22nd Annual National Conference of Indian Colleges Forum (ICF)

"Higher Education for Bridging the Gap between Rural and Urban India"

The Background

India celebrated 69th year of its Independence this year on 15th August. In couple of months we will be celebrating 70th year of Independence of India. The progress India had made in its Higher Education is commendable. Number of Institutions, programme of studies and number of students studying in higher education has increased many fold, since the time India attained freedom from colonial rule. It has also made its mark in various fields. It has never faced shortage of necessary manpower in social science, art, literature, science technology (ST), medicine, agriculture and so on. In fact a good number of its graduates and other qualified personnel from Institutes of higher learning are contributing to other countries in the development of high end science and technology. Both technological centres and their medical systems are supported by Indian educated persons. Yet India has been struggling to ensure potable water, electricity, roads, health and education to its teaming millions in its rural areas. Gap in the level of development between rural and urban areas is quite large. One can see very high quality infrastructures, roads, communication system, and education and health systems in urban areas. In contrast one finds lack of: proper potable water, quality education and health system, proper road and communication system in rural areas. This situation is visible at a distance of even about 50-60 km away from urban centres. Levels of educational institutions located in rural area are invariably of poor quality. In spite of our deep commitment to ameliorate poverty, level of poverty, squalor and lack of basic cooking and lighting facilities to families and roof on the heads of their family members are common.. News of farmers committing suicides owing to debt burden is a regular feature every year.

The challenge today is what higher education – particularly colleges which are located nearer to rural areas of district towns and blocks can do through education and skill development among youth and problem solving research by teachers for development of rural areas.

It is possible that:

(a) part of the problem can be attended, if students coming from rural areas and studying in colleges are equipped with suitable knowledge and skills to handle issues of rural development and,

(b) another part can be attended by every college by adopting a cluster of villages or hamlets (Dhanees) to help improve quality of primary and secondary education, skill development among women and enable them to participate in economic activities.

(c) Undertaking research studies by teachers and students to solve the problems of rural areas

(d) State can be persuaded to divert resources to initiate development from below, while attempting to create development from above by putting resources to create smart cities, metros and so on.

In order to deliberate and discuss ways and means of bridging the gap between rural and urban areas the 22nd National Conference of Indian Colleges Forum is being organized from 5-7th September, 2016 at Jodhpur, Rajasthan in collaboration with and support of colleges and JNV University. Jodhpur and is being hosted by Mahila PG College, Jodhpur with the support of other colleges in the region.

Theme

"Higher Education for Bridging the Gap between Rural and Urban India"

Sub-themes

Role of Higher Education in:

i) improving knowledge and skills among students to contribute to rural development;

ii) Improving Quality of primary and secondary education; and

iii) Carrying out problem solving research for development of rural areas

Collaboration and Host College

The 22nd ICF conference was held in Collaboration and Support of JNV University and hosted by PG Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Jodhpur, Rajsthan from 5-7 September,2016.

Inauguration

Professor R.P. Singh, Vice Chancellor, Jai Narain Vyas University presided over the conference and welcomed the delegates and Dr. Kavita Sharma, Vice Chancellor, South Asian University, New Delhi Inaugurated the conference.

Dr. Kavita Sharma , President, South Asian University, New Delhi lighting the lamp

Professor RP Singh giving welcome address

In welcome address professor underscored the importance of the theme of the conference, has reviewed the issues in the context of development in the past and recommendations made by Dr. Radhakrishanan, Dr. Kothari university and education commissions. He also referred to recent efforts in drafting of education policy and recommendations of Mr. Subraminiam committee. He said key aspect of contribution of higher education for development is equity and quality of higher

education as provided by Colleges and universities. Colleges being close to districts towns and rural areas can significantly contribute though knowledge, skill and value orientation in bridging this gap.

Dr.Kavita Sharma in her inaugural address gave a very comprehensive address covering Higher Education and Societal Expectations. It covered a very large ground dealing with employability, contribution to economic development, and the aspects of equity, relevance, accessibility by women, socially deprived sections and minority community. She highlighted the challenges and possible response to address issues of development both for urban and rural areas. Her detiled paper is given in the report.

Dr. GD Sharma addressing the delegates

Dr. G.D. Sharma , president ICF, highlighted the role of Indian Colleges Forum in brining Principals of Colleges throughout length and breadth of country to deliberate on important theme related to role of higher education in development of the country. He said it is a need of the time that colleges engage in knowledge and skill development to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas. Colleges can also become hub for research and innovations to solve problems of development in adopted villages and rural areas.

Shri PP Srivastave, former Member NEC and Chairman North Eastern Regional Education Council highlighted the importance of linking colleges with needs of localities in their neighbouring areas and helping people and youth through knowledge and skills so that youth can enhance quality of locally produced goods. This will benefit both youth and the society. He also emphasised that programmes of value education and inculcation values among students should also form an important part of college education. Students should develop the spirit of service to people and development of community.

Technical Sessions

Technical Sessions were addressed by experts and delegates coming from far off places in India, Namely, Kerala, Karnataka, Assam, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Gujrat, Rajasthan, Punjab and other places. Dr. Usaman from Kerala , Dr. Gogoi from Assam, Dr. Singh and Dr. C. Massar, from Meghalaya, Dr. Prabhakara from Karnataka, Dr. Kiran Arora from Pujab chaired and co-chaired the technical sessions and presented papter. Dr. K. B. Vandana, Principal,Rajasthan Police Training Centre, Jodhpur and Professor Ganga Ram Jhakar,former Chairman, RPSC, Jaipur addressed the delegates and chaired the technical sessions. Details of Technical sessions is given in second section of tthe report.

Valedictory

Dr. Chandrakala Padia, Vice Chancellor, Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Bikaner, in her valedictory address spoke very frankly on the recent development in higher education and impact of modernization on psyche of people. She highlighted the contribution of India in development in various fields of arts, science, technology and need for exploring and carrying out the research in Indian context. She said education system should address the problems of development indigenously while keep in touch with world development. We should avoid aping and show our originality to address the problems.

Dr. Chandrakala Padia, VC, MGS Bikaner University, Bikaner giving valedictory address

A large number of Principals of Colleges from different parts of country namely, Kerala, Karnatka, Assam, Meghalaya, UP, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan participated actively in deliberation, presented papers and worked in groups. They formulated recommendations pertaining to role of higher education in bridging the gap between rural and urban areas.

A very colourful cultural programme was presented by the students of the college. Delegates had also an opportunity to visit several historical places in Jodhpur and nearby places. Dr. Manorama Upadhyaya, Principal of the College, Dr. SP Vyas , Secy and Chairman of the College management committee gave an exemplary support for the conduct of the conference. Dr. B.K Tyagi, Secy, ICF and

Dr. SC Sharma, Vice President Seed steered several sessions very effectively and proposed vote of thanks from the side of SEED-ICF. Dr. Nalini Bhatt presented token memento to the host college Principa Dr. Manorama Upadhyayl from the side of ICF.

ResourcePersons sitting on Dias

- **Time Table of the conference is given Annexure –1**
- **List of Resource Persons is given in Annexure – 2**
- **Lit of Participants is given in Annexure - 3**

II

Reports of Technical Sessions

The first technical session on 5th September, 2016, Monday started with a focus on "Improving Knowledge and Skills among students to contribute to Rural development".

The session was Chaired by Prof. G.D. Sharma and was Co-chaired by Dr. H. Usman and Dr. K.D. Ramsiej, Shri PP Srivastava, former IAS was the Key-speaker. He spoke about how education has become office oriented and lack of counselling and mentoring in the process of teaching. He spoke how thinkers 5000 years ago divided knowledge into 2 parts – Vidhya and Avidhya.

The next speaker Dr. K.V. Prabhakar presented his paper on –"Concept of Social Laboratory – A Village College Interface". He spoke about governance model, social and institutional responsibility, India V/S Bharat and objectives of National Education Policy 2016.

2nd TECHNICAL SESSION 5.09.2016

The 2nd Technical Session for the day "Improving Quality of Primary and Secondary Education" was chaired by Prof. S.S. Tak, Former Member, RPSC and was co-chaired by Dr. Budhin Gogoi.

1. First speaker of the session Dr. S.C. Sharma talked about new policy of education introduced and discussed their critical issues – Accessibility, Facilities at Schools and Lack of Revolution in education system in his paper.
2. The next speaker Dr. B.K. Tyagi in his paper spoke about big difference between rural and urban areas. He highlighted the major emerging areas which need to be focussed by policy framers.
3. Dr. (Mrs.) C. Massar threw light on problems and issues regarding rural education in India and suggested that practical knowledge should be introduced to bridge this gap. She also suggested adoption of villages for better higher education.
4. The next speaker Dr. M.V. Mukandan focussed on Indian Higher Education at National and International Level. He also suggested how education is considered as public good and how practitioners of higher education have to mould them.

Lastly Dr. B.K. Tyagi emphasized on disruption caused in improvement of quality of education due to political interference. He suggested for effective check and control of the system by various regulatory agencies like UGC, AICTE, NCERT to avoid political interference and to ensure that quality of education is maintained

3rd TECHNICAL SESSION 6.09.2016

The 3rd Technical Session was chaired by Mrs. K.B. Vandana (IPS), Principal, Rajasthan Police Training Centre and was co-chaired by Prof. P.K. Mohanaraj. The topic for session was "Carrying out Problem Solving Research for Development of Rural Areas".

The first speaker, Dr. M. Usman focussed on GER of selected countries and India. He also threw light on demographic transitions and H.E. passing through critical demographic growth. He also highlighted on massive workforce employment and regional imbalance.

Dr. P. Mohammad Ali in his paper "female enrolment in H.E. in Kerala – Issues and Problems" focussed on development in Kerala's higher education system. He highlighted the status of women education and its achievements in higher education institutions of Kerala. He also put emphasis on GER of male and female students in the State.

4th TECHNICAL SESSION Date – 6th September, 2016

The 4th Technical Session (Time: 11:30-1:00) was on sharing of Experiences by Delegates on role of H.E. in development of Rural India.

Chaired by – Prof. Gangaram Jakhar, Dr. C. Massar

Co-Chair – Prof. Poonam Bawa

The first participant Dr. Buddhin Gogoi – spoke on 'Expansion of higher education in rural areas' with problems and remedies. He threw light on importance of H.E., how it influences culture and future leaders. He threw light on problems such as equity, unit cost of education high dropout rate, and remedies like adequate funding, academic audit.

Next Speaker Dr. Kiran Arora spoke that only when the basic amenities are met with, then only H.E. makes a sense. She also discussed about literacy role of S.C. & S.T., not attendance in rural areas & laid emphasis on making realistic plans, infrastructure development etc.

Dr. Nand Kumar from Meerut threw light on education policies, zero fees admissions, rural university model education policies. He also talked about the impending problems like poverty, inadequate means of transport, no internet connectivity, safety problems and political interference.

