

#### How to cite in APA:

Gaulee, U. (2022). From the mountain tops to the middle of the ocean: Scholars calling for collaboration. In E. J. Valeau, R. L. Raby, & U. Gaulee (eds), *Shaping a humane world through global higher education: Pre-challenges and post-opportunities during a pandemic* (pp. 163-168). STAR Scholars.

# From the Mountain Tops to the Middle of the Ocean: Scholars Calling for Collaboration

*Uttam Gaulee*

This book, *Humane World through Global Higher Education: Pre-Challenges and Post-Opportunities During a Pandemic*, is a collaborative written endeavor prompted by the 2020 STAR Global Conference. Nepal Open University hosted the Conference around the theme *Shaping a Humane World*. 2020 was a heady moment of pride and panic against a backdrop of politics and pandemics undergirded by a wave of nationalism and racial awakening. Against this backdrop, the presenters at the conference called for broader and deeper collaborations to shape a humane world. The conference held at the end of the calendar year in December enables those presenting to reflect on the past and what may come. Many Nepal scholars felt pride in presenting at the global conference, which attracted high-level policymakers, including the education minister of Nepal, the host nation, and renowned scholars such as Noam Chomsky, whose presence made the event extraordinarily poignant. All scholars worldwide were acutely aware of the raging pandemic caused by COVID-19. Selected presentations are included as chapters in this book *Shaping a Humane World through Global Higher Education: Pre-Challenges and Post-Opportunities During a Pandemic*.

The year 2020 was perhaps one of the most consequential years, riddled with crises. As this conference connected scholars from across the world, the Covid-19 pandemic was still the most extensive health crisis yet of the 21st century. One of the results was an awakening of student and faculty social and mental health. While universities were under significant pressure to remain financially stable, their need to address social and mental health began to be prioritized. Another juncture of history in the background of this conference is the new role that technology is playing in our lives. Artificial Intelligence is changing world jobs and how we live our lives. Technology opened opportunities as higher education went remote virtually overnight, and a growing number of human beings were increasingly connected only by technology. Yet, while technology has drastically changed how higher education is constructed, the fault lines of inequalities do not let technology be the equalizer that it could and should be. Yet another historic event in the background of this conference was the racial reckoning after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, U.S.; the repercussions of which have brought about a crucial reckoning of race and social justice across the world. Around the

world, people and scholars began to take stock of the inhumane actions of human beings everywhere.

At this conference, as international educators, we reflected on how to help our students distinguish between patriotism and tribalism. In so doing, we aligned with the STAR conference theme, the shaping of a more humane world. As president of the Star Scholars network, I talked about social justice. In my presentation, I remembered social justice leaders Martin Luther King, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and David Wilson, and I encouraged the scholarly community to speak up for social justice.

At this moment of global upheaval, where health and safety issues have collided with nationalism and a turning inward of societies, the impact on the role of institutions of higher learning is paramount. Throughout this book, the authors posit that our role as educators is to increase knowledge and help shape the hearts and minds of our students. What this means, in other words, is educating them to be humane citizens of the world and teaching them resilience. As educators and as citizens of the world, the authors in this book raise the following questions: What is our moral compass? What are our values as educators? How do we practice ethical standards as educators and researchers? How do we remain mindful about who is included and who history, culture, and prejudice have left out?

The authors in this book and the other STAR conference attendees reflect on our role and duty as educators for the future. At the core is the importance of identifying destructive forces wherever they are and pushing them back. The authors in this book remind the readers that as educators, we are the ones who shape the future and have the potential to contribute to the foundational work that Gandhi, Mandela, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg have contributed to the world. In particular, in his address, Professor Chomsky pointed out that our current crises go beyond the moment and this pandemic and that higher education does not operate in a vacuum.

Professor Chomsky also emphasizes that the solutions come out of collaboration and collaboration is possible. Then he questions if we are ready as educators and international citizens for the necessary collaboration. His remarks remind us that as globally connected individuals, we are at a point where we have to determine whether we have the moral and intellectual capacity to join together to cooperate to overcome global existential problems. As Stu Sutin, one of the STAR Advisors asks: What is the immune system for higher education? An emphasis on Global Learning will yield the greater good within the broader context addressed in the various chapters in this book.

The authors of the book outline some strategies that affect all areas of our society related to the economy, education, the environment, and social change that contribute to the title of the book. For example, Dzulkipli A. Razak & Abdul R. Moten argue that educators must cultivate “double consciousness” to humanize technology through a bold vision of moderation and middle ground. They suggest that educational systems should

be more wholesome, inclusive, sustainable, equitable, and resilient frameworks that should be WISER: Worldwide, Inclusive, Sustainable, Equitable, and thus be *rahmatan Lil' ālamīn*. This Islamic worldview and practices for the greater good of humanity, expressed as *rahmatan Lil' ālamīn*, are reconciled with the teachings of the Gita as presented by Hari Kamali. Kamali focuses on equity and purpose (as described in the Gita). This holy text, he believes, comes in handy in dealing with Covid 19 by demonstrating and providing resilience.

Some of these authors suggest that spirituality will lead to a more just and humane world as a higher purpose of life by humanizing higher education and providing continuous, holistic, and integrated education. As a solution, they argue the best lead base is Education 2030, focused on “The World We Want” aligned to UNESCO’s Pillars of Learning for the 21st Century, namely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be, and more recently, learning to become with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals.

