higher education and the role higher education plays in poverty reduction.

3.1 Concept of poverty

Generally, poverty is a lack of basic needs, such as food, shelter and clothes. Bradshaw (2009) argues that poverty is the lack of necessities and it is considered that basic food, shelter, medical care and safely are needed for the values of human dignity. If people lack necessities needed for survival, they are regarded as poor people. Mtey and Sulle (2013) make this issue clearer and define poverty:

> *as the deprivation of common necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, and safe drinking water, access to energy and all that determines quality life. Poverty also includes lack of access to opportunities such as education and employment and may affect groups of individuals. (p. 7)*

The definition of poverty by Mtey and Sulle (2013) aligns with the definition by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997):

> *poverty can mean more than a lack of what is necessary for material well-being. It can also mean the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development – to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and the respect of others. (p. 5)*

Poverty represents the denial of opportunities and choices which also hinders human development towards leading long, healthy and creative lives. It stops enjoying a decent standard living of human being (Sekhampu & Grobler, 2011). Similarly, Townsend (1979) points out:

> *Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. (p. 31)*

Philip and Rayhan (2004) link the poverty concept with the lack of access to different resources, such as political, economic and cultural. Mabughi and Selim (2007) also opined that poverty is not only economic reasoning but also a matter of social deprivation. In their

words, "Poverty, in general, economic reasoning, can be defined as social deprivation from a decent quality of life" (p. 181). Poverty is linked with all aspects of life; economic, social, cultural, and political.

Lötter (2007) explains poverty as distinctively human, "being poor is inhuman and thus why the concept of poverty functions to indicate a specific kind of loss to a person's human dignity" (p. 1207). Poverty refers to a condition where people lack their dignity. So, poverty puts people into an inhuman condition. Being in poverty means hard to get recognized, denied getting opportunities in resources and participation in decision making process, which seize the survival freedom of poor people (Pokhrel, 2015). Connecting this idea, Lötter (2007) says, "Poverty implies a loss of a person's humanity" (p. 1196). Therefore, poverty is a condition where people are deprived of the resources which are needed to live a quality life. Poverty leads people to live a very pathetic life. To be poor means to be the victim of the unacceptable and negative situation (Ikejiaku, 2009).

3.2 Absolute and relative perspectives on poverty

Commonly, poverty is viewed in absolute and relative terms (Philip & Rayhan, 2004; Sekhampu & Grobler, 2011; Lötter, 2007; Ikejiaku, 2009; Chen, Shen & Naznin, Wang, & Wu, 2014). In absolute terms, poverty is related to basic needs to sustain life (Sekhampu & Grobler, 2011). The absolute notion of poverty is related to the basic needs of human beings for survival. "The absolute definition of poverty is usually based on the notion of subsistence. Subsistence describes the minimum basic needs to sustain life" (Sekhampu & Grobler, 2011, p. 67-68). Philip and Rayhan (2004) mention:

> *Absolute poverty refers to subsistence below minimum, socially acceptable*
> *living conditions, usually established based on nutritional requirements*
> *and other essential goods (e.g. per capita income under a certain*
> *arbitrarily fixed poverty line in USD per unit of time, a daily intake of*
> *fewer than 2,150 calories/person/day, or Human Development Index). (p.7)*

Oppenheim (1993) mentions that an absolute definition of poverty is that a minimum standard of living based on the basic needs of human beings. When people fall below this minimum standard, they are regarded to be living in absolute poverty. Chen, Shen and Naznin, Wang, and Wu (2014) argue that having a low income or being without income and shelter can be considered as absolute poverty. For Mabughi and Selim (2007) absolute poverty is:

> *... referred to the subsistence below a minimum, socially acceptable living condition, established based on nutritional requirements and other essential goods. Sometimes known as subsistence poverty, absolute poverty was expressed in simple absolute terms as the equivalent sum of money required to attain minimum desired nutrition. (p. 184)*

This implies that the concept of absolute poverty focuses more on basic survival needs. Lötter (2007) defines, "Absolute poverty means that a person does not have adequate economic capacities to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, security, and medical care to maintain their physical health" (p. 1211). It is more about a person's inability for clothing, housing and feeding, which are the basic requirements for living. The people under the absolute poverty line live a very low-quality life, as they are unable to meet the minimum standards for living. "An 'absolute poverty line' aims to define a minimum standard, usually based on a needs assessment, such as the cost of a basket of food items that provide a basic level of nutrition" (Ikejiaku, 2009, p. 4). Therefore, absolute poverty compels people to live their life with no basic needs.

Poverty can also be viewed in relative terms. Relative poverty compares the two segments-the lowest segments of population with the upper segments on the basis of income (Mabughi & Selim, 2007). Similarly, Philip and Rayhan (2004) point out:

> *Relative poverty compares the lowest segments of a population with upper segments, usually measured in income quintiles or deciles, may be quantified by concentrating on a small number of key indicators such as the share, in national wealth or income, possessed by 20% of the poorest inhabitants of a country. (p. 7)*

Mabughi and Selim (2007) further mention that, "Relative poverty is measured in terms of judgements by members of a particular society by what is considered a reasonable and acceptable standard of living (p. 186). In the relative notion of poverty, people compare themselves with rich people and feel that they are poor. However, "Feeling poor can be relative or psychological" (Chen, Shen & Naznin, Wang, and Wu, 2014, p. 859) poverty, because "poverty is defined relative to the standard of living within a specific society" (Lötter, 2007, p. 1208). The relative approach of poverty is a more subjective measure than the absolute approach (Sekhampu & Grobler, 2011). Lötter (2007) defines it in the following way:

> *Relative poverty means that although people have adequate economic capacities to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, security, and medical care to mention their physical health, they cannot participate in*

any other activities regarded as indicative of being human in that society.
(p. 1211)

Furthermore, poverty is relative along with an absolute concept that exist in rich societies too in which if people are not considered to maintain social standard of quality life, they are regarded as poor, but not exactly as poor as people living in the third world without having basic needs (Ikejiaku, 2009). Therefore, relative poverty exists in almost every society. The poor people of developed countries are not as poor as those in the developing countries; however, they are poor in their society. So, Moore (as cited in Ikejiaku, 2009, p. 7) criticizes the relative notions of poverty as "bizarre". The relative notion of poverty seems to suggest that poverty is related to the average standard of living and it exists forever even in a rich society. Ikejiaku (2009) states that, "relative poverty is a "mirage". In other words, you cannot surmount or eliminate diametrically relative poverty" (p. 7). The concept of relative poverty seems useless in poor and underdeveloped societies because most of the people in such country live in absolute poverty. Relative poverty may increase along with the decline of absolute poverty and vice-versa (Mabughi & Selim, 2007).

To sum up, absolute poverty is all about the lack of access to the necessities of human beings, whereas the relative notion of poverty refers to social exclusion and deprivation. Based on definitions of poverty provided by different scholars, 'poverty' for the current study goes beyond basic needs of survival and refers to the situation where people lack access to the opportunities and services such as access to quality education, better health, employment opportunities, good working environment, rights and so on. Furthermore, it also means social exclusion and deprivation.

3.3 Public and private benefits of higher education

Higher education offers many private and public benefits to graduates (Bloom, Hartley & Rosovsky, 2007) and as a result, these benefits enhance better health and improved quality of life (Bloom, Canning, Chan & Luca, 2014). Moreover, it contributes to a nation's economic growth (Aluede, Oviawe, Imhangbe & Ehiaguina, 2020), by offering professional, technical and managerial skills to manpower (Tilak, 2008). It further, "produces and transmits knowledge and that knowledge is acted upon in all spheres of both public and private life" (Brennan, Durazzi & Séné, 2013, p. 23). Skrbinjek (2020) categories higher education benefits into five types: private economic and non-economic benefits, social benefits, external benefits (i.e., externalities) and contribution to economic growth.

Al-hajry (2002) points out that, "individuals with higher qualifications benefit from higher starting incomes with faster annual growth rates compared with those of lower qualifications" (96). Brennan, Durazzi & Séné (2013) argue that, "Higher education makes a difference, both to those who participate in it and to those who don't" (p.23). People with higher education experience to achieve distinct advantages in the fields of wellness, the labour market, parenthood, etc. (Bynner, et al. 2002). Although it depends upon the quality of an institution attended, higher education graduates have in general higher levels of income than citizens with lower levels of education (Perna, 2003). In addition, graduates from an elite university can earn substantially more than graduates from a lower-quality institution (Hill, Hoffman & Rex, 2005). Higher education benefits particularly individuals with higher salaries (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006) according to their education level, that promotes their living standard (Ukwueze & Nwosu, 2014). Moreover, Bloom, Canning & Chan (2006) argue that higher education provides better employment prospects and a greater ability to save and invest. Bynner, et al. (2002) argue that higher education contributes to wellness. Oketch, McCowan & Schendel (2014) argue that the body of evidence suggests that higher education has a strong positive impact on graduates' capabilities, including health, nutrition, political participation and women's empowerment.

Firstly, higher education graduates with their knowledge, skills, and productivity can influence each member of a family and a society. Secondly, they contribute to economic growth as they are in general paid higher salaries than those with lower levels of education (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006). Similarly, they are more unlikely to be involved in criminal activities (Groot & van den Brink, 2010; Johnston, 2004) which helps in maintaining safety in society. Moreover, Oketch, McCowan and Schendel (2014) and Feinstein and Hammond (2004) argue that educated people have better health as they are aware of their wellbeing. Also, Tilak (2008) emphasizes that higher education institutions assist students in the development of character and enable them to participate in society's legal, political, social, educational, cultural and economic activities. Therefore, higher education provides its graduates with direct and indirect private benefits. The indirect private benefits are more related to satisfaction that individual students get during their student life and even after their student life. These benefits are more abstract, and individuals feel them who get these benefits. Some of the measurable or direct private benefits such as higher wages. They are the most obvious and can be measured. The higher wages of educated people are also seen as a life-long return to investment in education (Al-hajry, 2002).

Higher education on the other hand provides us with public benefits as well. The public benefits of higher education are reflected in the words of Bloom, Hartley and Rosovsky (2007):

> The increased earnings that result from a college education, lead to greater tax revenues and enable increased savings and investment. Skilled workers are likely to be more productive, more creative in their development and use of new technologies, more adaptable and better able to learn new skills, and to have a greater knowledge of global economic and business conditions. Educated people are also less likely to have to claim government financial support (p.299).

Higher education functions, "as an economic resource by producing educated workers. These workers, in turn, would either create more tax revenue for the state or serve as attractive human capital to entice businesses to move to the state" (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer & Lee, 2013, p. 562).

Higher education influences the strengthening of both formal institutions and social norms, in areas such as governance, public services and the environment (Oketch, McCowan & Schendel, 2014). Private and public benefits are mutually linked (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer & Lee, 2013) in the sense that when the individual benefits, the state benefits (Tilak, 2008). Therefore, higher education promotes the economic growth of a family contributing to the development of a nation (Hanushek, 2016; Hill, Hoffman & Rex (2005). It plays an important role in transferring societies into knowledge societies as it, "provides not just educated workers, but also knowledge workers who are essential for the rapid growth of the knowledge economies. It also helps in reaping the gains from globalization" (Tilak, 2008, p. 453).

Individuals and government invest in education with the hope of getting future individual and social benefits. These benefits come in direct and indirect ways. Economists have also classified these benefits as measurable and non-measurable benefits, which they also call pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits. Pecuniary benefits can be measured in the form of income. However, non-pecuniary benefits are somehow abstract and cannot be measured (Tan, 2014; Al-hajry, 2002).

To sum up, higher education offers both direct and indirect public as well as private benefits. At the individual level, better health, quality of life, increase in life expectancy, the capacity to decision making, better working condition, better job opportunities, etc. are some of the direct benefits. Individuals' access to a better job, prestige and satisfaction are indirect private

benefits. Indirect private benefits are the set of personal satisfaction, which people get through education. Likewise, there are many benefits of education at the social level. Innovation, economic activity, increased human capital, higher growth, better health of the population and lower population growth are some of the examples of social benefits of education. Health, agriculture, culture, poverty reduction, reduction in crime rate, increase in life expectancy are some of the aspects of society, which are greatly affected by higher education. Higher education's positive impact on these aspects of society matters when it comes to the factors that contribute to the development of a society. However, it is difficult to measure the exact impact of higher education on these aspects.

3.4 Roles of higher education in poverty reduction

Higher education has the potential to provide new skills and knowledge to higher education graduates and in that way make them able to become more productive. It further enables them to gain a relatively high income and thereby helping them to come out of poverty (Fonkeng and Ntembe, 2009). The role of higher education is quite obvious that educated people have higher earning potential and are better able to improve the quality of their lives (Kiani, 2011). Skills and productivity bring higher earnings opportunities to people. Employment and earnings are important aspects of poverty eradication (Mtey & Sulle 2013).

