

Defining and Deriving Success in Open University

Some New approaches

*B.Panduranga Narasimharao, P.R.R. Nair and C.Gajendra Naidu**
*Centre for Corporate Education, Training and Consultancy, *School of Vocational Education and Training, Indira Gandhi National Open University, MaidanGarhi, New Delhi – 110 068, India.*
narasimhabpr@ignou.ac.in, prrnair@ignou.ac.in, cgnaidu@ignou.ac.in

Theme: Skills Development

sub theme: Skills development for national development

INTRODUCTION

We are living in exciting times with unprecedented developments in all spheres of life – education, health, science and technology, social life, economics and so on. All these developments in one way or other are related to education and knowledge dissemination to society. The pressures on higher education because of these social and economic developments in the present day society are unparalleled and the education systems all over the world are trying to cope up with these with innovations and change. We can say distance education started evolving as one of the alternatives to traditional class room system from 1969. Simultaneously the society, experiencing a gradual shift from industrial civilization to knowledge era, has seen revolutionary developments in knowledge creation and knowledge integration, globalization and commercialization of every field, application of science and technology for the welfare of human society, regional economic development trends etc. Peter Drucker (1994) states that the present day emerging society is far more than a social change creating a change in human condition as opposed to industrial society which was essentially a traditional society in its basic social relationships. When we see the evolution of education system the present day university concept came into being as per the Humboldt's or Newman's vision born of the experience of the nineteenth century. On same lines the present day education system(s) need to reformulate their vision and mission of the education system as per the experience of present day society in the present century and as per the future perspective covering all sections of the society. We can say the developments in higher education like mode 2, triple helix, outreach and engagement, regional innovation systems, corporate education, clustering, entrepreneurial university, corporate university, centres for excellence, national innovation systems, higher education for sustainable development etc., all efforts in response to this. However, most of these developments are either in their nascent stage or yet to be initiated in developing countries. Further, it is essential that universities integrate these developments and use them as per their societal and economic context. Yashpal committee (2009) in concluding their report on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education in India suggest that there should be an educational movement to continuously articulate and debate the issues faced by higher education so that changes are made in keeping with the emerging trends nationally and globally on the most effective forms of higher education. Though open distance learning system is considered to be highly potential system to address many issues faced by higher education, it need to fully utilize this potential to bring out changes keeping with the emerging trends arising

out of knowledge society and knowledge economy. The success of any system is to be assessed from this angle for its sustainability and relevance. We examine some of the issues what Yashpal committee highlighted relating them to some of the recent trends in higher education like outreach and engagement, corporate education etc. It is in this context we will be discussing the Open University system for defining and deriving the success.

EVOLUTION OF OPEN DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND CHANGING SOCIETAL DEMANDS

Much of the literature on open distance learning focuses on evolution of the system in terms of technological and pedagogical developments but not in terms social and economic demands of the society. When we see developments in distance education in terms of media and technologies we can identify three models – correspondence model(1890s – 1960s), tele – learning model (1960s – 1980s), information and networking model (1990s -) (Sadik, 2008). The fact that all these media proved to be useful and successful in one context or the other suggests that there is no one medium better than other; every medium and its technology has its own key features and these media should be selected and used as per the need and as per the social context (eg. the needed type of interaction, costs, availability of medium). It is in this context we should analyse the success and failure stories of media in distance education. Curmpecker (2001) while discussing faculty pedagogical approach suggested that pedagogical approach in the current distance learning milieu requires a change in course design, delivery and teaching style so as to meet the needs of distance learners. We can extend this observation to deal the issues faced by higher education as well as various developments that are taking place in higher education field in response to the pressures from knowledge society.

Open distance education is often seen as ‘second chance’ education and treated like that in many contexts. We tend to focus on more courses, more credits and more students. This approach may be reflected upon from what Guzzetta (1982) argues regarding change in higher education. He argues that , though we in higher education sincerely think that we have been responding to the perceived public needs, we have not met the challenge in reality. He says that we have interpreted all needs in our own image: more courses, credit hours, campus classes and classical curricula. He also adds that we have become so accustomed to thinking of change only in terms of knowledge and other, that it is generally outside of our reality to look to ourselves for the need to change. We can identify various explosive developments that had taken place which changed the course of the socio economic development of the society and that of human civilization in recent decades. The convergent impacts of these developments like population explosion, knowledge explosion, revolutionary developments in ICT, science and technology explosion, globalization and commercialization etc puts unprecedented pressures on universities for their broader involvement with society. The tertiary educational institutes all over the world recognized the need for a change and started introducing new innovative approaches to meet various challenges. Yashpal committee (2009) while pointing out certain traditional practices and policies like fragmenting our educational enterprise into cubicles, not

thinking beyond the boundaries of disciplines, emphasis on delivery of information and storing information rather than on creativity, imagination and knowledge creation etc., stated that one of the requirements of a good university is to engage in knowledge creation – not just for the learner but also for society as a whole. We argue that evolution and success in open distance learning should not be restricted to technological and pedagogical developments but should be extended to how it responds to the experience and needs of the society. Gunasekara (2004) explaining the evolution of changing role of universities over the last 20 years suggests that they have to be increasingly linked to place through collaboration, partnership with industry, government and communities. It is in this background success in open university context is discussed in this paper.

DERIVING SUCCESS IN OPEN UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

The potential of open distance education system is well documented in the literature in terms of its adaptability and flexibility, learner centredness, meeting the demands of a varied or distributed target group, preparing flexible packages, industrial scale operations etc. The potential and relevance of open learning concept and practices to industries are well recognized elsewhere in the world (Fricker, 1989; Temple, 1991; Brown, 1997). Similarly the use of open learning concept for community development by universities is also well recognized all over the world. The potential of open distance education system is more clear in the following statement of European Commission (Lewis, 1995). “The extraordinary potential of open distance learning arises from the freedom it enjoys from constraints of time, place and pace. This endows it with an extensive flexibility, which makes it readily adaptable to the needs of the consumer. It can reach across the boundaries of regions, countries and continents. It has an extremely wide range of applications either on its own or in conjunction with conventional education and training system.” The critical question is whether in developing countries context open universities are able to use this potential to move from its traditional ‘second chance’ education concept to the realm of knowledge society/knowledge economy and its needs.

Narasimharao and Nair (2010) while discussing corporate education as universities responsibility for integrating entrepreneurial university concept into traditional university identified various strategies under broad heads – avoiding compartmentalization of knowledge, reaching out to society, need for change in approach and attitude, and catering to regional needs. The focus of academics and as well as that of institution as a whole need to be shifted for changing our attitude and approach and keeping pace with the evolution of university and knowledge society. The open universities need to redefine their objectives in this context. Narasimharao et al (2010) discussing outreach engagement and staff development in higher education identified various issues which help in boundary expansion and new possibilities for universities. They are knowledge explosion versus knowledge fragmentation, multidisciplinary and trans disciplinary trends versus designing subject areas in isolation, universities as knowledge houses versus increasing tendencies to treat teaching & research as separate activities, learning across disciplines versus specialized studies, convergence of knowledge versus

regional/local/traditional knowledge, vocational education versus university education, sustainable and integrated development versus temporary and compartmentalized development, commodisation of knowledge versus community development . Kellogg commission on the future of universities in America (1999) identified seven guiding characteristics for universities for their broader involvement with society. They are - responsiveness, respect for partners, academic neutrality, accessibility, integrating engagement into the institutional mission, coordination and resource adequacy.

We generally define success in open distance education context in terms of number of courses launched, technologies used, standard and quality of open learning materials prepared using open learning technologies and pedagogies, number of pass outs etc. But success in societal context is more than these traditional yardsticks and open universities with their known potential should strive towards this. In this context observations made by Yashpal committee on renovation and rejuvenation of higher education in India are relevant. In this paper for we have taken only five aspects of what the committee discussed - Fragmentation of knowledge and invisible walls, Universities relate to the world outside and the crossing the disciplinary boundaries, increasing tendency to treat teaching and research as separate activities, catering to regional milieu, integrating vocational education with university education. How open universities use their potential to address these aspects taking some of the new approaches like corporate education, outreach and engagement, community development, knowledge integration etc into their fold is discussed further for deriving and defining success.

YASHPAL COMMITTEE REPORT AND SUCCESS IN OPEN UNIVERSITIES – ADOPTING SOME NEW APPROACHES

Yashpal committee defines the university in the following terms.

“A university is a place where new ideas germinate, strike roots and grow tall and sturdy. It is a unique space, which covers the entire universe of knowledge. It is a place where creative minds converge, interact with each other and construct visions of new realities. Established notions of truth are challenged in the pursuit of knowledge.”

Open universities if they aim to be successful as universities are not above this definition which makes it imperative that they need to define and derive their objectives to attend to the basic functions of a university or a professorate. We may identify them as – discovery (research), integration (research generated knowledge as foundation for instruction and outreach integrated with research and pedagogy), application (outreach to serve the society) and teaching (grounded in research and practice) (Boyer 1996). The success of open universities should be redefined in these terms to serve the knowledge society as universities are not just places where various types of courses are offered.

Fragmentation of knowledge and invisible walls

To overcome this Yahspal committee recommends that the universities adopt a curricular approach which treats knowledge in a holistic manner creating exciting opportunities for different kinds of interfaces between the disciplines, which is unthinkable today in most of the universities and institutions of higher learning. They also say that we have overlooked that new knowledge and new insights have often originated at the boundaries of disciplines. We have tended to imprison disciplinary studies in opaque walls.

There is concern among many leading educationists about the universal malady of knowledge being broken up into narrower and narrower cubicles and not integrating different disciplines or failure to look beyond the boundaries created by the disciplines. Open universities with their need to address the requirements of various target groups and adult learners can plan successfully hybrid disciplines. We can derive lessons from some universities in developed countries starting separate departments or schools on policy sciences or civil society studies. While policy science covers most of the social sciences in one holistic stream, civil society studies normally looks at the third sector and the space outside state and corporate with many social sciences and even natural science disciplines joining hands. We can see similar developments in some of the Indian universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indira Gandhi National Open University. For instance IGNOU in last 3-4 years has established various schools of studies and centres which are more multidisciplinary in nature.

Another approach is to develop courses in multidisciplinary approach and relating them to what knowledge and how much knowledge required for a particular target group. Narasimharao and Sridhar (2007) while taking the example of how biology is related to society pointed out the need for moving from subject based approach to need based approach which facilitates development of interdisciplinary courses suitable to various target groups as per their requirement. We also need to think differently and taking our context into consideration. For instance we can refer the recent Melbourne model (introduced in 2008) where the university phased out 96 old undergraduate courses in favour of six new broad first degree programmes; we can also refer to many universities offering offbeat courses crossing disciplinary boundaries (Dongre & Narasimharao, 2010). We may further analyse the curricular approach referred by Yashpal from the following quote about revamping the curricular approach:

‘I would like to turn the curriculum upside down and focus on learning rather than teaching. I would start by teaching courses which the physical and social world are explored via hands-on experiences. Specific skills needed to understand and influence the real world will be taught in the curriculum as needed in later years. In this approach, designing for a better world will be taught in the initial years through practical projects. Fundamental courses such as mathematics and physics would be taught as and when they are needed to understand real world applications’ – Krishna Vedula (www.educationtimes.com).

Another strategy to create opportunities for crossing disciplinary boundaries may be taken from the example of University of Mysore establishing Centre for Outreach Programmes where some of the university courses are designed as per the requirement of industry, NGOs, and others. As per the requirement the courses are planned in association with various faculty and other stakeholders. Dongre and Narasimharao (2010) discusses how the university under outreach concept designed a specialized post graduate course in non-profit management treating the subject in holistic way by integrating the knowledge of academics, NGO activists, practitioners and other professionals as per the needs prioritized for the course.

The concept of invisible walls can be extended to Open University system and traditional university system. While the objectives of both systems are same they are often treated separately taking the differences in the methodologies/technologies adapted by each system. This is more evident in the case of dual mode institutes in India where students in distance education mode and students in face to face mode are treated separately though it is possible to take good aspects of each system for the benefit of students in both the systems. The artificial boundaries between these two systems should be erased by focusing on the objectives to be achieved. In university of Mysore, under outreach concept adopted by Centre for outreach programmes this possibility was high. Similarly the convergence scheme introduced by IGNOU in conventional education institutes is a step towards this. In this connection we can also mention the IGNOU initiatives on face to face programmes, instructor lead learning/training. However, the success of all these initiatives should lead to the invisible walls becoming more porous for seamless possibilities to meet the demands of knowledge society.

Universities relate to the world outside

“It is important that universities relate to the world outside and the walls of disciplines are porous enough to let other voices be heard. It would also be necessary that the university education is seen in its totality and subject areas not be designed in isolation.” (Yashpal, 2009)

There is growing realization of the role of universities to the world outside. Gunasekara (2004) classifies the universities role into generative and developmental focusing on triple helix and outreach and engagement concepts at universities. As Beerkens (2009) says the old paradigm of scientific discovery driven by an internally driven taxonomy of disciplines with autonomy of scientist and the institution was superseded by new paradigm of knowledge production that was socially distributed, application-oriented, trans-disciplinary, and subject to multiple accountabilities.

