Chapter Two

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Abstract

Universities all over the world tend to make themselves exclusive institutions housed in the proverbial ivory tower. This has been, mostly, the case with Indian universities also, in spite of the efforts of the University Grants Commission to persuade them to accept extension as a third dimension of higher education, equal in importance to teaching and research.

Education in India is a national investment that ought to produce results in social transformation. It should, to begin with, help wipe out illiteracy because democracy is meaningless where the voters are illiterate and incapable of participating in the decision-making processes and power-sharing processes. National Service Scheme can act as an instrument for linking institutions of higher education with communities around them.

Against this background the present chapter spells out the objectives of this research which includes developing a conceptual framework for communitizing education and creating a replicable model for the process involved. It states the assumptions behind the study as well as its limitations. It establishes the rationale for the study, highlighting the social need and the possibilities of NSS, and states the methodology adopted. The last part of the chapter indicates how the content of the study is divided into sections and chapters.
Ours is a culture, which from time immemorial, has yearned for the light that liberates. ‘Lead us from darkness to light’ and ‘let wisdom come to us from all quarters’ are age-old prayers here.

Swami Vivekananda underlined the importance of educating the masses towards the light that liberates and brings about social change. He said, “Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. Your duty at present is to go from one part of the country to another, from village to village, and make the people understand that mere sitting idle won’t do any more. Make them understand their real condition, and say, O ye brothers, all arise! Awake! How long would you remain asleep! Go and advise them how to improve their own condition and make them comprehend the sublime truths
of the *sastras*, by presenting them in a lucid and popular way.... Instruct them in simple words about the necessities of life, in trade, commerce, agriculture, etc.' Organized educational system in our country, particularly at the university level, has not responded much to this call.

1.2.2 **Background of the Study: The International Scenario**

1.2.2.1 **Changes in the Idea of a University**

Throughout history, universities all over the world have been conceived of as exclusive institutions where relatively small communities of scholars and students - called the *universitas magistorum et studentium* - could develop, in splendid isolation, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they regarded as necessary for the betterment of society. Universities were housed in the proverbial ivory tower, and the communities they purported to serve were somewhere "out there". In modern times this concept is severely challenged.

1.2.2.2 **From University to Multiversity**

"The university started as a single community, a community of masters and students. It may even be said to have had a soul in the sense of a central animating principle". Today, particularly, in countries like India where affiliating type of universities exist, the concept has vastly changed. Cardinal Newman's 'Idea of a University' was modeled on the Oxford of his day from where he had come. For him it was a centre of knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery. He favoured liberal knowledge, and did not approve of the concept of 'useful knowledge'. Today in the west they have started talking about "The Idea of a Multiversity". "The multiversity is an inconsistent institution. It is not one
community but several – the community of the undergraduate, and the community of the graduate; the community of the humanist, and the community of the social scientist; and the community of the scientist; the communities of the professional schools; the community of all the non-academic personnel; the community of the administrators. The shift from the concept of university to that of multiversity, even when the name remains unchanged, has helped to break open the portals of the citadels of higher education for the benefit of the community. One of the best evidences of this is the Dearing Report.

1.2.2.3 Dearing Report: Emphasis on Social Goals

Dearing Report, which is the latest report on higher education in England, gives a clear emphasis on the social vision of the university. The aims and objectives of a university, according to Dearing Committee, are

- To inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfilment.
- To increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society.
- To serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels.
- To play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilized, inclusive society. (Italics added by the researcher)

It is interesting to note that, in spite of the fact that England is a developed country, Dearing Report contains an unmistakable social bias in each of these objectives.
1.2.2.4 UNESCO’s Observation: Call for More Involvement with Society

UNESCO, as early as 1976, observed that higher education should be more widely involved with society. Its institutions should cease to be passive repositories of knowledge, and should take an active role in the problems of development. While this was apparent even two decades ago, little has been achieved in real terms towards this goal.

However, there are a few universities, particularly in developing countries today, which see it as their duty to build capacity in deprived communities in a mutual learning process, thereby augmenting and integrating the societal relevance of teaching and research functions. More specifically this policy has been helping to build constructive citizenship and intellectual leadership in communities; maintaining information systems for community development; encouraging and sustaining collaborative ventures with communities, and with organized government and non-governmental institutions. The University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria, is a very good example. They uphold the view that “direct community involvement and participation, on the basis of inclusivity, have become the touchstone of a university’s commitment to and value for a society.”