Ominiyi (2013) argues that higher education is the foundation for fostering economic development and eradicating poverty. Moreover, "To benefit the lives of the world's poorest people, innovation must be prioritised, developed and delivered in a way that fulfils their needs, as well as being supported with adequate funding at each stage" (The Institute of Physics, 2010, p. 3). Thus, research activities of higher education that can deliver more innovation and form human capability can help people to raise their living standard. Tilak (2006) also argues that higher education can help people to uplift themselves from the poverty line by increasing the social, occupational and economic levels of the households. Similarly, Ukwueze and Nwosu (2014) present three arguments to prove that higher education is an important institutional tool for poverty reduction. Their first argument is that higher education correlates with economic growth by supplying the needed labour and skills to the knowledge-driven economy. Their second argument is that higher education provides employability and higher wages to skilled manpower and thereby increases access to education. The third argument says that higher education plays a role in supporting the educational sector development by providing trained and skilled personnel for curriculum

development of lower levels of education. However, Mtey and Sulle (2013) put stress on the quality education that matters for poverty reduction. Therefore, Kiani (2011) further argues that higher education needs to study the conditions of the society, monitor its needs and its problems and contribute to solve them.

Pokhrel (2015) states that, "poverty and education have a causal relationship, both reinforcing each other. Poverty restricts education opportunity while access to education plays a role to break the poverty trap by enhancing the ability" (p. 53). Likewise, Tilak (2006) remarks deprivation of education causes poverty, hence education is the best mechanism of breaking poverty. More educated people can enhance higher productivity which is ultimately related to poverty reduction (Kiani, 2011). According to Kiani (2011), the major roles of higher education are:

> Producing a qualified student by educating, training, and motivating through scholarships.
>
> Supporting the current business environment and accommodative
>
> Improving learning and teaching from primary school through graduate school
>
> Taking strong and valuable roles in regional and national initiatives
>
> Disseminating research and innovation and promoting a technology transfer culture
>
> Enhancing the technology infrastructure throughout the whole country
>
> Uplifting the conformable communities
>
> Creating job opportunities for graduates (p. 32).

The discussion based on the various scholars' ideas points out that higher education plays an important role in poverty reduction because higher education benefits individuals and the public at different levels. Employment opportunities and income help reduce poverty at individual levels. Similarly, educated people, directly and indirectly, help to reduce the poverty of their family and society as well. Higher education creates skilled human resources in different fields. Likewise, it also makes an advanced society by creating innovation and utilizing technology.

To support the above-mentioned ideas about the strong correlation between higher education and poverty reduction, some of the empirical studies by different authors will be discussed in more detail. An analysis of an Indian study on higher education has found a positive correlation between higher education and development. The data empirically shows that: 1) higher education enhances the earnings of individuals and contributes to economic development, 2) higher education makes a significant contribution to the reduction in absolute as well as relative poverty, 3) higher education is related to human development indicators, which reflect other dimensions of human poverty, as it significantly reduces infant mortality and increases life expectancy (Tilak, 2006). However, Blundell, et al. (1999) found no significant effect of higher education on men's employment prospects but higher education appeared to be an important determinant of employment for women. This study shows that higher education plays an important role in employment for certain groups in society. Similarly, another study by Bloom, Canning and Chan (2006) concluded that:

> *If Africa were only to double current tertiary education levels from 0.147 years per person to 0.294 years per person, it would increase steady-state output from a larger stock of total education by 1.8%. Growth rates would at first be about 0.04 percentage points per year higher than the initial growth rate, as the economy approaches this higher steady state. (28)*

The study shows that higher education assists to increase the economic growth of a country. Likewise, Barro and Sala-i-Martin (2004) showed a strong correlation between tertiary education and positive growth effects. Their study indicated that higher education should be the basis for the increment in economic growth.

A study carried out by Lin (2004) to investigate "the effects of higher education curricula on the labour force and thus on economic growth in Taiwan over the 1965-2000 period" (p. 355) indicated that higher education had a positive and significant effect on Taiwan's economic development. The result revealed that the rise in higher education stock led to the rise in industrial output. Similarly, Wolff and Gittleman's (1993) study also revealed that university enrollment rates were positively correlated with labour productivity growth. Likewise, Jenkins' (1995) study of the United Kingdom also disclosed that an increase in education qualifications positively affected the increase in annual output.

In conclusion, the above mentioned conceptual and empirical studies indicate that higher education can have a positive impact on economic growth. Further, it provides knowledge

and skills to people, which are inevitable for innovation and employment. It generates employment opportunities with higher wages, which can contribute to poverty reduction.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the overall theoretical framework for this study. It further presents the introduction to Human Capital Theory (HCT) and an account of higher education as human capital. Finally, it discusses HCT as an analytical framework for this study.

4.1. Introduction to HCT

The economists Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Alfred Marshall (Sweetland, 1996) conceptualized HCT centuries ago. "However, the modern formulation of human capital as part of the overall economic production function is generally traced to mid 20th century Nobel Prize-winning works by Schulz and Becker" (Crocker, 2006, p. 1). Later, "it was formally introduced in the 1950s and its analytical framework was developed by academicians at Chicago School of Economics" (Tan, 2014, p. 412).

HCT assumes that investment in human capital and innovation leads to economic growth. In Sweetland's (1996) words, "Human capital theory suggests that individuals and society derive economic benefits from investment in people" (p. 341). To invest in education is to invest in knowledge and skills because the level of education is a way of quantifying the quality of labour (Crocker, 2006). Along with the level of education, training and work experience also help individuals to be more productive. According to Blundell, et al. (1999), "there are three main components of ´human capital´- early ability (whether acquired or innate); qualifications and knowledge acquired through formal education; and skills, competencies and expertise acquired through training on the job" (p. 2).

HCT holds the notion that knowledge, skills, talents, abilities, capacities and wisdom people possess are human capital (Baptiste, 2001; Schultz, 1961). In Crocker's (2006) understanding, "increased knowledge and skill will yield improved economic outcomes for both individuals and societies" (p. 1). Similarly, Kjelland (2008) states, "Human capital theory argues intuitively that education endows an individual with productivity-enhancing human capital, and that this increased productivity results in increased earnings in the labour market" (p.70). HCT has thus promoted education to a key instrumental role in boosting economic growth. "The better the investment made by individuals in education, the better they and the economy will do" (Gillies, 2017, p. 1).

4.2. Higher education as human capital

Education is at the centre of HCT (Tan, 2014), which assumes that investment in education is an investment in human capital (Al-hajry, 2002). Therefore, educating individual citizens is a kind of investment. Tan (2014), in his understanding of HCT, points out that, "education increases the productivity and earnings of individuals; therefore, education is an investment. This investment is not only crucial for individuals, but it is also the key to the economic growth of a country" (p. 412). When individuals are educated, they learn skills and knowledge, which lead them to be more productive. Utilizing their skills and knowledge, they can produce more, and their income can also be expected to increase. A country can grow economically when there is more productivity.

Investment in education uplifts individuals' lives economically and also leads to economic growth in society. Machlup (1982) asserts, "Education is commonly regarded as the major form of investment in human resources" (p. 4). Investment in education comes up with skilled human resources who can promote economic growth, develop society and reduce poverty as argued by the OECD (2003, p. 201). Many economists view that the expenditure on education is not a consumption rather it is an investment which will give return benefits in the future. In this context, Crocker (2006) opines, "public or private educational expenditures represent investment rather than consumption" (p. 2). It is an investment because this investment comes with many direct and indirect benefits for the public and individuals.

When people realize that education returns much more benefits to individuals and society in future, then they are ready to invest in it. Al-hajry (2002) mentions, "if education is perceived to yield higher benefits to the individual or society than its cost, then more resources will be invested" (p. 82). He further points out that there are input and output elements in educational investment too as in other forms of investments.

> *The input element is the cost of all individual (private) and public (society) expenses that are sacrificed to acquire education and the output is the amount of skills, knowledge, and other benefits gained by individuals and societies from the education and training system". (Al-hajry, 2002, p. 89)*

The output of this investment gives long-term benefits to individuals and society. It helps individuals and society to have economic growth and also reduces poverty.

The investment in human capital can be both private and public, as argued by Al-hajry (2002), "higher education can be regarded as both private and public investments" (p. 91). Individuals and society invest in education directly and indirectly. Schultz (1961) states, "Direct expenditures on education, health, and internal migration to take advantage of better job opportunities are clear examples. Earnings foregone by mature students attending school and by workers acquiring on-the-job training are equally clear examples" (p.1). The direct forms of investment can be measured easily. "Examples of direct investment are those of books and other learning materials, travel, and living expenses" (Al-hajry, 2002, p. 89). If the individuals need to pay tuition fees and a semester fee, these fees also belong to the direct investments individuals make in education. The indirect investment in education by individual students is that they could utilize their time to do a job and earn money during the time of education themselves. Individual students need to devote both time and money to be educated. They can join the labour market and get salaries instead of spending many years in education, but they forego their time and money to be more productive and skillful in the future. Individuals invest in education with the expectation of reaping several benefits, which exceed the cost (Al-hajry, 2002).

Like individuals, society also, directly and indirectly, invests in education. The society's investment in higher education can be regarded as a public investment. Al-hajry (2002) mentions:

> *Public (social) investment in higher education consists of direct and indirect costs in return for measurable and non-measurable benefits. The direct cost is the sum of all public expenditures on higher education institutions whether it is current of development, capital or fixed. Indirect cost is the opportunities cost of the production foregone by students during the years at university. This productivity foregone is a loss to society in the sense that if an individual student joins the labour market instead of going university his or her production in this period is a contribution to national production. (p. 97-98)*

Educated people have more employment opportunities in comparison to uneducated people, which benefits society economically, socially and politically. The opportunities of employment help breaking the circle of poverty. Society and individuals are motivated to invest in higher education with the expectation of getting more benefits in the future. They compare their costs in investment and future benefits and when they find that future benefits are greater than the costs, they invest (Tan, 2014).

The public investment in higher education also benefits in measurable and non- measurable form. The measurable benefit is more related to the monetary value of productivity. It is supposed that education enhances skills to individuals and makes them more productive. So, educated people can give more production and output to society. The public benefits of higher education can contribute to poverty reduction, better health of citizens, crime reduction, improvement in agriculture, democracy, etc. (Al-hajry, 2002).

In brief, investment in higher education is an investment in human capital, which has the potential of generating income for individuals with high skills, capacities and productivity. As a result, higher education graduates with higher salaries and wages contribute to the economic development of a family, society and a nation. Therefore, Almendarez (2013) stresses that, "education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability…The provision of formal education is seen as an investment in human capital…" (p. 21). It is further a key element of human capital, that is viewed as "a means of developing knowledge and skill and because the level of education is a way of quantifying the quality of labour" (Crocker, 2006, p. 1).

4.3. Analytical framework

HCT holds the notion that higher education provides people with knowledge, skills and capacities. The knowledge, skills, competencies that higher education graduates acquire help them get better employment opportunities, and higher salaries and wages. It also benefits society with economic growth. It means, "The returns on education investment are both personal and social. The individual is rewarded financially, and the economy as a whole is boosted by individuals with advanced human capital" (Gillies, 2017, p. 3). Higher education as a component of human capital (Blundell, Dearden, Meghir, & Sianesi, 1999) can lead to economic growth (Mtey & Sulle, 2013; Sweetland, 1996). Even though some benefits of higher education are individual or private, there are immense public and social benefits. Many social benefits constitute public goods in themselves. Public benefits are also called externalities of higher education, which are believed to be non-measurable (Tilak, 2008).

From the literature review, HCT was identified as the theoretical foundation for this study. Based on the core concepts of HCT, the following conceptual frameworks were adopted to explore the role of higher education in poverty reduction in Nepalese context. The below figure explains that higher education is a public good and investment in higher education

offers both public and private benefits. Public benefits are inclusive to the society and society's citizens, but private benefits are exclusive to involved individual citizens (Tilak, 2008). The public benefits consist of both measurable and non-measurable benefits, which are inclusive. These benefits are economic, social, civil and political in nature and are sometimes overlapping. Increased tax revenues, poverty reduction, better health of citizens, crime reduction, improvement in agriculture, quality of civil life and democracy are some of the inclusive benefits of higher education. In other words, higher education plays a role in alleviating poverty.

