



## Higher Education in New Perspectives

### KEYWORDS

**Dr. Girdhar Lal Sharma**

Principal, J.B. Teachers Training Institute, 23 PTP, Sadulshahar, Distt. Sri Ganganagar (Raj.)

**ABSTRACT** Higher education plays its part in creating, preserving and passing on knowledge at the highest levels. Institutions of higher education also play a decisive part in rethinking education, as regards both where and when it takes place. Although the number of places in higher education is everywhere limited, it is important for higher education to be conceived in such a fashion as to unite equity with excellence, within institutions that are wide open to people from every social and economic group, whatever their previous education. Universities, in particular, must lead the way by trying out new methods of reaching new groups of learners, recognizing skills and knowledge acquired outside formal systems, and promulgating, through the training of teachers and teacher trainer, new approaches to learning. It is primarily the universities that unite all the traditional functions associated with the advancement and transmission of knowledge: research, innovation, teaching and training and continuing education. Institutions of higher education are ideally placed to use globalization as a tool for bridging the knowledge gap and in order to enrich the dialogue between peoples and between cultures. Co-operation among scientists working in the same discipline transcends national boundaries and is a powerful tool for the internationalization of research, technology, ideas, attitudes and activities. However, the concentration of research and research facilities in the countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) constitutes a challenge to sustainable development in economically less-advanced countries.

### Introduction

Higher education is at one and the same time one of the driving forces of economic development and the focal point of learning in a society. It is both repository and creator of knowledge. Moreover, it is the principal instrument for passing on the accumulated experience, cultural and scientific, of humanity. In a world where resources of knowledge will increasingly predominate over material resources as factors in development, the importance of higher education and of higher education institutions can only grow. Moreover, the effect of innovation and technological progress means that economies will increasingly demand competencies that require high-level studies. Social pressure and the specific requirements of the labour market have resulted in an extraordinary diversification in institutions and in courses of study. Higher education has not been exempt from the 'force and urgency with which educational reform is politically advocated to respond to the economic imperative.

Universities no longer have the monopoly of higher learning: indeed, national higher education systems have now become so varied and complex in terms of structures, programmes, student populations and funding that it has become difficult to categorize them.

The expansion in enrolments and in the number of institutions has entailed increased expenditure on higher education, which is faced with the formidable problems of the development of mass higher education. The challenge of mass higher education has still not been met adequately, making it necessary to re-examine the role of higher education.

### The Functions of Higher Education

It is primarily the universities that unite all the traditional functions associated with the advancement and transmission of knowledge: research, innovation, teaching and training and continuing education. To these one can add another function that has been growing in importance in recent years: International co-operation.

These functions can all contribute to sustainable development. As autonomous centres for research and the creation of knowledge, universities can address some of the developmental issues facing society. They educate the intellectual and political leaders and company heads of tomorrow, as well as many of the teachers. In their social role, universities can use their autonomy in the service of debate on the great ethical and scientific issues facing the society of the future, and serve as links with the rest of the education system by providing further learning opportunities for adults and acting as a centre for the study, enrichment and preservation of culture. There is increasing pressure of higher education to respond to social concerns, while the other precious and indispensable features of universities, their academic freedom and institutional autonomy, have also been the focus of attention. Those features, although no guarantee of excellence, are a prerequisite for it.

### A Place for Learning and a Source of Knowledge

With the growing role of scientific and technological knowledge in society, in industry and trade, and in the application of research to the problems of human development, institutions of higher education have an extremely important duty to maintain their capacities for high-level research in their fields of competence. Today, they are in competition for research funds with a wide variety of operators, some in the private sector. On the other hand, they are uniquely well placed to play their traditional and necessary role of advancing knowledge by virtue of the intellectual freedom, freedom of debate and the guarantee of independent evaluation they offer to researchers.

At a time when the sheer quantity of knowledge and information is expanding exponentially and when higher education institutions are confidently expected to be able to meet the learning needs of constantly growing and increasingly varied student population, the quality of training for teachers and the quality of teaching in higher education institution takes on ever greater importance. Higher education institutions have a key responsibility in training

teachers, in establishing links with non higher education teacher training institutions and in training teacher educators. They must open themselves up to bring in teachers from the economic and other social sectors to facilitate between them and the education sector.

### Higher Education and the Changing Labour Market

Employment structures are changing as societies progress and machines replace human beings: the number of manual workers is declining, whereas supervisory, managerial and organizational tasks are expanding, thus increasing the need for intellectual abilities in employees all levels.

