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BUILDING AGILE AND EVOLVING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Higher education plays a great role in solving complex social and ecological problems. Globalisations of education, aggrandised competition, emergence of new technologies and increasing emphasis on quality assurance, have forced educational institutions to change. Universities are also expected to become catalysts of change in society. In view of ever-changing needs and challenges of society, educational institutions need to evolve continuously and they should not become complacent. These institutions have to get rid of delusions of regressive metal models. The higher education institutions should strive towards their vision by building both human capital and social infrastructure. Trust is the most important element here and hierarchical structures are barriers to change. There is therefore a dire need for institutes to become open, agile, dynamic and networked.

PRELUDE

According to the World Bank Report, India after US and China stands at third place in the world in terms of higher education system (Reddy, and Vaidyanathan, 2019). On the other side, India has the largest youth population aged between 15-24 years. However, India ranks low in terms of spending per student and per teacher. Per capita nominal GDP in 2018-19 was INR 142,719, which is about one-fifth of world's average (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2019). There is significant role of education in poverty alleviation. There are about 39000 colleges and 900 universities in India. The Government of India has opened new IITs, NITs and IIMs and at present there are 23 IITs, 31 NITs and 20 IIMs in the country. The government of India has recently passed the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, to improve the quality and access of medical education so as to provide better healthcare services across all parts of the country including rural and remote areas.

Higher education plays a great role in solving complex social and ecological problems. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former president of the country, emphasised that higher education institutes must stress upon curiosity, design thinking, entrepreneurship, use of technology and inspiring leadership. The education process is neither individualistic nor static; it is holistic in nature as it stresses upon holistic transformation. Another important aspect of education is that it is constantly evolving in nature. We need to have such an education system that provides equal opportunities for all. The goal of education system is not only academic superiority but also for making our youth relevant and capable of generating knowledge.

We are now in the fourth phase of the industrial revolution. The first industrial revolution that came in 1760 invented technologies like the steam engine and other manufacturing technologies that led to establishment of factories. The second revolution that came after one century introduced steel, electricity, oil and IC engines. The third revolution that came after another hundred years introduced technologies like computers, microprocessors and the internet. The fourth phase of technology that has introduced artificial intelligence and 3D printing has come at a much faster pace as compared to previous three phases. It would have a great social impact. Many people may find themselves irrelevant and new jobs would demand new knowledge and new skill sets (Schulze, E., 2009).

There is increasing pressure on higher education institutes. Globalisations of education, aggrandised competition, emergence of new technologies and increasing emphasis on quality assurance have forced educational institutions to change. It requires new forms of governance and acquiring new skill sets (Taylor, 2006). The decrease in ministerial funding that used to come in the form of annuity would cause greater competition among institutes. The institutions will have to bring entrepreneurial change to increase their ability to raise funds. There needs to be in place both comparison and collaboration with best universities of the world. (Rebora and Turri, 2010).

Indian higher education system faces two distinct challenges. On one side, it strives for excellence and on the other side it has to ensure inclusion so that education system has far reaching impact on the development of society. On one side, there are centrally funded universities and institutes. Though, they are doing well in terms of academic excellence, yet their number is insufficient to spread education among masses. On the other side, there are state-funded universities that are penetrated deep within the local communities. But their delivery at present is not up to the mark. They are starved in terms of shortage of funds, faculty and infrastructure. More than seventy per cent students in higher education have been enrolled in state colleges and universities (Reddy, and Vaidyanathan, 2019).

Besides teaching, research and institute-building have also been stressed upon as important assignments of the faculty. Teachers need to bring parity between these three activities. Unfortunately, none of the Indian universities have been placed among top ranked universities of the world. Only recently, IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi and IISc Bangalore have been ranked in world's top 200 universities. A National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF) has been introduced so that universities can compete with one another on quality band. New benchmarks and standards have been earmarked since there is increasing emphasis on improving quality of education.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Change management refers to the process of continuous renewal of organisation in terms of direction, abilities and structure in response to dynamic internal and external

environment (Moran and Brightman, 2001). Change – both at operational and strategic levels – is a permanent characteristic of organisational life (Burnes, 2004). It has also been witnessed that more than 70 percent change initiatives fail due to lack of understanding about the framework of change process (Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2004). Change can either be incremental and continuous or discontinuous. Discontinuous change involves speedy moves in strategy, culture or structure or in all three (senior, 2002).

