Globalization of Education: Recognition and Challenges

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Abstract:
This paper is based on the published Knowledge and science are universal activities. Every society, however, has its own problems and its own challenges. An essential feature of knowledge is that it requires human capital for both its production and its application. Globalization is no more a recent phenomenon in the world's socio-economic system. The impact of globalization has been uneven and responses to it are varied in terms of its positive and negative dimensions the world over. Education is an important investment in building human capital that is a driver for technological innovation and economic growth. It is only through improving the educational status of a society that the multi-faceted development of its people can be ensured. In the post-industrialized world, the advanced countries used to derive the major proportion of their national income not from agriculture and industry but from the service sector. In any case, it is difficult to assess not only the nature and dimensions of globalization, but also what it means to the field of education. No doubt, Higher Education has attained a key position in the knowledge society under globalised economy. However, the challenges faced are immense and far-reaching. Its impact on the clientele viz., Individuals, Institutions, Systems and Societies is not only not clear but also not comprehensible at this moment unless it is viewed in the context of various other factors that are simultaneously operating on the higher education system.

Key Words: Knowledge – Human Capital – Globalization – Higher Education – Industrialization – Challenges – Technological Innovation

INTRODUCTION

National competitiveness today depends on the capacity to produce and absorb knowledge. The higher education sector plays an important role in the production, distribution and absorption of knowledge. Therefore, an expanded higher education sector has become a necessary condition for increasing national income and improving global competitiveness. India is well known for its large pool of technical manpower, a fair proportion of which finds employment in developed countries, especially in the West. As a happy sequel to the story, India has recently witnessed a big boom in the BPO/KPO sector. In order to sustain this trend, and to ensure that India does not throw away this key advantage, it is imperative that we continue to produce a critical mass of highly skilled manpower at an accelerated pace. An enabling academic and economic setting is a key factor determining the fate of our nation in the wake of the knowledge sector boom. This paper reviews the prevailing policy environment in this context to evaluate its efficacy in ensuring that India remains ahead of the curve in the knowledge sector which has been growing exponentially in recent years.

GLOBALIZATION

As it is known globalization, no doubt, promises dramatic and rewarding change to the higher education systems of the developed countries. Where as for the developing and the underdeveloped countries, where the system is facing the scarcity of resource, it threatens the stability needed to build the well performing system. Developing countries often have to adjust willingly or unwillingly both to the quickening pulse of international change, and accordingly, reform on several fronts simultaneously, which may not be possible under the given resource status of higher education.

GLOBALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the results of a special survey 'Higher Education: Free degrees to fly', higher education is already a global business. The days when higher education was a matter of national policy and government regulation are rapidly fading. Higher Education provisioning is now globalised and in many ways, a commercialized affair and the way that the State had in the goings on is vastly diminished. According to Andreas Schleicher of OECD, a Paris based ‘Think Tank’ the numbers studying abroad were statistically negligible two decades ago.

According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the growth is now soaring: 2 million university students-approaching 2% of the world's total of around 100 million studying outside their home country in 2003 (cited in Higher Education in the same article in Economist). Since the late 1990s the higher education market is growing by 7 per cent a year.

The Economist Survey on higher education further indicates that annual fee income alone is estimated at $ 30 billion. While private profit seeking companies have entered the education business, even government-controlled universities
are seeking independence from governmental authority. However, many countries including India continue to control the fee structure of their universities causing financial stress to foreign students, who are generally made to pay much higher fees than local students. This has resulted in many universities openly soliciting entry of foreign students. To facilitate this process they have even tailored their courses to international requirements besides appointing agents abroad and publicizing the offers widely in the media.

HIGHER EDUCATION - INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector, the third largest in the world (in student numbers) after China and the United States. It uses English as a primary language of higher education and research. It has a long academic tradition. Academic freedom is respected. There are a small number of high quality institutions, departments, and centres that can form the basis of quality sector in higher education (Bundy, 2004). The fact that the States, rather than the Central Government, exercise major responsibility for higher education creates a rather cumbersome structure, but the system allows for a variety of policies and approaches. India’s higher education policy of the 1950s which envisaged schools of excellence, especially in technology and sciences, has finally paid off rich dividends. The creation of IITs, IIMs, Schools of Science, Schools of Law, a large number of advanced training and research institutions have now been well and widely accepted.