Universities have come to place more emphasis on training in science and technology in response to the demand for specialists familiar with the most recent technologies, capable of running increasingly complex systems. As there is no reason to think there will be any reversal of this trend, universities must continue to be in a position to meet the demand and thus must constantly adapt specialized courses of study to the needs of society.

The division of subject-matter into separate disciplines may be just what the labour market does not need and the most successful institutions are those that have evolved flexible, co-operative forms of cross-disciplinary teaching. Although many scientific universities face the question of whether to steer the best students towards research or towards industry, flexibility dictates that, wherever possible, the multi-dimensional character of higher education must be protected to ensure that graduates receive an appropriate preparation for the labour market.

### The Universities as a place of Culture and learning open to all

Universities are usually multidisciplinary, making it possible for each individual to escape the confines of his or her initial cultural environment. They are usually more in touch with the international world than are other educational structures.

Each university should become an 'open' university, offering possibilities for distance learning and learning at various points in time. Experience in distance teaching has shown that, for people studying at to higher education level, a judicious mix of media, correspondence courses, computer communications technology and personal contact can broaden the options on offer at relatively low cost. These should include both vocational training and personal development courses. Furthermore, in keeping with the idea that each person should be both learner and teacher, greater use should be made of specialist other than faculty members: teamwork, co-operation with the surrounding community and community service by students are some of the factors that can enrich the cultural role of higher education institutions.

### Higher education and International Co-operation

Institutions of higher education are ideally placed to use globalization as a tool for bridging the knowledge gap and in order to enrich the dialogue between peoples and between cultures. Co-operation among scientists working in the same discipline transcends national boundaries and is a powerful tool for the internationalization of research, technology, ideas, attitudes and activities. However, the concentration of research and research facilities in the countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) constitutes a challenge to sustainable development in economically less-advanced countries.

The networks that have been developed amongst the wealthier countries, in the European Union and the OECD countries, have produced enormous scientific and cultural benefits, but networks, useful and powerful though they are, can exacerbate the differences between the countries which participate in them and those which are left outside, unless there is a concomitant strengthening of North-South and South-South co-operation. The economic sector also needs to set up partnership with universities in both the developed and the developing world to carry out research on problems related to development in the different regions. International donors can also give a fresh impetus to these kinds of partnerships. The free movement of persons and the sharing of scientific knowledge are important principles, endorsed by the commission. While paying due respect to intellectual property, the universities and governments of 'knowledge-wealthy' countries should employ every means whereby the potential of the poorest regions of the world may be enhanced and their access to information improved. These include exchanges of students and teachers, assistance in the development of communication systems, particularly on-line systems, the pooling of research findings, inter-university networking and the establishment of regional centres of excellence.

### Recognizing subsequently acquired skills by means of new methods of certification

A certificate obtained at the end of formal education is still, all too often, the only means of gaining access to skilled employment, and young people who leave school without any qualifications and without any recognized skills not only suffer a personal sense of failure but are placed at a disadvantage, in most cases a long-term disadvantage, in relation to the job market. It is therefore important to make it possible for acquired skills, especially those acquired in the course of people's working lives, to be recognized not only in the workplace but also within the formal education system, including universities. Schemes of this kind are at present being studied in some parts of the world; thus, the European Commission, in a recent White Paper, envisaged the creation of 'personal skills cards' enabling individuals to obtain recognition of their knowledge and skills as and when they acquire them. It does seem that the worldwide implementation, in various forms, of such certification systems, taken together with the formal qualifications obtained during initial education, would allow due credit to be given to the totality of a person's skills and would make for greater possibilities of movement between education and the working environment. These proposals apply, incidentally, just as much to those with as to those without formal qualifications.

### References:

1. George S, Papadopoulos, Learning for the Twenty-first Century, Paris, UNESCO, 1994. (UNESCO doc. EDC/III/1.)
2. Policy Paper for Change & Development in Higher Education, Paris, UNESCO, 1995. (UNESCO doc. ED.94/WS/30.)
3. European Commission, Teaching & Learning: Towards the Learning Society, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 1995.
4. Jacques Delors, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO Publishing, 1998.
5. Mongaonkar, Dayanand "Internationalization of Higher Education", University News, Vol. 44, No. 48, pp. 160-169, 2006.
6. "Open Doors-2005" Report International Education Exchange, Institute of International Education.
7. Powar, K.B. (E.D.) 2002 "Internationalization of Higher Education", Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi.