

## **Launching of the M. Phil Program at KUSOM**

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Vice Chancellor Suresh Raj Sharma, Dean Subas K.C., distinguished guests, fellow educators, devoted teachers, representatives of the Nepali intellectual community, and perhaps most importantly, those of you who comprise the first batch of KUSOM's new M. Phil program in Management, I am delighted to be with you today at the launch of this exciting new program, the initial step in the anticipated launch of a Ph.D. program in Management at KUSOM tentatively scheduled to open in 2010.

Higher education is the keystone of every successful society and the education young adults at the university level is of critical importance to the future of Nepal. The M. Phil. in Management is not just another high status professional degree program. It is an academic degree program with the goal of producing master's prepared scholars who can understand and participate in not simply the utilization of the most current knowledge in the field of management around the world but in the production of such knowledge. The focus of the new M. Phil. program in Management is on research and I am very happy to be an integral part of that focus as I will be teaching Research Methods to the M. Phil. students in the first semester, beginning on Saturday.

In the course of my stay here in your beautiful country (this is my 17<sup>th</sup> visit in 15 years, I have come to love Nepal deeply, and I have had the opportunity to teach students at four different institutions of higher education—the Padma Kanya Multiple Campus in Bagh Bazaar, Tri Chandra College, Tribhuvan University's Central Campus in Kirtipur and for the last two years at Kathmandu University's School of Management. Nepali students are as bright and eager to learn as any of the students ever taught in the course of my 41-year career as a Professor of Psychology in the United States. However, their potential is hampered by a lack of educational resources including a paucity of readily available books and the limited access that both students and faculty have to the educational materials available via the internet, especially the data base services to which one must subscribe either at the institutional or personal level. Such subscriptions are prohibitively expensive here and therefore limit the ability of Nepali students and scholars to take advantage of the knowledge base which is expanding exponentially around the world and which requires ready access to the most recent technological advances to be utilized effectively. So, even though students here are routinely exposed to computers, they are hampered in their ability to use the knowledge that is available via the internet as so many college and university campuses are not able to subscribe to the plethora of data bases that are available world wide.

There are three primary ways that humans acquire knowledge: authority, tenacity, and science. Authority involves the accepting what you are told because someone in authority told you. Tenacity refers to the belief that something often repeated represents a truth. Science on the other hand requires the accumulation of empirical support for hypotheses, logically deduced from theory. Worldwide, the academic community generally agrees that the scientific method represents the best of these alternatives. This means that exposure to research methodology should begin early. Let me talk for a few minutes about why this is so important. In 2005 when I was teaching at the PK campus as a Fulbright Scholar, I photocopied an article from a professional journal and distributed it to my class in Research Methods. The students assumed as I passed the article among them that it was a newspaper article. They had had little exposure to the professional literature—a literature that is subjected to a rigorous process of peer review prior to its publication. As a result, they were not familiar with that literature, an essential foundation upon which to build new knowledge.

Rigorous research is critical to building dynamic, intellectual life—the examined kind that most of us would agree is most worth living. It is also a critical foundation upon which to establish policy and to chart a successful course toward the future, at the individual, organizational, community, national and global levels. As I often remind students in research methods--garbage in, garbage out—if our research is based on inadequate research design, our results will be uninterpretable garbage). We must begin with descriptive studies but we must then move beyond that level, digging deeper to identify the cause of the behaviors about which we are interested—building an empirical base—an especially critical task in the developing world. We all have high hopes for the new Nepal and look forward to the changes that the new political order will bring. To create effective change one must have the relevant information about the phenomena we wish to change and the best way to obtain that information is through expertly designed, meticulously executed, and carefully interpreted empirical research. Only with a clear understand of what is can we create the future we desire.

Being bright is not enough. Disciplined thought is required to make a lasting contribution to one's community. Such discipline is acquired through rigorous discourse with others and the exertion of focused effort.

Ensuring critical thinking skills is one of the most important goals of education and one way to instill that ability is through training in research methods, which requires precise observation and careful evaluation. Those who offer methodological training must themselves be knowledgeable and able to convey that knowledge in a way that can be easily understood. One of the best means of ensuring that faculty are up to date is to make sure that they are committed, not just to the transmission of knowledge but to its creation. This means that faculty should be actively engaged in research and scholarship. Such engagement constitutes one of several criteria for their continued retention as members of the professoriate. In this way they may be held uniformly accountable for achieving a high (read international) standard of currency in their respective disciplines and scholarly productivity. Not only should their scholarship be evaluated on its merits, so should their teaching be evaluated by both students and peers.

Keeping abreast of new developments in one's field is integral to maintaining professional competence. Publication in internationally recognized journals subject to the

rigorous standards of peer review is one valuable standard by which to measure scholarship. Locally produced journals are not an appropriate substitute if one wishes to encourage research and scholarship that meets international standards.

Education should be encouraged as an independent enterprise free from undue influence from the pressures of national politics in order to ensure that the standards for excellence are the based not on interpersonal influence but on more objective criteria such as expertise and demonstrated productivity. Establishing accrediting bodies to review institutions abilities to deliver competency based programs of study dedicated to the creation and dissemination of knowledge is essential to ensuring that students who are eager to learn get the tools they need to enter the work force with the skills necessary to assist the nation achieve the development it so richly deserves. Just a few days ago I attended the inauguration of a UGC sponsored training program on Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Sanothimi and am gratified to see that Nepal is posed to develop a system of national accreditation for it higher education institutions. This effort, which will result in the establishment of an independent accrediting body will do much to assure Nepali students access to professors who not only enjoy secure positions and high status but who are also well educated, current in their disciplines and deeply committed to the instructional missions of the institutions in which they teach. It will also ensure over time that the qualifications of the faculty are evaluated on the basis of merit and that this evaluation will include scholarly productivity as measured by research and publication in journals that meet not just national but international standards. A national system of accreditation will provide an opportunity to change and upgrade the current system which has been tied too often to political affiliation and too infrequently to scholarly productivity.

I congratulate KUSOM on its launching of the M. Phil. program in Management and hope that this auspicious occasion marks a new opportunity to enhance the quality of higher education in Nepal by encouraging those who obtain the degree to be an active producers of knowledge that will have a direct effect on improving the practice of management in the Nepalese context and will also provide a sustainable source of educated scholars to transmit such knowledge at local universities. I am absolutely delighted to be a part of this new program!