Dr. Khushboo Bhatt enlightened the audience about knowledge and skill improvement for rural development. She talked about how big enterprises uses rural development as huge CSR activity and how students are our main resources to reach and shorten the gap between rural and urban area.

Dr. B.K. Laitflang also shared his views on how media education has overtaken the education in rural area too. He stated that in order to understand the problems of rural areas one has to become a part of rural area.

The last paper for the session was presented by Prof. Atima Sharma Diwedi. She threw light on the programmes that are offered by the KMV Foundations, Schools of PW Programmes, School of Communication and Foreign Languages. She also spoke about the various skill development programmes which are been run under Kaushal Kendra, such as Yoga and Wellness, Self-defence training and motivational talks.

Group Work

Participants worked in Groups on the following themes:

1 .Improving Knowledge and Skills among students-
2. Improving Quality Primary and Secondary Education-
3. Carrying Out Problem Solving Research for Development of Rural Areas

- *Each group deliberated on the respective themes and made several recommendations with regard to implementation of some of the same. Key suggestions and recommendations made by them are as follows:*

- *With regard to improving knowledge and skills among the students group felt that special provision other than the regular classes of subjects may made so that students can be given training in communication skills, interdisciplinary orientation so as to face real life situations and employment market effectively*

- *For improving quality of primary and secondary education in rural areas it was suggested that college should adopt villages as their social and educational laboratory and provide support to schools and village community to work for improving quality both at primary and secondary education. One of the step could be to invite teachers to colleges to expose them to latest development in the subjects.*

- *On the aspect of undertaking problem solving research studies for rural areas, the group recommended that special provisions may be made by funding agencies to support studies undertaken to tackle the problems of rural development. Rural development agencies should take advantage of faculty members in the college to undertake studies and analysis of their project work so as ensure quality of intervention and outcome of the project. Colleges can also set Village college interface as social laboratory for research and development.*

"Higher Education for Bridging the Gap between Rural and Urban India"

ADDRESS BY

PP SRIVASTAV, IAS, FORMER MEMBER NEC,SHILONG

Significance of Indian Colleges Forum:

Obliged to Dr G D Sharma, the then Director of UGC's Consortium for Educational Communications) for having introduced me to the ICF (while I was Member of NEC and ex officio Chairman of the NE Regional Education Council) and who made tremendous contribution to the modernization of education in NER by providing IT inter-connectivity to all the Universities in NER with CEC in Delhi and of individual Universities with their affilitated Colleges.

Founding of ICF itself was a very imaginative, thoughtful and far-sighted move BY Dr G D Sharma, who had a holistic vision of the Education needed by the country as well as in NER. I got the opportunity to participate in 2 Annual Conferences held in NER in Umiam (Shillong) in 20 &Kaziranga in 20 .

Colleges as Pillar of higher education edifice:

Colleges are the pillars on which the main edifice of higher education really stands, and where higher-level knowledge on all subjects is actually imparted to youthful Students whose foundations have been laid by the School system. It is here that the education of the raw youth in specific subjects has to be rounded off in a manner that makes him a good citizen capable of standing on his/her own feet, supporting himself and his family and contributing to the progress of the nation and the humanity at large. For this he has to be prepared and counseled to know himself, his own mind, his likes and aptitude and his real potential. Alongside the students should also be exposed to the to the opportunities available at the time; needs of the society; demand & supply scenario etc, so that he is able to select the one that suits him the best, as a researcher, teacher, entrepreneur, professional, public service or any other avenue that is in tune with his nature.

The subject chosen for consideration of this year's Annual Conference **"Higher Education for Bridging the Gap between Rural and Urban India"** is also very relevant and significant in the current context. Permit me to give some idea of our thinking on this subject that evolved in the context of NER, where the Urban-Rural disparities are more pronounced than in the rest of the country, on account basically of terrain & climate, but are more or less generally applicable elsewhere in the country also.

1. It will be useful to have an idea of the ***The basic Malady*** in the Education system - *Educational Perspective*:*High on literacy statistics but low on quality. Emphasis on collecting information not its assimilation, churning it within and integration of various types of information from different sources and making it contextual, creative thinking.*

Dissonance with the National and Cultural Ethos

Little change has been made over the seven decades of Independence. The message of present Colonial education is dissonant with the national cultural ethos of equity, equality, dignity of human person with high regard for labour, *honesty, truthfulness, trust, transparency, community above individual* etc and the ancient Panchayat tradition of *collective unanimous decision based on consensus*. The western concept of development imperceptibly emphasing individualism, competition, division and decision by vote and an *opposition* that continues to oppose for its own sake and such like continues. The Indian communitarian moral social frame, t***he basic Value-System*** – (***Truthfulness; Honesty; Community-interests above individual's-interests; Transparency; Unanimity in final decision-making after through discussions of pros/cons.***) which still persist in areas difficult of access (so-called backward and under-developed areas like the *North Eastern Hill-tribal States) should be taught as core values in th entire education right from the nursery to the University.* **Colleges** can play a significant role in this.

Dichotomy created by the educational system itself needs to be eliminated

The present education is alienating the student from both the traditional system and philosophy of our country as well as from it needs presently and in the future. The preference of youth for white-collar job under the Government; for being a servant and not master of his own destiny is unfortunate.

Single track system - Need to integrate vocational stream with the general academic stream at the School level.

The present single-track educational System does not provide for alternative routes to the student at different stages that may equip him with relevant know-how in areas of his/her interest. In other words, **students need to be trained in the vocations/professions that are relevant locally and in the region and also to their liking.** There is thus urgent need for a frame which can coordinate the local educational effort for optimal utilization of available physical and human resource for excellence in education. The single-track educational System must provide for alternative routes to the student at different stages, which may equip him with relevant know-how in areas of his interest. **Vocational stream has to be integrated with the general academic stream.**

In Colleges, that vocation could be continued as a hobby of in liaison with Vocational or Technical Training Institution or some related Industry nearby**.**

Colonial design needs to be changed to national objectives

Lord T B McCauley's ***Minutes*** in 1835, wherein he advocated education of the upper classes in India and spread of western learning through the medium of English, through which, he felt ***it was possible to create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect****.*

Extracts from his speech of **Feb 2, 1835** in the British Parliament,:

"I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such high caliber, that I do not think we could ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation"

Independent India needs a system of education that has the following:

Basic Objectives of Eduction according to Indian Ethos to be kept in mind always

- Manifestation of the perfection that exists already in the child.
- Achieving concentration of mind, rather than mere collecting of facts.
- Enabling the student to earn honourable living and not depending on government job only.
- Develop a nationalistic outlook in consonance with the cultural ethos of equity & equality; human dignity & high regard for labour; honesty & truthfulness; transparency & trust; community above individual & system of unanimous decision by consensus sans considerations of *caste/community/language/region/ religion in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*
- **Moulding the student into a good citizen, i.e., enabling him to**:
    - enjoy community life with grace and ease,
    - partake in the affairs of the State as a responsible citizen with honour and dignity,
    - due appreciation of his role and responsibility as a member of humankind in the spirit of *vasudhaivakutumbakam* (universe as a family) and as inheritor of the Mother Earth with all living being as co-partners, and NOT ITS SOLE MASTER.

Importance of Art and Culture to develop the finer aesthetic elements of life and

Should be fine-tuned and made use of in Colleges:

College is the final stage for preparation of students for participation in Economic Life:

Drawing up of *long-term Plan for visit of students to nearly rural areas to catalogue the local resources, skills, potential and their problems, AND then draw up plans for remedial measures. That would give the students under guidance of Faculty to gain contextual awareness and to inspire*

generation of prosperity through entrepreneurship development through value addition of local produce/skills locally.

A system of continuing dialogue and contact with village folk may be developed to institutionalize the above process.

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Higher Education- Matching Societal and Individual Expectations

Dr. Kavita Sharma, President SAU, New Delhi

Society and Individual expectations

The aim of education is two-fold: collective and individual. At the collective level, the aim is to make an individual into a good citizen, that is, a person with harmonious relationship with other members of the community, a person useful to society, and one who fulfils his or her obligations as a citizen. At the individual level, the student expects an educational institution to help him or her to develop a strong and healthy body, build his or her character, attain self-mastery and supply opportunities to discover and realise natural abilities so as to become gainfully employed and economically self sufficient.

Both expectations are justified but it is necessary to understand the relationship between the individual and society and that the aspirations of the two need to be mutually harmonised. The human mind tends to emphasize one or the other and the current dominant thought is that individual interest must be subordinated to societal interest. Therefore, the collective aim of education has overshadowed the individual aim and the chief challenge facing educators is how to fit the individual to the demands of society.

The needs of society are determined by what society thinks it requires at that point of time. For example, at the time of war, society may require defence personnel,

scientists for arms industries, traders in arms and ammunition, defence strategists, and others. Such societal aims are usually determined by the perceptions of the ruling class. If there are powerful patrons of culture, society will produce artists of all kinds. If industrialisation is taking place, then the need will be for engineers and technicians.

Education is built on the pillars of access, equity, expansion, relevance and quality. All are interlinked if equitable opportunities have to be made available to all. Imbalance in any one of these causes disparities that lead to social unrest. Since the liberalisation of economy beginning in the second half of the decade of 1990s, Indian economy has opened up a variety of jobs and a shift is gradually being seen away from the agricultural sector to the service industry and manufacturing. Even agriculture has become more mechanized and demands inputs of new knowledge. The country is now part of a globalized world in which knowledge is the key to development. Hence both national and international organisations like UNESCO have emphasized that education especially higher education is the key to development.

New Demands : Globalization, Liberalization, Research and Development

New demands are being made on education both in terms of demand and relevance. Expansion has taken place but by and large it lacks quality and relevance. From elite, education has moved towards massification and is now moving towards universalization. in a globalized world, knowledge is the key to development, both its creation and dissemination. Changes are required at a pace that have not happened since independence. it has led to two things: emphasis on research and proliferation of private education.

However, higher education means both teaching and research. Clear ways on how to bring teaching and research together within a scholarship paradigm are still unresolved and very often universities themselves are confused about their mission. But usually research has been privileged over teaching as its applications are seen as promoting economic growth. This leads to several questions. What kind of research is needed? What is the aim of this research? How can research be incorporated into teaching? At what level should the research programme begin? One thought is that there does not seem to be an obvious flow from research to teaching at least at the undergraduate level. This could partly be because of the way teaching is organised and partly because research yields such specialised knowledge that it is remote from what students need to know at the undergraduate level. But on the other hand, evidence can also be given to show that there are advantages to learning in a research-rich environment. For that, however, a conscious and deliberate link needs to be established between teaching and research in each department

Challenges before world

As Hebe Vessuri points out, the three main challenges that face the world in the 21st century are: freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom for the future generations to sustain their lives on this planet. Science, technology and innovation are central to successfully handling these challenges, but in some ways, they are also associated with causing them. They have led to the improvement of health, life expectancy and living standards, greater opportunities for information sharing and

environmental remediation in many places around the globe. But they are also linked, in complex ways, to the current unsustainable development trajectories and ruthless exploitation of nature that has led to climate change and disasters both natural and man-made.