Doctors trained in India have been the backbone of the British Medical Service for many decades. Indian scientists have found positions of importance in research laboratories of the US and other developed countries. But it was the IIT engineers who have finally struck gold during the dot.com boom of the 1990s and brought the final recognition and testimony for Indian competence. Of about 140,000 graduates of IIT so far, roughly 40,000 have gone to the US. They have been given the credit of creating 150,000 jobs and $80 billion in market capitalization.

It is said that when a new IT company is launched, investors inquire if there is an Indian in it. In the second meeting of IIT Alumni in the US, prominent persons like Jack Welch of GE, Larry Summers, President of Harvard University, and Tom Friedman, the globalization columnist of New York Times were present. The states of Virginia and Maryland declared the month of May 2005 as IIT – Indian American Heritage Month. Further, 55 US Members of the House of Representatives co-sponsored Resolution 227 honouring ‘the economic innovation attributable to graduates of the Indian Institute of Technology’.

According to NASSCOM, India had a total of 650,000 IT professionals in 2002 and by February 2005, they were to rise to 813,500. According to Brainbench Inc., India ranked behind the US in the number of certified software professionals The Indian figure was 30 times larger than Europe’s top country Germany (4802) and one hundred times Chinas (1325). India, therefore, does have an overwhelming lead in software. Further, leading US IT firms has their CMM Level 5 certification in India, rather than in the US. The High Technology leadership of the US is now coming under threat from India.

In a paper published by Richard Freeman of Harvard University quoted by Sheshabalaya, the employment at General Electric Company’s Global Research Headquarters in New York is being surpassed by their own facility, the Welch Centre at Bangalore. Similarly, IBM cut its jobs in the US and Europe but recruited more in India. In another surprise move, in just 2 years, the Indian R&D Centres of Bell Laboratories, the world’s largest research organization, filed more patents than the US Labs. In August 2006, India announced 1312 applications for drug patents, a record second only to the US. It is 25 per cent higher than Germany which is the third in ranking, and ahead of Britain, Japan, etc. India, is therefore, not just at the lower end of the software and research business, but is now in a leading position of the scientific and financial research revolution. This is also confirmed by the massive market value of IT firms on US stock markets which indicate that the investment community endorses this view. According to current thinking an estimated $356 billion worth of global financial services will relocate to India in the next 5 years, producing a cost saving of $ 130 billion for top 100 financial service firms. From R&D and scientific research, Indian commercial research market has further widened to financial and economic research. It has been said that Wall Street is also outsourcing white-collar jobs to India as a reaction to the local scandals, which erupted in 2002 and 2003. Already McKinsey & Co. and AT Kearney Inc., have shifted bulk of their research to India. J.P.Morgan, Moran Stanley, Deutsche Bank, etc. are all considering the same.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Fundamental to understanding the future role of WTO in education is the question: is higher education a marketable commodity like an FMCG product or is it a service like water or electric supply? Is higher education a commercial service or a public good?

While universities and the academic community in general would like higher education to be viewed as a public good, the prevailing argument in the WTO Secretariat is that higher education is akin to ‘private consumption’ directly benefiting the consumer by way of higher income. In April 2002, Universities from Latin American countries, Portugal and Spain adopted a Declaration at the III Summit of Iberian and Latin American Universities in Porto Alegre, Brazil in which they declared education as a ‘public good’ and requested their governments not to make any commitment on this issue within the framework of WTO. However, overtime the perception of higher education as a commercial service is gaining acceptance.

The WTO Secretariat in September 1998 has mentioned that with the rapid changes in higher education ‘education also exists as a private consumption item with a price determined
freely by the providing institutions’. As a result, they have stated that more and more paying students are attracted to these institutions including foreign students.

WTO has also adopted the Principle of Most Favoured Nation. This WTO rule, which is binding on all members, will have its implications for educational services. The Principle of the Most Favoured Nation implies that each party ‘shall accord immediate and unconditionally to services and service providers of any other party, treatment no less favourable than it accords to the service and service providers of any other country.’ This means that, if a country allows a foreign institution of a country to provide distance education services, all other countries can request to have the same treatment. Similarly, if subsidy is given to one, others can request the same advantage.