Figure 1: Investment in higher education as Human Capital
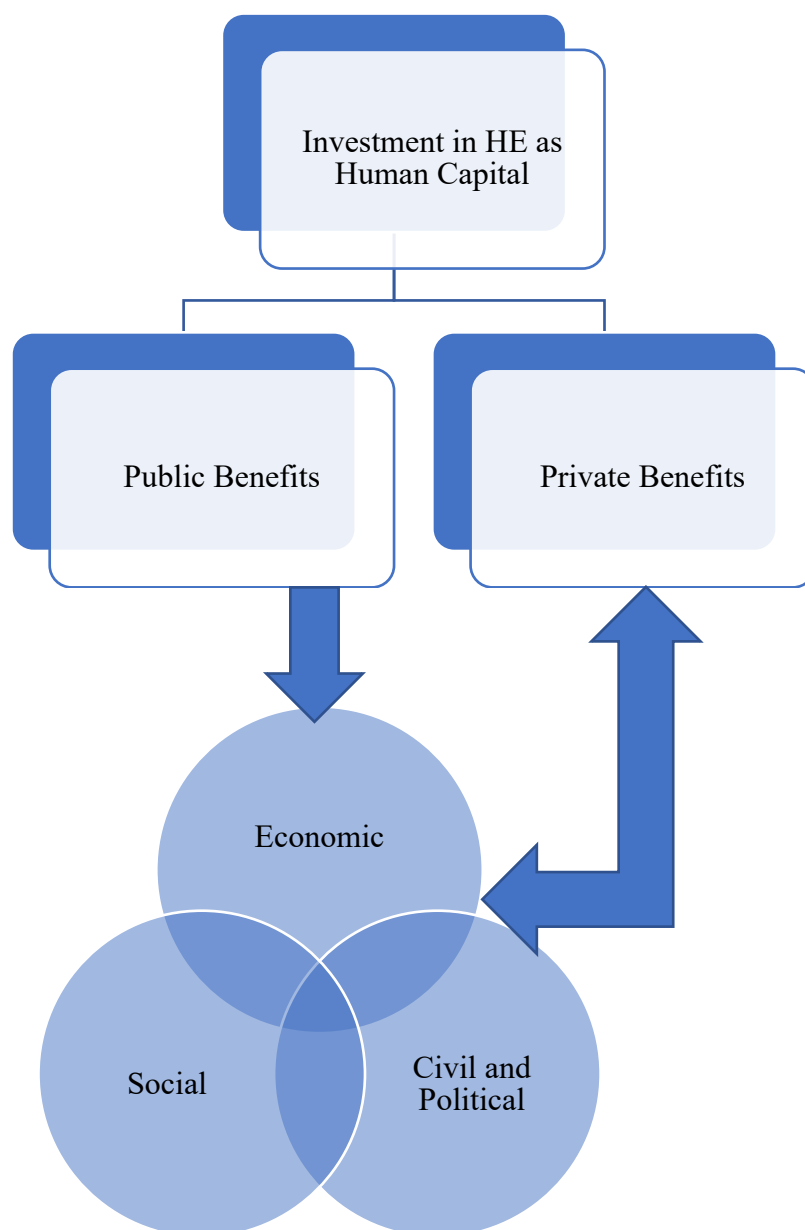
(Based on the concept of Tilak, 2008)

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the overall methodological framework of the study. It presents an account of qualitative research, research design, methods of data collection, interview and purposive sampling. It further deals with the procedures of data analysis and interpretation, validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

5.1 Qualitative research method

The present study adopted the qualitative research approach to explore the perspectives of diverse groups of people from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, TU, Nepal, on the role of higher education in poverty reduction. Qualitative research refers to a way of inquiry, which explores phenomena in the natural settings by using multiple methods in order to interpret, understand and bring meaning (Anderson, 1998). In this connection, Ritchie & Lewis (2003) point out that, "qualitative methods are used to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of the social phenomenon and their contexts" (p.6). Bryman (2008) further mentions that qualitative research is considered as a research strategy, which highlights words rather than numbers during collection and analysis of data. Therefore, qualitative research interprets the views, opinion, ideas, etc. of a diverse group of people in their natural settings. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as:

> *Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices ... turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)*

In the qualitative research method, researchers study the things in the natural settings by interpreting the phenomenon, making meaning about the attached phenomenon to understand the world. While practicing it in the field, the researchers can apply field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos of the self (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Similarly, Anderson (1998) defines qualitative research as, "a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them" (p. 119). Qualitative research aims to study people in their natural settings and interpret their reality. It explores different perceptions, meanings and

ideas of people. "Qualitative research is of specific relevance to the study of social relations, due to the fact of the pluralization of life worlds" (Flick, 2009, p.12). Hence, the reason for selecting qualitative research for the present study is to understand and explain the views of the diverse groups of people on the role of higher education in poverty reduction in their natural setting.

5.2 Research design

Research design is an overall plan for the research study. Flick (2009) states that, "the keywords "research design" address the questions of how to plan a study" (p. 128). "A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2008, p. 31). For the present study, a case study design was selected based on the nature of the study's research problem.

Bryman (2008) opines that the term 'case' refers to the study of a case with a location, for example, community or organization. Similarly, Patton (2002) states that, "The case study approach to qualitative analysis constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data; in that sense, it represents an analysis process" (p. 447). Thus, a case study allows researchers to have a detailed and intensive study. Accordingly, Flick (2009) points out that, "Case studies can capture the process under study in a very detailed and exact way" (p.134). Based on the nature of the addressed research problem and questions, the present study looks at the case of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at TU. One of the reasons for choosing the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science at TU as a case for this study is that this case exemplifies a broader category. Bryman (2008) points out:

> *a case may be chosen because it exemplifies a broader category of which it is a member. The notion of exemplification implies that cases are often chosen not because they are extreme or unusual in some ways but because either they epitomize a broader category of cases or they provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered. (p. 56)*

However, there are some challenges to conducting a case study. One of the most important challenges in a case study is "boundaries". A case is bounded with location and time. Being in boundaries, it might be difficult to achieve a research goal (Creswell, 2007). In the current study, the case is bounded by the time of data collection around 32 days and the location is in Nepal (particularly the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at TU). "The data collection for case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials"

(Creswell, 2007, p. 75). Interviews have been selected for data collection for the current study to explore the understanding of multiple groups of people and their views on the role of higher education in poverty reduction.

5.3 Methods of data collection

A method is a technique to gather information for a research study. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) point out that, "By methods, we mean that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (p. 44). There are several ways to collect data and selection of data collection depends on the nature of the study. "The choice of methods by a researcher turns on whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or to allow it to emerge from participants in the project" (Creswell, 2003, p. 17). Based on the nature of this study, interviews as methods of data collection were adopted.

5.3.1 Interviews

An interview is an oral communication between two or more people to explore the information needed for research. It is a purposeful communication where an interviewer gets the required information to conduct the research. Bryman (2008) opines that, "The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research" (p. 436). Similarly, Ritchie & Lewis (2003) state:

> *Individual interviews are probably the most widely used method in qualitative research. They take different forms, but a key feature is their ability to provide an undiluted focus on the individual. They provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of people's perspectives, for an in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located, and for very detailed subject coverage. (p. 36)*

In an interview, the participants try to express their opinions about the world they live in and the interviewer attempts to investigate the participants' perspectives in detail. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) point out that, "Interviews enable participants – be they, interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their point of view" (p. 267). The purpose of an interview in qualitative research is to know about the people's perspectives on different areas of study. Patton (2002) mentions, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the

perspectives of others are meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 341). People's perceptions are significant in qualitative research because their opinions input knowledge about the study. So, "In qualitative interviewing, the researcher wants rich, detailed answers" (Bryman, 2008, p. 437).

As the idea of Bryman (2008), there are different types of interview: structured interview, standardized interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interview, intensive interview, qualitative interview, in-depth interview, focused interview, focus group, group interview, oral history interview and life history interview. Based on the nature of the study, I used semi-structured interviews for this study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected faculty members, students and academic leaders of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The interviews were conducted both in English and Nepali languages. There were eleven interviewees including three academic leaders, four faculty members and four students. Bryman (2008) defines a semi-structured interview as "…a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but can vary the sequence of questions" (p. 196). The reason for selecting semi-structured interviews for this study was to encourage the participants to express their personal feelings, opinions, ideas and experiences about the role of higher education in poverty reduction. Likewise, semi-structured interviews allowed for both flexibilities as well as the structure, which helped to gather the required information from the respondents.

An interview guide was prepared based on the purpose of the study (see appendix). Ritchie & Lewis (2003) refer to an interview guide as a topic guide. They state that, "Topic guides are also known as interview schedules or interview guides. They list the key themes to be explored, broken down into topics and subtopics" (p. 137). The reason for preparing the interview guide was to make sure to obtain the required information from a diverse group of interviewees by using similar sets of questions regarding the role of higher education in poverty reduction.

5.4 Purposive sampling

It is impossible to study each individual or item due to the lack of time and appropriate budget. So, the interview sample is selected from the target population, which can represent the entire population. But a researcher should be very careful while selecting a sample because the selected sample is supposed to represent the entire population. It is a process of selecting a few items from the entire population and the selected samples represent the whole

population. Bryman (2008) defines a sample as, "the segment of the population that is selected for investigation. It is a subset of the population" (p. 168).

This study has used the purposive sampling method for collecting data. In purposive sampling, a researcher deals the cases to be included in the sample based on his/her judgement that is satisfactory to the specific needs (Cohen, Manion and Marrison, 2000). In this connection, Bryman (2008) mentions:

> *Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling. The researcher does not seek to sample research participants on a random basis. The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants strategically so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed. (p. 415)*

Faculty members, students and academic leaders from the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have been selected purposively. The reason behind selecting them was that they were relevant to the research questions of this study. Lecturers were chosen from the two departments: Department of Rural Development (RD), and Department of Sociology under the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. They were selected based on availability and their willingness to cooperate with this study. They were selected to understand their perceptions on the relationship between higher education and poverty, and the opportunities of higher education. Similarly, master level students from the very departments: Department of RD and Department of Sociology under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences were selected to obtain their views about the role of higher education in poverty reduction. Members of academic leadership from departments under the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the research centres under T.U. were selected to understand their perceptions on the role of higher education in poverty reduction.

Table 3: Overview of the interviewees

An overview of interviewees				
Interviewees		Interviewees' gender	Interviewees' education or position	Number
Students	S1	male	Master student	1
	S2	female	Master student	1
	S3	male	Master student	1
	S4	female	Master student	1
	FM1	male	Teaching staff	1

Faculty members	FM2	male	Teaching staff	1
	FM3	male	Teaching staff	1
	FM4	female	Teaching staff	1
Academic leaders	AL1	male	Head of RD department	1
	AL2	male	Head of Sociology department	1
	AL3	male	Executive Director at CERID	1
Total				11

To select the participants, the researcher visited the field, met the participants, talked about the research problems and selected them on the availability and willingness. Date and time for the interviews were fixed based on participants' availability. The length of each interview was approximately an hour.

5.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis is regarded as an important and challenging part of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Bryman (2008) argues, "One of the main difficulties with qualitative research is that it very rapidly generates a large, cumbersome database because it relies on prose in the form of such media as field notes, interview transcripts, or documents" (p. 538). It is the researcher's task to systemize the large database and present the discovery of the research to others in an understandable way. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define the process of data analysis in the following way:

> *Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. The analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (p. 153)*

In this study, the collected data in the form of interviews has been systematically managed and analyzed. Spenser, Ritchie & O'Connor (2003) point out "there are no clearly agreed rules or procedures for analyzing qualitative data" (p. 200). However, Creswell (2009) points out that there are six steps for data analysis process: Step 1) Organize and prepare the data for analysis; Step 2) Read through all the data; Step 3) Begin detailed analysis with a coding

process; Step 4) Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes of analysis; Step 5) Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative; Step 6) Involve making an interpretation or meaning of the data. Based on Creswell's steps, the data of the current study was analyzed accordingly.

As the interviews were conducted in English and Nepali languages as per the convenience of the participants, the interviews conducted in the Nepali language were translated into the English language. Then the data collected through the semi-structured interviews were transcribed into written text. The researcher, many times, went through the information provided by the participants to generate themes and subthemes. Finally, the collected data were interpreted based on the analytical framework.

5.6 Validity

Validity is a very essential criterion for good research. "Validity is an important key to effective research" (Cohen, Manion & Marrison. 2000, p. 105). The validity in research has to exactly measure what is claimed to be measured (Bryman, 2008).

Flick (2009) discusses that the concept of validity can be summarized on the basis of researchers' thoughts and the reality. "The validity of findings or data is traditionally understood to refer to the 'correctness' or 'precision' of a research reading" (Ritchi, 2003, p. 273). Validity is supposed to be addressed through researchers' honesty in depth knowledge, authenticity of achieved data, the approach of participants and impartiality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this study, the issue of validity was addressed through several aspects such as the extent of triangulation of data collection methods, honesty, depth participants approach and impartiality of the researcher. Direct quotes of the participants' interviews have been used and the researcher has analyzed the quotes critically.