Unacceptable levels of disparity have been created because research efforts are unevenly distributed in the world between different countries and regions. As Jevs Renold points out, it is only a few industrialised countries that conduct the greater part of the world's research. This is problematic for developing countries that do not have the means or the education base to get a large share in the global research effort. Quite inevitably most of the research effort is directed at solving problems and answering questions that are related to the needs of industrialised countries, where the research is conducted. Applied to developing countries, their solutions may not be appropriate. Also, the developing countries may not even have the level of competency of education, research and technology required to benefit from the knowledge developed elsewhere.

Linking Research to Societal Needs

Moreover, the way research endeavour has grown, it has led to the privileging of science, but is this the surest route to development or is there a need to also incorporate other routes? The universalistic scientific approach without the national, social and cultural dimensions being factored in, can lead to problematic and even tragic results. Therefore, scientific endeavours should be linked to social concerns. Scientists have to be aware of the societal impact of their work if their research and its applications have to bring collective well-being and equity in society and salvage the Earth's environment.

Science is only a part of a richer whole and spaces have to be created to bring scientists and different audiences together in democratic spaces so that expert knowledge can become comprehensible and more widespread. This would enable plural perspectives to emerge on the pros and cons of application and increase informed awareness among citizens. Without it, the growth of higher education will not necessarily reduce social and economic inequalities. As Vessuri has pointed out, in weaker countries with inadequate capacity, and unstable political and social institutions, higher education in science and technology may actually widen the gulf between the knowledgeable and the ignorant; between the better off who can afford education through its formal structures and those who cannot.

Therefore, universities cannot just do neutral science research. They must build a foundation of civic and democratic values to build social cohesion and purpose. They must create knowledge that not only leads to economic growth, but also to an understanding of how to overcome racial and ethnic tensions, dogmatism and religious extremism that often become concomitant to it because of its unevenness. This requires immediate attention to cultural diversity in higher education and research within the framework of globalisation. This does not mean merely increasing the population of the under-represented social groups in a campus population. It implies building knowledge systems that give an understanding of diverse values, policies, practices, traditions, resources and living knowledge systems outside the formal structures so that students and faculty, who have been excluded up to now, can become part of the knowledge resource and provide keys and solutions that have eluded thought and policy up to now.

Research and Teaching and Continuum:

Teaching and research have to be seen as a continuum. There is no real dichotomy between the two if the connection is seen not between research and teaching as between research and learning. Research can probably be seen as a process. It is a form of learning. At one end of the spectrum is information transfer that takes the form of lecturing or slide presentations and at the other end is enquiry into a problem by individuals or teams. Therefore, integrating research and learning is really about inculcating skills of enquiry and research into students. This is much more important educationally than providing students with content knowledge, which is now freely available in different media both print and electronic.

Emergence of Private Sector and its implications

The demand for education has led to the emergence of the private sector. The government itself realizes that it cannot meet all the financial requirements of the demand and tacitly recognizes the need to involve the private sector. Therefore it has allowed private education to enter the public sector universities and colleges through mechanisms such as self-financing courses that run concurrently with public-funded programs. Also self financing institutions are affiliated to public universities and they now far outnumber the public-funded colleges. Most of them are in the southern states of India. Many private deemed universities have emerged, which indicates that the government seeks private help and lacking a transparent policy or legislation, has taken this route to enable private institutions to flourish. Another group of private institutions in the non-university sector is run private and corporate initiatives like NIIT and APTEC. By law they cannot award degrees but

they attract students because of the quality and relevance of their programs and the training that they offer.

Historically, private institutions were established as not-for-profit institutions, like the universities. However, recent private institutions are inevitably profit seeking. Even when for profit institutions are not allowed, private institutions are usually for profit whatever may be their claim; and the regulatory mechanism is not able to deal with them. Further, most private institutions are not universities but specialized institutions that provide higher training in some specific fields of study. Research facility, especially in basic sciences is usually weak or often non-existent here, because of the large outlay it demands. However, in recent times, attempts to gain legitimacy have prompted them to show some research activity but it is largely cosmetic because it is difficult to find philanthropic sources of funding and these institutions have no access to public research funds. Therefore, whatever finances are required for research have to be cross-subsidized from teaching funds; this involves raising tuition fees, which are already high compared to public universities and therefore not a viable option. As the system matures, some amelioration may take place.

Right now, most private higher education institutions cater undergraduate demands, which satisfy the current needs of the labor market and bring immediate returns. However, high-end programs demand heavy financial outlay, which in turn means very high fees. Since there are no takers for this, either the quality gets diluted or private education gets confined to the popular courses of social sciences, economics, business management, and others.

The issue of quality becomes an urgent one for private institutions since they find it hard, if not impossible, to compete in terms of fees with public institutions. They also face problems of getting good teachers. Most of them have to rely on part-time teachers or the retired faculty from public universities. The dearth of faculty disturbs the teacher-student ratio that further dilutes the quality of teaching. Moreover, when teachers from public institutions moonlight, it creates tension between the two sectors with its own dire consequences. Public angst also rises against them because the lack of quality and high fees means that the employment returns do not match the individual investment and expectations.

At the policy level, expectations from private institutions are usually not met. Given that they have more flexibility, one would expect that they demonstrate increased diversification, both in terms of geographical reach and subjects taught, being more responsive to labor market demands. But, this does not happen because the very nature of private institutions compels them to gravitate to capital cities or major urban centres. The subjects get confined to those that are popular because of market demand. In fact, it is the public institutions that are geographically diverse because of the involvement of local and regional authorities. They also have the wherewithal to innovate if they could only get out of their straitjacket.

But whatever may be the constraints on private higher education, evidence seems to suggest that they are set to become a permanent feature on the higher education landscape. This is because higher education is likely to persist as an important priority in policy terms. The government may not be able to cope with the rising financial demands and expectations, and this will give a push to private higher

education. There will also be financial challenges on how to expand the supply of higher education but these will be in both the public and the private sectors. Unless there is a policy that will take into its ambit the concerns of both sectors, the likely response will be the strengthening of market mechanisms which can increase the unregulated growth of privatization in the system. The consequence will be the commercialization of higher education and the victims will be the stakeholders--teacher, students, and parents. Teachers will be underpaid, hired on a contractual basis, with their services being dispensed with during vacations. They will have career uncertainties. Students will not get quality education and parents will exorbitant fees in their quest for professional degrees for their wards. Therefore, it is vital to have a public policy with regard to private education in place to avoid the ills of commercialization. But this is a complex and controversial issue especially in countries where private institutions have remained minimal with ideological issues and public sentiment to grapple with.

Since private education usually gets a boost because of massification initially at least, it tends to focus on the absorption of unfulfilled demand but gradually these institutions tend to position themselves as high quality high cost alternatives to mass/low cost public higher education. In the course of time, they would not want to be seen as the second choice for those who do not get a place in the public sector institutions. In the post-massification phase, the demand absorption pattern can give way to niche institutions, which present alternatives to mass higher education rather than reinforcing it.

Linking education with Employment / Development- The gaps

Linking higher education to development has led to its being linked to employment. hence the unprecedented demand for employability after education and accountability of the education system in this area. No longer does the idea of knowledge for the sake of knowledge hold good. higher education is expected to lead to better employment and is seen as an investment that must yield returns.

School and Higher Education: However, India's education system at all levels is in crisis. An appraisal of India's performance towards millennium development goals,shows that while there has been progress in some areas, other vital areas that pertain to human resource development are lagging behind. These are Primary School enrolment (10.8% children between 6 to 10 years are not in school) ; youth literacy, child mortality and infant mortality rates; immunisation of children; access to sanitation; and child births in hospitals as opposed to at home. All these are essential indicators of human development and therefore have major implications for the economic development of a country.

The performance of School System and Participation of Deprived Sections;: While both health and education are vital, for our purposes let us look at education.and begin with school education because without it, good higher education is not possible. Prof. Dayanand Dongaonkar in an AIU occasional paper (2008) painted a grim picture of the state of school education both for the population in general and for the SCs and STs. According to the Population Census 2001, the literacy rate is 65.38 per cent indicating that about 35 per cent of the population is still illiterate. According to the Population Census 2011, the literacy rate jumped to 73 per cent. However, the dropout rate was 27 per cent at the primary level and 41 per cent at the elementary level. Further, at least13 per cent of students did not even

transit from primary to upper primary level. The dropout rates are even higher for SC, ST, OBC and Muslim populations. This is worrying because it throws children out of the education system without providing a viable alternative of remedial action or skill development.

School education therefore, obviously needs to be strengthened both for the general category and for the less privileged before better access can be provided in higher education. The approximate passing rate is about 45 per cent of those who appear in the 10th and 55 per cent of those who appear in the 12th. Therefore, a very large number of young students is being pushed out of the system with no alternative to turn to. Given the state of school education,students' capacity to cope with higher education becomes an important issue that has been completely overlooked. Also, with affirmative action policies in place and strata that were hitherto excluded from higher educaton now finding a place in classrooms, studies are needed on the challenges of diversity in classrooms, the pedagogical methodology required for effective teaching, and the actual current outcomes of access. Unless there are successful outcomes, mere access or enrolment is not enough as it does not benefit anyone.

Since the dropout at the school is, over 65 per cent, only a very small percentage of students have access to higher education. The dropout level and the failure rate even at the tertiary stage for those who do manage to enter college, indicate that without good school education there cannot be any meaningful access to higher education. Pratham, a leading NGO in education, has pointed out in the tenth annual status of Education Report (ASER 2014), released on 13 January, 2015 that for six years in a row, school enrolment in India was 96 per cent or above for the age group

of 6–14 years and hence India was close to universal enrolment in this age group. The out-of-school children have remained in this age cohort at 3.3 per cent for the last three years. However, the learning outcomes are a grave cause of concern. About 25 per cent of class 8 students could not read a class 2 text. Mathematics remains an area of concern. Such outcomes mean that majority of the workforce in India lacks education. Further, they have to contend with an out-dated system that involves rote learning rather than learning skills, understanding information and solving practical problems. This also impacts tertiary education.

A large number of students are left out of the system. A study by Dr. Sudhanshu Bhushan in 2004 divides the left-out students into three categories: left out at the school level, pre-college level, and college level. In all these areas combined, there are about 30 million students with little or no alternatives. They need to have a well-developed tier of vocational education that links with school education on the one hand and higher education on the other. Vocational education is available in the form of Polytechnics, Industrial Training Institutes and, more recently, Community Colleges. However, all of them suffer from lack of resources and poor implementation.

The NSSO 61st Round states that while 70 per cent of the population completed primary education in the 18–22 age group, only 6 per cent completed a diploma course; and 97 per cent of the workforce in the country, in the 15–60 age group has no technical education. The inability of the system to provide continuation of education leads to fewer students going to the next levels of education, resulting in an inability to meet the needs of the job market, lower employability and an

accumulation of people with low skills at the bottom of the job pyramid. Similar findings are seen in the Report on Condition of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector (2007). The average number of years of schooling of workers in the rural, unorganised non-agricultural sector was found to be 4.6 as compared to nine years in the organised sector, and for the unorganised agricultural sector it was 2.8. Mean years of schooling among casual workers in the unorganised non-agricultural sector was 3.5, thus denying workers access to jobs in the organised sector and confining them to casual labor

Unequal Access: Urban- Rural, SC/ST, Minority Community

Not only is the education system not performing, even access to it is very unevenly distributed. A more equitable distribution is needed both for regions and communities.Equity is sought in higher education in India through admissions done according to a rigid quota system of SCs, STs and OBCs. Thorat provided data on some other relevant factors besides caste and also pointed to the inter-linkages between caste, poverty, location, occupation, gender and religion. While there may be some changes in figures since 2003-2004 when Thorat did his study the essential problem remains the same. *Disparities are evident between rural and urban areas*. The gap being 7.76 per cent and 27.20 per cent, respectively. Hence, the GER in urban areas was four times higher than rural areas. *There are wide inter-State variations*. The GER at the aggregate level was 13 per cent. Now it is around 20-23% depending on varied statistics. However, the numbers hide the disparities. The GER varies from state to state ranging from about 39% to 3% .

Among religious groups the GER is the highest for Jains followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. A recent newpaper report shows that ab out 44% of Muslims are illiterate.

Sachar Committee Findings: Since Muslims are the largest religious minority of India and constitute the second-largest religious community after the Hindus, the government had set up the Sachar Committee in March 2005 to get authentic information about their social and economic status so that specific interventions, policies and programmes could be formulated.this is important because Muslims form about 14% in a population of 1.25 billion making them the largest minority and a huge number in absolute terms.

According to the Sachar Committee, only about 7 per cent of the Indian population over 20 years of age were graduates or diploma holders, but among the Muslims, the percentage was just 3.6, while only 0.4 per cent had technical education. The figures were somewhat similar to those for SC/ST. Technical education is particularly important for Muslims as a substantial numbers are engaged in artisanal activities in which technical training would improve their economic status. The gap in the Graduate Attainment Rate (GAR) between Muslims and 'all others' has widened from the 1970s onwards, and while the Muslims initially had a higher GAR than the SCs/STs, the gap has been closing, as the GAR for the SCs/STs have been increasing. There is a very real possibility, therefore of the SCs/STs overtaking the Muslims. This is already apparent in some states.

The Sachar Committee pointed out that one cause of this could be that there were very few government primary schools in Muslim areas, and even fewer higher-level educational institutions. From those that existed, most were of a very low quality, with high teacher-pupil ratios. This was because Muslims found it difficult to get jobs as teachers in schools. Those who did get the jobs were allegedly badly treated. The main cause for the educational backwardness was possibly poverty. The children were required to earn for the family from a very early age, and even those who did go to school, could not cope without tuitions or parental support, resulting in drop-outs after a few years of schooling. Because of their perception of being discriminated against in getting jobs, Muslim families did not perceive any major gains from education. Difficulty in getting government jobs, even with certificates and degrees were brought up repeatedly, says the Report. The situation in the private sector was worse.

The low participation in higher education probably led to fewer job opportunities. This was borne out by the data presented in the Sachar Committee Report which stated that the Muslim participation in salaried jobs was poor — just about 13 per cent and these were mainly in casual labour.Desai and Kulkarni argued that greater opportunities for employment due to reservations for SC/STs resulted in higher economic status, was motivating and enabled them to invest in their children's education. Since Muslims faced impediments in getting employment, they did not have the motivation to meet the challenge of improving their educational levels. The reason for the low participation of Muslims in both higher education and in jobs can, however, be traced to weak school education.

*Apart from religion, there are other factors that lead to inequity. For instance, gender impacts the access to higher education*and this is more pronounced in rural areas where female access to higher education is low. The gender disparity is aggravated by caste and religion. *Poverty also creates disparities*. In 1999–2000, the GER for the poor was 2.4 per cent as against 12.91 per cent for non-poor, when the average being 10.10 per cent. Similar disparities were seen for the poor in rural and urban areas.. Poverty is also tied into caste and location, i.e. rural and urban areas. Among the poor, the GER is the lowest for ST and SC followed by OBC and others. In rural areas, the GER is the lowest for ST — 1.11%, 1.35 per cent for SC, 1.13 per cent for OBC, and 1.66 per cent for others. A similar pattern follows for the poor in urban areas. Occupation is another factor, and can be clearly seen across occupation groups in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the GER was 5 per cent, being generally higher for self-employed households engaged in farm and non-farm economic activities compared to 1.41 per cent for those who worked as farm wage labour and 3 per cent in non-farm wage labour activities. Similarly in urban areas, the GER was much higher for those engaged in business, regular salaried and other activities compared to casual labour. *Occupation can be correlated to caste.* The GER is generally low for wage labour and particularly low for SC/ST compared to other groups. In short the GER is very low for both rural and urban poor and is aggravated by caste occupation.

All the above data shows that in spite of all the efforts that have been made, the access of SCs and STs to higher education is low. Caste factors are undoubtedly important but equally important are other factors like occupation, gender, poverty

and the disparity in the rural and urban areas of development. Caste also aggravates the deprivation caused by other factors.

Demand to Link Education with Employment

Linking of higher education with development has led to its being linked to employment. Hence the unprecedented demand that education must lead to jobs and that the system must be accountable. No longer does the idea of knowledge for the sake of knowledge hold good. higher education is expected to lead to better employment and is seen as an investment that must yield returns.

The strains on the existing system of public sector higher education are evident. The system is not conducive to providing skills necessary for employment and a majority of Indian graduates are actually unemployable. The vocational sector of education is woefully lacking and the academic sector is not delivering the way it should. The problems have assumed serious proportions and there is an extreme urgency to emphasize skill or career orientation into tertiary education, with linkages with theschool on the one hand and the academic stream on the other between which there must be points of convergence. Both these have not happened in India.

The Indian Labour Report 2007, by TeamLease Services states that while poverty is declining in India, inequality is rising and 57 per cent of Indian youth suffer from some form of skill deprivation. Corporate India cannot find skilled employees and much of the labour force is the ‘working poor’. Despite the large human resource available in the country, employability remains a key challenge. Pressures on employment arise from several factors including shift in the demographics of the population, the inability of an ailing agricultural sector to support labour and an

educational system that is not in sync with the requirements of business and industry. The inadequate interaction between the academics on the one hand and business and industry on the other results in a lack of focus on the skill development of individuals. The decision of most individuals to continue with education depends on their receiving adequate returns for the efforts made, and the current system does not enable them to do so, resulting in dropouts, under-trained and under-skilled labour. Globally, two approaches are followed to achieve better employability — educational reforms followed by a focus on lifelong learning opportunities.

Although the number of colleges and universities has mushroomed in the country, they lack the ability to impart career-oriented knowledge and training; curricula are outdated; there is little interaction between industry and educational institutes, and only about 10 per cent of the colleges show good academic achievement. The poor quality of colleges means that students passing out of them would earn low incomes or would be unable to find jobs relevant to the courses pursued by them. This is also one of the causes for the high levels of dropouts in higher education. When future prospects are not attractive, the better option appears to be to dropout, particularly for the deprived sections of society.

The Half Yearly edition of TeamLease Employment Outlook Report for October, 2014– March, 2015, also shows that employers need newer and more sophisticated skills while aspirations of candidates for cutting-edge careers was also increasing. The gap that separates the two consists of institutional inadequacies that empower candidates with technological and market-focused capabilities. Employers are also

placing more emphasis on soft skills and team and collaborative skills, together with technological tools that would lead an employee to fit into the organisation

Resistance to Skill Oriented Programms

There has been resistance among students to vocational education in India because of the perception that it is meant for those who are not good at academics. But with the opening up of the economy, the demand for specialised skills has gone up manifold. To meet this demand, the focus on vocational education has to be directed at the school level. It may be argued that vocational education was attempted earlier and the endeavour failed. It is necessary to analyse why this happened. One on-going reason is that if a student opts for a vocational subject at the school level, he or she has no opportunity to pursue this or an allied subject at the tertiary level. In colleges and universities, no credit is given for the vocational subject studied at the school level and so it actually becomes a disadvantage to do so. Also, at the time that vocationalisation was attempted in India, the economy did not have the capacity to absorb skilled human resources at different levels that it has now and the demand can only grow. Another drawback is that a person in the vocational stream has little or no opportunity to rejoin the academic stream at any point in his/her life without starting totally afresh. In other words, no credit is given for either the vocational knowledge or the work experience acquired.

While universities may prepare engineers, scientists, industrialists and social leaders of a country, a second-tier educational level is essential to produce the middle-level technologists who can manage and maintain the industrial infrastructure. Without such an educated and technical workforce, there can be no progress. Steps were taken during the early 1980s to introduce Application-oriented Courses (AOCs)

within the framework of the graduate courses and in the 1990s, several self-financing institutions sprang up with the approval of universities and State government to run job-oriented programmes in fields such as electronic, computer science, accountancy, food science, hospital and hotel management and others, which have been popular with students. The University Grants Commission also introduced vocational courses as part of the three-year bachelor's degree courses. The curriculum was restructured to integrate the vocational angle. Add-on courses oriented towards skill development were also allowed outside the timetable.

This appears to be confused thinking as academic colleges are not oriented towards vocational education and do not have the wherewithal to do so. Heads of academic educational institutions have difficulty in identifying industries for practical application work and funding agencies to finance the training. There is still a considerable gap in what the industry wants and colleges are able to provide. The country needs different levels at the tertiary education system so that a bouquet of options is available. This will bridge the gap between what the students are taught and the demands of the workforce. It will also provide opportunities for training to the large unskilled workforce available in India. According to an ILO report, 95 per cent of the Indian workforce has no marketable skills. This vast need for productive skills cannot be achieved only through the formal sector especially if it is as rigid as it tends to be in India. A parallel informal, flexible system is also required to identify and develop local talent for local needs.

Vocational and technical training as a means of empowerment is not a new idea. It has been recommended and tried much earlier but with limited success. The major

vocational institutions imparting training for middle-level technical personnel were polytechnics, industrial training institutes, junior technical schools, crafts and handicrafts schools, and other industrial and technical schools.

The Secondary Education Commission, in 1953, had recommended the setting up of technical schools, as separate institutes or as part of existing institutes, in industrial areas, which would work in collaboration with industries. When the Commission reviewed the situation in 1964–66, it found a shortfall of middle-level technical personnel and recommended an increase of part-time and full-time vocational and professional courses at the lower secondary level and after Class 12. It also reported that semi-skilled and skilled workers were primarily trained in the ITIs, while technicians were trained in polytechnic. A doubling of ITIs was recommended. Most importantly, it was recommended that the courses should allow for students to move to the academic stream. This, however, has never happened and there are no enabling structures or systems to date.

