

Chapter 9

Social Science Education and Outreach as a Tool for Regional Development and Institutional Building: A Case Study in India

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Chapter is to delineate how Outreach of Social Science Education can become meaningful for Institution building as well as for society. The case of how an aided college in India run by private management facing the perils of post liberalization adjustments in governance and funding for higher education is able to create social relevance in its existence. The main factors that make outreach possible is the values of social commitment among the faculty and students. It shows that formative attitudes for such outreach, its implementation and monitoring through specified pedagogical perspectives, play a major role in bringing out effective development in the region causing institution building. The challenges and constraints embedded in its growth were no impediments to the institution being accredited as the best in the category for Arts and Science Colleges in India.

INTRODUCTION

There is an ongoing debate on the relevance of Social Science in practice while economies determine budgets for policy making. This question could be answered if the content of Social Science was looked into seriously and there was an emphasis on evidence-based policy making. The Social Science considers all issues of social action and social relationships that creates an environment to be negotiated in every aspect of life, be it changing demographics, impacts of scientific applications, poverty, environment,

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support to disadvantaged families, crises resolution, organisational relevance and the like. It also deals with research addressing immediate social and policy issues that make a difference to people's lives.

It is found true that Science research is given more value than Social Science research the world over, considering the number of institutions, funding to institutions, number of researchers, scholarships and value for implementing changes in society. Due to limited funding for Social Science research the researchers are compelled to do research in topics delineated by Governments as important (Mathew 2014). Thus the role of social scientists as independent thinkers gets eroded. It is not an exaggeration to highlight that if government social policy were to seriously implement positive research findings for effecting changes in society we would have a much better place to live in. The fact is that the findings of Science research is integrated into policy much more than findings of Social Science research, even though it deals with impacts and is much talked about during elections. This is because effecting social changes by the ruling party, are socio-political in nature and therefore changes are slowed down, quickly implemented or trampled over according to the effects it can bring the party. This questions the practice outcomes of research and points that social scientists need to engage with policy as much as politicians need to engage with social science. On the other hand, Non Governmental Organisations(NGO's) are playing their role to fill up this gap, between reality and potential of political and social action at the grassroots. However the extent of engagement at grassroots that can be achieved remains small due to large funding required for reaching large populations.

In India, Social Science research in higher education started during 1970's when several non-teaching research institutions came up under the Indian Council of Social Science Research because of the availability of funds. The University Grants Commission (UGC) by the eighties, tried to raise importance of higher education by increasing pay and teaching workload that included research. This was formalised as 'norms' of the UGC. This workload left little time for teachers to conduct research in most University departments and colleges. Thus the quality of the researches degraded. Those interested in sponsored research on project mode had to comply with rigid bureaucratic financial and administrative procedures leaving poor interest for these ventures (Papola 2010).

The proliferation of higher education institutions were also noticed in India during the eighties, which called for the maintenance of quality standards in the National Policy in Education of 1986. This made it difficult for the UGC to carry out maintenance of standards along with other major roles of higher education and thus an independent national accreditation body was set up in 1994 called The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) at Bangalore in the South of India (UGC 2015). The Accreditation by NAAC began on a voluntary basis which is now made mandatory for all Technical Institutions, Universities and Colleges affiliated to Universities and is done in cycles of five year periods. A framework for accreditation used by the Council rests on seven selected criteria and five accepted core values for higher education in the present globalised scenario of the country. Presently, the Core Values are:

1. Contribution to National Development,
2. Fostering Global Competencies among Students,
3. Inculcating a Value System in Students,
4. Promoting the Use of Technology, and
5. Quest for Excellence.

These five core values are expected to be implemented through the nine criteria namely:

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