5.7 Reliability

In Bryman's (2008) understanding, "Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. The term is commonly used about the question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences (such as poverty, racial prejudice, deskilling, religious orthodoxy) are consistent" (p. 31). Similarly, Lewis and Ritchie (2003) state that, "Reliability is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same

or similar methods was undertaken" (p. 270). For the reliability of this study, all the respondents were given the freedom to explain their perceptions and experiences, and their interviews were recorded. Moreover, careful selection of methods of data collection, the adoption of procedures for analyzing and interpreting the collected data have helped to maintain the reliability of the study.

5.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are important for social scientists to obtain valid and reliable data (Cohen, Manion and Marrison, 2000). Bryman (2008) points out, "Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in social research" (p. 113). "However, the in-depth, unstructured nature of qualitative research and the fact that it raises issues that are not always anticipated ethical considerations have a particular resonance in qualitative research studies" (Ritchie, 2003, p. 66). Considering ethics in social research is one of the wide-ranging and challenging tasks for the researchers (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2002). This study has considered ethical issues at the steps of data collection, data analysis and interpretation, dissemination of research. The researcher followed the principles of 'harm to participants', 'lack of informed consent', 'invasion of privacy' and 'deception' as suggested by (Bryman, 2008).

Harm to participants

'Harm to participants' is one of the important ethical issues that needs to be considered. Bryman (2008) writes:

> *The issue of harm to participants is further addressed in ethical codes by advocating care over maintaining the confidentiality of records. This means that the identities and records of individuals should be maintained as confidential. This injunction also means that care needs to be taken when findings are being published to ensure that individuals are not identified or identifiable. (p. 118)*

The participants were well informed that they had no harms in taking part in this study. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary.

Lack of informed consent

This principle suggests that the participants should be given more information about the research study so that they can decide whether they want to participate or not. Bryman (2008) describes the lack of informed consent as, "The principle means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed

decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study" (p. 121). In this research, all the participants were informed about the kind of research, its aim, purpose and output. They were given much information about this research before they participated in this study.

Invasion of privacy

According to Bryman (2008), "This third area of ethical concern relates to the issue of the degree to which invasions of privacy can be condoned" (p. 123). It is about the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) mention, "essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity" (p. 61). Considering this, all the participants were guaranteed that their anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained while analyzing data, writing and disseminating the results. Moreover, they were informed that their interviews were recorded just for the researcher's sake to carry out this research and after the dissemination of the research, all the information gathered would be deleted or destroyed.

Deception

Deception is one of the ethical issues that needs to be considered. "Deception occurs when researchers represent their work as something other than what it is" (Bryman, 2008, p. 124). To address the principle of deception in this study, the researcher explained the purpose of the study.

6. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The primary aim of this study was to find out the role of higher education in poverty reduction in Nepal's context. In order to explain the relationship between higher education and poverty reduction, I applied qualitative research method. I took RD department, and Sociology department of TU as a case and interviewed master students, faculty members and academic leaders of TU.

Analytical framework was then used to interpret the findings of the study in order to answer the research questions. The purpose was to identify interviewees' perceptions on the role of higher education in poverty reduction. Similarly, the study also discussed about the activities related to poverty reduction and challenges to conduct those activities. However, interviewees' viewpoint also pointed out that there was a gap between university graduates and labour market, which directly affected in socio-economic development in society.

6.1 Students' views on the role of higher education in poverty reduction

Each interviewee at the RD discipline and Sociology discipline under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences was asked first four and last two questions (see appendix) in order to inquire his/her perceptions on the role of higher education in poverty reduction. They expressed various ideas regarding the relationship between higher education and poverty reduction. In response to the first question, S1 expressed that, "higher level of education itself somehow uplifts a person from poverty level because poor can't get education. After getting higher education, a person knows about the causes of poverty and finds out solutions to come out from the poverty" (S1/interview). This point of view indicated that getting a higher education was a way to come out of poverty. S1's view is supported by S4 who pointed out that, "people with higher education know about poverty, they can analyze the gap between the poor and the rich, try to narrow down this gap of poor and rich, and act accordingly" (S4/interview). This viewpoint indicated that higher education provides knowledge to people which helps them know the reasons of poverty and find out solutions. In this connection, S3 opined that, "higher education reduces poverty with income. Higher education creates job opportunities and income generated activities which are essential for poverty reduction" (S3/interview). This interviewee's opinion suggests that the essential tool to reduce poverty is employment and higher education is a source for it. Another interviewee further added based on personal experiences, "higher education gives us theoretical and practical knowledge

about poverty. Poverty is a multidimensional issue and higher education is needed to find out reasons of poverty" (S2/interview).

The interviews with students suggested that it is important to find out the causes of poverty to reduce it and higher education gives us theoretical and practical knowledge about poverty. Along with it, higher education creates job opportunities and employment itself is a sign of poverty reduction.

In response to the second question (see appendix), students expressed that social sciences deeply study society, and poverty is one of the aspects of it. S4 opined that, "to know and reduce poverty, it is important to know the society first. Social sciences studies society and finds out causes and solutions of poverty" (S4/interview). This point of view indicated that social sciences itself is a pillar of society, which studies social ups and downs, and it prepares students in order to tackle these hindrances. Similarly, "Social Science is not a technical faculty, but it functions like a technical faculty. It studies the existing conditions and contemporary issues of society that helps to identify the social and economic causes of poverty" (S2/interview). The interviewee's opinion suggests that social sciences produce researchers who can envision the link between poverty and social problems. This point of view is further made clear by another interviewee who conveyed that:

> *I think there is no direct relationship between social sciences and poverty, but they are indirectly related. Different disciplines under social sciences study about the causes of poverty do research in poverty, find out the ways to reduce it, create modality for poverty reduction and the findings of research affect the policies. Social sciences study different levels of poverty which are needed to be sorted out for poverty reduction. (S1/interview)*

Regarding this interviewee's view, social sciences can study every types of social problems indirectly, the study in fact is needed to discover solutions. In this pretext, S3 stated that, "Social sciences create awareness among people and changes people's consciousness. It also tries to uplift rural people with training leading to income-oriented activities and makes them self-dependent" (S3/interview). The viewpoint indicated that social sciences gives people knowledge about the vocational training which can generate self-employment opportunities.

The interviews with students confirmed that social sciences play a role in the reduction of poverty directly and indirectly. It was argued that social sciences study society and its aspects, and poverty is one component of them.

Students opined differently regarding the benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Regarding the individual benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, some of them linked it with job opportunities and income. S3 expressed that:

> *In my opinion, higher education creates a job opportunity which is a way for generating more income. Income is the main source for reducing poverty. Income also changes people's conscious and way of thinking. It makes people aware of their status such as their poverty level. So higher education is a medium to improve family status too. (S3/interview)*

This point of view indicated that higher education could benefit individuals through a job-related income and a better way of thinking. Employment also helps society in reducing crime rates and uplifting economic status of the nation through tax revenues. Another interviewee linked the individual benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with society. The interviewee said that, "higher education, especially the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences helps to know the society and we are also components of society. It teaches us how to develop a society and development of society benefits individuals too" (S4/interview). This viewpoint argued that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences directly and indirectly benefits social and individual development. Similarly, S1 views that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has more social benefits than individual benefits. According to the interviewee, "individuals gain knowledge, expand their capacity and are able to present themselves from different dimensions. People with higher education get the ability to impact their society for development and along with it, higher education provides self-employment" (S1/interview). This interviewee's opinion directed that individual benefits of higher education are social benefits.

The interviews with students confirmed that higher education benefits individuals to know about society, understand different aspects of society such as poverty, development, and make them able to develop their society. People also get benefits from job opportunities.

The students had a somehow similar response to the question about the social, civil and political benefits of higher education. While talking about the social and political benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, most of the students responded that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences makes individuals able to analyze their society. Conscious individuals can maintain the democratic system of nation and quality of civil life. In this connection, S1 focused on research and its finding. S1 states:

> *I think the main social benefit of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is that it makes students able to analyze their society. Students can do research and know the obstacles of development. Similarly, findings of the research are much more important because it helps to formulate policy at the national level and suggest the government with possible solutions to reduce poverty. (S1/interview)*

The interviewee's opinion suggested that the Humanities and Social Sciences faculty makes one capable to study society through research and its findings can develop appropriate policies for poverty reduction. Likewise, "the social benefit of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is to make students able to analyze the real problems of society and their solutions" (S4/interview). This point of view is further elaborated by another interviewee who said, "Education is not only for individuals; rather it is for society and nation. Individuals can be a role model for society, share their knowledge and mobilize the youths for development" (S2/interview). This view suggested that to educate individuals means to develop a society and education plays a role in social development. Likewise, another interviewee linked the social benefits of higher education with income generated activities and the use of local raw materials. The interviewee stated that:

> *In my point of view, one of the main benefits of higher education is the use of local raw materials which creates income generated activities for the local people. Use of local raw materials creates employment opportunities for the local people. Use of local raw materials and employment opportunities indeed help to reduce poverty. Higher education also trains people to be self-dependent. (S3/interview)*

S3 argued that higher education creates job opportunities through the use of basic resources in society.

The interviewees expressed that higher education benefits society in different ways such as-it studies society deeply, finds out the strengths and weaknesses of society and comes up with solutions to advance society. It also helps to reduce poverty in society with income-generated activities.

In response to the opportunities of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, all the students had somehow similar views. S3 mentioned, "the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences gives theoretical and practical knowledge about social phenomena. It also creates an opportunity for research on social issues. Development and poverty reduction are not possible without research" (S3/interview). The interview meant that it is important to know the society at first to develop and reduce the poverty of society. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences studies society in detail and comes out with possible ways to reduce poverty.

Moreover, "the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences makes students realize that their field is society itself. They can better study the society and lead for development" (S4/interview). S4 supposed that knowing the society and developing it accordingly are the opportunities of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. In this context, S2 had a different opinion. S2 stated:

> *In the Nepalese context, nepotism blocks the opportunities of higher education. The practice of nepotism is wrong, and it results from a lack of confidence in graduates. There is no proper connection between graduates and opportunities. However, there are chances of being employed. (S2/interview)*

S2 indicated that favoritism could block the possibilities of being employed for university graduates. The long practice of nepotism can lead one to be unenthusiastic towards higher education and its implementation. However, another interviewee linked opportunities with employment and social development. S1 opined, "I think, employment, development at a social and national level, poverty reduction, research on different aspects of society, its findings are some of the opportunities of higher education" (S1/interview).

The interviewees linked the opportunities of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with employment, poverty reduction and social development. Their point of view suggested that research on different aspects of society is also an important opportunity needed for development. However, some of them pointed out the wrong practices of society such as favoritism and nepotism.

Students shared similar views regarding the preparation of graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences to handle the issues of poverty and economic development. All of them argued that the graduates were not well prepared to work in society. They were given less practical knowledge and most of the graduates were capable of talking about theory but failed to apply that theory in practice. S4 expressed that, "in my opinion, the curriculum is not relevant and out of social context. It is a more theory-based curriculum and gives less practical knowledge. However, the graduates are motivated to do social work and their ultimate goal is to develop society" (S4/interview). This point of view indicated that the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have more theoretical knowledge than practical skills. They know different theories but have limited skills for applying those theories in practice. Nevertheless, they are prepared to concern about social issues but not competent practically. As argued by S3:

I think the graduates are prepared with just theoretical knowledge and they have no practical knowledge. Similarly, politics penetrates everywhere even in higher education and influences it. However, in my opinion, Social Sciences play a vital role to reduce poverty because without knowing the society, it is impossible to apply knowledge and develop society. So, there should be a balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. (S3/interview)

This viewpoint indicated that political influence hinders to get quality knowledge in the field of higher education. Similarly, the lack of proper balance between theoretical and practical knowledge obstructs higher education graduates to implement their knowledge in practice.

Based on interviewees' views on the role of higher education in poverty reduction, it was found out that higher education has a great potential in contributing in reducing poverty. It can expand skills and the competences of people and create job opportunities. Employment and income are the main sources of poverty reduction. It was also identified that higher education does research on poverty, finds out reasons and comes up with solutions. Research on poverty situation is one of the main component factors to reduce poverty.

6.2 Students' views on the activities and challenges related to poverty reduction

Students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences were asked several questions to find out more about their perceptions and experiences on the activities and challenges for poverty reduction (see appendix). Interviewees suggested that research should be prioritized for poverty reduction. S2 opined that, "I think there should be involvement of people in social activities. They need to be involved in a joint venture for income generated activities. Similarly, there should be awareness programs and campaigns about poverty and its different aspects" (S2/interview). The interviewee indicated that people's involvement in different activities for poverty reduction was a major opportunity for people to learn things by doing. The programs related to poverty should be localized to uplift the status of local people. Income generated activities needed to be organized. Similarly, another interviewee voiced for the realization of strengths and weaknesses of society. The interviewee articulated that:

> *In my opinion, the main important activity to reduce poverty is to make people or society realize the strengths and weaknesses of society. The realization about society helps to conduct awareness programs and campaigns according to the level of society. Graduates can apply their knowledge and work as an agent of change. (S4/interview)*

From the interviewee's point of view, making people know about their society is one of the most important activities for poverty reduction. It was important to study society before conducting any kind of planning for poverty reduction. Graduates could play the main role and develop society.