There are several universities having community outreach programmes covering areas like revitalisation and rebuilding, education and technology, youth development and empowerment, women empowerment, tribal welfare, environment, economic and entrepreneurial development, food security, health, child development, tapping and conserving natural resources, family development, arts and culture, improving local level technologies etc., (Narasimharao, 2009a). Similarly there are many universities offering industry related courses. However, this strategy alone cannot make universities relate to real world. As Yashpal committee mentioned the universities need to make the disciplinary boundaries porous, see university education in totality and design subject areas in integrative way and not in isolation. We can say IGNOU entering into MoUs with many organizations for offering relevant courses or IGNOU establishing centres/schools covering areas of corporate education, vocational education, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary studies, tourism hospitality service sectoral management etc or University of Mysore establishing a separate centre for outreach programmes may prove beneficial in this direction. However, we need to see that these developments really lead to a successful story of universities relating themselves to real world in true terms. What is important is to develop key competencies of using academic capacity in practice with emphasis on collaboration with other stakeholders and integration of theory with real world situation. One of the basic requirements for this to happen is scholarship of engagement. Thus we need to define new boundaries to scholarship so that boundary

expansion takes place or boundary walls of disciplines become porous to hear the voices outside. This is not going to be easy.

Levine (1980) explains how organizations possess unique personalities that are shaped by a distinctive set of norms, values, and goals. He proposed a model of boundary expansion or contraction based on the profitability of innovations to the mission, norms, values, goals etc. of the individual or organization. Sandmann (2008) explores four punctuations in the conceptual development of the scholarship of engagement (SOE) as reflected by articles published in the Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement. The first defines SOE's underlying values and introduces the principle of bidirectional reciprocity expressed through campus-community partnerships. In the second, SOE is coupled with the first two traditional missions of the university – research and teaching. The third punctuation tracks the evolution of SOE into scholarly engagement. Finally, the fourth punctuation addresses institutionalization of the scholarship of engagement within and across academe. Narasimharao and Nair (2010) proposed integration of corporate education into traditional universities as one of the effective strategies for influencing the expansion of values, goals and norms of universities in developing countries. what Mission 2007 thought up the 'Every village a knowledge centre' plan, recommending an alliance of the private sector, cooperatives, NGOs and the mass media is also towards the boundary expansion. We can probably add industries, civic bodies and all other stake holders to this list. We need to evolve different strategies for this to happen. The developments that are taking place in corporate education (or triple helix) and outreach and engagement are important in this context.

Increasing tendency to treat teaching and research as separate activities

“Universities were historically conceived as spaces where teaching and research go together. They are closely linked. Research and teaching are simply different aspects of academic work. To teach effectively at the university level, one needs to actively engage in research.”

As already discussed one of the success criteria of a university is their ability to integrate teaching, research and outreach. Teaching not grounded in research and practice is hollow. Research not applied and transferred to real world problems (outreach) is without value. And outreach not informed by pedagogy is ineffective. Open universities does teaching through various inputs. Most often they concentrate more on producing standard material (thus on teaching) and not on research. As Narasimharao (2009a) points out with the concepts of outreach, clustering innovation systems, corporate education etc it can be said that universities cannot be seen as the only place where knowledge production takes place. Narasimharao and Nair (2010) in this connection suggests that the corporate education concept at university level would not only help in integrating various fields of study for which the university has expert faculty but also help in collaborating with relevant sections of the society having more practical and real life exposure in that particular field. IGNOU has entered into a number of collaborations with various corporate and offers more than 70 programmes from its centre for corporate education, training and consultancy (CCETC). For the success of these programmes and to integrate teaching, research and outreach in these arrangements we need to evolve strategies

for research by faculty in this direction. IGNOU's Research and Teaching Assistants scheme also can be used in this direction. IGNOU has also established a separate research unit to coordinate the research activities. We also need to make the faculty to focus in this direction. For instance traditional promotion, tenure, and research protocols protect academic culture and ultimately discourage university faculty members from getting involved with community based work. This makes university research historically narrow in its design with community partners acting as passing participants rather than as partners in discovery (Corrigan, 2000). Open distance education system can change this trend by applying concepts like outreach & engagement, corporate education, community colleges, regional net works etc. For this the regional centres of open universities should be active academic hubs constantly promoting local research and integrating that with teaching. Integrating teaching, research and outreach is more feasible at regional centres than at head quarters as teaching/counseling takes place more at regional and study centre level. All this not only make the academics at regional centre get involved in research pertaining to the university programmes related to outreach or corporate education but also help in finding innovative ways of integrating the three important functions of a university. The success of open distance learning can be measured in these terms.