Henkel (2000) has emphasised on understanding past history and academic identities of the institutes. There are multiple cultures within organisations and these cultural configurations need to be understood with a view to conceptualise institutions (Trowler, 1998). McCaffery (2004) has argued against the vertical leadership and stated that values are voluntarily chosen and these can't be imposed upon people. Scott (2004) has remarked that culture depends upon the good practice of senior leadership of an institution. Robertson et al. (2009) highlighted that it requires a lot of hard work, sophistication and collegiality over a long period to build an educational institute. Marshall and Massy (2010) has emphasised about establishing a sense of urgency for institutions to change. However, it will not be possible until faculty and staff see the change as relevant, desirable, clear and feasible (Scott, 2004). Watson (2010) argues, "In my opinion, 'managing the future' on the part of any university senior management team involves: understanding the present and the past condition of your institution, getting the resources right, so that there is a zone of freedom of action in which to operate, understanding the terms of trade of the business, especially its peculiar competitively cooperative nature, helping to identify a positive direction of travel for the institution, engaging progressively with that direction of travel (through what Peter Singer describes as an 'ethical journey') and optimistically trusting the instincts of the academic community (of students as well as staff) operating at its best".

Bureaucratic structure is one of the biggest impediments to change (Mintzberg, 1983). The structure with vertical leadership works well only when the external environment is stable and technological change is limited. However, it does not work when there are unpredictable changes in the external and technological environments. In such a situation, an open and adaptive organisation with free flow of information both horizontally and vertically works well (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1986). Institutions resist change due to behavioural inertia (Rumelt, 1995). There are four main interdependencies within an educational institution. These include: workflow interdependency relating to many aspects of a process; process interdependency relating to working together by specialists to maintain their expertise; scale interdependency so as to avoid duplication of resources; and social interdependency relating to the fulfilment of social needs (Mintzberg, 1985). Clark (1995) applied the idea of evolution of organisational structure in terms of interaction of two distinct processes: differentiation and integration. Educational institutions on one side have to differentiate between different units and at the same time integrate these units through common values, budgeting and horizontal information (Dill, 1997). Shattock (2003) advocated, "Departments need to be nurtured and supported. Their leadership,

their succession policies and the way they encourage their younger staff should be of continuing interest to a university's central authorities; their success should be celebrated, their disappointments sympathised with. Any resource allocation process should seek, within the constraints available, to ensure that departments are equipped as best they can to meet their research and teaching responsibilities”.

BECOMING AGILE AND EVOLVING INSTITUTIONS

Universities as Catalytic Agents

Universities are expected to be catalysts of change in society. A university being the society's change agent needs to have change agents for its own evolution. The word university has been derived from Latin word, *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, which means community of teachers and intellectuals of different disciplines (Reddy, A.A. and Vaidyanathan, G, 2019). In view of ever-changing needs and challenges of society, the educational institutions need to evolve continuously. These need to change continuously to stay relevant. In this mechanism, educational institutes need to introspect whether these are change-ready or not. The educational institutes need to develop multidisciplinary capabilities, so as to cultivate and upgrade new competencies to prosper, stay contemporary, and relevant. Educational institutes need to stay away from complacency without any illusion concerning no visible crisis with respect to students' enrolment and funding etc. Low benchmarks, only internal feedback systems without external feedbacks including all stakeholders, considering evidences of change as finger-pointing and over-emphasising marginal issues, are the signs of complacency.

