

Chapter 3

Promoting Research Culture in Cross Functional Areas: A Tool for Universities to Reach Out to Society

Byju John

MATS University, India

Shilpi Gupta

MATS University, India

ABSTRACT

The 21st century is known as “knowledge era”. Universities, educational Institutes play a pivotal role in re-confirming the label of knowledge era. This chapter highlights the role of cross functional research in promoting convergence of ideas from various disciplines by specialists to cope with global competitiveness and promote social and economic progress. There is no alternative to the creation of a knowledge society and knowledge workers without the Universities. The various sections of the chapter explore the role of Universities in promoting CFR and how it encourages the researchers to go beyond their discipline and gain a broader vision and in-depth insight of the problems existing and promoting total transformation of a region and society towards nation building and improving the ranking of Indian Universities in the global educational market.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of globalization and economic policies of the nation have a direct impact on the society at all levels. All the areas of the society have undergone a rational change and the education system was also not left untouched by it. The current era as it's labeled as “knowledge era”. Universities, educational institutions and centers of excellence have to play a pivotal role in re-confirming the label of knowledge era. The universities have been identified as the source of innovation that gives birth to new ideas and provides basis for economic development (Chakrabarti & Lester, 2002) and progress for the welfare

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of mankind (Florida, 1996). The universities serve as catalyst of change and acts as the basic pillars of society by providing its citizens with a broader paradigm of problem understanding and its solutions. Amartya Sen and Jean Dereze (1995) argued that higher education as one of the most important inputs that influence the all round development of any nation pertaining to attainment of all round development is possible through research oriented mindset seeking solutions to the problems. The universities in the 20th century witnessed innovation and research in area-specific disciplines. But it was realized in the 21st century that knowledge oriented society can only be crafted through cross-functional researches. Cross functional research (CFR) can be defined as the convergence of ideas from various different disciplines by specialist's to solve in an integrated manner various national and international problems. The need of the hour is to break the shell of specialized research and contribute one's knowledge for a broader and better vision of a nation and the best ways for doing it is through cross functional research to cope up with global competitiveness and bring sustained social and economic progress.

All the countries of the world cannot forgo the reality of its rural economy and it's a known fact that unbalanced regional development had prevented world's largest democracy India also to rise as a shining star at the Global level. The universities have to play the role of bridging the gap between the urban and the rural society. This bridging of the gap is only possible through a "psychological surgery" in the higher education system.

The universities should recognize that to take a nation to a greater level's it has to collaborate with various industries and NGO'S and cross functional research teams to be formed to address the various problems of the specific regions. The young Research Scholar's need to be motivated to cross-breed their ideas and extend their arms to plant the true fruits of research.

The solution to many problems of regional development is cross -functional research as it involves integration of social services, core sciences, humanities & various streams of specialization for the development of a nation as whole. The basic essentials of CFR (Cross Functional Research) are problem based learning. Various collaborative activities, joint research projects, pooling of shared knowledge, creation of research centers are the basic pillars of a good cross functional research. The Indian industrialists highly complain of the poor quality of interns and recruits. This is basically due to lack of research oriented mindsets of researchers. The promotion of cross functional research in universities will enhance the levels of rational thinkers and intelligent workforce. Universities have to play the lead role in creating a pool of knowledge based society and workers with adequate knowledge and skills. There is no alternative to the creation of a knowledge society and knowledge workers without the involvement of universities. The researchers must be encouraged beyond their own discipline to gain a broader vision and in-depth insight of the problems existing and its probable solutions through cross functional research.

The sections of this chapter explores the role of universities in promoting cross functional research and how it addresses the local and regional problems of various sectors of the economy for total transformation of a region and in turn contributing towards nation building as a whole and in return improving the rankings of the Universities.

Theoretical Perspectives

The inherent complexity of the society and the need to have a competitive edge in the world have compelled people and nations to explore problem that are not confined to a single discipline but which requires integration of information, techniques and concepts from various disciplines. The inability of a single discipline to provide rational solution to various national and international problems was the

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