Catering to Regional milieu

“There should be sufficient room for the use of local data and resources to make the knowledge covered in the syllabus come alive as experience. This is required simply because engaging with the world surrounding us – both local and international- is an important aspect of learning, both as a means as well as an end. Knowledge- both theoretical and applied- when pursued with reference to the milieu is qualitatively different from knowledge, which is pursued in isolation from the surroundings.”

Universities are acknowledged as important contributors to economic growth and as crucial elements of national and regional innovations systems via the different mechanisms of academic knowledge transfers at local, national and international levels. There has been new recognition that the 'economic development and welfare of regions' can be enhanced through universities' various engagements with the local economy, including infrastructure development, education, effective university-industry partnerships, technological innovation and community development (Kitgawa, 2009). Narasimharao (2009a) proposed a model for a systematic effort by the university and society for sharing knowledge in close association in the development of community and economy. In this model the University will have a linker unit like University centre for outreach which will coordinate and collaborate the activities. The advisory committee of stake holders in association with the university centre for outreach would identify the issues, capacities and needs of the community. Based on the inputs and the evaluation of issues and implementation of strategies the university centre will develop university outreach programmes using the knowledge capital network (of all players) developed. In outreach and engagement programmes the faculty needs to integrate teaching, research and service activities. This provides architecture that enables the faculty with community partners to practice community engagement in ways that produce credible scholarship. This model is

proposed on the basis of experience of Centre for Outreach Programmes of University of Mysore in establishing outreach centres in collaboration with various organizations covering business schools, NGOs, finishing schools, education trusts in rural areas, hotel management institutes, IT industries, clinical research organizations, animation industries etc. IGNOU with its large net work of regional centres started region based programmes either on its own or in association with local organizations. They cover areas like non-credit vocational programmes, security services, business entrepreneurship, IT services, airport related programmes, entrepreneurship, poultry farming, leather goods making, business communication and entrepreneurship etc. Though all these efforts are a step forward to cater to regional milieu, we need to evaluate whether these are in real sense providing opportunities for the university to engage with the world surrounding them. For instance, Holland et al (2004) notes that “the scholarship of engagement and the idea of community partnerships are not about service. They are about extraordinary forms of teaching and research and what happens when they come together.” Academics at the regional centres can play a prominent role and we can say that the success of Open University has to be derived from its ability to use its regional centres as academic hubs.

Another concept which can cater to regional milieu is corporate education. Under this concept the direct and two way interaction with industries and other stakeholders through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information and expertise for mutual benefit makes it more region specific focus. IGNOU’s centre for corporate education, training and consultancy launched a number of programmes of different nature starting from specific industry based MBA, executive MBA, other PG level programmes to degree, diploma, certificate, non credit programmes and target specific tailor made programmes. Under the corporate education concept some of the courses can be repackaged as upskilling programmes for region specific industries and communities. In one of the proposal received by CCETC a number of new job oriented upskilling programme in different streams (Management, Engineering, Science and Commerce) were identified for development and delivery. Similarly in university of Mysore under outreach concept Dell Carnigie entered into an agreement to offer courses to prepare the graduates for job oriented skills under finishing school concept. IGNOU has entered into a similar type of agreement with NIIT (National Institute for Information Technology) for offering various job oriented courses.

Two other concepts that IGNOU has launched - community college concept and convergence scheme have the potential to force the academics to engage with surroundings. While community college concept aim to empower individuals through appropriate skill development leading to gainful employment in collaboration with the local industry and the community, the convergence scheme can make the conventional colleges to develop courses suitable for the local needs and use open learning technologies as well as conventional class room system. One of the advantage for universities like IGNOU is their large net work of regional centres where the academics can make a big difference in successful implementation of these concepts with real regional milieu. We can say success of open university system should be measured in its ability

to use its academic resources at regional centres to implement various concepts in region level context.

All these efforts will be successful in terms of what Yashpal committee said about difference in knowledge when integrated with local milieu only when the university system allows it to collaborate with relevant sections of the society. We need to involve various sections of stake holders in designing and even in the delivery of programme. For example Moorpark College and local Biotechnology companies developed a strong collaboration that focused on providing a comprehensive education in Biotechnology at the community college level. Eight department heads from a local industry (Baxter Healthcare Corporation), numerous scientists and managers from Amgen company, administrators from Moorpark College, and faculty from Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology participated while designing a training program curriculum for industry purpose. Similarly, for people in professions like footwear, pottery, agriculture, and business etc. the local university/corporate education centre can give inputs through research relevant to local needs and based on the local resources. For universities like IGNOU where they have an extensive net work it can be used in this direction. Table 1 gives some areas which the faculty at regional centres can take care.

