



## Envisaging Higher Education Institutions for Social Change

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### ABSTRACT

*University Grants Commission (UGC) in its Policy Statement in 1977 has clearly mentioned that, 'If the University system has to discharge adequately its responsibilities to the entire educational system and to the society as a whole, it must assume Extension as the third important responsibility and give it the same status as Research and Teaching. This is a new extremely significant area, which should be developed on the basis of high priority. In the IXth plan guidelines, University Grants Commission, in Chapter IV, deals with 'The University and Social Change'. In this chapter It has been mentioned that the University has a crucial role to play in promoting Social Change. It must make an impact on the community, if it is a to retain its legitimacy and gain public support. Universities have to find solutions to the Nation's problems. It is necessary for them to address themselves to the issues whether these be a social as women, health or welfare, or scientific and technological, such as transfer of technology and appropriate technology for the community.*

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### Introduction

India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (1947), in his official convocation address at Allahabad University, urged the university to "emphasize the standards of thought and action that constitute individuals and nations." He further explained: The Board of Education (1964-65) sees the role of the university as:

"The image of the university as a closed community of scholars who create and disseminate knowledge and continue their own type is over. Community lives are virtually

connected and mutually enriched. The Radharishnan Higher Education Commission (1948) states: Not as big as months of freely packed change. Academic issues are taking on new forms. We now have a broader understanding of the duties and responsibilities of universities.

## **Social Change**

The objectives of Higher Education are Teaching, Research and Extension, It means Extension is a third dimension of Higher Education, besides Teaching and Research. In the report on General Education (1961), -University Grants Commission New Delhi, published extracts from the observation of the University Education commission (1948-49), which stated the function of General Education; “Higher Education should not be looked upon as the acquiring of certain conventional accomplishments, which marks one as a member of the education class. It should be well-proportioned preparation for effective living in various circumstances and relationships. The interests and opportunities and demands of life are not limited to any few subjects one may elect to study. They cover the entire range of nature and of society. That is the best liberal education, which best enables one to life a full life, usually including an experience of mastery in some specialised field”. (1961:33)

After independence in 1947, some of the inadequacies of Higher Education become more and more accentuated. Some changed their character. With Independence came the conception and reality of democratic Government and Planning for a better life for our people. The University Education Commission (1948-49) rightly called for a “radical change of spirit” in our Universities to enable the Nation to meet the challenges and opportunities involved in her efforts to develop her materially and spiritually.

University Grants Commission (UGC) in its Policy Statement in 1977 has clearly mentioned that, ‘If the University system has to discharge adequately its responsibilities to the entire educational system and to the society as a whole, it must assume Extension as the third important responsibility and give it the same status as Research and Teaching. This is a new extremely significant area, which should be developed on the basis of high priority. As can be easily imagined, the extension programmes of the University system will fall into two broad categories, namely.....

### **i. Extension Services to Schools and Colleges**

The University should work with the colleges, which in turn, should work with the secondary and elementary schools in their neighbourhood and help them to improve standards by in-service Education to teachers, sharing of facilities, provision of enrichment programme for students and discovery and cultivation of talent.

The development of a proper Research and Development programme for the education system is also a special responsibility of the Universities.

### **ii. Extension Services to the Community**

The University system also has a great responsibility to the society as a whole. All Universities and colleges should develop close relationship of mutual services and support with their local communities. All students and teachers must be involved in such programmes as an integral part of their education. The National Service Scheme (NSS) programme should be expanded and improved, ultimately to cover all student programmes should be to implement a spirit of co-operation and social commitment inter-related to moral development. It should be the obligation to the teaching community to give extension lectures to interpret recent trends in their fields, to the community, to create scientific awareness to participate in adult education and workers’ education programme etc. Universities can also help in the preparation of developmental projects for the community around them including the rural

community. Such involvement will also help in bringing greater relevance into the courses at the under-graduate and the post-graduate levels and into the research programmes.

Taking into consideration this policy, many Universities became strongly committed for the welfare of their societies and student community. Soon 'Extension' or Service to the Community, became a recognised function of Universities.