Another important issue of GATS and WTO, which is fundamental to its principles, is the notion of National Treatment. This implies an obligation to treat both foreign and domestic service suppliers in the same manner. It has been contended that this would imply, if implemented rigidly, that a foreign educational institution of, say, distance education, can demand subsidies similar to those received by public universities in an individual country.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities and institutions of higher education traditionally were public institutions. The state invested resources to set up universities and was responsible for funding and controlling their activities. When governments were in financial difficulty in the 1980s, the state could not extend adequate funding to cope with the increasing demand for higher education. This was an era of low state funding and slow expansion of higher education. This encouraged market operations in higher education that helped the process of globalization of higher education. The options open to governments in the context of globalization were: (a) to continue the policy of providing higher education through public institutions only, leading to limited access; (b) to expand access to higher education through public and private domestic providers only; or, (c) to expand access through domestic public and private providers as well as cross-border providers. Given the fiscal state of the economies of the developing world, it was not possible to expand access through public institutions.

Therefore, most countries opted for option (b), and this encouraged market operation in higher education and multiple providers. The choice of this option promoted the private sector in higher education. With the expansion of the private sector and market operations in higher education, cross-border higher education became a new and viable option. Many countries reformed their rules and regulations to encourage transnational providers. All of these providers are operating simultaneously in many of the developing countries. Government, which enjoyed a monopoly in the sector, needs to play more of a facilitative role than simply a financing and controlling one. This is where the role of the state becomes important.

Regulations are needed more at the national level to monitor the growth of institutions, both private and cross-border. In some countries, regulating private universities is a three-staged process – letters of interim authority which give temporary recognition followed by registration which recognizes the existence of the university, and finally full accreditation. This seems to be a good process and procedure. Therefore, it is important to review the process of granting permission to open and operate private and transnational institutions. There have been instances of fraudulent practices by some of these institutions and public authorities did not act strongly and promptly. Governments in some countries insist that only accredited institutions in the home country will be permitted to open branch campuses in the host country. Therefore, accreditation in the home country becomes a necessary condition for cross-border collaboration or for the starting of a foreign branch in another country.

RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER GLOBALIZATION

The term, ‘Recognition’ in the higher education context relates to reciprocal understanding between two or more parties to accept the awards and qualifications of each other as equal or substantially equal to those of their own for a variety of academic and professional purposes. The mutual recognition may be accorded to short courses for credit transfer or to the institution as a whole covering the entire range of its offering such as bachelors or masters degrees. As mentioned earlier, ultimately, in practice, all such recognition narrows down to the recognition of the Qualifications. When once quality education is ensured and a set of elements that make the quality education as an international education are implemented, recognition of the qualifications across the borders become easier. This can however be hastened and ensured by the National External Quality Assurance agencies seeking mutual recognition among their counter parts through appropriate modalities like what is being done by the signatories of the Washington Accord by agreeing to certain rigorous conditions for compliance.

Mutual Recognition (MR) of the NEQA agencies is the necessary first step towards the ultimate recognition of the qualifications or any other academic outcomes globally. Therefore, the efforts to develop the appropriate protocol should be undertaken for evolving the mutual recognition among NEQA agencies of the region. The international organization like the INQAAHE or its regional unit is the best to initiate the work. The regional cooperative bodies like UMAP and UCTS, SEAMEO RIHED, AUN, AUAP, AND ASAHIL, etc., can also play an important role in promoting mutual recognition among the NEQA bodies of the region.