1.2.2.5 The National Scenario: UGC’s Guidelines

In India the University Grants Commission (UGC) has taken some bold policy decisions in favour of the trend mentioned above. In their policy statement, UGC has recognized extension as the third dimension of institutions of higher education, in addition to the earlier two-fold dimension of teaching and research.
The university system has a great responsibility to the society as a whole. All universities and colleges should develop close relationships of mutual service and support with their local communities, and all students and teachers must be involved in such programmes as an integral part of their education. The National Service Scheme (NSS) should be expanded and improved, ultimately to cover all students. Programmes should be designed to inculcate a spirit of co-operation and social commitment inter-related to moral development.

Another document of the UGC goes on to state explicitly that:

The acceptance of extension as the third dimension equal in importance to teaching and research was in the context of a growing realization that universities and colleges having institutional resources - knowledge, manpower and physical resources have an obligation to develop sensitivities to involve in the development of the community with particular reference to overall and diverse learning needs of all segments of people in the community.

Prof. K.G. Saiyidain was an eminent educationist who had strong views on this matter. His paper on "Universities and Social Responsibility" in the conference which met at Bhopal in July 1965 made a strong plea that one of the most important functions of the university is to organize extension services, so that students in the various departments are closely involved in activities organized for the good of the community. They may adopt a neighbouring village to help in literacy programmes and other social activities based on the local needs.
Dr. Yash Pal, in July 1990, when he was occupying the powerful position as chairman of the University Grants Commission in India made a passionate plea:

Let us close down all colleges and universities for one year, and let every one connected with them – teachers, students, principals, vice-chancellors, office workers and other employees – get immersed in making 200-300 million people literate in that one year⁹.

No college or university was closed, and it is quite unlikely that anything of that kind will happen in the near future. But it is significant that some of the best minds and eminent educationists of our country sat down for three or four sessions along with the UGC Chairman to formulate what Dr. Yash Pal called a “Mass Action For National Regeneration”. It is in pursuance of this trend of thinking that the subject of this research has been conceived.

UGC further states that the third dimension aims to promote a meaningful and sustained rapport between the universities and the community. It identifies two aspects of this aim in very clear terms:

It aims, firstly, to extend knowledge and other institutional resources to the community and vice-versa, and secondly, to gain insights from a contact between knowledge resources and socio-cultural realities with a view to reflecting these in the entire curricular system of higher education including teaching and research¹⁰.

There are a number of other statements/documents issued by the UGC which emphasize the dimension of campus community interaction.
The basic premises in this study are the following:

(a) The one input in national development which is capable of bringing about revolutionary changes of a sustainable nature is education.\textsuperscript{11} This revolution is yet to take place in our country; this lion of a nation is still asleep, as pointed out by Swami Vivekananda. This is because the efforts at value-education and motivation of youth so far attempted in our educational system were unsystematic, and visibly lacking in result orientation. Consequently the educated elite does not recognise their social obligations; they tend to use society for their individual advancement. This is a scenario which calls for urgent corrective intervention.

(b) In our country even today about half the population is illiterate. "Learning is essential in a developing society for making decisions and sharing power. In this sense all illiterates are out of the power-game."\textsuperscript{12} About 70\% of our high school and college-goers are from the top 20\% of our society. Sixty per cent of the children who enter Standard I drop out before reaching Standard V. Eighty percent of our schools are single room sheds where four or five classes are ‘managed’ simultaneously by a single teacher. Universities here are generally insensitive to these and similar realities.\textsuperscript{13} The present study considers this situation also as one crying for correction.

(c) Another important basic premise of the study is that at policy-level there is a firm commitment on the part of Central and State governments in favour of communitizing education. What is missing is the machinery to operationalize the policies. There is need for national debates on this issue. If viable proposals in this direction are
made available to the UGC and the governments, there is reason to hope that a change can take place.

(d) National Service Scheme (NSS) which has a nation-wide network covering 250 universities and about 7500 colleges has the potential to undertake this mammoth task of mobilizing academic resources in favour of the masses. But unfortunately for want of suitable models and adequate enthusiasm NSS has not significantly succeeded in the task of percolation of academic resources for socio-economic development. There is lack of conceptual clarity as well as absence of administrative will in this area.