In the IXth plan guidelines, University Grants Commission, in Chapter IV, deals with 'The University and Social Change'. In this chapter It has been mentioned that the University has a crucial role to play in promoting Social Change. It must make an impact on the community, if it is to retain its legitimacy and gain public support. Universities have to find solutions to the Nation's problems. It is necessary for them to address themselves to the issues whether these be a social as women, health or welfare, or scientific and technological, such as transfer of technology and appropriate technology for the community.

i. In the UGC IXth plan guideline, their approaches are envisaged; Continuing education programmes should be targeted for those who have had the benefit of University Education but need to return, either for updating knowledge or skills or acquiring new skills. These courses could be short-term or offered as a certificate/diploma. They could be for those already in services or for the unemployed to improve their employability. This is going to be a major activity of the universities necessitated by the changes taking place in our economy.

ii. Extension education should be programmes of training of a short-term nature, aimed at various groups who would not be normally entrants in the University System. These courses could be skill based, e.g., skills for income generation, entrepreneurship development, or base on social issues such as para legal training, or for grass root level workers/activist, and family life education.

iii. Community outreach activities would include the responsibility to reach out to society, whether it is specific disadvantaged groups e.g. bonded labour, child workers, street children, or organisations for the disadvantaged such as primary health centre of municipal/Zilla parishad schools; or a geographical community such as urban slums or village.

In the IXth plan, the concept of Adult, Continuing Education & Extension is being redefined, as above, so that Universities emerged with the new role in the twenty first century for promoting social change and development to impact on the Nation's problems even if in their own neighbourhood.

Universities today have an obligation and responsibility to contribute to the overall development of the Nation by improving the quality of life of its people. The Universities and colleges have been primarily functioning as center for the transmission of knowledge and generation of new knowledge.

There are several major development issues for which Universities need teaching, research and more importantly developing a methodology for focusing upon the following issues with a view to determine their impact on social change and overall development-

- i. Adult illiteracy, high dropout from schools and non-enrolment in primary schools.
- ii. Bonded labour, child labour and Street children.
- iii. Health, poor nutrition, sanitation potable water and problems of environment i.e. deforestation pollution etc.
- iv. Gender equality

- v. Family Life Education, population education, drugs, AIDS, addiction.
- vi. Human Rights education and activism to achieve it.
- vii. Communal Harmony and development of cohesive society in diversity.
- viii. Increasing income and skills for employment and self-employment.
- ix. Transfer of technology and application of appropriate technology.

In the chapter IV, (UGC IXth plan guideline) it is further mentioned that education for the masses should be a factor of social change and technological progress while continuing to transmit a cultural heritage. It must be closely linked to the preparation for an employment market where competition is ever more ruthless. Training with more diversified and specialised skills obsolete before they can be fully mastered.

The objective of restructuring a curriculum has to be viewed as curriculum for change, instead of changing curriculum. It is important for Universities in India to capture the vision of continuing education as an essential aspect of higher education and outreach work should become involved in the broader struggles within society. There is a need to take science to people, remove superstitions, work on issues of environment, participate in developing communal harmony and take up a host of local issues.

With the follow-up of this, In Xth plan, Profile of Higher Education in India, University Grants Commission has advocated the promotion and strengthening of outreach activities. University Grants Commission contemplates that the colleges and Universities would continue to play a dominating role in social change, through outreach activities. The University and Colleges need to be used as focal points of activities to spread and sustain the torch of life-long learning. In the thrust direction of this plan University Grants Commission has mentioned that outreach activities like Value Education, Positive Health, Life Skills, mind and consciousness studies need to be supported from the profile of this plan. It is apparent that the principle of passing of the benefit of conventional education to the society will contribute during this plan period. The society is a very important bridge for bringing higher education to a level of utility. The society also looks for life-long learning.

While we considered University Grants Commission's policies, IXth and Xth Five-Year Plan Profiles, and Maharashtra University Act, 1994, we could understand that Universities are a playing very important role in social change and Extension Programmes.