Luskin and Siddiqui argue the idea that teachers are the key to success individually. They opine that success cannot be attained without considering students’ and faculty’s experiences. The faculty’s role must be facilitated, which includes continued training and opportunities for new instructional techniques and models to meet the needs of the students. Ghimire, Bhattarai, and Rajbhandari tell the stories of disadvantaged students in higher education, particularly in Pakistan and Nepal, under Covid 19. Their insights have policy implications to positively impact the lives of those who have been unevenly affected due to the lack of digital preparedness and the absence of proper student support.

International students are an essential aspect of higher education to promote global communication and awareness. Moreover, they are an indispensable resource for international higher education nearly everywhere. Abdullah and Singh reveal how international students have become vulnerable during the covid 19 pandemic mainly because of the abruptly placed global restrictions on higher education. As a solution, they suggest thinking out of the box as nations wait for the flow of international students to return. Thus, Analyses and assessments are needed to develop a curriculum that is personalized, developmental, and global; learner-centered, autonomous, and critical; and synchronous and asynchronous instructional learning. They point to a future where students will be dealing with machines and call for an education curriculum to prepare them for the fast-changing times.

The struggles of underprepared and under-resourced teachers of Nepal are revealed by Rohit and Karna, who managed the challenges of online teaching during the pandemic. They show the challenges and the strategies needed to achieve success, including teamwork and leadership. Bhola paints a poignant story of the living experiences of these faculty members during covid 19 in yet another aspect of the teaching-learning endeavor: the online university examinations.

The Covid 19 Pandemic has impacted many students. Manandhar and Gaulee explore the conditions of students with disabilities in Nepal, who are certainly the most vulnerable across higher education worldwide. Their stories illuminate and beg the attention of the developed nations to do more to assist developing countries during and after this crisis. The physically disabled are the most challenged populations during the pandemic. These authors use Nepal as a case study to show how difficult it is for so many experiencing the wrath of Covid 19. Hu and Kee believe higher learning institutions should leverage the renewed opportunities post-Covid-19 in lifting global higher education to the next level. *They think leaders should take active responsibility* for common humanity, well-being, and sustainability; they believe leaders should draw strength from intercultural and epistemic diversity and create interconnectedness at multiple levels. These and other innovative approaches can enhance learning across the globe.

Authors throughout this book touch upon the importance and successes of online learning, but Adhikari and Rana provide insights into the barriers to implementing online education for all students. They demonstrate an economic, social, and technological divide surfaced more vividly by the pandemic that makes it impossible for students in remote villages like Nepal to learn. They further conclude that the pandemic will doom millions of students to a continued life of poverty and low wages, which hundreds of communities are already a part of and mightily struggling with.

White deliberates on the prevalence of online learning in secondary, post-secondary, and higher education through the Internet. Discussing the pros and cons of this shift, she opines that the advantage of a student-centered virtual learning environment is its availability anywhere, anytime. She warns that its disadvantages are opportunities for plagiarism, possible detachment from classmates, and the overall learning experience.

In conclusion, the interconnectedness of the world of scholarship was vividly presented during the conference and is displayed in the chapters in this book. Combined, this book *Shaping a Humane World through Global Higher Education: Pre-Challenges and Post-Opportunities During a Pandemic* shows that the mere actions we take every day impact our very existence as humans. The unprecedented heatwaves are indicating that we are vexing nature and inviting devastating trouble to ourselves. Mountains in the Himalayas may melt, and island nations like Maldives or Mauritius may be washed away if we do not unite our strengths to achieve victory over environmental degradation. COVID-19 has laid bare the economic and political inequity in the world, and we in education need to join hands. This call for collaboration is to provide the critical infrastructure worldwide to sustain the higher education system as an archipelago of hope, which has a vital role in the long-term recovery of society. Issues such as mental health, poverty, environmental degradation, class and caste divides, and the rising tide of nationalistic instincts prompted by a loss of hope can be addressed most effectively by higher education.

Finally, as Noam Chomsky observed during the conference, “Collaboration is possible, but are we ready?” His remarks remind us that as globally connected individuals, “we are at a point where we have to determine whether we have the moral and intellectual capacity to join together to cooperate to overcome existential problems that are global in nature.” We as humans are prone to be confused when people with different ideologies say different things but we can guarantee the continuation of human existence if we could just listen to the glaciers. We have the scientific means to do so.

## **Author**

**Uttam Gaulee, Ph.D.**, is a trusted leader in American higher education. A policy analyst, author, and keynote speaker, Dr. Gaulee currently serves as a professor in the advanced studies, leadership, and policy department at Morgan State University. He served as the Chair of the University Council at his institution from 2019 to 2021 and played a pivotal role in cultivating an effective relationship between the faculty and the administration. With a strong understanding of shared governance and the necessity of shared excitement towards a common goal, he established a research and creative activities committee within the University Council geared to generate a joint effort toward elevating the institution to a higher level of research activity. As a DEI champion, he advocated for the faculty and introduced the principle of fairness in the institution as the entire industry of higher education suffered financially during the pandemic. His research agenda intersect international higher education systems, diaspora studies, interdisciplinary perspectives on education policy, global citizenship, and cross-cultural issues in international development and geopolitics. Dr. Gaulee advocates community college as a vehicle for social progress and economic development in and beyond the United States. He recently edited a volume on *Global Adaptations of Community College Infrastructure*.