Skill Development Polytechnics

Polytechnics were set up to build up the technical education system and there are about three hundred institutes, which had an annual intake of around 30,000 students. About 70 per cent of the polytechnics were run by State governments and the rest by private agencies or autonomous bodies. The institutes have three-year and two-year full-time courses and sandwich courses. However, because the machinery for systematic evaluation of their work and progress was inadequate, there was little feedback on performance.

A National Expert Committee, Chaired by S.S. Kalbag, was set up in 1987 to appraise the status of community polytechnics in the country. It stated that for the balanced development of the country, human resource for all sectors, both the organised and the unorganised, had to be prepared by the technical education system. The All India Council for Technical Education recommended in as early as 1978 that a few select polytechnics that had shown initiative in promoting interaction with the rural community at large and had the necessary capacity to undertake rural development work, could be used as focal points to promote transfer of technology to the rural sector and make contributions to rural development. These polytechnics were designated as Community Polytechnics.

Community Polytechnics were to make a socioeconomic technical survey of adjoining villages to determine the needs of the people. They were then to develop human resource and training through a wide variety of trade courses, non-formal training programmes, and entrepreneurial development programmes. Further, they were to facilitate technology transfer to rural areas and provide technical support service to ensure the sustenance of rural technologies. They were to also assist local entrepreneurs in various aspects of enterprise building by disseminating information, creating awareness about various developmental schemes and by applying science and technology to find solutions for specific problems. These efforts however, met with limited success because of the inadequate implementation.

Skills Development Initiatives

Lacking effective skill development institutions, several private initiatives were being taken to meet the ever-expanding job requirements of the country. For example, Skills for Progress (SKIP), an all India association of private technical and vocational training institutions that collaborates with the Community Colleges for International Development (CCID), USA. CCID and SKIP have been working on programmes focussing on curriculum and workforce development, communications and electronic education resources. The programmes aim at capacity building of institutions to stay relevant to the changing needs of vocational and technical training so as to enhance employability of the students.

Skills Development Initiative of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) took the Skills Development Initiative in 2004, to provide social inclusiveness and bring the marginalised sections of society into the mainstream economy through empowerment by skill development. The main features of the initiative were its localised and need-based approach, practical hands-on experience, training and testing, accessibility, quality, cost-effectiveness and centralised certification.

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan had favoured a comprehensive National Skill Development Mission. As a result, a “Coordinated Action on Skill Development” with a three-tier institutional structure was established in 2008. It consisted of a PM’s National Council; National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB), and a National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). The Prime Minister’s National Council of Skill Development was to lay out the policy, the direction in the form of “Core Principles”, and a vision to create 500 million skilled people by 2022 through

skill systems having a high degree of inclusivity. Individual States also came up with plans and policies to face the challenge of skill development. The National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) under the aegis of the Planning Commission was to coordinate all these activities. The NSDC geared itself for preparing comprehensive action plans and activities that would promote Public Private Partnerships (PPP) models of financing skill development. The increasing emphasis on skill development and the government's seriousness on the subject were evident from the fact that in May 2014, a new Ministry was created for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The immediate mandate of the new Ministry was to ensure that India meets the target of skilling and up-skilling 500 million people in India by 2022. This is the first time that a separate ministry for skill development has been created.

Higher Education and Community Colleges : The Eleventh Five-Year Plan's Working Group on Higher Education also recommended the setting up of community colleges. The 12th Five Year Plan also accepted Community College, the model being the US. It was found that community colleges had the unique record of empowering the socially, economically and educationally backward sections of society during the past ten years wherever they have been started.

American community colleges are designed as comprehensive institutions combining liberal arts, vocational, technical and adult education. They have two-year duration courses and students accumulate credits that are transferable to colleges of higher education. A majority of students complete the first two years of junior college at such institutions. They have an open-door policy that enables almost anyone

seeking higher education or the enhancement of vocational and technical skills to enrol. Today, in the Indian system, barring open universities and schools, and those offering correspondence courses, this is difficult, if not impossible.

There are three types of courses that such colleges can offer which could suit Indian requirements:

- First, vocational and technical courses.
- Second, a two-year programme that prepares students for transfer to a three-year bachelor's degree in science, arts or commerce at a traditional college.
- Third, a remedial programme that brings students up to the required levels in reading, writing, mathematics and communication so that they can pursue further education. This is eminently suited to the Indian environment, with a large number of first-generation learners, who do not have home support for their studies and lag behind, frequently resulting in dropouts; those who have already dropped out of the education system, and could have even reverted to illiteracy; and adults who may not have had an opportunity to study.

Since these institutions would all have a general education component, students who originally joined a vocational or remedial course, have the opportunity to prepare for higher college courses, if they come up to the required standards. Courses could be designed to give diplomas, certificates, and, as in the case of the US, associate degrees, that could equal a certain number of credits, enabling entrance to traditional universities. These could be designed for skill upgradation in collaboration with industrial houses, or for the development of new skills, particularly in the 'sunrise industries'. Therefore, the philosophy of a community college is an institution that

provides transfer to higher education and prepares a student for an occupation. Being locally based and supported by the community, it is expected to link the aspirations of the community through an education that provides employment or higher education. It accommodates over-achievers and under-achievers.

To Conclude : Development of higher education in India reveals that problems are more than evident with only a few research universities at the tip while the bottom does not adequately fulfil the requirements of demand and so has little time to devote to relevance and quality. Skill formation is inadequate and too dysfunctional to meet the requirements of a growing and diversifying economy. While IITs and IIMs may be internationally competitive, they are only niche institutions which cater to a very small percentage of the student population. One of the fundamental causes of the malaise is, perhaps, what Prof. Altbach points out when he says that the mass of institutions of higher education have no clarity of vision about their purpose and aim. The universities are neither provided resources nor do they have the mandate to build a distinctive and innovative profile, which is essential for successful academic systems. So, they continue as an undifferentiated mass repetitively producing more of the same. If there was clarity on what different institutions are attempting to deliver, then their funding sources and patterns could also be diversified.

The accountability in the system is so diffuse and distributed that no one can be held responsible for delivery and outcome. This leads to mediocrity. It is only natural because most academic arrangements in India have been derived from British colonialism and were not meant to be effective or to encourage quality. The most

affected is undergraduate education as the affiliating system puts the undergraduate colleges under the universities with their highly bureaucratized and controlled environment. It impedes innovation as they have to follow the common centralized policies without any autonomy. The universities, in turn, receive their funding from the government. So while they have formal autonomy, they too are basically under the control of Central or State governments. Also, they have been politicized which makes them ideologically blinkered and contentious. All this has made issues of quality assurance very ambiguous.

Right now higher education seems to be stuck in a quagmire. It is clear that India is affected by global trends but is unable to deal with them. It has to meet the challenges, it has to systematically create an internationally competitive academic system. For this, it will have to rise above ideological biases and politics to reform its outmoded structures of academic governance and delivery systems and build a national consensus by a continuous Center-State dialogue on higher education both in the public and the private sectors. A tall order perhaps but without it, the Indian higher education system cannot deliver--neither nationally nor globally.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN STUDENTS - SPECIALLY DESIGNED PROGRAMS FOR THE PURPOSE

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Education is the backbone of any strong economy. It is one of the most potent mechanisms known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth. Education system of any nation bridges the gap between the people of different communities, castes, genders etc. It raises the productivity and competence of individuals and produces skilled manpower that is capable of leading economic development. Education is a process through which the intellectual, moral capacities, proper conduct and technical competency of individuals are developed to make them cultural members of their societies (Tuan, 2009 as cited in Dorleku, 2013).

Is the education system of India, especially the higher education system, successfully achieving these goals? The answer to this question needs careful deliberation. The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. Being driven by economic and demographic change, higher education in India is going to face unprecedented transformation in the coming decade as well. By 2020, India will be the world's third largest economy, with a correspondingly rapid growth in the size of its middle classes. Currently, over 50% of India's population is under 25 years old; by 2020 India will outpace China as the country with the largest tertiary-age population. Despite significant progress, Indian higher education is faced with numerous challenges, the most crucial of them being the rural-urban divide amongst the students enrolled for various higher education programmes.

While rural India is home to around 830 million people, about 370 million reside in towns and cities. In absolute numbers, India lives in its villages. Rural–urban disparity in economic and social development in India has led to disparities in educational resources and variations in students' achievement in different parts of the country. This suggests that bridging the rural–urban gap in educational resources could promote quality teaching and learning and thereby raise academic achievement of the students.

According to Gray, Griffin, and Nasta (2005), students come to school with unique sets of characteristics that include cultural backgrounds that may assist or impede academic performance. Students' background is another factor that influences their performance (Weber, 2000, as cited in Dorleku, 2013). Students from different backgrounds and cultures bring differing prior knowledge and resources to learning. The background of a student is a major contributing factor to the teaching-learning process and also serves as a springboard for further education (Adedeji & Owoeye, 2002).

There is no universally accepted definition for a rural area because different countries have different perceptions of what "rural" means (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). Kashaa (2012) simply describes rural areas as deprived, lacking many government developmental interventions such as potable water, electricity, good roads and school infrastructure to improve upon the lives of the people. In this sense a rural pocket may well exist within the limits of an urban centre. The rural–urban differences in levels of educational resources, quality of teachers and students, students' entry grades, geographical location, prestige of school, character of the community in which a school is located and other environmental factors seem to have some influence on student learning and performance.

In the case of India, this gap is not only witnessed in students coming from rural belts like villages and hamlets but also in the students who are products of government schools well within city limits. The reason for this can be traced to strict vigilance and quality control mechanism of private and public educational institutions as opposed to the lackadaisical approach of the ones being managed by state governments. There is no doubt that primary and high school education needs marked improvement to produce students who exhibit qualitative readiness for higher education. But this is not happening, especially in the case of students hailing from rural areas. Even in urban belts, the requisite level of readiness is not achieved by students from many government as well as some public and private schools.

When students from such widely different backgrounds and schooling enter the portals of a higher education institution, it becomes a challenge to expose them to the same level of academic experiences that can be easily understood and appreciated by them all. At a time when the world has become a veritable global village, such divides should not be a limiting factor for a student in order to realise his dreams and ambitions. Creating necessary conditions that will enable all the students to develop alike to their highest potential to aid national development requires bridging the gap that is the result of their rural and urban milieu and school education.

With specifically this aim in mind, many innovative programmes have been designed and are being run for the students at Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, since the college caters to both the city and the adjoining rural areas. The student body of the college is a composite of both public as well as government school pass-outs hailing from cities and villages of Punjab and nearby states. These programmes endeavour to bridge the gap between high school and higher education as well as reduce the differences arising out of diverse economic and intellectual backgrounds of the students. The present paper focuses on three models that are practical and have been tried at KMV yielding very encouraging results.

The first of these special programmes is the KMV Foundation Programme for all the new students coming to the college for the first time. This course has been designed to strengthen the intellectual foundation of all the new entrants in the college while bridging the gap between high school and higher education. It aims to enable the students to realize their position in the whole saga of time and space, to inculcate in them an appreciation of life, cultures and people across the globe while promoting an awareness of the human intellectual history so that they can carry forward the rich legacy of humanity as responsible and humane citizens of the world. The course curriculum traces the story of evolution of human intellect passing through the ancient, middle and modern ages. Students are provided a glimpse of all the stages that human thought has passed through to reach the present where solutions to the most complex of problems are available. Beginning from the dawn of humanity, each module of the course focuses on the important milestones in the growth of human intellect right from the Vedas, the Gita and the Bible, passing through historically defining moments of the Renaissance to the more recent struggle for the rights of women as well as other marginalized communities both in the East and the West. Special focus is laid on India's contribution as well as the making of modern India.

Student assessment and feedback form an important segment of this programme which is highly interactive and seeks student participation in the form of discussions, interactions and activity sessions. The presentations are made interesting with the use of technology while incorporating music, dance and movies to make the learning exciting and motivating while opening the world in front of the eyes of the students and filling in the gaps left behind by high school education. Being conducted successfully since 2011, this course is a favourite among all the students alike.

KMV School for Personality Development is another attempt by the college to develop a student as a multifaceted personality with academic excellence and commitment to an egalitarian society. India lives in her villages and to bridge the gap between rural Bharat and urban India, this programme is basically conducted for the benefit of students coming from the rural areas, who are economically backward, intelligent and meritorious but cannot afford high charges of personality development programmes available in the market. The three week power-packed personality development programme empowers the students by grooming their personalities, thus enabling them to face the challenges of the world as well as to leave a long-lasting positive impact on whomsoever they meet.

Primary focus is on helping the students overcome their fears and inhibitions through confidence building and attitude training. Lessons on virtually every aspect of life and work starting from observance of etiquettes and manners to inculcating self esteem and positive attitude, table manners, personal grooming, wardrobe planning and physical fitness form a major chunk of the course content. Every effort is made to train the students in skills requisite for the job market that include interview skills, group discussions, public speaking, telephonic conversation skills, effective body language, goal setting, time management, problem solving etc. Training is imparted through practical activity-based sessions in which students learn by doing. This programme is being conducted on the campus since 2009 and has enabled hundreds of students in recognizing their confident selves and emerging as winners in their desired fields.

Communication skills is another area that has witnessed increasing gap among rural and urban students. Students from underprivileged sections especially lack effective communication skills. KMV School of Communications and Foreign Languages is the third model on the college campus that provides the students the rare and unique opportunity to upgrade their communication skills in English, especially the spoken skills and learn foreign

languages of their choice. In the highly competitive globalised world that we inhabit today, effective communication skills, fluency of spoken English and knowledge of a foreign language can surely provide a cutting edge over others and brighten one's career prospects.

The School offers short-term proficiency certificate courses in foreign languages like French, Chinese, German, Spanish, Spoken English and Communication Skills as well as IELTS Training. The unique feature of foreign language classes is that these languages are taught by native speakers who are invited from abroad for the purpose. Since their inception in 2009, these classes have attracted an overwhelming response from the students.

The latest addition to these innovative and well-meaning efforts is the Centre for Leadership Development & Life-long Learning established for the holistic growth of KMV students. Focused on the challenges of professional world today and into the future, the classes and programs offered at the Centre help the students develop personally and professionally. It aims at bringing together learning across the spectrum and preparing the students to continue and evolve their lives & careers in a constantly changing workplace. The mission of the Centre, the first of its kind in this region, is to enable the students to be distinctive individuals and to emerge victorious in whatever endeavour of life they may take up.

The Center engages the students in creating and sustaining a cohesive culture of lifelong leadership development, training and education. It empowers students to become leaders by facilitating opportunities for purposeful learning, self-reflection and skill development. We believe in developing authentic, visionary, goal-driven, action-oriented and resilient student leaders who exhibit an awareness of self and others. The endeavour is to empower a community of student leaders to inspire them for positive change through multi-disciplinary dialogue and action. Programmes offered at the Centre include Personality Development, Yoga & Wellness, Self Defense Training, Health & Physical Fitness and Motivational Talks by some of the most renowned and expert speakers and trainers of the region.

All these programmes are being offered at minimal or no cost so that students from rural as well as underprivileged sections of the society can gain from them. Ample flexibility in timings is permitted so that the students can take advantage of their free classes and earn maximum advantage.

Students, whether hailing from urban or rural backgrounds or belonging to the privileged or disadvantaged segments of the society, are the resposibility of all the educators alike. No doubt much needs to be done at the level of primary and high school education which is a huge challenge and a time consuming process in itself. Meanwhile, the significant role of higher education institutions towards equity cannot be denied. We can neither give up on such students nor can we blame the schools alone. Concerted efforts through specially designed programmes need to be made in this direction if we are to gainfully utilise the strength of our energetic youth towards nation building. The huge rural-urban divide can be overcome by adopting a multi-pronged approach that comprises lifting up the standards of primary education, improving educational facilities and infrastructure in the villages as well as recognizing the vital role that higher education institutions have to play in the whole process. The collective and vigorous efforts of educationists and academicians across all levels of education in this direction are bound to bring about much needed substantial positive change in the educational scenario, giving us hope for the future.

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"ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN: IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT"

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"The most important class conflict in poor countries of the World today is not between labour and capital. Nor is it between foreign and national interests. It is between the rural classes and the urban classes". (Lipton)

Abstract

The Urban -Rural conflict in terms of socio-economic divides is a global phenomenon. The gravity of the matter, however, is deeply felt by the poor and less developing countries particularly by the African countries and the South East Asian nation states. India being one of those nation states cannot escape from the scourge of this conflict. The dawn of globalization and its subsequent policies has further aggravated the matter and extended the gap that splits the urban-rural worlds apart. In our context, the socio-economic analysis reveals the existence of such disparities between urban and rural areas that is so glaring and prominent a phenomenon. The University Education Commission (1948-49) headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan made such recommendations as to the establishment of rural universities and higher institutions in the rural areas, the role of which would reduce the gap of disparities and accelerate the pace and the process of urbanization. However, the concerned Govt. and the subsequent authorities failed to recognise the implications of the truth and took no notice of the vital importance of such recommendations which has resulted in the multiplication of the problems. There is therefore, a need to redefine the goals and objectives of higher institutions in our country, re-assessing their roles and re-frame the educational policies that would empower the higher educational institutions to act as a catalytic agent for comprehensive development of the nation, bridging the gap of disparities between urban and rural areas, a cleft that has been left so far un notice

Difficulty in striking a balance between rural and urban areas in social and economic development is a common policy dilemma in the whole world, especially among developing countries that "must balance the need for economic development against an inherent political agenda of reducing class inequalities" (Hannum, 1991).

The question of inequality and disparity is one of the most important concerns in education, as apparently intractable as it is morally critical. Disparity in education is a question at the heart of the endeavours of social theorists, sociologists, policy makers, the governments at different levels and other practitioners committed to equitable distributions of educational and other social goods and to education development as a moral, social and political goal. It is in this sense that the presentation of this issue bears its meaning.

The importance of education as a key catalyst for overall individual, community and national development (Sen, 2000, Bowles & Gintis, 1976) is an unquestioned assumption and most economists would probably agree that it is the human resources of a nation, not its capital or its natural resources, that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. Human resources.....as late Professor Frederick Harbison of Princeton University puts it constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop, the skills and knowledge of its people and effectively promote them in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

In this context, in 1996, the World Food Summit in Rome stressed the increasing access to education for the poor and members of the disadvantaged groups, including rural people, as a key to achieving poverty eradication, food security, durable peace and sustainable development (WFS, 1996). Underdeveloped education system in rural areas constrains rural people's ability to upgrade the skills of rural labours and the level of human capital. Without well-educated labour force, rural areas are unlikely to prosper (Han, 2000).

India remains predominantly rural. 'India lives in its villages' a proclamation made by the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and this statement still witnesses the truth of the Indian society to the present generation even after a lapse of more than six decades since we acclaimed freedom and liberty from foreign yoke. People residing in villages still represent the true image of Real India. 83.3 crores or 68.84% of the Indian population resides in rural areas as against 37.7 crores or 31.16 % of its counterpart that resides in urban areas.

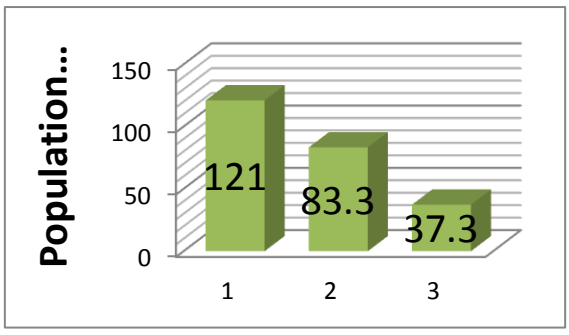

Figure 1: Total Population (India): Rural – Urban distribution

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RURAL INDIA

The growth and development of the rural societies keeps on trudging in a very slow pace and pains a bleak picture of our future prospect and negates all our tall claims and pride that India has entered into the club of world super power. The core contention of this claim is embedded in the analysis of the ground realities that reflects the rural societies.

Less than half of rural households are engaged in agriculture. Of the rural households, only 30% are engaged in cultivation. So the role of agriculture as the main source of livelihood in rural India is not at all that is meant to be.

Manual casual labour is the key source of rural livelihood. Over half of rural households, 51%, earn their livelihood by doing odd jobs. These could be in cultivation, during key agricultural seasons like the time of planting and harvesting, but they could as well be in any other activity, or the absence of work in rural areas can and does lead to migration to cities

A colossal three-fourths of rural Indians earn less than Rs. 5,000 per month. In 74.5% or rural households, the highest-earning member earns less than Rs.5, 000 per month. A household do have more than one earning member, and children are usually roped in to help earn something, so the total household income will be higher-but this “three-fourths” benchmark gives a measure of how poor most in rural India are.

Over a third of rural household own no land. A measure of the core of rural poverty is perceived from the fact that 38.3 % of households are landless and earn a majority of their income from manual casual labour. Coming just above them, but not very much better, are the 30 % of households that own un-irrigated land. Members of these households will also be ready, particularly during a period of drought, to migrate to towns for work.

The top of the pyramid is so narrow. If we add up all those households with jobs in the government, the public and the private sectors, as also those who run non-agricultural businesses and are registered with the government, then it comes to 12.6 %. This can be place next to the figure of 8.3 % of rural household in which the highest earning member bring home over Rs. 10,000 a month.

RURAL EDUCATION IN INDIA: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

The number of illiterates in India is estimated to be over 400 million of which 75% live in rural areas. Of the literate population, a significant proportion lack basic vocational skills.

POOR ALLOCATION OF FUNDS:

The need for increased expenditure on education has been talked about since the late sixties. The allocation of fund for education as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been steadily declining since the promulgation of the New Economic Policy. This investment has continued to decline in spite of the levy of the 2 percent Education Cess. The present level of investment is as low as 3.7 percent (Union budget 2011) which has been achieved 20 years ago. Out of this modest budget a big chunk of it goes to the payment of the teachers' salary and for the development of the elitist world-class institutes of higher learning, such as the IITs, IIMs and Medical Colleges that are located in urban areas and out of reach by the larger community and society. The left over crumbs is doled out for the rural education.

MULTI-GRADE AND MULTI-LEVEL CLASSES:

Multi-grade teaching is a fact of primary schooling in India. Most states are still struggling to achieve the national norm of two classrooms and two teachers, and a teacher pupil ratio of 1:40 in every school. With very few exceptions in a few states and metros, government schools in India continue to have two teachers for five classes. Rural schools are therefore largely multigrade multilevel classes. Such schools work under major constraints. These include uneven quality of classroom management and teaching-learning practices, lack of clarity about and monitoring of, learning outcomes, inadequate teaching-learning materials and learning practice for children. Consequently, the foundation knowledge and skills in language and mathematics are not well mastered, leading to unsatisfactory rates of transition and completion in primary school.

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION:

In some sense, the entire educational system in India is a bilingual system. No Indian student can ever hope to complete her/his school and college education without studying at least two languages. Also in most cases, a language that may or may not be the mother tongue of the student may be used as the medium of instruction. More than ever before, parents now prefer to have their children educated in English. While private regional medium schools have started shifting to English, Government elementary schools, continue to teach children in the regional language. The entire issue has been embroiled in politics. Since the majority of the elementary education in rural set up are imparting education through the medium of the mother tongue or regional language, they are unable to cope up and proceed to the secondary grade or pursue for higher study since at these levels the education are conducted via the English language as a means of instruction.

STATUS OF RURAL EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA:

It is true that the Government of India and the governments of the states and UTs have been striving for several decades to put in place adequate rural education

infrastructure, particularly for elementary schooling. However the widespread availability of pre-school and primary school facilities is outrun by the number of the relevant elementary school going age group. According to NUEPA (2004-05) there were 0.9 million rural elementary schools and 90% of these rural schools are government schools. Referring to the infrastructural status of the elementary school buildings DISE reports that the percentage distributions of rural elementary schools by type of building are pucca (71 percent), partially pucca (9 percent), kuccha (2 percent), tent (0.11 percent), and multiple type (9 percent). The average rural elementary school has three or less permanent classrooms (with 21 percent of schools having one or no classrooms). Sixty-five percent are in good condition; 24 percent are in need of minor repair; and 11 percent are in need of major repair.

The overwhelming majority of rural schools have some kind of drinking water facility: 50 percent have access to a hand pump; 5 percent have access to a well; 18 percent have access to tap water; and 7 percent have access to some other form of drinking water facility. But 17 percent of schools do not yet have access to drinking water facilities. While more than 80 percent of schools have some drinking water facility, not much is known about the adequacy of the water supply or the quality of the water supply.

The availability of toilets in rural schools is more limited with less than 45 percent of schools having a common facility. Less than 30 percent of schools have a girls' toilet. As with access to drinking water, having a toilet facility is no guarantee that it works or is utilized by the students. The ASER suggests that small proportions of the toilets in schools are not working or are reserved for the use of teachers.

CONTRACTUAL/PARA-TEACHERS:

A recent phenomenon in Indian education has been the recruitment of para-teachers hired on contract basis at lower pay scales compare to permanent and pensionable regular teachers. DISE reports that in 2004-05 there were a total of 346,824 Para-teachers contracted in rural elementary schools comprising 11 percent of the total teaching force in rural areas. The enormity of the backlog of untrained teachers in rural set up is yet another concern that has affected the dissemination of quality education in rural areas.

PUPIL- TEACHER RATIO (PTR):

Though the target norms of one teacher for every 40 children in primary and upper primary has been achieved as indicated by the survey for the current year 2004/05) which shows the average teacher- pupil ration is 1:39, yet significant disparities exist between and within states; the majority of schools have ratios well in excess of which 40.8 percent of rural schools have a PTR above 100 compared to 4 percent of urban schools. 122,483 rural primary schools have only one teacher (19 percent of the total) and 9312 rural primary schools have no teacher (1.5 percent of the total).

PRIMARY-UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOLS RATIO:

In rural areas there are on average 2.93 primary schools for upper primary school. About 85 percent of the rural population has an upper primary school within 3 km of habitation. While the national average is now below 3, in eight states the ration is below 2, in three states the ratio is above 3.5 of which Meghalaya is one of them. In West Bengal there are 5.3 primary schools for every upper primary school. The gap in access is therefore, wide in the larger in some states, particularly in West Bengal.

OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN (OOSC):

The survey estimates that the number of children in the age group 6-13 years is over 194 million of which 145.5 million are living in rural areas. The study estimated that less than 7 percent of children in this age group are out of school amounting to 13.5 million children of which 84 percent reside in rural areas.

NET ENROLMENT RATE (NER):

The study suggests that in the urban areas of India the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) has reached 96 percent while in the rural areas the Net Enrolment Rate is close to 92 percent.

SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION:

There has been considerable growth in the number of rural secondary schools and progress in secondary school enrolments over the last twenty years, but access to this level of provision is only a little over half that of elementary education. The current GER for secondary education in rural areas is 48 percent with girls 14 percentage points behind boys in their share of these enrolments.

The GER in HSE (20 percent) is less than half that of Secondary Education, equal to just a third of upper primary education (60 percent) and almost one fifth of primary education (97 percent).

HIGHER EDUCATION:

Higher education in India is undergoing a tremendous change and transformation as the country is able to perceive the significance and the meaningfulness inherent in Higher education as per the context of the contemporary society which demands, for this 21st century, a knowledge based society. Higher Education sector has witnessed an extensive increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. The sector boasts of 45 Central Universities of which 40 are under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, 318 State Universities, 185 State Private Universities, 129 Deemed Universities, 51 Institutions of National importance (established under Acts of Parliament) under MHRD (IITs-16, NITs-30 and IISERs-5) and four Institutions

(established under various State legislations). The number of colleges has also registered manifold increase of 74 times with just 500 in 1950 growing to 37,204, as on 31st March, 2013. Out of 677 universities 200 of them are located in rural areas and 54.3% of the colleges are located in rural area and 9.1% colleges are exclusively for girls.

Despite the fact that over the last few decades, there has been remarkable progress in Indian higher education system, there are a number of problems plaguing our system and one of them is that of inequalities, more specifically between rural and urban systems of higher education.

There are number of problems facing rural higher education. They include inadequate quality institutions, low Gross Enrolment Ratio, high level of dropouts, high cost of education, lack of equity, too much political intervention and bureaucratic inertia, absence of stringent enforcement measures, inadequate infrastructure and absence of competent and qualified faculty.

ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In the recent past, renewed attention has been paid to investment in education as a means of fulfilling economic growth, full employment and social cohesion. This renewed interest is related to the deep transformation of national economies and labour markets, as well as in rural areas where off-farm employment is playing a growing role.

In addition to the sectoral transfer of labour away from agriculture production, globalization has far-reaching implication for occupational profiles. Addressing this transformation will require increased investment in education and training in order to raise productivity levels and equip vulnerable rural communities to cope with such change. In a fast changing and unpredictable environment, fostering flexibility relies on solid general education and on broad vocational skills which can be updated and completed through lifelong learning pathways.

While the debate on knowledge and skills for rural development used to focus mainly on agriculture, the transformation of rural labour markets implies that delivery systems should become responsive to a wide range of economic activities such as agro-industries, craft production, tourism and other services. For this reason, the concept of a so-called Agricultural Education and Training (AET) system becomes largely obsolete. What is needed today is a much broader conception of knowledge and skills for rural development. Consequently, the concept of vocational qualifications for employment in the rural economy has much in common with the overall reflection on the future of technical and vocational education and training in a global economy. In this context, higher education assumes an important role to respond continuously to the new demand which is taking place during the rapid transformation of societies with regard to economic, cultural, social and other aspects.

1. ***Commitment of Higher Educational Institutions to participate in the developmental process of the Society*** :

Universities in particular and higher institutions of other importance for so long have remained monumental sites and the isolated castles, an outreach which is quite impossible from the ordinary life of the public and the society at large. Even though around 200 Universities in India are located in rural areas, these institutions could hardly have any relevance to the rural community as they could hardly be reached out by the students of the locality or the community where such institutions exist. These institutions are very hectic and deeply absorbed in the dissemination of knowledge and research work of high profile which least matter to the need and the welfare of the rural community. To establish the relevance and the meaningfulness of the existence of the higher educational institutions in the rural settings they have to re-commit themselves to establish a link to the needs of the environment that surrounds them and actively participate in the developmental process of the society. This role involves on occasion the expansion and the improvement of the relationship of the institution with society, but at other times it requires a profound revision of the mission of the higher education institutions so that its lost role can be recovered. Therefore, their commitments represent a kind of 'contract' between those institutions and its surroundings, which is one of the best ways to establish and carry out its real 'social life'.

2. ***Identification of the needs and demands of the rural community*** :

Higher educational institutions such as universities and other research-based institutions in rural areas should act as a hub for research activities that are linked with the problems and issues of rural life and their needs at the ground-level. This would help in bringing about a profound understanding and the identification of the needs and aspirations of the rural community. Identifying the potentialities of the specific rural environment and their natural endowments, would offer vital information as to what type of education and content of curriculum needs to be designed and offered, so that human resources developed in the rural setting are not uprooted, transferred and transplanted into the urban societies that are alienated to their environment.

3. Widening access to higher education:

In some countries growth has specifically been linked to addressing regional disparities. In India, for example, a strong emphasis has been laid on equity and expansion, which has aimed to include new groups in higher education and to reduce inequalities in gender, place of residence and socio-economic background. Far more people are now within easy travelling distance of a university, although this does not always mean that rural areas are well-served. In the most sparsely-populated areas, widening access also means changing the way in which courses are delivered, for example through distance learning – whether via traditional correspondence courses or on-line.

4. ***Improving the relevance of provision:***

Access is of little use without relevance. There are two aspects to this:

1. *Improving* the balance between labour market supply and demand. It is a challenge to balance the aspirations of individuals and the needs of the regional economy. Research based measures designed to stimulate the different categories of business innovation must be linked to teaching-based initiatives designed to enhance the regional skills base in its key business sectors.

2. Improving the relevance of programmes themselves. Higher education institutions are under pressure to increase regional impact, particularly in ways that generate new income streams.

5. ***Knowledge and Skills for rural development:***

1. Skills are central to improve employability and livelihood opportunities, reduce poverty, enhance productivity, and promote environmentally sustainable development. Coordinated efforts are needed to develop an integrated approach that improves access to relevant, good quality education and training to all rural women and men.