The University Grants Commission has stressed the Area based Community Approach from the very beginning. University Grants Commission has stated that, "Community education as a programme as well as approach is intended to help sustain the linkage with all sectors of the community, consisting of all age-groups. It is important to adopt and integrated approach of treating the community as a composite social structure in which all its segments complement each other. It aims, firstly, to extend knowledge and other institutional resources to the community and secondly, to gain insights from contacts between knowledge and socio-cultural realities with a view to reflecting these in the entire curricular system of higher education including teaching and research. It is a two-way process between the experts and the people, an intellectual intervention in the community having problems which need to be over come through an education process. It is that education which helps students to face Life and challenges and creates an ambience for a learning society".

The approach during the XIth plan would be not only to continue the ongoing programmes initiated during the earlier five year plans but also to consolidate them and expand them to cover new Universities and select colleges. UGC reformulated this

programme as lifelong learning programme. There is a specific focus mentioned in XIth Plan guideline for lifelong learning. UGC mentioned main programme and activities in its XIth Plan guideline as

1. Teaching, Training and Research.
2. Lifelong Learning Programmes
3. Extension (including counselling of students and non-students youth, career guidance, and placement assistance)
4. Publication (including e-content development).
5. Population Education.

Universities have powerful potential as a change agent for students, teachers and community. University provides opportunities for personality development in healthy environment. In the XIth plan period Saakshar Bharat Programme was launched. It covers all adults in the age group of 15 and above. The scheme has not only been relieved of the shortcomings noted in its preceding editions, but also, several new features added to it. Basic Literacy, Post literacy and Continuing Education programmes, will now form a continuum, rather than sequential segments. Besides, the volunteer based mass campaign approach, provision made for alternative approaches to adult education. Adult Education Centres are set up to coordinate and manage all programmes within their territorial jurisdiction. State Government, as against the districts in the earlier versions, and Panchyati Raj institutions along with communities, will be valued stakeholders. XIIth Five Year Plan (2012-17) Guideline on LLL & Extension Education: The 12th Five Year Plan too reiterated the need for a paradigm shift from basic literacy to lifelong learning, contextualizing this need in terms of fast changing technologies, service sector and knowledge-based competitive economy. The document emphasized a LLL perspective within all learning activities that may be undertaken by an individual throughout his/her life along life-wide sectors professionally– whether in formal, non-formal and informal settings for the up-gradation and improvement of one's knowledge, skills and competence in spheres like personal, civic, social and economic including employment.

XIIth Five Year Plan (2017-2022): Future. With the Planning Commission dissolved, no more formal plans are made for the economy, but Five-Year Defense Plans continue to be made. The latest is 2017–2022. There will be no Thirteenth Five-Year Plan. There is no separate budge for either adult education or lifelong learning programmes.

## **Conclusion**

An efficient support system by government and other stakeholders is needed to ensure sustainable financial, infrastructural, and legal framework for better research and innovation and state-of-the-art institutionalization of LLL in Indian education system. There is a fresh need to review existing regulatory frameworks in education by governments, regulatory bodies, institutional and professional bodies and other influential stakeholders. We need to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in existing regulations, policies and budgetary provisions for education, particularly in the context of LLL. Investment in education, and particularly in LLL must be guided by effective welfarism as against unproductive and inefficient welfarism in order to cater to social justice and to the needs of personal fulfillment, professional growth and development of social and private entrepreneurship.

Ensuring universalisation of basic literacy and going further for adult and lifelong education as a matter of right can be seen as part of the struggle for citizenship. Full

citizenship depends on recognizing not only the rights embedded within it but the catalyzing role of education in accessing a number of other fundamental rights through it. Only a shared vision for transformation and the highest level of importance and urgency accorded to literacy and education can make this possible. Working relentlessly to see that every person is literate and is enabled pursuit of knowledge and education throughout her life is a non-negotiable. Adult and lifelong continuing education has to be brought to the centre stage of India's democracy – we must ensure that, this is where it remains.

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