1.2.4 The Rationale

Rationale of the present study can, therefore, be summed up as follows:

(a) Institutions of higher education, particularly in a country like India, cannot afford to remain in splendid isolation. Educational planning in the country expects these institutions to develop a community orientation.

(b) But owing to the class-characteristics of the population that avails the facilities of higher education, our colleges and universities tend to be elitist and, to some extent, ‘anti-people’.

(c) Communication technology and production technology have now put more power into the hands of the elite, further accentuating the gap between those who have access to the centres of higher education and those in the peripheries of illiteracy and ignorance. In this historical juncture, an advocacy role in favour of linking the campuses with the communities around them has great relevance.
(d) The fact that our cultural ethos is very much in favour of such a vital linkage, and the fact that National Service Scheme has the specific mission to materialize this linkage, needs to be emphasized;

(e) Along with such an emphasis should go practical guidelines which NSS units can adopt for realizing the lofty objectives of higher education. There is also need for giving feedback and recommendations on NSS to the officers in charge of decision-making.

1.2.5 The Problem

Against the backdrop of these premises and possibilities, the researcher wants to formulate a model for communitizing higher education through the already existing medium of National Service Scheme. A model of this nature cannot be realistic and operational unless NSS develops a vision and mission which legitimizes the model. Hence the researcher has attempted to formulate a development perspective for NSS incorporating values and concepts which are nationally and internationally accepted. The background of the study is prepared by tracing the history of community oriented education in India as well as the evolution of NSS. The researcher has analyzed a few available experiences of campus-community interaction in order to formulate a viable model which is probably acceptable to the UGC as well as the Ministry of HRD.

1.2.6 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are:

- To develop a conceptual framework for the process of communitizing education;
• To do a historical overview of community-oriented education in India;

• To trace the evolution of the philosophy of National Service Scheme, to critically examine its strengths and weaknesses as an instrument for communitizing education, and to propose a development perspective for it;

• To attempt a conceptual analysis of sustainability, participation, and empowerment in the context of communitizing education;

• To examine four significant experiments in communitizing education with a view to deriving learning outcome for realizing the goals of the study;

• To make an empirical study of the social and economic benefits which Nalpathimala as a partner village in development has gained;

• To develop a replicable model for communitizing education with special reference to colleges and universities.

Ideas pertaining to educational reform have a long gestation period in India. The idea of NSS took eighteen years to be evolved before it was put into practice in 1969. The idea of communitizing education may also take its own gestation period. But it can be accentuated through conceptual explorations and empirical studies. It is assumed that the model of communitizing education presented in this study may find less resistance on its way into the educational system because it is only an extension of an already accepted idea.
Case study is the approach used for critically identifying the steps and stages in the process of communitizing education. Four successful cases are examined for this purpose and guidelines for a replicable model are drawn.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods such as focus group discussion, prioritizing of benefits gained, and assessment of impact have been used in the context of one of the cases, namely Nalpathimala experiment. Nalpathimala is seen as a social laboratory for generating a number of insights which are utilized in developing the model presented in Chapter Fourteen. The fact that Govt. of India has recognized the work in Nalpathimala as relevant and meaningful through the award of Indira Gandhi NSS award (1993) to Mahatma Gandhi University, has been taken as a point of justification for drawing substantially from the experience here. The fact that it has stood the test of time (nine years now) is another reason for depending on the learning experiences from here.

All the four experiences presented in Section III of this study are well documented cases, and are fairly well known in NSS circles. The fact that there are striking commonalities (Chapter Eight) in the strategies and methods adopted by these agencies is seen as basis for the generalization implied in the formulation of a model (Chapter Ten).

For establishing the viability and desirability of communitizing education, it is necessary to prove that this is what Govt. of India and the UGC advocates. The method used for providing this is to present excerpts from the relevant documents such as policy statements and reports of
education commissions. Consequently the section on Annexures is slightly swollen, but it is hoped that it serves the purpose.

The method of Organization Development (OD) has been adopted in analyzing the limitations of NSS as it exists. OD needs the findings of a recently conducted evaluation to form the basis of the recommendations. The report submitted by Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) on the functioning of National Service Scheme (NSS) has been used for this purpose.

The focus of this study is to formulate strategies for communitizing the higher education system in India through the instrumentality of NSS. The study has come up with a number of recommendations for the ministry of Human Resource Development, the nodal agency for education as well as NSS.

