



TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ROLE OF LIBRARIES

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Abstract

Government of India initiated various campaigns and projects like ‘Digital India’, ‘Make in India’ for transforming India. There is a need of active participation of every citizen and community in the process to acquire goals in minimum time. Higher education and libraries have to play significant role in this transformation. Present paper defines and discusses related concepts and role of libraries in transformation of higher education.

Key words: Transforming, Higher education, Digital India, Make in India, Transformation, Library and Information Centers, Knowledge economy.

Introduction:

Recently the Government of India initiated ‘Digital India’ program. The basic objective of the program is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The action process of Transforming India accelerated with the cabinet resolution to constitute National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog. At the heart of the dynamics of transforming India lies a technology revolution and increased access to and sharing of information (PIB, 2015). In transforming India there is need to have and provide relevant, updated, and adequate information food security, health, democracy, population, education, family planning, youth empowerment, gender equality, environment etc. Higher education institutions and libraries can participate and contribute in transforming India.

India is formulating itself to enter the knowledge era and to obtain a leadership position. India is considered as a world leader amongst the developing countries in terms of economic sustainability and growth.

Transformation:

Global dictionary, defined the term transformation as “The act of transforming, or the state of being transformed; change of form or condition. Transformation is an action form of transforming or fact of being transformed (OUP, 1978). In an organizational context, transformation is a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. Transformation implies a basic change of character and little or no resemblance with the past configuration or structure (Business dictionary, 2016).

Areas of Transforming India:

According to Dr. A. P. J Abdul Kalam, there are five areas for transforming India where India has core competence viz.,

1. Agriculture and food processing;
2. Education and healthcare;
3. Information and communication technology;
4. Infrastructure development, which includes reliable and quality electric power, surface transport and infrastructure for all parts of the country including rural and urban areas under PURA;
5. Self-reliance in critical technologies (Scroll, 2016).

Need of transforming India:

Chinmya Mission (2016) pointed out the need of transforming India is as, “A nation with a magnificent past, India is notable on the world map today as the largest and most vibrant democracy, and a nation experiencing rapid economic development. India is sought-after for her cultural and spiritual depth, geographic and cultural diversity from snow-dusted mountains to sun-washed beaches, tranquil temples to feisty festivals, lantern-lit villages to software-supreme cities; it’s hardly surprising that this country has been dubbed the worlds most multidimensional.”

Knowledge economy:

Transforming India into the Knowledge economy is one the basic aim of 'Digital India'. Knowledge economy is an economy in which the generation, distribution and use of knowledge are the main drivers of growth, wealth creation and employment across all industries. Effective exploitation of information in organizations appears to be a distinguishing characteristic of this new socio-economic model (Chaudhry, 2016). The growth of the knowledge economy is being driven by business change and has put greater emphasis on the need for better management of institutional knowledge (Hayes, 2004).

Higher education, Universities and Knowledge economy:

Government policy and scholarly work have identified the growing role of higher education and research in the world-wide knowledge economy. The role of higher education is not limited to fostering the economic development of nations and providing opportunities for individuals, it extends also to promotion of cultural diversity, political democracy and trade. Emphasis is rightly placed on how higher education can better serve society and promote international cooperation (Marginson, 2007).

To compete successfully in the knowledge based economy of the 21st century, our country needs universities that not only produce bright graduates for export, but, which can also engage in sophisticated research in a number of scientific and scholarly fields and in the process sufficient manpower needed to man the expanding economy (Dange, 2016).

A university can be viewed as a knowledge factory creating new knowledge through research and by educating knowledge workers, both of which are essential for the knowledge economy (Hayes, 2004). There is clearly collusion with leading universities as higher education has become a global business. The branding of universities and faculty members is integral to the organization of academic enquiry. Claims to world-class standards depend on attracting 'the best' academics and forming alliances with elite universities elsewhere in the world, while recruiting the 'right' kinds of students. Universities play the same reputational games as companies, because they are a logical

consequence of market competition (Brown, 2008).

Basic terms in Knowledge economy:

The data, information, knowledge and libraries are the major terms in the knowledge economy. Data is an unorganized information i.e. unstructured facts and figures. Data can only become useful when it is combined with knowledgeable practitioners, often by interacting with other individuals or communities of practice.

Information is an organized or processed data that is timely and accurate. It is a power and power belongs to the people. Information is a vehicle that drives people to be better understanding that in turn induces sound judgment and decision making (Achitabwino, 2007).