The interviews with students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences suggested that research is one of the main activities for poverty reduction because it is important to know the society and its structure before carrying out poverty reduction programs. At the level of society, awareness programs and campaigns could be organized. Likewise, involving people in income generated activities is also an important activity for poverty reduction because, "income is the main source of reducing poverty. It also determines people's level of consciousness and way of thinking" (S3/interview).

The students also opined that there are several challenges to carry out the above-mentioned activities. According to them, especially students face more challenges than other agents who are already involved in an organization. S1 opined:

> *To do research is a kind of challenge for students because of the lack of financial support and experiences. Another great challenge is to build up trust among the people. We also face a lack of motivation due to the government's ignorance of the findings of the research. I think the findings of the research would be very much useful for creating policy about poverty reduction. However, the powerful political party matters to apply the findings. (Interview/S1)*

The interviewee indicated that financial support and lack of experiences are the obstacles to carry out activities related to poverty reduction. On top of it, the powerful political parties influenced the findings of the research. Similarly, agents are hardly trusted because of the lack of experiences. Another interviewee also mentioned lots of challenges to carry out activities related to poverty reduction. The interviewee expressed:

> *There are lots of challenges to conducting activities which would reduce poverty. I see a challenge even in creating awareness and changing people's way of thinking. Another challenge that I perceive is a lack of trust and motivation. Sometimes the agents get frustrated because the locals do not co-operate with them due to the lack of trust. Some of the other challenges are political situation, geographical situation, funding and corruption. (Interview/S3)*

The interviewee saw several challenges to carry out the above-mentioned activities. The interviewee meant that it is difficult to change people's rational if they are very traditional

and conservative. Most of the local people want to follow their tradition and do not want to get changed. Their mind is deeply rooted in tradition. The interviewee also indicated that instability in the political situation creates challenges to carry out activities for poverty reduction. The interviewee's focus was also on the terrestrial situation of the country. It is supposed to be difficult for agents to accomplish their activities in time due to the geographical situation. Lack of monetary support and dishonesty are also the challenges to carry out the activities that can help to reduce poverty. Likewise, another interviewee argued that:

> *In my opinion, the first challenge to carry out poverty reduction activities is a process-oriented system. Instead of focusing on the findings of the activities, the process is more focused. Similarly, I find problems in the syllabus of higher education which gives more emphasis on theoretical knowledge. So, most of the graduates lack the practical knowledge and face problems in the field. Some of the other challenges are lack of culture and environment to work, lack of trust in society, geographical challenge, economic challenge, the problem in the labour market, political challenge, lack of good governance, and pessimistic concept in society. (Interview/S2)*

The interviewee focused on the processes an agent has to go through before implementing any activities. There is a problem with the syllabus too because it is not updated according to the needs of society. The interviewee suggested that graduates should be given chances to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice. Likewise, people do not have a culture of co-operation and society hardly trusts the researchers. The lack of trust is the result of not implementing the activities because most of the agents and organizations working for people rarely implement the activities properly. In this context, another interviewee also perceives political influence and lack of cooperation as difficulties to carry out poverty reduction activities. The interviewee argued that, "in my opinion, the largely politicized society itself is a problem. Likewise, the social structures, level of awareness, lack of consciousness, lack of people's support are other problems. In many societies, it is difficult to enter in social issues" (Interview/S4). The interviewee meant that Nepalese society often gets influenced by political parties and people infrequently cooperate with agents from other political parties. Some of the societies are deeply traditional and it is a challenge to change people's thought.

On the basis of all the interviewees' opinions on the challenges to carry out poverty reduction activities it can be argued that politicized society, lack of trust, political instability, geographical and financial challenges are among the obstacles for achieving the intended outcomes of the activities.

Students were asked to identify the major challenges of poverty reduction. Most of them had similar opinions. S1 said that, "political influence in society is a great challenge in my opinion" (Interview/S1). This point of view was further supported by S4 who expressed, "I think, the politicization of social issues is a great challenge to carry out any type of activities in society" (Interview/S4). Similarly, S3 said, "the political situation is a great challenge in my opinion" (Interview/S3). The interviewee meant that political instability of the country is a major challenge to implement poverty reduction activities. However, government policy is a major challenge for another interviewee who argued, "In my opinion, the government policy is a major challenge because it does not give opportunities to graduates" (Interview/S2). The interviewee saw flaws in government policy. The government does not seem to have a good policy to give opportunities to graduates. The interviews with the students identified that political instability and lack of good governance are the major challenges to carry out poverty reduction.

The students shared different views on their contribution to poverty reduction (see appendix). Some expressed that they lack opportunities and experiences. In this context, S3 argued, "there is a lack of coordination, opportunities and experiences. We know only practical knowledge and we do not get a platform to work. Nobody listens to us" (Interview/S3). The interviewee complained that they hardly get opportunities to utilize their knowledge and experiences. The interviewee further opined that, "corruption is the main obstacle for poverty reduction" (Interview/S3). Similarly, another interviewee added that, "at first we need opportunities. We can create income-oriented community joint venture and encourage people to participate in it" (Interview/S2). However, another student had a different view and expressed that, "as a student, I can do research and will apply its findings to solve problems" (Interview/S1). This interviewee gave more emphasis on research to find out the problems and solutions to poverty. Likewise, S4 pointed out that:

> *I think distribution of money to the poor does not work. Poor people should be empowered about their rights and works. As a student, I can create a level of consciousness and aware people about their rights and situation. I can work to give voice to the voiceless and create an environment to enjoy their rights. (Interview/S4)*

S4 seemed more confident and meant that students can do many things for the poor. It is important to make people aware about their poverty situation, rights and possible solutions. The interviewee also meant that graduates could raise the voice for the marginalized people.

Based on students' views on their contribution to poverty reduction, it was identified that students can find economic status thereby can create different income generated activities.

The interviewees presented different views in response to the next question about how they would apply their knowledge to reduce poverty (see appendix). Some of the students argued that they lack motivation and opportunities whereas some expressed that graduates could work as agents to reduce poverty. In this pretext, S4 reported that, "being a graduate itself is a medium to reduce poverty because we are aware of our rights and duties. As graduates we can analyze and discuss the causes and solutions of poverty" (Interview/S4). The interviewee meant that it is important to be aware of situation first. Education determines people's way of thinking and level of consciousness. Educated people could analyze the poverty situation and could come up with solutions. Similarly, another student focused on the importance of motivation. The student viewed that, "we need to motivate people with skills and training leading to income generated activities" (Interview/S1). On the other hand, some interviewees argued that they do not have a proper environment to apply their knowledge in society. In this regard, S3 argued that, "we lack environment where we can use our skills and knowledge. We face the problem of political instability, lack of leadership and coordination" (Interview/S3). Similarly, another interviewee added that, "we need opportunities to share knowledge and ideas we have. We do not get a proper platform to utilize our skills" (Interview/S2). The interviewee meant that lack of prospects and avenue are required graduates to apply their knowledge in practice.

The interviews with students confirmed that several activities could be done for poverty reduction. Some of the main activities are research activities, awareness programs and campaigns to make people aware about their situation, people's participation in the different income generated activities and training to the locals to utilize local raw materials. It was also identified that there are several challenges to accomplish those activities. Similarly, it was found that students could work as agents to reduce poverty, but they need a proper platform, sufficient budget, social trust, stable political situation, non-corrupted society and motivation for it.

6.3 Faculty members' views on the role of higher education in poverty reduction

To get an understanding of the general perceptions and opinions of faculty members on the role of higher education in poverty reduction, the first four and last two questions were used (see appendix). The interviewees expressed various ideas based on their experiences and

knowledge. In response to the first question, the interviewees had somehow similar ideas. All of them argued that there is a positive relationship between higher education and poverty reduction. One of the interviewees expressed that, "I think there are two ways to reduce poverty; 1) short terms strategies through training and awareness, and 2) long terms strategies through university education. University education provides various opportunities to graduates" (FM3/interview). This point of view indicated that university education is one of the important potential tools for poverty reduction because it can create various opportunities for graduates. This point of view was further supported by FM4 who mentioned:

> *Poverty is positively linked with education because education is one of the main criteria for employment and employment is needed for poverty reduction. However, it is not sure that education can reduce poverty. If education cannot create job opportunities or people cannot utilize their education, poverty is likely to remain. (FM4/interview)*

The interviewee indicated that education is the best tool for poverty reduction. However, if it is not productive enough, poverty might not be reduced. Similarly, "education produces human resources and experts for different fields. It also changes people's way of thinking. People with higher education can have sustainable planning for their future" (FM2/interview). This point of view suggested that human resources and skilled manpower are important for poverty reduction and developmental activities. Likewise, another interviewee expressed that education is a way to enlighten people and reduced poverty. The interviewee said that, "education is a way of putting light in the eyes of people. It imparts skills to people which helps in poverty reduction" (FM1/interview).

The interview with faculty members confirmed that higher education could be one of the best tools for poverty reduction. However, quality education is needed for it.

Regarding the second question (see appendix), the interviewees expressed similar views. They mentioned that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences indirectly reduces poverty. In this regard, FM3 shared, "people think that only technical and vocational education can reduce poverty but in reality, the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences also reduce poverty directly and indirectly. They know the society better" (FM3/interview). The interviewee meant that it is important to know the society in depth as a condition for contributions to reducing poverty. In this pretext, "Humanities and Social Science Faculty is more based on theory; however, it researches different aspects of society which would lead to

policy formation. This faculty studies the different problems of society such as poverty and tries to find out the solutions" (FM4/interview). Likewise, another interviewee added that:

> *Humanities and Social Science faculty is more theoretical but some of the practical disciplines are there under this faculty. Theoretical knowledge helps graduates bring big changes in development if they get trainings by different developmental agencies such as NGOs/INGOs. They can easily go for an action plan. (FM2/interview)*

The interviewee suggested that it is important to know both theoretical and practical knowledge for development. Graduates with theory could easily implement their knowledge in practice if they are provided with different kinds of training related to development. In this way, the faculty is useful for development activities and poverty reduction. In this connection, FM1 opined, "this faculty focuses on how poverty happens, what can be done to reduce it and so on. It is important to know the condition of poverty to reduce it" (FM1/interview). This point of view suggested that the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences studies the causes of poverty in depth, which is required to overcome from it.

The interview with faculty members showed that the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty plays a role to reduce poverty by studying the society and condition of poverty. It was also identified that the faculty researches different aspects of society, which are important for reducing poverty and carrying out developmental activities.

The interviewees shared contradictory views regarding the individual benefits of the faculty of Humanities and Social Science Faculty. One of the interviewees argued that graduates get very few benefits due to the lack of vision for the future and because most students are more certificate-oriented than knowledge oriented. The interviewee opined that, "graduates are not likely to get benefits because most of them have no vision for the future. They just prefer completing graduation and getting a certificate only. Only a few graduates want to get knowledge and apply them in practical life" (FM1/interview). In contrary to this view, another interviewee mentioned:

> There are several individual benefits of this faculty such as self-employment, engagement in local business, become service provider, to bring local products to the international market as a trader, involve in government jobs and other agencies that work to reduce poverty and other developmental sectors. (FM2/interview)

The interviewee meant that the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences benefits individuals with socio-economic development. Similarly, another interviewee also viewed that, "graduates get jobs, knowledge, skills, consciousness about right and wrong, and they think economically. They can apply their theoretical knowledge in practical life" (FM4/interview). The interviewee focused on employment and knowledge as the main benefits of higher education. Furthermore, one of the faculty members pointed out the importance of individuals and their culture, "I think this faculty supports individuals to realize their role in society and understand a particular culture because everything is defined in terms of culture." (FM3/interview).

Overall, the interviewees argue that individual students get many benefits from higher education. However, they should have an interest in learning and be able and willing to apply their knowledge and skills in practice.

In response to the fourth question (see appendix), the participants shared parallel viewpoints. They perceived that graduates could play a great role in social development. One of the interviewees mentioned that, "in my opinion, the Humanities and Social Science Faculty creates social mobilizers and change-makers in society" (FM4/interview). Similarly, another interviewee added that, "regarding the social benefits of the Humanities and Social Science Faculty, society gets local planners, resource persons, social managers and community mobilizers" (FM2/interview). The interviewee meant that graduates could create developmental changes in society. "Graduates of the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty could conduct awareness programs explaining the social reality. Only the social scientists can define social problems and solve them" (FM3/interview). The interviewee suggested that it is important to study the society first for being able to develop successful poverty reduction and social development activities.