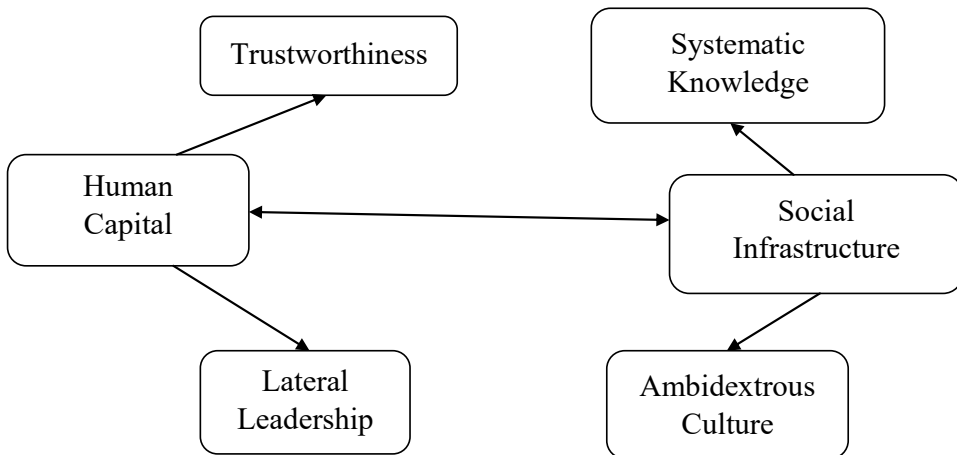
Organisation Structure of Educational Institutions

The organisation structure of educational institutions also plays a great role in deciding whether these institutions are change-ready or not. Hierarchical structure is the biggest barrier to change. Hierarchy protects two enemies of change: one is bureaucracy and the second is entitlement among faculty and employees. Bureaucracy protects how the things are being done as usual while entitlement among faculty and employees keep people focussed only on their part of the job. Both these approaches are detrimental to long-term interests of an institution. Therefore, institutions essentially need to become learning organisations in which everyone is engaged to achieve the distant visions of the institutions. People should continuously experiment, improve and increase their potentials. Faculty should engage themselves into cross-functional and inter-disciplinary teams. Since most of the knowledge of modern-day world has become inter-disciplinary in nature, silo thinking has lost its relevance. Another important step is no place for 'C' performers particularly at leadership positions. Inept people at leadership positions of higher educational institutions foil all the plans to improve performance of the institution.

The present paper highlights the strategies for renewal of higher education institutes in reference to model proposed by William Q Judge (2012) in Fig. 1.

The educational institutions in their endeavours to continuously evolve should consistently stress upon two broad areas: human capital and social infrastructure. In the human capital aspects, the institutions should further focus on two aspects: one is trustworthiness and the second is lateral leadership. In the social infrastructure, these should again focus on two aspects: one is systemic knowledge and second is an ambidextrous culture.

FIG. 1. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE MODEL (WILLIAM Q JUDGE, 2012)



Trustworthiness in Leadership

The leadership of higher education institutions play a vital role in the evolution of institutions. Trust is the glue that binds all sorts of relationships. The biggest responsibility of leadership is to define reality. There are two important and essential elements of trustworthy leadership: competence and benevolence. Competence helps in envisioning the future and making vision a reality, whereas benevolence develops cooperation. Both trust and cooperation are important for the sustainability and continuous growth of institutions. Cooperation and shared sense of purpose i.e. mission is critical for staying relevant in times to come. Today's knowledge is multi-disciplinary in nature that requires integration of multiple departments. Trust is an important factor for such integrations. Therefore, lateral leadership is gaining tremendous importance over vertical leadership. The leadership must know and take all actions in the pursuit of values for enduring trustworthiness. The leadership should demonstrate authenticity in terms of 'talk the walk and then walk the talk'. There should be an increasing emphasis on trusting more and controlling less.

There needs to be positive transference of feelings across all levels of an educational institute. The educational leaders, i.e., faculty of the institute, should possess a high degree of emotional intelligence to generate trust within the institution. Inter-disciplinary programmes can only be successful if faculty of cross functional areas exhibits emotional glue and stay emotionally resonant with one another.

Lateral Leadership

Inspiration-related currencies such as vision, ethical considerations and moral correctness should get top priority. Bureaucratic layers need to be removed. The senior leadership should extend continuous support to the faculty to enhance their self concept. Educational institutions should exhibit a greater understanding about socio-economic issues of surrounding society and adopt an inclusive approach in which issues relating to well-being of society should be addressed. The senior leadership should empower faculty members to take initiatives relating to gaining, generating and transmitting knowledge. The faculty needs to be clear about vision of an institution in terms of what we are doing and what others expect us to do. The right people should be considered for faculty positions; only people with right acumen and potential must be hired at faculty positions. Here again there should be no place for 'C' performers. The faculty recruitment process must be revamped so as to find the right people for the right job. This is so because faculty members are the change agents of educational institutions. Being educational leaders, they are enablers rather than doers; they can take many initiatives by involving students and need to collaborate laterally. The senior leadership should support them consistently.