Rural livelihoods are becoming diversified. Agriculture is the main source of livelihoods, but an increasing share of rural households' income comes from non-farm activities. While some farmers are engaged in high-return agricultural business(for example, agri-business value chain activities and export-oriented cultivations), in developing countries like India is still engaged in low-productivity subsistence farming. Education and skills increase the ability to innovate and adopt new technologies in agriculture and enhance farmers' performance. Evidence from Asia suggests that better education and training increases the chances to find high-paying non-farm employment, whereas lack of education tends to limit options to agriculture or low-wage non-farm employment. Education and training is often of inadequate quality in rural areas. Teachers and trainers may be unqualified, equipment and technology out-dated and teaching and training methods ill-suited to rural contexts. In many aspects training systems tend to operate in isolation from the labour market and employers' needs. So training does not always match skills demand. The severity and persistence of the food crisis makes it crucial to increase productivity in agriculture, agri-business and other relevant rural industries, for which appropriate skills are indispensable. Environmental degradation and climate change present risks to rural livelihoods that need to be manage and mitigated. In this frame of reference the role of education, and in particular, the higher education sector in the context of rural socio-economic- upliftment requires a paradigm shift in its policies, methodology and strategies in

disseminating information and skills that would suit to the changing environments. Higher education should therefore:

2. Focus on providing affordable technical and vocational training by reducing financial entry barriers, and design interventions to include those most disadvantaged in accessing education and training.

3. Complement technical and vocational training with basic education (literacy and numeracy) and life skills (e.g. confidence building, health management, social awareness). This enables participants to benefit more from the technical and vocational training, and may be particularly relevant for those most marginalized.

4. Develop flexible, modular training. This will benefit those who cannot afford taking time off (for example, due to household or seasonal work) or paying for longer term training.

5. Facilitate access to training materials, toolkits and modern equipment and technology, and invest in teacher training, as well as better remuneration for teachers and trainers.

6. Consider outreach measures such as mobile or distance learning through information and communication technologies (ICTs). The latter requires, in particular expanding access to mobile phones, computers and education and training hardware and software, and investing in the ICT training of teachers and trainers.

7. Provide career guidance and practical labour market information (e.g. in schools' training facilities and community associations) to enable rural youth to make informed choices about their education, training and employment in the rural context.

8. Consider linking formal with non-formal training, or combining institution-based education with enterprise-based learning.

9. Combine technical and entrepreneurship training, for example through incorporating business knowledge and skills in formal secondary and tertiary education or through developing innovative community-based training programmes.

10. Complement entrepreneurship training by facilitating rural entrepreneurs' access to micro-credit schemes, business development services and market information. This may require expanding the scope of these services and ensuring that the right legal framework is in place.

11. Promote apprenticeship systems as a viable option for young women and men to learn a trade. Apprenticeships are a practical and usually cost-effective way to develop skills, especially for those who do not meet the entry requirements for formal training.

12. Upgrade traditional and informal apprenticeship systems to offer higher quality training and facilitate technological advances and innovations, depending on the local context.

There is a need therefore for the higher education to focus its aim at deepening the understanding of how teaching and learning for agriculture and rural livelihoods takes place in rural communities, and what kind of knowledge and skills are communicated to rural youth and rural population. Particular attention is to be given to the views of young people on the education and training they receive, how they apprise knowledge and skills, the way gender influences the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and their aspirations and perceptions of agriculture and rural livelihoods. Higher education is expected to contribute to adapting and scaling up innovative teaching and learning methodologies, as well as to new ways of promoting youth engagement in agriculture and off-farm income generating activities. It is also expected to help reinforce and stimulate policy dialogue on the role of education for rural development, and to dismantle the prevailing negative image of the agricultural sector – one of the reasons young people often view farming as a last resort occupation.

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Concept of Social Laboratory

A Village – College Interface

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Introduction

"What Higher Education – particularly colleges which are located nearer to rural areas of district towns and blocks can do through education and skill development among youth and problem solving research by teachers for development of rural areas", is a challenge today, says the preamble to the conference titled "Higher Education for bridging the gap between Rural and Urban India." The need to bring Higher education institutions close to roots and teach what is important to masses is the explicit goal of higher education. But in reality this idea has, by and large, remained only in books, real education neither came close to rural India nor did it ever tried successfully to bridge the gap between rural and urban India. The new education policy (draft) has also emphasized on this objective.

An institution with a difference

A College in Mysuru, Karnataka State has experimented with students engagement with the society, since a decade now. The students of this college, are invited to take part in activities connected with the main stream society as a supplement to their studies. About 100 areas are identified for the purpose, and the students are asked to involve themselves in various kinds of activities under the guidance of the teachers. Those areas are carefully selected before being offered to students. They range from National Cadet Corps to Display Boards, Sports to College Ambience, Photography to literacy. These are grouped under four major heads as supporting systems. Student support, Administration support, Institutional support and Curricular support. There are about (average) twenty five different areas (fora) under each of them. Its leadership comes through a process of elected representatives, called Student Parliament. It is an all inclusive model, called ASIC, in short form. ASIC is conceived from Institutional Social Responsibility (In-So-Re) and delivered through My-So-Re i.e. My Social Responsibility – of each individual member associated with the institution.

The Village – College Interface

As a part of social responsibility, the college has created a social lab, twenty kms. away from the college. It is a village called Varakodu. The whole village is considered as the

laboratory. It is a place to test and experience. Not to simulate and experience virtually. Ideally, every bit of learning undertaken by a student is fit to be experimented here, be it Humanities, Management or Science ... everything.

Extension Service Crystalised

Under National Service Scheme, village adaption is a mandatory exercise. Many a time it is done only on papers or for limited purpose of conducting the annual camp there. This college also went there with the same purpose in mind; but then got involved so intensively that it was not possible for it to leave it and come. That is how the relationship was established.

You do a PURA – Kalam

Dr. Abdul Kalam who took part in our Silver Jubilee programme in 2008 suggested to us to start a PURA (Providing Urban Amenities to Rural Areas). He said "*I would suggest SBRR Mahajana College to consider undertaking a PURA project covering 20 villages involving around 50,000 population in the neighbourhood of Mysore as a Silver Jubilee mission.*" The college went about looking out for a place to implement the great man's ideas. Indeed, a village was spotted 15 kms from Mysore. A special camp was conducted there and a plan was drawn out to implement PURA. There was enthusiasm, very intense, and a lot of work progressed. The projects included assisting the primary school with computers, books and furniture. A village monitoring committee was also formed. Camps for children, programs for women, talks, counselling, medical checkup, … many empowerment programs were conducted there. But gradually the interest generated receded. People got detached and students became disillusioned. PURA made its exit from that village.

Varakodu, the New Destination

The New destination came under the reckoning, but this time with a difference. Once ruled by the Chalukyas and Gangas, this village Varakodu has a history of 1000 years. A vandalized Vishnu Temple and huge tank stands against the time to reveal the old glory of the village. The village has a population of 2000 members belonging to 900 families. It is a dry place with no perennial irrigation facilities. There is one primary and secondary school in this village. An asphalted tar road runs in the middle of the village and connects it to the city of Mysuru. There are one or two recently built temples in the village. But the difference is about the leadership. The people have ensured that politics and political parties do not interfere in the developmental interests of the village. Incidentally it belongs to the Chief Ministers' constituency.

We Came, We Saw, We…

The place must have been conquered by the ruling kings of different dynasties. The Masti gallu, Veera gallu, the Varadaraj temple, the tank, they all speak history. But the college wanted to record another kind of victory over the village: Victory of humanity.

The Community College, secured from University Grants Commission gave the college right support to establish a foothold in the village. It made the village its practical field and brought it under the open museums concept. For, every alternative street had something to do with a monument or a relic or some kind of trace connecting it to its History. As a result an open museum emerged. NSS also wanted a village for its activities under village adaption scheme. The college wanted a stage to perform its Institutional Responsibility My-So-Re i.e. My Social Responsibility by Students and staff.

College signed a MoU

Village leaders came to the college on an invitation to sign a MoU. The interface meeting was held after they were publicly honoured in the Weekly Assembly. The former co-ordinator of NSS of University of Mysore and a local industrialist witnessed the event. The President of the Grama Panchayat and the college Principal signed the document. An eleven point agenda highlighting the programmes emerged. They are summed up with the following points.

1. **Practical work**

   The students enrolled under Community College will make the village a destination to visit to test their knowledge against the historical relics abundantly available in the village. This will constitute their practical work related to Museology.

2. **Over-all development**

   Students of the Community College to be involved in the restoration work of the historical temple and for the over-all development of the *grama*. There will be an added agenda of development associated with this MoU. The historical sites are to be restored by inviting proper guidance from the archeological department. This is a tedious task, but the priceless evidences accessible by researchers and students are many. Thus a blue print for development is drawnout.

3. **Tourist destination**

   The entire village is a open museum or atleast very close to be called so. The village boasts of a 1000 years history involving Chalkuyas and Ganga Dynasty. The temples, sculptures, the tank, folklore etc featuring the village will make it a preferred destination for tourists. It has every potential to make it big provided it is properly promoted in those lines.

4. **NSS Units**

   NSS has a concept of village adaption, to carry out their special activities and annual camps. This village is most suited for the purpose.

5. **Visit to the College**

   The villagers are invited for an exposure tour to the college, especially the children from the village school. This has been done in several rounds, already, and the response is very good.

6. **Socio-economic survey**

   The village is a treasure house of varied information. It provides a typical example for a village trying to retain its heritage status but develop socially and economically. Therefore a data bank over these aspects from the researchers point of view is very important. The data will be used as a repository of vital information which can come to multiple use, particularly to execute the developmental plans.

7. **Women, children, the aged and the minorities**

   The data thus secured will be subjected to analysis to throw special light on women, children, minorities etc.

8. **Blue print for overall development**

   The data will be used to prepare a blue print for development of the village. It will help while approaching agencies and departments for funds and assistance.

9. **Strengthen panchayath system**

   Attempt will be made to consolidate the Panchayath system in the village. Democratic participation of all will be ensured through monitoring bodies constituted by villagers themselves.

10. **Introduce Self Help**

    It is planned to introduce Self Help and Social Business concepts in the village on an experimental basis. Generating economic activities through Social Business will be the thrust area of the MoU.

11. **Rural Arts, Carnival, traditional festivals**

    The village has been witnessing slow disappearance of very vital art forms and folklore. An attempt to revive them and revitalize village festivals and traditional carnivals will be made through this MoU.

Conclusion

A college can become a catalyst of development in the village. That is the ultimate aim of this agreement and that is the meaning of this Memorandum of understanding. All the subthemes enlisted for deliberation in the conference are the subject matter in this village-college interface. They are:

(i) Improving knowledge and skills among students to contribute to rural development

(ii) Improving Quality of primary and secondary education, and

(iii) Carrying out problem solving research for development of rural areas.

Dr. Kalam dreamt of empowering youth and developing society. SBRR Mahajana First Grade College aims to realize this dream!

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