



Research in Higher Education for Rural India and Sustainable Development

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Abstract : *Research in Higher Education is an essential element in every field of development. Higher Education has played an important role in preparing individuals as competent and responsible individuals. This is a time of renewed enthusiasm for higher education and research as the way forward to world development, with the establishment of millennium centres and science academies in Rural India and other such initiatives in developing regions. Human and social development through higher education and research capabilities are appropriate themes in a report dedicated to the future role of higher education in an era of globalization. In this paper, however, I do not focus on the repeated promise that science, research and higher education are the surest routes to development. Instead, I argue that this can no longer be taken for granted and concentrate on how international efforts in science and technology and higher education have missed the mark concerning unsolved issues and challenges in this domain, and on how research and higher education have grown in developing regions. I set out these ideas in this abstract. The frugal Jugged innovations & research are also important and may be more relevant for many of the institutions in the rural areas to find solutions to the pressing local problems. Gradually these institutions can always move towards the State, National and International level research*

Key words: *globalization, higher education, multidisciplinary*

Introduction

We do not question the changes that are taking place all around us. We have also reconciled to the need for us to change to be able to survive and grow under the constantly changing surroundings. However, we are yet to truly imbibe the role and need for Research to assist and equip us for innovatively managing change for betterment. Higher Education has been the foundation for the Research and Innovation to introduce changes in our lives both in terms of worldly comfort including health as well as to discover our spiritual self with societal values. Since much of the research happens on the boundaries of disciplines and also the fact that most of the research today involves complexities and linkages,

multidisciplinary approach is very important to address various aspects including the primary research focus, environmental concerns, societal issues, external implications, etc.

Analysis

Research is very significantly affected by the culture of the institution and individuals involved. Most of the worthwhile research requires passion of the key participants and an enabling environment. Path breaking research and innovation also require the tremendous amount of trust among the participants and key stake holders. While the research infrastructure is still easy to create with financial resources, the human resource required to create the research culture is the rare. The leaders need to have a



vision, the researchers the passion while the enabling environment provides the essential ingredient of trust. Unless these critical elements are present, the quality of research at best will be mediocre and also plagiarism cannot be ruled out especially in a competitive environment like India.

There are several aspects that need to be considered while introducing the research culture in an institution. The introduction needs to be at a pace that builds the momentum and passion but is not too compelling to adopt dubious means. Challenges need to provide a sense of motivation and achievement but not demolish the confidence of the participants and stake holders.

We also need to focus on the research that is relevant for institution and the community including industry and the key participants for them to be able to relate and develop active interest. For instance all Universities and Institutions need not focus on the international or even national level research. The frugal Jugaad innovations & research are also important and may be more relevant for many of the institutions in the rural areas to find solutions to the pressing local problems. Gradually these institutions can always move towards the State, National and International level research.

In the present era of internet where large volume of research findings are available on the net, the small and rural institutions can also start with designing applications based on the tremendous repository of the research that they can access to find innovative solutions to local problems. Even in the frugal innovations and designing small applications, the quality focus must not be lost and the institutions should be able to create a

dependable brand that they are proud of in their community and with various stake holders. Rural institutions as a part of their research may also need to focus on improving quality of teaching - learning processes including use of technology enabled learning to improve quality as well as access.

We can learn from the strategy that China adopted during the implementation of Project 211 (with aim to strengthen 100 key universities and colleges for 21st century initiated in 1995 by China Ministry of Education) and Project 985 (to promote the Chinese Higher Education System by founding about 40 world- class universities in 21st century initiated on May 4 1998). Hence, not all universities focused on world class research and status but at the same time implemented significant reforms including research & quality focus.

Canada provides another relevant model to learn from where out of the overall budget of \$36billion, Universities receive about 36%. Universities sector is The second largest performer of research after the industry. More than 70% of state / Provinces' research funding is to the Universities which also facilitates about 40% of Academic publications to be internationally coauthored.

Conclusion

Any reforms in Higher education including the research culture are not easy to carry out as we are implementing these at a level of faculty and the learned members of the society who are often complacent being the torchbearer of the knowledge in the society. The academic community, more than any other community, needs to remember the Alvin Toffler and his quote "The illiterates in the 21st century will not be those who



cannot read or write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn". Research focus will also ensure that the faculty and the institutions are in sync with and facilitate lifelong learner culture for themselves and their students.

References:

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Hebe Vessuri: The role of research in higher education: implications and challenges for an active future contribution to human and social development

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