Chapter-7

Conclusion

Knowledge has always been a distinguishing characteristic of human beings in view of their unique capacity to formulate and continuously transmit knowledge one generation and location to another. Knowledge Society- has gained prominence due to advances in Technology and related Applications. Knowledge Societies have to address issues about how information and ideas are to be created and, thereafter, adopted at an accelerating speed.

Today, the Indian education sector has been recognized as a “Sunrise Sector” for investment in the recent past. This recognition stems from the fact that the sector offers a huge untapped market in regulated and non-regulated segments due to low literacy rate, high concentration in urban areas and growing per capita income. The Government has also been proactively playing the role of facilitator in this sector.

The higher education sector, owing to its huge potential, holds very promising prospects. With an estimated 150 million people in the age group of 18-23 years, the sector offers one of the most attractive yet highly complex market for the private/foreign players. Despite some inherent concerns with respect to choice of entity, not for profit character and foreign investment in formal education space; the industry does offer various innovative business opportunities, which can be explored for establishing a presence. The Planning Commission in its approach paper to 12th Five Year Plan had suggested that the current “not-for-profit” approach in the education sector should be re-examined in a pragmatic manner so as to ensure quality without losing focus on equity.

The higher education institutes are however, facing competition. With the mushrooming growth and more institutes being recognized and affiliated year by year, a call for marketing techniques has become extremely important. Now these institutes have to promote themselves
in the areas where they want to operate. A very important tool for marketing is advertisements. Advertisements can be made in any media like televisions, newspapers and internet.

However, advertisements do not mean that anything that is found to be catchy and attractive should be disclosed. The very purpose of advertisements is to make people aware of what the product or service has to offer. But when false or misleading information is provided, people lose faith in such product or service. Same is also the case with advertisements of higher education. Higher education institutes are misleading prospective students by deploying selective data, flattering comparisons and even outright falsehoods in their advertisements. People have lost faith about what is being said by higher education institutes in relation to faculty, placements or alumni and students’ achievements. Hence, institutes must improve their reputation and start advertising with genuine and reliable information only.

Advertisements must adhere to a specific purpose. It is true in case of advertisements by higher education institutes too. Students or parents both take decisions on which educational institute to join. And this decision is many times also based on the information they gather from newspaper advertisements. However, they seek some specific information also like what is the students’ performance in a particular institute, or what type of faculty is teaching or whether facilities like hostel is available and finally what is the placement record of the institute. Hence, higher education institutes should also try to disclose such information and that too genuinely.

Finally, it can also be concluded that there are reasons to argue that the marketing of higher education should aspire to higher ethical standards than marketing in general. Firstly, because what is being marketed is expensive, potentially life changing, and cannot be tried out before it is ‘purchased’. Secondly, because university marketing is directed, in part, at a potentially vulnerable group. Seventeen year-old young people from social backgrounds where there is little experience of higher education have limited sources of information on various institutes. Their parents, relatives and friends are unlikely to have been to same institutes. As such, the advertisements may be their principal source of information. If they are to make wise life choices this information needs to be truthful, balanced and complete. Hence, higher education institutes today, need to follow ethical approach of advertisements in newspapers. By
following this approach, these institutes need to present true information and not false tall claims. These also need to present information which may actually help to decide about admission in the institute. Then only the very purpose of advertisements for higher education institutions is fully met.