Integrating Vocational education with University education

“The reason why vocational education has remained underdeveloped and continues to be perceived as a last option is because it is largely the poor, who either cannot afford academic education or who pass out of poorly-equipped and uninspiring schools with low marks. This kind of stigmatization of vocational education, as a last resort and essentially for the poorer sections of society, needs to be overcome for speedy development of the skills necessary in the present phase of India's economic development. The setting up of a skill-development council at the Central level is a positive step in this direction.”

In order to achieve this mission we argue that universities need to establish centres or departments which can focus on vocational education, skill development, collaboration with local organizations and building of local capacity etc. IGNOU has established School of Vocational education and Training under which many relevant courses are offered. Some of the areas covered are vocational education in general, actuarial science, fashion design, textile design, fashion merchandising and production, pharmaceutical sales management, security operations, business process outsourcing with reference to finance and accounting, entrepreneurship and skill development, security management, fire safety, security operations, air ticketing, travel agency operations, tour guiding skills, hospital administrative assistance etc. The school offers from Ph.D. programmes, specialized post graduate and graduate level programmes to diploma and certificate level programmes, most of which are designed with industry in focus and are job oriented. The school is in the process of developing a National

Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) and Assessment and Certification of Prior Learning (ACPL) in association with ministry of Human Resource Development and Labour and Employment, Government of India. IGNOU also established a Research Institute of vocational education and training at Phulbani and an IGNOU institute for vocational education and training at Shillong.

The policy document (2008) of Government of India on skill development mission states that the current capacity of the skill development system is inadequate to meet the requirement. Potentially, target groups for skill development comprise all those in the labour force, including those entering the labour force for the first time (28 million), the workforce in the organized sector (27 million) and in the informal economy (421 million). The current capacity is only 3.3 million (www.cii-skillsdevelopment.in). Innovative delivery models are to be explored. Some approaches stated are school/institution based training, formal apprenticeship, workplace learning and training by industry, adult learning and retraining, non-formal training and learning, informal apprenticeship, lifelong learning, vocational education, as well as vocational training. One of the challenges the developing countries face is their existing work force may lack even the basic education. For example, only 17 percent of India's workforce has a secondary education. The success of open universities lies in bringing these workforce into higher education sector offering relevant vocational and skill based courses. Narasimharao (2010b) discusses biotechnology education and societal demands. He in another paper (2009b) also discusses the need for new trends in biotechnology education and training. We argue that we need to see vocational education in the larger picture of higher education and societal needs. It should not be restricted with low end courses. It is necessary that we develop 'institutional systems of innovation' to overcome the hurdles faced by traditional thinking and practice.

CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION

The definition of success in higher education system keeps changing as per the societal experience as the present day university system itself arisen as a result of Humboldt's or Newman's perception of experience of the society. In the present day context as the politico-economic processes of globalization and the knowledge economy increasingly impact socio-cultural spheres, the higher education sector in the 21st century is faced with new and more complex challenges resulting in the need for broadening the success parameters. Access, participation and success are shown to represent degrees of social inclusion underpinned by a nested spectrum of ideologies – neoliberalism, social justice and human potential, respectively – with human potential ideology offering the most embracing perspective (Gidley et al 2010). From the perspective human potential ideologies which points towards success and empowerment, quality in higher education would mean more than global competitiveness or higher levels of access, but would be related to human potential and transformation. In order to cater to the present day social context the higher education system has to identify and practice several social inclusion interventions that focus on - the economic benefits and neoliberal economic theory (increased access); social justice (increased participation and

engagement); human potential (increased success and empowerment). Yashpal committee (2009) has identified several issues facing the higher education system in India. It is necessary that we develop 'institutional systems of innovation' to overcome the hurdles faced by traditional thinking and practices and which can take care the issues like compartmentalization of knowledge, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary trends, need for convergence of technologies, integrating the activities of major actors of national innovation systems, integrating government schemes, building knowledge net works etc and to practice effective social inclusion practices.