Regarding the interviewees' views, it was identified that the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty benefits society in different ways. The graduates of the faculty could be local planners and social mobilizers.

Educated individuals can contribute through their knowledge and skills to social, political and economic sectors in society. If individuals lack knowledge and live under the poverty line, it is almost impossible to develop society. "We are ourselves victimized by poverty. However, we can have positive efforts to reduce poverty through academia by conducting research, writing research articles and creating job opportunities" (FM3/interview). Knowledge can

work as a chain of development at individual and social level. Similarly, another interviewee opined that, "as a faculty member, I could produce manpower to develop the back warded society, provide consultancy support to practitioners and introduce the syllabus of poverty reduction" (FM1/interview). The interviewee meant that it is important to introduce poverty and its aspects in the syllabus so that graduates could know acquire relevant knowledge. Likewise, any type of society needs manpower for developmental activities. Another interviewee also stated that, "as a faculty member, I could consult people and mobilize them, conduct research based on social needs, supervise any type of projects related to development and poverty reduction, advocate for communities in different organizations" (FM3/interview). It is suggested that the interviewee could be a social mobilizer, conduct research on social prerequisites, monitor different development projects and advocate for the marginalized communities in different NGOs/INGOs. Another interviewee also focused on research as a contribution of the faculty member. The interviewee stated that, "as a faculty member, I provide knowledge to graduates. I also research different social aspects, which would help to reduce poverty. Similarly, I help people to be self-dependent by encouraging them to use local resources" (FM4/interview). It is recognized that the role of faculty members can be inevitable to produce knowledgeable and independent graduates who can contribute to social development.

In the interviews with faculty members, they argued that they could conduct research on different social aspects and use the findings of their research to reduce poverty. It was also indicated that they could be advocators for marginalized communities.

In response to the last question, the interviewees had similar ideas. They opined that it is important to invest in human capital because it is the prime way for poverty reduction. One of the interviewees stated that, "investment in human capital mobilizes local resources and motivates people for entrepreneurship. It also advocates for the back warded communities in development agencies" (FM2/interview). Similarly, another interviewee opined that:

> *Investment in human capital generates skilled and semi-skilled manpower. This manpower reduces poverty at individual, family, social and national level. So, the government should develop the policy of investment in human capital. However, in the underdeveloped and developing countries, corruption obstacles everything and only the corrupted people get more opportunities. (FM3/interview)*

The interviewee meant that it is important to invest in human capital because it creates manpower needed for all sorts of development aspects of a country. Similarly, it is also

suggested that different negative aspects of society such as corruption should be removed, and the real skilled people should be given opportunities to work. This point of view is further supported by another interviewee who stated that, "the prime solution to alleviate poverty is to invest in human capital because it has multi-effects in life. It generates ideas, thoughts, belief systems, and makes people able to work effectively which are the most important aspects of poverty reduction" (FM1/interview). Investment in human capital is argued to be needed for poverty reduction, because it benefits individuals as well as society.

Based on interviewees' opinions, it is concluded that investment in human capital can help to alleviate poverty. It can create many income-generated opportunities for people at individual and social level.

On the basis of participants viewpoints, it is found out that there is positive co-relation between higher education and poverty reduction. Investment in higher education benefits society as well as individuals in different aspects. Hence, investing in higher education means promoting human capital.

6.4 Faculty members' views on the activities and challenges for poverty reduction

To perceive the general insight of faculty members' views on the activities and challenges for poverty reduction, they were asked several questions (see appendix). The faculty members were also asked about the national policies of higher education and internal policies of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for poverty reduction.

Regarding the views on the national policies of higher education for poverty reduction, one of the faculty members had no opinions on it. However, another faculty member argued that, "from 7th national planning, poverty reduction has been concretized. Likewise, 10th national planning developed a poverty reduction strategy paper" (FM2/interview). The interviewee referred to the national planning of the government that gave more priority to poverty reduction in 7th and 10th national planning. Another interviewee opined that, "inclusive policy for marginalized people is one of the best national policies to uplift the marginalized group" (FM4/interview). The interviewee intended that the government policies have covered reservation quotas for relegated people in order to uplift them from poverty. One of the most effective government planning was, "back to village program in national policy" (FM3/interview). The interviewee meant that the government came up with the planning of encouraging people to go back to the village to develop it.

The interviews with the faculty members suggested that there was a national policy that included poverty reduction as national planning for development. On the other hand, some interviewees were not clear about these policy ideas.

The interviewees had different opinions on the internal policies of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences related to poverty reduction. One of the interviewees stated that, "there is no particular internal policy of TU, but it can collaborate with different development agencies and provide human resources" (FM2/interview). The interviewee indicated that the human resources of TU could collaborate with different organizations that work to reduce poverty. However, another interviewee opined that the university policies have included inclusive strategy through reservation seats and scholarships provided to the pupil who do not have access to higher education. The interviewee said that, "TU has an inclusive strategy for all the groups through scholarship and quota system" (FM4/interview). Similarly, another faculty member mentioned that, "fieldwork is compulsory for few disciplines under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Students are motivated to research local, social and national issues" (FM1/interview). The interviewee opined that TU has an internal strategy of encouraging the students to involve in research activities.

At this point, it was identified that TU had internal policies for poverty reduction through research and inclusive strategies for all groups. It was also suggested that collaboration with the development agencies would be one of the best internal policies of TU to reduce poverty.

The interviewees also pointed out some of the challenges in applying national and internal policies related to poverty reduction. One of the interviewees mentioned that, "most of the policies of Nepal do not meet total objective due to political instability. Likewise, there is a lack of administrative efficiency and gap between planner and implementer" (FM2/interview). According to the interviewee, the political instability of the country is one of the great barriers for the implementation of any type of planning and policy. There also seems to be the coordination gap between organizer and implementer. In contrast to this view, another interviewee opined that, "it's a challenge to find out the real victims of poverty because of the diversified group" (FM4/interview). Analyzing this point of view, it is found that there are many diverse groups in the country and there are different levels of poverty among them. So, it needs detail research to find out the real victims of poverty.

The faculty members were also interviewed about the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' collaboration with other related sectors of higher education to reduce poverty.

However, only two interviewees could opine on that topic. One of the interviewees mentioned that, "Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences works in isolation and doesn't have plans to collaborate with other sectors of higher education. The present education system of Nepal has resulted in brain drain" (FM3/interview). The interviewee seemed unhappy with the present education system of Nepal. It is observed that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences works in exclusively. In contrast to this point of view, another respondent focused on the importance of this faculty in poverty reduction. The participant argued that, "Only Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences can motivate, mobilize and groom the society because society itself is a lab for this faculty" (FM2/interview). Analyzing this point of view, it is identified that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences could study society in detail and play the main role to develop society. However, it lacks collaboration with other sectors of higher education.

The interviewees were also inquired about the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for poverty reduction at the local and national level. The interviewees had somehow similar opinions on this topic. They focused on research, use of local resources and mobilization of local people. In this regard, FM2 said that, "The faculty organizes campaigns about different income-generating activities and motivates local people to use local resources to generate income. It also collaborates with agencies and researches at the local level to know the real situation of the very society" (FM2/interview). The interviewee opined that the faculty could research at the local level and could mobilize local people for income-generating activities. The interviewee assumed that mobilization of local people helps to develop society. Similarly, another interviewee also focused on the importance of research who added, "real situation comes to known through research. The faculty also produces human resources and mobilize them in society" (FM4/interview). The faculty member viewed that the production of human resources could be equipped in research to get a better understanding of the real situation of the society. Research is an important aspect that analyzes society in depth. However, FM3 is concerned about the implementation of research output who argued:

> This faculty may conduct workshops, seminars and various kinds of research activities at the local and national level. Along with this, the faculty is needed to compel the government to implement its research output. It is also needed to analyze, and change curricula based on the need of society. (FM3/interview)

The interviewee suggested that it is important to change curricula per se social needs. It is also recommended that along with the research activities, the implementation of the research results is equally important. In addition, another interviewee also opined that research is the main activity, the faculty could conduct at the local and national level. Yet, the faculty member realizes a gap between academics and practitioners and the gap works as an obstacle. According to the faculty member, "Academics are only advisors, not practitioners. Academics indirectly produce human resources and practitioners conduct researches on their own. There is a huge gap between them. The gap is needed to be minimized; the practitioners need to invite academics in research" (FM1/interview). The faculty member supposed that faculties and students might get involved in research, but they need to work with practitioners for the better implementation of research result.

Analyzing the faculty members' points of view about the activities to reduce poverty, it is acknowledged that research is the main activity that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences could conduct at the local and national level. It is also argued that the academics need collaboration with the practitioners for the better result of research activities. Similarly, it is also suggested that the faculty could mobilize local people and local resources to reduce poverty.

The interviewees shared similar thoughts about the challenges they face while carrying out the activities for poverty reduction. One of the faculty members expressed that, "There are several challenges to conduct different activities related to poverty reduction. Some challenges are related to economy, society, accessibility, etc." (FM1/interview). The faculty member meant that lack of funding and social structure creates challenges in conducting activities related to poverty reduction whereas another interviewee indicated that, "political inconstancy, corruption, the dependency of funding on foreign aid and lack of awareness at the grass-root level are some of the challenges to conduct poverty reduction activities" (FM3/interview). However, two other respondents had different opinions on challenges. One of them opined that, "the curricula at university are more theoretical which does not produce good researchers. Likewise, economy, geography, unstable politics and social hierarchy are some other challenges to create poverty reduction activities" (FM4/interview). The participant suggested that the curricula at university need to include more practical aspects to create good researchers in society. Similarly, there should be no discrimination in society in the name of caste, class and social norms and values. This point is further clarified in the

following way: "there are fewer choices for females and marginalized groups due to social norms and values" (FM4/interview). The next participant further added:

> *Lack of conscious in community and lack of trust, geography and transportation, lack of infrastructure, difficulties in collaboration with the community, lack of desire and ambition, political influence, lack of funding are some common challenges to create poverty reduction activities. (FM2/interview)*

The interviewee insinuated that there is a lack of transportation to the remote parts of the country due to geography. People are also self-centered and have no ambition in developing society. Researchers are not trusted and cooperated with in the field especially if the researchers are students. Political power influences the society in many ways that sometimes kills the desire of people to conduct any type of activities.

Based on interviewees' point of views, it can be argued that funding, lack of proper infrastructure, political influence, diversified society, lack of trust in researchers and lack of advisors are some of the common challenges to conduct poverty reduction activities.

The interviewees were further inquired about the major challenge among other challenges. They had different opinions on it. One of the interviewees said that, "political challenge is the main challenge because it influences all the aspects of society" (FM3/interview). However, for another interviewee, lack of adequate skills for research is the main challenge to conduct research. According to the interviewee, "researchers especially students don't have adequate skills for research. They also lack experts to guide them" (FM1/interview). In contrast to this point of view, another interviewee remarked that, "Funding is the main challenge to conduct any type of research" (FM2/interview). The interviewees had different viewpoints on the major challenge related to poverty reduction activities such as political contest, lack of budget and not having sufficient skills for research.

In the interviews, faculty members emphasized that mobilization of local people, use of local resources, advocacy for society, collaboration with agencies, workshop and seminar, and research are some of the activities for poverty reduction. It is also argued that research is an effective activity. However, some of the main challenges that affect the accomplishment of those activities are a lack of infrastructure, transportation, enough funding, trust and stable politics.

6.5 Academic leaders' views on the role of higher education in poverty reduction

Academic leaders of TU were interviewed about the role of higher education in poverty reduction. To gather their perceptions and opinions, they were asked the first four and last two questions (see appendix). They opined various ideas based on their experiences and understandings.

In response to the role of higher education in poverty reduction, the interviewees opined somehow similar ideas. All of them agreed that higher education plays a great role in poverty reduction. AL1 said, "higher education plays a great role not only in poverty reduction but in overall development. It provides consciousness to individuals that leads to social development" (AL1/interview). The interviewee meant that higher education is a basis for all sorts of development in society. He pointed out that educated individuals get awareness about their conditions and also influence grassroots to have consciousness about their condition. Their consciousness makes them involved in finding out the solutions to their poverty. However, AL1 further suggested that, "higher education needs to study and analyze the society in-depth to develop suitable planning for contemporary society" (AL1/interview). "Higher education plays a vital role in poverty reduction, but it basically should focus on national priorities to reduce poverty. For example, Agriculture Study, and Tourism Study should be priorities of higher education in the context of Nepal" (AL2/interview). Income generated activities such as agriculture and tourism study in higher education is one of the effective ways to reduce poverty. In this pretext, another AL3 pointed out:

> *Higher education creates skilled manpower that is the basis of development because natural resources are not enough for development. For example, due to the lack of enough skilled human resources, Africa and Asia are still underdeveloped though they have enough natural resources. Natural resources remain unexplored due to the lack of skilled human resources. (AL3/interview)*

The participant meant that higher education is needed to create experts who are the basis for economic development.