1.2.8 Assumptions

Development, it is said, is an endogenous phenomenon. That is to say, it has to spring from within its cultural seeds. In the case of India, the concept of communitizing education has been part of the Indian tradition. But it has been set aside and trampled on as a result of historical forces as explained in the next chapter. It is in fact a dormant seed. It is assumed that the process of germinating a dormant seed is easier and wiser than genetically engineering a new seed.

Another assumption in this study is that the model of communitizing education which is developed here, is replicable and is relevant anywhere in India, in spite of the fact that our country is a most mysteriously diverse mosaic of social practices, customs, and manners based on castes, creeds, and languages. It is also assumed that there are lessons in the broad concepts
and practices even in developed countries which can help us to develop our own model.

It is also assumed that the recommendations emerging from the study have validity and usefulness even if Government of India and the educational planners of India turn a deaf ear to them. This is illustrated by Pauta Experiment where NSS is not involved in the communitizing process.

It is assumed that if the recommendations do not carry implications of large financial input, they are likely to be accepted for implementation by Govt. of India.

The forces of globalization have already started producing negative impacts on the rural masses as well as the campuses. Competition is replacing co-operation everywhere. Altruism and such noble concepts are increasingly seen as irrelevant. In a society where socio-economic marginalization and consequent alienation is rampant, these are dangerous trends. It is assumed that the educational planners will attach greater importance to deliberate efforts at communitizing education.

1.2.9 Limitations of the Study

This study has a built-in limitation, namely that it has to confine itself only those levels in the educational ladder where National Service Scheme is being implemented. At present it is the +2 level, graduate and postgraduate levels. However, while reviewing the philosophy and practice of education in our country, this limitation is not kept in view because at the conceptual level the entire educational system, from kindergarten to post-doctoral, should take the community into consideration.

Also, the study does not intend to prove empirically that communitizing education results in qualitative change in the communities concerned. This is because the focus of the present study is not on impact
evolution, but on the modality or process of communitizing. It wants to propose a model for this process, a model which is in consonance with our national ethos, our national system of education, the vision and objectives of NSS, and the proven strategies of community organization and development. However the socio-economic benefits which have accrued to the participating community are examined in the cases given in Section II.

1.2.10 Chapterization

The study is presented in four sections. Section I is essentially conceptual. It presents, in Chapter One, a conceptual framework for communitizing education, while Chapter Two presents the rationale of the present study, along with its objectives and methodology. Chapter Three seeks to establish that India’s educational tradition has always been community oriented. Chapters Four and Five are on National Service Scheme. These chapters together try to establish the appropriateness of NSS as a tool for communitizing education. Chapter Six presents a brief discussion, mostly at conceptual level, on three important dimensions of the process, namely sustainability, participation, and empowerment.

Section II is experiential. Four experiences drawn from different educational agencies are presented in Chapters Seven. The learning outcome from these experiences are examined in Chapter Eight.

Section III is devoted to the formulation of a model for communitizing education through NSS, and a set of recommendations for the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.

Section IV contains Annexures, followed by a select bibliography. Annexures, as already pointed out, contain mostly excerpts from the documents, which have been referred to, or quoted from. These documents have a vital relevance in this study because they establish, beyond question
that communitizing education is a process of value-addition which is in the mainstream of educational planning in India.

1.2.11 Conclusion

Communitizing education through NSS is an interdisciplinary effort. It has in it elements of community development, educational planning, management, training methodology and psychology of motivation. The end result is a package of recommendations which the Government of India may consider for implementation in view of the rationale which is sought to be established in this chapter.
Notes and References

1 Vivekananda Writes to You rev. ed (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978)

2 Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University, (Massachussetts : Harvard University Press, 1964) 1.

3 Clark Kerr, op. cit. 18-19.


5 A.P Melck “Prologue” Community Participation at UNISA (Pretoria : UNISA, 1998)

6 UGC: “University System and Extension as the Third Dimension: Report of the Review Committee appointed by the University Grants Commission” (New Delhi : UGC) 118. This document is given as Annexure A.

7 UGC, op. cit., 118.


A succinct presentation of some these realities in the form of a balance sheet is done by UNDP in India: The Road to Human Development. (New Delhi: 1997) (Reproduced in Annexure X)

“NSS has great potential and tremendous possibilities in terms of channelizing the untapped youth energy through well-organized youth activities”. IIPA Evaluation Report, Executive Summary, IV 1.10 (b) 3.