

Chapter 2

Higher Education in Developing Countries: Emerging Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Due to globalization of economic activities and increased scope of higher education, higher education has become a priority agenda for countries around the globe. In order to increase opportunities of higher education, institutions of higher education must enhance their quality and access through open and distance learning while following national and international standards. For developing countries, higher education opportunities through open and distance learning are important for economic prosperity and participation in global knowledge economy. Globalization has created numerous challenges and opportunities for higher education. These challenges are more significant for developing countries because of limited resources. At the same time, meeting these challenges is a top priority of developing world. This chapter examines numerous challenges faced by higher education in developing countries. The chapter also discusses how higher education institutions in developing world can use open and distance learning to cope up with these challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The success of a country in our global knowledge-based economy is significantly dependent on a well-developed system of higher education that provides equal opportunities to every citizen. This system must promote quality learning and emphasize excellence in both teaching and research. Education can contribute significantly to economic development. Individuals with higher levels of education have an edge over their counterparts. We are witnessing an unprecedented phase in human history when the knowledge has become the driver of economic growth. Knowledge has potential to replace physical capital as the source of present (and future) wealth. Technology is driving much of this process, with information technology, biotechnology, and other innovations.

As knowledge has become the resource, the knowledge generating systems should be the major area of public investment. Though governments in developing countries have started realizing the importance of knowledge, we find that this important sector has not attracted the required degree of investment in developing countries. One can see the data about the percentage of GDPs spent by developing countries on education as compared to developed countries. Educational and economic data suggest that in the present world economy, without substantial numbers of university-trained professionals a country cannot advance (Harvard, 2006). The worldwide concern for school education has led to tremendous rise in enrolment for schooling. It has generated further rush for the higher education. Hence the higher education in developing countries are under tremendous pressure to respond to this demand for higher education (Mundial, 2000). Developing world has no choice but to invest for the expansion and up gradation of their systems of higher education (Ved, 2007).

Higher education not only fosters the national economic development but also promotes cultural diversity, political democracy and trade (Uvalić-Trumbić & Daniel, 2016). The world economy is changing at a rapid pace and new developments are revolutionizing the education sector. The traditional educational systems have a national focus, predominantly under state controlled, centered around general education model, and focus on educating learners once in a life time. The new educational systems in the era of globalization are global, predominantly independent of state control, focus on lifetime learning of learners, and provides learner-centered education (Venkatasubramanian, 2002).

The changes happening in higher education has brought many challenges for the institutions based on traditional education systems and practices. Globalization is producing significant impact on higher education and posing significant new demands to enhance the ability of learners to access, assess, adopt, and apply knowledge, to

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