HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE NEW NORMAL

Case of re-thinking the structure of higher education
Introduction

- Higher education begins at the end of school education (often Grade XII)
- Includes undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate, and professional education
- Purpose of higher education has been under constant revision
  - Creation of new knowledge
  - Application of knowledge for humankind
  - Devoted to improve welfare of human being for today and for the future
Seeking Knowledge: why and how

- To know good and evil – eventually converts into ‘commonsense’ (‘nonsense’ is that of without knowledge).
- Pursuit of knowledge continues from cradle to grave
- How to pursue knowledge acquisition?
  - From Guru
  - From God/Allah
  - From Religious sources
  - From informal/formal institution
  - From Society/community
  - From books
  - From hearsay/stories
Seeking knowledge …

- **Knowledge** includes facts, information, description(s), and/or skills acquired through ‘experience’ or ‘education’.

- Quest for knowledge began to grow for two main reasons
  - Knowledge increases ability of a person to give to society – they are respected and honored by all.
  - Knowledge became the source of prosperity

- How to acquire knowledge?
Early knowledge

- **Growth of academic disciplines**
  - Used to be no separation
    - Based on individuals to individuals
    - Early innovations were all guided by ingenuity of individuals and were often protected by communities using a cobweb of rules guiding trade practices to wedding rules.
    - Knowledge remained confined to communities and nations
    - Transfer was only through indoctrination into faiths/communities
Disciplines of Knowledge

- Guru model (early approach)
- Religious schools
- By the 13th century knowledge became classified:
  - Knowledge was divided into disciplines
    - Theology, medicine, law (religious) and arts
- 19th Century – secularization of knowledge began
  - New faculties of knowledge were recognized
    - Social science, language, science, humanities/liberal arts, technology, medicine
Disciplines of knowledge

- 20th Century – further extension of disciplines
  - Education, music, psychology, media studies, business studies, crafts, physiotherapy, military strategies, etc. entered as new disciplines of studies.
  - Acquisition of knowledge began more multi-disciplinary
Demand for Knowledge

- Demand comes from several sources
  - Individuals
    - Want to specialize
    - Benefit the humankind
    - Spiritual needs
    - Secure jobs
  - Communities / nations
    - Maintain peace
    - Support community needs
    - Develop a spirit for the community
    - Ensure prosperity
    - Accomplish tasks
Changing nature of educational needs

- Comes from the job market
  - Has expanded from communities → nations → regions → globe
  - Nature of a work became more integrated rather than separated by disciplines
  - Globalization and increasing mobility of people across the boundaries
  - Future job markets – will be more global in nature.
Crafting a new educational supply mix

- As demand for education has completely changed from that of 19th and 20th century – the new education needs to be re-crafted.

- Education systems in South Asia are driven by
  - National aspirations
    - History, culture, science and technology
    - Very few discoveries/innovations – can check the patent history of the world
    - More to do reach a target – little push to expand the boundaries
    - Little research and mostly based on lectures and exams.
Current structure of Education

- **National goals**
  - Harmonization between center and periphery
  - Reduce poverty — through universal access
  - Integrate national identities — through knowledge of culture and history

- **How was it done?**
  - Through creation of ‘national’ standards — reduces innovation and diversity.
  - ‘Degree’ became a ‘tick box’ and often curriculum is drafted based on vested needs.
Education might have become a means for achieving national integration but

- ‘Standards’ allows minimum changes while the nature of problems and the demand are changing fast.
- Deviated from the global race
- Lack of research led to zero innovation and changes
- Lack of homegrown materials (due to absence of research) led education to become a vehicle for entering into the job market only
- Educational institutions become ‘degree mills’ and students want to secure a ‘recognized’ certificate only.
Righteousness, problem solving are no longer the goal of education

Education fails to improve the society
- Statistics would show more crimes, hatred, and dishonesty are now embedded among our educated youths!

Moreover, as demand for educated /skilled labour increases globally
- National curriculum in higher education fails to guarantee the professional quality needed
- National demand also changes as global investments flows in every country
  - Unfortunately even within a country domestic MBAs are less worthy than an MBA from USA
New Demand for education

People demand education for various reasons:
- Become high achievers using knowledge
- Build individual dignity and honour
- Join global job markets
- Social recognition/family prestige
- Contribute to knowledge creation / creating human value
- Solve difficult problems of earth / humankind
- Guarantee professional ethics
- Very high degree of specialization
- Allow innovation and discoveries
- Life long education / limit free education
- Allow quest for excellence
Rapid expansion of demand

- Literacy rate increasing in South Asia
- Structural shift in supply of students will be felt within the next decades
- Demand for higher education will grow
  - Due to increased enrolment rate
  - Due to higher completion rate at the school level
  - Job markets will be come more unstable with rapid changes in the nature of service sectors
  - Expansion of education into other soft areas previously unknown, for example,
    - Degree in leadership, degree in counter terrorism, degree in corporate security, degree in surveillance
    - Degree in music, instrumental music, media, graphic designs, aid disbursement, aid strategy, international negotiations, compliance of standards, creation of global standards
    - Degree in humanitarian aid, degree in hospital management, airport management, office record keeping
New demand ...

- Demand for education will further grow
  - More re-training is needed due to retrenchment and job changes
  - Need for flexible timing of education
  - Need for less structured education
  - Need for less integrated but more multi-disciplinary and step-wise education
  - Need for flexible courseware to study
  - Need for flexible length of study
  - Need for global recognition of educational certificates
Reforming the supply side

- Given these complex needs it is important to realize that educational industry must accept changes
  - Changes in designing curriculum – discipline and their mixes
  - Changes in delivery of education – time, place, and assessment
  - Changes in quality assurance – flexible standards
  - Changes in delivery mechanism – cross-country, global, national
  - Changes in recognition and quality assurances – international certification, global degrees, regional degrees

- New education must be innovative, must facilitate new experiments, must solve problems, must be integrated with the global world.

- New education cannot based on ‘all size fits all’ formula

- Strictly regulated education system cannot deliver all of these.
The New Normal

- **Background**
  - WTO negotiation on movement of natural persons (mode 4) will allow skill individuals to move across the boundaries along with global flow of investments (in the service sector).
  - Requires a rapid measures to ‘internationalize’ national higher education system in South Asia
  - Requires cross-border recognition of higher education
New Normal in HE in South Asia

- Focus of global/regional needs
- Focus on cross-recognition
- Focus on flexible standards

**Example**

- Definition of ‘Levels’ in UK Higher Education
- Credit hours and their distribution without assigning courses like Core credit, GED credit, Open Credit etc.
- Create knowledge ‘building blocks’ through certificates, diplomas and degrees to ensure access to education for the mass.
New Normal...

- Allow learning for life as the principle for delivery of education. Facilitate cross-border education to integrate regions and the globe and to fill-in the gap for skilled individuals.
- Move to voluntary standards using professional, private and public entities.
- Integrate professional experience into the knowledge domain to recognize ‘experiences’ into knowledge.
A Metaphor – river of knowledge

Current Structure of HE

The New Normal of HE