The interviews with the academic leaders concerning the relation of higher education with poverty reduction, suggest that higher education plays a great role in poverty reduction and other sorts of development. However, higher education and needs of contemporary society should match for the better result.

Regarding the second question about the role of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in poverty reduction, the interviewees had opined different ideas along with suggestions. One of the interviewees argued that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences studies all the aspects of society and poverty is one of them. The interviewee further stated that it is required to track down the reasons for poverty mitigation. According to the interviewee, "Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is theoretical, but it studies all aspects of society, analyses social issues, theorize them and helps make policies. It is needed to discover the reasons of poverty before solving it" (AL1/interview). Similarly, AL3 viewed that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is directly and indirectly linked with economic growth of nation. According to AL3, "Some of the disciplines such as RD, Sociology of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have a direct link to poverty issues and development but some of the disciplines can be the indirect basis of poverty reduction" (AL3/interview). The interviewee further came with the suggestion that, "Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences needs to relate its content with practical knowledge. Research-based education in each subject is needed" (AL3/interview). This point of view is further elaborated by another interviewee who stated that:

> *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences combines theoretical and practical knowledge that helps to learn theory and apply it in real life. Internship courses are useful for practical knowledge. The courses are needed to focus on income-generating activities, for example, homestay. (AL2/interview)*

The interviewee suggested that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences helps to reduce poverty because it provides both theoretical and practical knowledge. The faculty could reduce poverty by introducing more income-generating activities.

In the interviews the academic leaders argued that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had a connection with poverty. Combination of theoretical and practical knowledge could give better solutions to poverty reduction. In addition, in line with the opinions of the students and faculty members, it is argued that the faculty needs to focus on research activities to reduce poverty.

The academic leaders shared different views in response to the individual and social benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. One of the interviewees focused on research and its benefits. AL3 added that, "students work in research that makes them gradually experts" (AL3/interview). The interviewee meant that research activities make

students experts in research and can do more research, which ultimately benefits them academically and economically. However, other interviewees had different ideas regarding the individual benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. According to AL2:

> *I don't know much about the individual benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. It is a kind of mystery for me. Graduates need practical and theoretical knowledge, but theoretical knowledge is given more emphasis due to several obstacles such as undesirable no. of students, little resources etc. (AL2/interview)*

The interviewee indicated that graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences need both theoretical and practical knowledge to benefit them academically, economically and socially. However, the current curriculum of the university focuses more on theoretical knowledge that makes students understand the situation of social issues such as poverty but makes them unable to tackle with it. Opposed to this point of view, another interviewee argued that graduates get individual as well as social benefits from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The interviewee stated that, "individuals have an affiliation to different institutions that help them understand different levels of society. The very understanding of the level of society and social issues help them develop useful planning for individuals and society" (AL1/interview). The interviewee meant that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences helps graduates to learn more about their society and themselves. Knowing their society is inevitable to design suitable planning for developmental activities along with poverty reduction. Another interviewee further clarified the social benefits of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, by saying that:

> *Students are involved in social research that creates a kind of understanding between students and the community. Cultural, social practices of that community are studied, and unknown is known to the world. Planning is designed to meet the needs of people of that community. (AL3/interview)*

This viewpoint suggested that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences involves students in research and different aspects of society are studied. The research could find out the real needs of the very society and policymakers could design policies to meet the needs of society. In that way, society could be benefited.

The interviews with the academic leaders suggested that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences contributes individual as well as social benefits. However, practical knowledge and research-based education are needed to grab those benefits.

About the academic leaders' contribution to poverty reduction, the interviewees shared different ideas. One of the respondents expressed that, "each of us should be professional and that's the best policy for reducing poverty" (AL3/interview). Likewise, another respondent added that, "I participate in academic debates and discussion, do research and publish research outputs" (AL1/interview). The respondent meant that participating in different academic and research activities is a way of contributing to finding out the reasons behind poverty, thereby identifying possible ways to solve it. Publishing the research outputs could help policymakers to design policies for poverty mitigation. In this context, AL2 argued, "As an academic leader, I give priorities to sustainable poverty reduction and income-generating activities. Resources, entrepreneurship and market are the keys to sustainable poverty reduction" (AL2/interview). The interviewee advocated that long-termed revenue-producing activities would mitigate poverty.

The interviews with the academic leaders suggested that research could discover the situation of poverty and help to design needed policies to mitigate it. Likewise, it is also noted that it is important to emphasize sustainable poverty reduction.

In response to the last question about the investment in human capital for poverty reduction, the interviewees opined similar perspectives. All of them agreed that investment in human capital is a key to poverty reduction. At that point, AL2 expressed that, "There is no chance of poverty reduction without investment in human capital and good environment. Poverty reduction is directly related to employment and investment in human capital creates the opportunities of employment" (AL2/interview). With this point of view, it is revealed that investment in human capital is an important aspect of poverty reduction since it could create job opportunities. AL1 further made it clearer that, "Investment in human capital explores job opportunities and alternative ways of income. Likewise, knowledge helps them study the reasons of poverty and find out the possible ways of solution, thereby benefits individuals as well as society" (AL1/interview). The interviewee indicated that investment in human capital creates income-generated activities as well as gives knowledge to people about the conditions of poverty. Knowing the conditions of poverty helps to bring out suitable solutions to reduce it. Similarly, AL3 also focused on the importance of investment in human capital who stated, "To make an expert in any field, investment is needed. Experts give more inputs than other common people" (AL3/interview). This point of view suggested that investment in human capital is necessary for skilled resources to develop new ways of thinking and produce more. They could also discover different income-generating activities for locals.

Based on interviewees' views, it can be argued that investment in human capital creates more skilled manpower and employment opportunities. Skilled manpower could give more productions as well as study society. Therefore, investment in human capital is needed for poverty mitigation.

In conclusion, there is deep correlation between higher education and poverty. Proper blending of practical and theoretical knowledge is a way to meet this very correlation, which ultimately benefits society as well as individuals. Hence, investment in higher education can mitigate poverty.

6.6 Academic leaders' views on the activities and challenges for poverty reduction

Academic leaders were asked several questions to identify their opinions on the activities and challenges for poverty reduction (see appendix). They were also asked questions about the national and university's policies for poverty reduction and challenges in implementing those policies.

Regarding the national policies for poverty reduction, AL2 opined that, "Government has set out national policies for poverty reduction, but they need to institutionalize within the courses of higher education" (AL2/interview). The interviewee indicated that the government's policies for poverty reduction are not aligned with the university's policies. That's why there is a gap between university graduates and government policies. The interviewee further suggested that, "universities need to identify the demands of the labour market and produce manpower accordingly" (AL2/interview). This point of view is further supported by another interviewee who said, "different ministries have different agendas for poverty reduction, but they are not synchronized. Similarly, there is a lack of direct connection between education centres and development centres" (AL3/interview). The interviewee argued that there is no correlation between poverty reduction planning of different ministries. It also suggests that there should be an association between university graduates and labour market.

Concerning the internal policies of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the participants had similar opinions. All of them agreed that the university hardly has such concrete policies for poverty reduction. However, some of the disciplines of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have courses that focus on poverty alleviation. AL2 expressed that, "There is no exclusive paper for poverty reduction at university, but the government has some policies. Few disciplines have some courses that focus on poverty

mitigation" (AL2/interview). The interviewee indicated that there are no concrete policies of the university for poverty reduction. However, some of the disciplines have included courses about poverty issues. "Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences does not have separate policies for poverty reduction, but it works under the government's broader policies. National Planning Commission designs policies and MoE passes relevant policies to university" (AL3/interview). The interviewee indicated that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences follows the government's broader policies for poverty reduction. Another interviewee talked about technical and non-technical subjects under different faculties. "Technical subjects technically help to reduce poverty, for example, transportation, infrastructure, and non-technical subjects such as social sciences study society, its diversification, social problems and so on" (AL1/interview). The interviewee meant that it is important to study and analyze society before bringing poverty reduction plan. Both technical and non-technical subjects help reduce poverty.

The interview with the academic leaders indicated that the government has policies for poverty reduction. However, the government policies are not aligned with the university policies that has created a gap between the labour market and university graduates.

The interviewees were also asked about the implementation process of the policies of poverty reduction. Some of them had similar ideas on it. According to AL1, "State has different agencies at different levels and these agencies implement the policies" (AL1/interview). This point of view is further clarified by AL3 who stated that, "National Planning Commission designs and evaluates policies. Under Ministry, there are different agencies to implement these policies" (AL3/interview). The interviewee mentioned that there are different agencies at different levels to implement poverty reduction policies. Unlike this point of view, AL2 suggested that, "University has to pay attention to government policies because the government always plans accordingly national problems and needs. National policies and university policies are needed to be synchronized" (AL2/interview). The interviewee meant that there should be collaboration between national policies and university policies.

The interviewees also pointed out some of the challenges in implementing those policies. They had different opinions on it. In this pretext, AL3 stated that, "There is a big gap between policy formulation and implementation because there is a lack of communication between Ministry and aligned agencies, MoE and university, university and colleges" (AL3/interview). The interviewee suggested that lack of interaction between the ministries,

university and colleges has created a big gap between policy formulation and implementation. Similarly, AL2 argued, "Number of consultants are recruited to design periodic and annual planning. But university resources are not recruited, and they are isolated. There is a problem in quality, good management and skilled manpower" (AL2/interview). The interviewee pointed out that there are problems in the synchronization of government policies and university graduates as well as the quality of university graduates. Unlike this point of view, AL1 opined that, "There is a lack of resources and proper policies which negatively affects poverty reduction. Likewise, policies need to focus on local resources and local people" (AL1/interview). The interviewee indicated that policies have to focus on the needs of society. Lack of adequate resources is also one of the challenges to implement those policies.

The interviews with the academic leaders indicated that lack of communication between different agencies that implement policies, lack of adequate resources and proper policies, and a gap between government policies and university graduates are some of the main challenges to implementing the policies related to poverty reduction.

The academic leaders were also asked about the collaboration of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with other related sectors of higher education to reduce poverty. All of the interviewees suggested that an interdisciplinary approach is needed for achieving better output. According to one of the interviewees, "Other technical faculties also require social scientists. So, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences can collaborate with other faculties too" (AL3/interview). The respondent opined that technical education is supplement to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and vice versa. Similarly, AL1 stated:

> *There should have been a collaboration of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with other sectors of higher education because social scientists know about society and technical disciplines only study about technical aspects of society. If they don't collaborate; all the aspects of society can't be included. (AL1/interview)*

The interviewee focused on the importance of the collaboration of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with other faculties for the better output of poverty reduction activities.

The academic leaders had also opined about the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for poverty reduction at the local and national level. They had different opinions on it. One of the participants opined that, "Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences imparts only theoretical knowledge about poverty to students"

(AL2/interview). The interviewee suggested to include practical knowledge in the courses so that students could apply their knowledge in practice. The interviewee also indicated that students are given knowledge about what poverty is, what the causes of poverty are and so on. But students barely know what to do to reduce poverty as they lack practical knowledge such as fieldwork, internship. In contrast to this point of view, AL1 argued:

> *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences analyses local, national and international policies related to poverty reduction, organizes social debates and invites people to participate in debates, publishes the output of the debate, sends it to policy level and suggests policymakers for the formulation of suitable policies for people. (AL1/interview)*

The interviewee focused on the analysis of poverty reduction policies, the importance of social debates and people's participation in debates. The interviewee also indicated that social debates could come up with better findings and suggested policymakers to formulate suitable policies related to poverty reduction. Similarly, AL3 also opined that, "Graduates of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences collaborate with local people and generate awareness at the local level. Local people are imparted knowledge to have basic earning using their local resources" (AL3/interview). The interviewee suggested that the use of local resources was an important aspect of poverty reduction.

The interviews with academic leaders suggested that social debates and people's participation in it, collaboration with local people, the use of local resources, awareness programs are some of the main activities to reduce poverty.

The academic leaders also pointed out some of the challenges of carrying out the above-mentioned activities. They shared similar opinions on it. In this connection, AL2 stated that, "There are political instability and impunity system in the country. There are political influences in each aspect of society; even in recruiting employees" (AL2/interview). The interviewee revealed the fact that political instability and its influences are the main challenges to carry out poverty reduction activities. Likewise, AL3 also opined political intervention as a great challenge along with other challenges. According to the respondent, "Some of the challenges to carry out poverty mitigation activities are traditional curricula, political instability, political intervention and lack of funding and resources" (AL3/interview). This viewpoint suggested that the traditional curricula of university need to be reformed. Similarly, there should be no political intervention, and the government should release adequate funding and resources for carrying out poverty reduction activities. AL1

further added that, "Lack of resources, lack of funding and lack of research at different levels are some of the challenges to conduct poverty reduction activities" (AL1/interview). The interviewee suggested that having enough research at different levels (local, national, international) would help to design appropriate policies for poverty reduction. However, lack of resources and adequate budget are the challenges to conduct research as well as poverty reduction activities.