Open distance education system is considered by some as the next stage in the evolution of education because of its potential to cater to societal demands of access, equity and quality in education. We need to derive and define success of open distance education system or open university in our use of this potential rather than in terms of use of technologies and in terms of pedagogical practices. Success depends on what kind of interventions we are able to practice for social inclusion practices for access, participation and empowerment and what kind of institutional innovation systems we are able to develop to overcome the hurdles we face because of various issues. In all this we need to have an integrative and holistic view or stand. For instance, though access to higher education for under-represented groups is fundamental, it does not necessarily lead to active participation, engagement, empowerment or success. We need to design pathways which show alternatives in higher education. Open distance learning can become a successful leader in this through effective use of its potential. It can incorporate various pathways like face-to-face education, instructed led learning, machine led learning, net working, outreach and engagement, corporate education etc. Through these pathways open universities can help in thinning or disappearance of the walls not only between various disciplines but also between open university system and conventional education system. The success we need to measure in these terms. Further, we need to measure success of Open University system in its ability to move from 'second chance' education to the realm of knowledge society and knowledge economy.

There are examples both from conventional universities and open universities where they realized importance of the change and moving forward in the direction of social inclusion. UNESCO termed IGNOU as the most inclusive system. IGNOU has collaborations with - more than 400 community colleges; four union ministries for capacity building programmes; states for training in-service teachers; confederation of Indian Industries (CII) for education and training youth; Secure Skills Council of India (SSCI) to train security personnel; Rainmaker for building up trained human resources in the profession of Law for Legal Process Outsourcing; Communications and Manufacturers Associations of India (CMAI) for low cost mobile handsets; Accenture for launching programmes in BPO for creating tertiary sector job opportunities; Retail Association of India (RAI) for training and educating youth (IGNOU Silver Jubilee Year Special 2009-2010, December, 2009, www.ignou.ac.in). All these collaborations and also certain initiatives like establishing schools of studies for multidisciplinary based studies, centres like centre for corporate education are a great step towards the social inclusion process of access,

participation and empowerment. However, these steps need to be taken forward further in that direction. It is necessary that we also redefine our objectives for open universities from gross enrollment ratio to more socially inclusive objective. This is clear from what IGNOU Vice Chancellor Prof. V.N. Rajsekharan Pillai (2009) states in his editorial message to IGNOU silver jubilee year special

“The IGNOU system can be an effective model for education communities all over the world. For developing country like India, the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system has to play a complementary skill development role to the conventional models. Although the primary aim of Open and Distance Education has been to improve the Gross Enrollment Ratio, this is not going to take place in isolation. The quality of teaching-learning processes needs to be improved. Technology capacitated distance education has enabled us to improve the quality of distance education in classrooms as well as to enhance the reach of education. By acknowledging the nature of the clientele, we have to modify and adapt to the nature and mode of education delivery.”

We identified several success parameters for open universities based on some issues identified by Yashpal committee in relation to higher education. These parameters are also related to the social inclusion as discussed above.

- The success of open universities should be redefined in terms of whether they are able to attend to the basic functions of a university – discovery, integration, application and teaching. Since most of the open universities and distance education institutes focus mostly on offering courses rather than on these functions, this is an important parameter of success.
- How open universities are able to use their mechanisms for planning hybrid disciplines for covering many target groups and for delivering what and how much knowledge is required by a particular target group. This is to create both access and participation of social inclusion.
- Open universities ability to enter into new paradigm of knowledge production that was socially distributed, application-oriented, trans-disciplinary, and subject to multiple accountabilities with focus on scholarship of engagement and boundary expansion to relate their activities to outside world.
- Applying concepts like outreach and engagement, corporate education, community colleges etc for integrating teaching, research and outreach.
- The ability of open universities to use their features and structures for catering to regional milieu is important to meet the demands of knowledge society.
- The flexibility in the open university system and its academia to collaborate and involve relevant sections of the society for constant interaction, engagement and development of local capacity and economy.
- Ability to focus on vocational education, skill development, collaboration with local organizations, building local capacity etc is another success parameter.

It is essential that we save our universities from becoming soul-less organization by making them complete and broad purpose organization without limiting their purpose by not defining success only in terms of numbers and financial gains. We need to see more from social angle and how our systems can promote neoliberalism, social justice and human potential in an integrative and in inclusive way. The universities should not get accustomed to thinking of change only in terms of knowledge and other, so as to it become outside their reality to look to themselves for the need to change.