Even if MR of quality assurance agencies is construed as accreditation of accrediting bodies, it has to be done using suitable protocols and formalized. Such stipulations can include the use of common criteria, policies and procedures for accrediting institutions/programs and the agencies
should agree for mutual monitoring and for information exchange through appropriate modalities. A beginning has already been made in this regard in the American Continent and in Europe with success and their experiences can be adapted to the Asia-pacific region as well. Mutual Recognition of National External Quality Assurance agencies of the region can only be a workable answer to the emerging needs for the recognition of qualifications from a particular country by the others.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Two of the strategic and long-term questions that Globalization poses to the higher education system are: (i) “Commodification” - the use of knowledge as a purchasable and saleable good. (ii) ‘Alternative providers’ with profit motive of higher education’s landscape that are engaged in the transmission of knowledge using Information and Communication Technologies. Displacing and reinterpreting knowledge raise fundamental questions to the Universities, more so, in the area of autonomy and academic freedom. They also pose questions with regard to the very objectives of Higher Education system in terms of its ethical obligation to make knowledge freely available to those who seek for it. The apprehension is, that the globalization, may herald a basic change in the very role that the Universities play in the society. Defining universities simply as ‘service providers’ and changing their responsibility to the society for the shorter gains, may in the long run, ruin the very objectives with which the universities were established.

The dynamics of Globalization is no doubt a challenge as well as an opportunity. Higher education today, Globalization or no Globalization, is no more constrained by geographical boundaries. Innovative forms of translocation and transnational education have become a possibility. Multi campus institutions, "franchised institutions learning centers providing university degree, off campus education, distance learning, internet based distance education, virtual universities merging of part studies to combine into a whole for obtaining national as well as international degrees are only few models as examples. As far as higher education is concerned, an enthused and well-informed student has umpteen choices, for the first time in the history of education, to access for a "global marketplace”. Yet, the matter of the fact is, this access remains only as availability. Who can reach to it and how? What alternative provisions are made for those who cannot afford to reach is the crux of the matter.

The impact of globalization and WTO & GATS on the Higher Education would be Multidimensional, it would be on:

- the higher education policy, programs and its implementation;
- the very system of higher education;
- the structure, functions and structure-function relations;
- the accreditation and assessment of higher education;
- the role of regulatory bodies;
- the individual institutional policy and programs; and finally on

- the acts and statutes of universities and state education acts.

CONCLUDING SUGGESTIONS

- Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit keeping in mind Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Higher Education should uphold education’s role of service to society.
- Quality of education is a multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all functions and activities, that is, teaching, academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, infrastructure, and academic environment.
- Higher education institutions should be committed to transparent internal and external evaluation conducted openly by independent specialists.
- The potential of Information Communication Technology (ICT) should be fully utilized. Equitable access to these should be assured through international cooperation and support to countries that lack capabilities to acquire such tools.
- Higher education should be considered a public service.
- While diverse sources of funding are necessary, public support for higher education and research remains essential to ensure balanced achievement of its educational and social missions.
- Partnership should be forged between higher educational institutions and responsible state authorities.
- The international dimension of higher education is an inherent part of quality.

Networking which has emerged as a major means of action should be based on sharing, solidarity, and equality among partners. Honestly, these suggestive remarks envisage the withdrawal of state from its social obligations once for all. Thus, each country should decide about the nature and extent of globalization that can be constructively introduced in their socio-economic and educational systems. While it is difficult to resist the temptation of falling in line with the international community, it is necessary that while doing so, the Paramount of national interests should be kept in view. This is more so in the field of education, which is intimately concerned with the development of human capital. Ultimately, any hasty involvement in the global educational market can end up in harming the vital interests of students, and particularly of poor and downtrodden for generations to come.

CONCLUSION

The needs of higher education cannot be met by the Government alone. It needs the participation of the Government, the private providers and perhaps selectively participation of foreign universities. We have to free ourselves from the mindset and take a realistic attitude, taking into consideration the fact that a major revolution is
taking place in higher education in the world. Considering
the conditions of India, the writer is of the view that the true
patriots are those who create opportunities for education. As
regards Tamil Nadu, suggestion was made. If you take
India, the Government at the Centre has constituted a
number of committees and commissions for higher
education. Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission from 1947 to
1948; Gothari Commission from 1964 to 1966; National
Education Policy in 1986; and recently, National
Knowledge Commission and Prof. Yashpal Committee.
Particularly, Tamil Nadu has not taken a comprehensive
view of higher education through an appropriate committee
since independence. The neighboring states have done the
exercise. It is necessary for Tamil Nadu to examine
comprehensively the opportunities available for higher
education and research; the opportunities needed to be
created and policy decisions to be taken for the future. It is
not the responsibility of the party in power alone. Every
political party worth the name must accept responsibility in
this direction.

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