Based on interviewees' point of views, it can be argued that funding, lack of resources, lack of research, and political influences are some of the common challenges to carry out poverty reduction activities.

The interviewees were further inquired about the main challenge among all the challenges. They shared different opinions on it. AL1 stated that, "lack of experts cum funding is the main challenge for me" (AL1/interview). In contrast to this point of view, AL2 viewed political uncertainty is the main challenge. "Political instability of the country has affected everything, and it has been as the main challenge to conduct poverty reduction activities" (AL2/interview). This point of view was supported by another respondent who stated that, "Political instability is the main challenge" (AL3/interview).

The interviews with the academic leaders suggested that appropriate policies should be formulated and implemented properly in order to reduce poverty. They also indicated that government policies and university policies need to be aligned better for achieving better outcomes. The interviewees also argued that collaboration with local people, use of local resources, social debates and people's participation in them, and research activities are some of the activities for poverty reduction. However, there are some the challenges, such as lack of adequate resources, funding and political instability, which hinder to accomplish those activities.

7. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

7.1 Perceptions on higher education and poverty

The findings of the study indicate that higher education could contribute to poverty reduction in a number of ways. The participants agreed that higher education has a positive correlation with income, which is one of the main components for poverty reduction. Decision in investing to pursue higher education depends on the positive correlation between higher education and enhanced skills, which can be used to improve labour productivity. In other words, higher education promotes economic activities for an individual and society (Kjelland, 2008; Al-hajry, 2002).

The students' interviews suggest that higher education could benefit society as well as individuals at different levels. Individuals are benefited with job opportunities, self-employment, awareness and motivation. These individual benefits can help to reduce crime rates, promote better health conditions, maintain social harmony, increase tax revenues, increase supply of educated labour force, give input on national issues, maintain quality of civil life, and so forth (Tilak, 2008; Al-hajry, 2002). The interview data further indicate that higher education in general and the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in particular study society in depth through research thereby contributing to planning suitable actions for poverty reduction. These individual and social benefits of higher education include personal satisfaction, social status, access to better jobs and better working environment. It also has the potential of enhancing better skills, productivity and national economic growth. Furthermore, individual graduates can make economic contributions affecting both individuals and society (Sweetland, 1996; Crocker, 2006; Al-hajry, 2002).

Faculty members' opinions on the relationship between higher education and poverty reduction are more identical with the ideas of Mtey and Sulle (2013), who believed that educated people could have higher levels of productivity. The interviewees argued that there are lots of direct and indirect opportunities for educated people such as self-employment, local business, jobs in private and public sectors, consciousness about their conditions and knowledge about their society. These direct and indirect opportunities are linked to poverty reduction. However, some of the faculty members perceived that there is a lack of adequate research and educated people are less benefited as they are expected.

The analysis of viewpoints of the members of the academic leadership suggests that higher education graduates could benefit themselves and their society through research activities. Their opinions indicated that a higher level of education is a way to bring a quality of labour in the labour market which is similar to the view presented by Crocker (2006) who views that education is the primary approach of developing knowledge and skills because the level of education is a way of quantifying the quality of labour. However, some of the members of the academic leadership believed that lack of adequate practical knowledge and research-based education had minimized individual and social benefits of higher education.

Based on interviews with students, faculty members and the members of academic leadership indicated that individuals and society could benefited from higher education. All the participants agreed that higher education could create lots of opportunities for individuals which would minimize poverty and benefit society too. However, adequate practical knowledge and research-based education are needed for the positive correlation between higher education and poverty reduction.

7.2 Gap between labour market and university products

The interview data indicate that there is a gap between the labour market and university graduates in the context of TU. In this pretext, the students, faculty members and academic leaders had a similar opinion. They opined that there should have been a positive correlation between university graduates and the labour market. However, they remarked that the very correlation had lacked in the context of TU. The gap between university graduates and the labour market is contrary to the view as presented by Kjelland (2008) who stated that there is a positive correlation between education and earnings because education creates more economic opportunities.

The interview data show that university graduates are viewed to lack opportunities and motivation. They lack a platform to apply their knowledge and skills. This finding is contrary to the view of Baptiste (2001) who assumed that knowledge and skills are developed for economically productive potential. However, the findings also show that some students viewed their education as a way to job opportunities, social development and research activities. This point of view indicated that higher education benefits individuals and society at different levels (Al-hajry, 2002).

The findings suggest that in some of the faculty members' point of view, university graduates are not prepared properly with the required knowledge and skills. The graduates' main focus

is to gain a certificate instead of acquiring knowledge and skills. Certificate oriented study has created a gap between the labour market and university graduates. This finding is contrary to the point of view of Tan (2014) who viewed that education enhanced the productivity and earnings of individuals as well as the economic growth of a country. However, the findings also indicate that in some of the faculty members' point of view, higher education creates job opportunities, self-employment opportunities and local business (Al-hajry, 2002; Mtey & Sulle, 2013; Crocker, 2006).

Analyzing the viewpoints of academic leaders indicates that there is no proper coupling of government planning and university human resources. There is a gap between government recruited consultants for poverty reduction and the university human resources. The viewpoints also suggest that the demand of the labour market is not met by the university graduates because of the lack of practical knowledge in university curricula.

Moreover, the results from the study show that there is more theory-based education in TU. The interviewees agreed that TU needs to give more emphasis on practical knowledge for the university graduates to be able to join labour market more effectively. The interviewees agreed that university educated manpower needs skills and competencies that could be obtained through practical knowledge. Higher education is a great component of human capital by producing more trained and skilled manpower who can promote the economic growth of nation (Blundell, et al., 1999).

Based on the interviews with students, faculty members and academic leaders, it can be concluded, there are strong indications that there is a gap between the labour market and university educated manpower. The gap has created unemployment, lack of motivation and less economic benefits for individuals and society. To minimize this gap and create employment opportunities, TU needs to focus on practical skills and competences along with theoretical knowledge. Similarly, there should be a relevant curriculum in the study. The university needs to collaborate with government policies too.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter deals with overall conclusions of findings of the study. Furthermore, it covers possible recommendations based on the weaknesses of Nepalese higher education institutions in providing effective knowledge for socio-economic contribution in the country. The conclusion is drawn from the perceptions of university students, faculty members and academic leaders, which is expressed in the following section.

8.1 Positive co-relation between higher education and poverty reduction

This research was carried out to understand the perceptions of students, faculty members, and the members of academic leadership on the role of higher education in poverty reduction. The respondents of this current study were chosen from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of TU. The project studied the activities and challenges related to poverty reduction. Based on research objectives, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How is poverty eradication interpreted in the academic literature in the area of higher education studies?
2. How do academic leaders, faculty members and students interpret the relationship between higher education and poverty eradication?
3. What challenges do academic leaders, faculty members and students encounter in their activities aimed at contributing to poverty reduction?

The academic research in the area of higher education finds a positive co-relation between higher education and poverty reduction. Higher education generates knowledge and skills which are inevitable for job opportunities and economic growth. The different job opportunities with practical knowledge helps to get higher salaries which can contribute to poverty mitigation. In this pretext, the interviewees perceived positive relation of higher education in poverty reduction.

The result of the study indicates that the number of activities could be done to reduce poverty. Some of the major poverty reduction activities are awareness programmes, research activities leading to findings, sharing knowledge, social campaign, collaboration with agencies, mobilization and collaboration with local people, utilization of local raw materials, advocacy for society, workshops and seminars related to poverty reduction, organization of social debates, and implementation of the findings of social debates. The respondents from different groups such as students, faculty members and the members of academic leadership

opined that research would be one of the best activities to find out the situations, causes and solutions of poverty.

The study further shows that there were several challenges to conduct the above-mentioned activities. Some of the major challenges were lack of research, lack of resources, lack of advisors, diversified society, lack of desire in people, lack of funding, difficult geography, lack of transportation, corruption, political intervention and lack of trust for the outsider in the community. Among those challenges, most of the respondents regarded political intervention as the main challenge.

8.2 Connection between literature and findings

The conceptual and empirical research show the positive co-relation of higher education with poverty mitigation. Similarly, the findings of the study somehow agree with this line. Higher education profits individual and society economically, socially and politically, which have positive impacts on poverty reduction. However, findings further show that there are some flaws in implementation of higher education in labour market in the context of Nepal. In the context of Sociology and RD departments provide more theoretical knowledge than practical one. Hence, higher education graduates fail to compete in labour market.

Furthermore, the interviewees' data indicate that different ministries have different agendas for poverty reduction and TU makes policies under the MoE. The study further remarks that there is a gap between policy formulation and implementation because of the lack of collaboration between ministries and aligned agencies.

8.3 Recommendations

The findings of the current study show that some disciplines under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of TU, still in practice, offer old and irrelevant curricula. It is therefore recommended that TU revises and organizes them according to the demands and expectations of society and the labour market. Similarly, it is also advised that adequate practical knowledge should be included in teaching-learning activities. The study revealed that students were acquiring mainly theoretical knowledge and they had difficulties to apply their knowledge in the field. For example, they were taught what poverty was, what the causes of poverty were, what could be possible solutions to reduce it and so on. But they were not taken to the field to apply their knowledge.

The findings of the study also indicate that there is a lack of funding, resources and experts to include practical knowledge of the study. It is, therefore, suggested that the government of Nepal should allocate more funding to higher education so that it can afford experts in the field. The researcher of this study also advises TU to include research-based study. Research-based study focuses on implementation of knowledge in practice, which can be applied through problem-based inquiry, field work, project work, case study and so on. The researcher believes that research-based study is needed to find out the real situation of society and formulate planning accordingly.

The current research has also tried to study the national and internal policies of poverty reduction activities. However, the findings of the study show that there is no synchronization between government policies and internal policies of TU in a satisfactory way. It is, therefore, recommended that TU should synchronize its policies more with the national policies through its research activities and outcomes. Similarly, it is also suggested that TU should identify the needs of the labour market and produce human manpower accordingly.

To sum up, formulating relevant curriculum, synchronizing government policies and university policies, identifying the needs of labour market, including adequate practical and research activities are some of the suggestions to the university.

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Appendix – Interview guide

Interview guide for students of the Faculty Humanities and Social Sciences

1. How do you perceive the role of higher education in poverty reduction?
2. In your view, what role does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences play in poverty reduction?
3. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences benefit individuals/graduates at public and individual level?
4. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science benefit economic, social, civil and political development of the society?
5. What are the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science for the poverty reduction?
6. What are the possible challenges to conduct these activities?
7. In your view, which one is the major challenge?
8. As a student how can you contribute for the poverty reduction?
9. How can social science graduates apply their knowledge and skills to reduce poverty at individual and social level?
10. What sorts of opportunities does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences create to reduce poverty in the Nepalese context?
11. In your opinion, how does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences prepare graduates to handle the issues of poverty and economic development?

Interview guide for faculty members of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

1. How do you perceive the role of higher education in poverty reduction?
2. What role does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science play in poverty reduction?
3. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science benefit individuals/graduates at individual and social level?
4. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science benefit economic development of the society?
5. What are the national policies of higher education related to poverty reduction?
6. What are the internal policies of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science related to poverty reduction?
7. How are these policies implemented?

8. What are the challenges to implement these policies?

9. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science collaborate with other related sectors of higher education to reduce poverty?

10. What are the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science for the poverty reduction at the local level?

11. What are the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science for the poverty reduction at the national level?

12. What are the challenges to conduct different activities related to poverty reduction?

13. In your view, which one is the major challenge?

14. As a faculty member how can you contribute for the poverty reduction?

15. In your view, how does an investment in human capital help in poverty reduction?

Interview guide for academic leaders of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

1. How do you perceive the role of higher education in poverty reduction?

2. What role does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science play in poverty reduction?

3. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science benefit individuals/graduates at individual and social level?

4. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science benefit economic development of the society?

5. What are the national policies of higher education related to poverty reduction?

6. What are the internal policies of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science related to poverty reduction?

7. How are these policies implemented?

8. What are the challenges to implement these policies?

9. How does the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science collaborate with other related sectors of higher education to reduce poverty?

10. What are the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science for the poverty reduction at the local level?

11. What are the activities conducted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science for the poverty reduction at the national level?

12. What are the challenges to conduct different activities related to poverty reduction?

13. In your view, which one is the major challenge?

14. As an academic leader how can you contribute for the poverty reduction?

15. In your view, how does an investment in human capital help in poverty reduction?