REFERENCES

- Beerens, E. (2009): *Centres of Excellence and Relevance: The Contextualisation of Global Models*, Science, Technology & Society, **14 (1)** : 153-175
- Boyer, E. (1996): *The Scholarship of Engagement*, Journal of Public Service and Outreach, **9 (1)**: 11-20.
- Brown, S (1997): *Open & Distance Learning: Case Studies from Industry and Education*, Kogan Page Ltd., London, pp. 210.
- Corrigan, D. (2000). The changing role of schools and higher education institutions with respect to community-based interagency collaboration and interprofessional partnerships. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 75, 176–195.
- Crumpecker, N. (2001): Faculty Pedagogical Approach, Skill, and Motivation in Today's Distance Education Milieu, *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, Volume IV, Number IV.
- Dongre, Y. and Narasimharao, B.P.R. (2010): University reaching out to society in management education – A case study from Inida, (communicated)
- Drucker, P. 1994, 'The Age of Social Transformation.' *The Atlantic*, November 1994, p. 54.
- Fricker, J. (1989): Open Learning – What is in it for Business, In: Niegel Paine (ed) *Open Learning in Transition: An agenda of action*, Kogan Page Ltd., London, pp. 264-274.
- Gidley, J.M. Hampson, G.P., Wheeler, L and Bereded-Samuel, E. (2010) : From Access to Success: An Integrated Approach to Quality Higher Education Informed by Social Inclusion Theory and Practice, *Higher Education Policy*, 23, pp.123-147.
- Gunasekara, C. (2004): Universities and communities: A case study of change in the management of a university. *Prometheus*, **22(2)**. pp. 201-211.
- Guzzetta, D.J. 1982, Education's quiet revolution: changes and challenges, *Change*, **14 (6)**, 10-11, 60
- Holland B. Cited by: Brukardt MJ, Holland B, Percy S, Zimpher N. (2004): *Calling the Question: Is Higher Education Ready to Commit to Community Engagement? A Wingspread Statement*. Milwaukee, Wisc; Milwaukee Idea Office, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee: 2004:2. Available at: <http://www.milwaukeeidea.org>.
- Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999): *Returning to our roots: The engaged institution*, Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.
- Kitagawa, F. (2009): Universities-Industry Links and Regional Development in Japan: Connecting Excellence and Relevance? *Science, Technology and Society*, **14 (1)**, pp. 1- 33.
- Levine, A. (1980): *Why innovation fails: The institutionalization and termination of innovation in higher education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lewis, R. (1995): Open and Distance Learning in Europe: Add-on or mainstream? *Open Learning*, 10 (3), pp.52-56.
- Narasimharao, B.P.R. (2009a): Knowledge Economy and Knowledge Society – Role of University Outreach Programmes, *Science, Technology and Society*, **14 (1)**: 119-151.

- Narasimharao, B.P.R. (2009b): Need for new Trend in Biotechnology Education and Training, *Asian Biotechnology and Development Review*, 11 (2): 89 -114.
- Narasimharao, B.P.R. (2010a): Biotechnology education and Societal Demands: Challenges faced by Biotechnology and Human Resource Development, *Social Responsibility Journal*, 6(1), pp.72-90.
- Narasimharao, B.P.R. (2010b): Tertiary Education Institutions for Corporate Education – Need and Relevance of Corporate education centres, *Indian Journal of Higher Education* (communicated).
- Narasimharao, B.P.R. and P.R.R. Nair (2010) *Universities and Corporate Education, 21st Century Social Responsibility of Developing Countries*, SRRNet, Discussion papers in social responsibility, No.1002 www.socialresponsibility.biz
- Narasimharao, B.P.R. and Sridhar, Y (2007): University Outreach Programmes – Their potential to meet changing societal Demands, In Narasimharao, B.P.R. etal (ed) *Changing Societal Demands and Adopting Teaching Learning Systems in Higher Education to Reach Out*, University of Mysore, Mysore pp.85-94.
- Rajsekharan Pillai, V.N. (2009): Celebrating 25th year of success in Open & Distance Learning, 2009-2010, IGNOU Silver Jubilee Year Special 2009-2010, Vol 1 (1), p 3.
- Sadik, A. (2008) : A theory of development and evaluation of distance education technologies <http://www.scribd.com/doc/7699558/A-theory-of-development-and-evaluation-of-distance-education-technologies>
- Sandmann, L.R. (2008): Conceptualization of the Scholarship of Engagement in Higher Education: A Strategic Review, 1996-2006, *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 12 (1), pp.91-104.
- Temple, H (1991): *Open Learning in Industry: Developing flexibility and competence in the work force*. Longman Group, Essex.
- YashPal (2009): *Report of 'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education'* <http://www.education.nic.in/> accessed on 11/7/2009.