Systemic Knowledge

It is imperative for educational institutions to get rid of delusions of regressive mental models. Otherwise, it will be too late to take corrective measures against creeping problems that aggravate steadily in a subtle manner. The senior leadership and faculty of the institute should be consciously aware of their mental models and its impact on their behaviour. Many times, the people in such organisations suffer from spatial and temporal blindness; they look at only on a part without viewing institute as a whole. They fail to differentiate between what they have been today and what they had been in the past. In such a case, they fail to foresee where they would likely to be in the times to come. The miserable state for an educational institute would be the situation of 'dance of blind reflexes'. It happens when leadership lacks vision; the faculty is torn, fragmented and deprived of resources; and students feel twisted by uncaring system. No one is able to see his or her own role. If despite of best efforts of the people, there are fewer results than anticipated, it means that there is a problem with the system not with the people. The communication systems need to be robust to provide comprehensive data on all key processes and integration of data across and beyond boundaries of different sections and departments.

Ambidextrous Culture

Culture and leadership are entangled with one another. The people of educational institutions must own up to their actions. In other words, there should be sense of ownership in an institution. They should understand that they have big responsibilities of transforming youth of the nation. They should be aware about the consequences of their actions. There should be no ambiguity about their roles. The culture has three layers; the outermost layer, which is most visible demonstrates infrastructure; the intermediate layer is comprised of values and beliefs; and the deepest layer that

by and large remains opaque, is related with human nature, human relations and interface between institute and external environment. Culture acts as social glue; it should never be perceived a tool of social control. Moreover, culture is established by attitude, intentions, and behaviours of senior leadership. There are three important elements of institute's culture: discipline, process and ownership. Discipline refers to rigor, consistency and commitment. It is very important in the teaching-learning process. The second element is process. Teachers should remain engaged in teaching, research and institute building in a balanced manner. The ideal ratio is 50:30:20 for teaching, research and institute building activities respectively (Reddy, and Vaidyanathan, 2019). It is highly essential that teachers should be engaged only in academic activities. The research should be objectively carried out. Instead of running after increasing the number of publications, an emphasis should be made on generating knowledge in a systematic and unified manner so that it can be useful in real life. Each institute should perceive itself as unique entity. It is possible only if they rightly identify their core competence and allocate resources towards activities that are complemented by the core competence of an institute. The third element is ownership. People must owe responsibilities of their actions. People need to have clear understanding what is considered eminent and what is ignored. Each and every institute has the potential to stand out distinctly, provided they relate the education process to the issues of nearby society. Social diversity provides distinct avenues. A collaborative culture provides opportunities for creativity and innovation, whereas a hierarchical structure does not. It requires adhocracy, team structure, which is loose, flexible and networked. Creativity is a combinational game, which is social and not an individual process. Independent thinking, diversity of thought, expressing his or her own views, asking questions and seeking questions, free flow of information, less bureaucracy, inherent learning platforms, just and equity, transparency, celebrating failures, and emphasis on improvements rather than fault finding are the attributes of conducive culture for an institution to become agile, adaptive and evolving.

CONCLUSION

In view of globalisation of education, emergence of new technologies and demand for new skill sets, the Indian higher education institutes need to bring radical reforms in the delivery of education. In order to stay relevant in the changing times, the higher education institutes should build contemporary human capital as well as social infrastructure. Culture, structure, leadership, process and strategic approach are critical elements that must be stressed upon to succeed and stay relevant in the long run. Trust is the most important element; no organisation can survive without an element of trust. Lateral leadership is more important than vertical leadership. The faculty of the institute with consistent support from senior leadership should work with horizontal collaboration both within and outside the institutes in the socially relevant areas. Culture and leadership are intertwined, and the role of senior leadership is vital for establishing conducive culture. In terms of social infrastructure, people in educational institutions should possess ability to view their institute as a whole. They will have to abandon silo thinking and work towards the vision of an institute in a cohesive manner. Overall, the culture of the organisation should be balanced in

terms of both accountability and innovativeness. The educational institutions need to become more open and networked than ever before.

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