

Chapter 21

Role of Universities in Leveraging ICT for Corporate Education

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ABSTRACT

In the recent past, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has impacted human lives in multiple dimensions. No aspect of human endeavour is untouched by ICT and education domain is no exception to this. Universities need to leverage ICT to improve the quality and relevance of higher education, which would positively impact the corporates, apart from other sectors. In this context, this chapter provides an innovative model which the universities could adapt and revolutionize the higher education. The best practices being followed by Infosys Limited, the IT corporate giant, narrated in this chapter could be leveraged by the universities in the interest of the learning community, the corporates and the society at large.

INTRODUCTION

C. S. Lewis, the British novelist and academician once wrote, “The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts”. This is a profound and insightful thought that any academia need to address and, more importantly, any higher education system needs to demonstrate. To make this happen, the philosophy and vision, the governance and policy, the processes

and practices of the educational systems need to converge towards creating educational excellence albeit universities cannot be linked to training institutes, factories and workshops. With the emerging trends in the ICT, there is a wide scope for the educational systems to leverage ICT in all dimensions.

To start with, the chapter sets the background taking a retrospective observation of education system in India and summarizes the contemporary

education including the corporate education and its challenges. The background also covers the current trends in ICT and ICT use in country's education.

The main focus of the chapter is the role of universities in leveraging ICT for corporate education. A brief introduction to the structure of university education system in India becomes essential to indicate the gaps and shortcomings in the current university education system. An innovative model has been proposed to plug these gaps along with the recommendations. Infosys Limited initiatives have been illustrated as the evidence of best practices in corporate education. Future research directions have been covered towards the end.

Acceptance and deployment of the proposed model in certain areas of university education would bring a substantial and visible transformation in higher education in India which would eventually reduce the demand-supply paradox currently existing in corporate systems.

The proposed model is based on author's two decade of experience in academia and a decade's experience as the Head of Infosys Global Education Center, the largest corporate university in Asia. The author acknowledges Infosys Limited for providing relevant information related to the initiatives mentioned.

BACKGROUND

As the saying goes "if you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday", it is imperative that the progress of education in India needs to be considered in retrospection with the evolution of civilization. If not the past can be applied today, at least the wisdom, intellect and accomplishments of our fore-fathers would motivate us to think big, plan better and execute brilliantly. Also, history would warn us to be cautious of our moves so as not to err the same way over again.

Evolution of Education System in India

Origin of higher education in India dates back to Indus valley civilization. During the Vedic times, the education was imparted orally by the sages and saints, may be underneath a tree and the knowledge was passed on from one generation to the other (Figure 1). Openness and inclusiveness were believed to be prevalent as is evident from the Vedic hymn "Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah" (Rigveda 1-89-i) meaning "Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions". Later, the Gurukul system of education came into existence (Figure 2). The Gurukuls were the traditional residential schools which were usually conducted in the master's residence. Sanskrit was used as the major lingua franca to disseminate the intended knowledge. Vedic learning remained as the major part of education, subsuming the literature, grammar, epics and ethics. The Vedic hymns clearly dictate the importance of learning and preaching, as understandable from one of the verses "Swadhyaya Pravachanaabhyam Na Pramaditavyam" (Taittiriya Upanishad) meaning "do not desist from self-study and preaching". Questioning and dialogues were very much a part of pedagogy as could be seen from the lengthy conversations between master and student collated as Upanishads.

Figure 1. Early Vedic education



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