Knowledge is information in action. It is an application of information which contextual, relevant and actionable. It is closely linked to doing and implies know-how and understanding. It is fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insight and grounded intuition. It is the capacity to act effectively.

Knowledge management is a set of processes, practices and management philosophies that exist to collect, process, store and make available the organizational knowledge that enables institutions like libraries and information centers to be more proficient and competitive in the delivery of their services. Knowledge management is, getting the right information to the right people at the right time, helping people, create knowledge and sharing and action on real information.

Libraries are there for proper management, provision and dissemination of such information and knowledge. This new initiative has created unprecedented opportunities for institutions that deal with information and knowledge. It is obvious that libraries have always been on the fore front of facilitating access to information and knowledge (Chaudhry, 2016).

Transformation of libraries:

The emergence of new technologies transformed libraries significantly, the transformation can be observed in resources as well as services. The traditional resources like books, rare books, Manual/ Print catalogues, Collection of printed theses/reports/conference proceedings will be transferred to E-books, E-

text archives, E-journals, Databases/ OPAC, E-theses/CD-ROM

databases/Digitallibraries/Institutional

Repositories respectively. The traditional services like Circulation of books, Collection development, Manual processing of books, Reference service and Bulletin Boards will be transferred to Providing access and download of electronic resources, Development of e-sources, Computerized processing, Searching databases for information Blogs / Websites and Social networking sites respectively.

Role of libraries in transformation of Higher education:

Libraries can contribute by fostering collaboration to achieve improved outcomes, making the best use of our resources and learning from best practice. Thus libraries can play following important roles in transformation.

i) Adding value to Information:

In transformation citizens of the country have to make efficient use of Information. The capability to recognize, access, assess, categorize and communicate knowledge is a core capability of a knowledge society. Libraries can bring citizens together to solve troubles by adding better value to the information.

Members of higher education institutions need to make effective use of information and information technology systems to create new knowledge. The role of library is not only to identify and acquire highly relevant information and to add value to that information by making it more useable but to assist our users to develop the capabilities to become learners for all time (Hayes, 2004).

ii) Information literacy:

Information literacy is a critical skill for every citizen who participates in transformation. Information literacy skills need to be commencing early, emphasized at point of need and reinforced regularly.

Hayes (2004) stated that "Libraries can work with suppliers to ensure that information provided to citizens is easy to use. Even when citizens have learned to access library resources, some academic staff assumes that the material that is provided to them comes free of charge on the web and it is in both our interest and that of publishers to jointly brand material to avoid the perception that we no longer have a role in information provision. Information literacy is a critical skill in the knowledge economy"

iii) Safeguard to cultural heritage:

Libraries are institutions in society that assists people to exercise their right to information and safeguard and provide access to cultural heritage.

iv) Creation of knowledge:

Libraries support academics in the creation of knowledge by developing and using systems and tools to support and facilitate the identification, capture and use of knowledge. Identifying barriers to access and developing plans to overcome impediments to information and knowledge creation wherever they exist.

v) Management of Information:

Existing information must be managed well "Knowledge originates and is applied in the minds of the knower's. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories, but also in the organizational routines, processes, practices and norms.

vi) Management of knowledge in organization:

Most of our experience is based on knowledge that is embedded in documents or repositories which is generally acquired at a cost to our institution. Beyond this, there is a range of knowledge that exists in our organizations that libraries could also provide the expertise to manage effectively (Hayes, 2004)

Making available the knowledge embedded in the organization by identifying and capturing the assets that already exist and providing access to this knowledge held in multiple sources. This includes assisting members to build reputation through alternative publishing models, thinking outside existing systems.

vii) Facilitate knowledge economy:

Content management, web based access to print based information, and use of skills in indexing, thesaurus construction etc to facilitate knowledge economy. Libraries can take advantage of the initiatives of KBE, KM, and social media by creating environments that facilitate collaboration with communities of users. A challenge in this is a move from rigidity to flexibility.

viii) Important partner in the information and knowledge scene:

This is an opportune time for libraries to reposition them to be seen as an important partner in the information and knowledge scene. While standards and tools are crucial and use of the smart technologies in a clever way is important, role of libraries in the new milieu will mainly depend on embracing the imperatives of

socialization of knowledge. Libraries are expected to take full advantage of social media such as wikis, blogs, and social networks. They must remain open to collaboration of users to take advantage of community wisdom. Some libraries appear to be very excited about this transformation for advancing KM and KBE while others appear to have apprehensions about the lack of control implied in the collaborative model.

Initiatives of the knowledge-based economy combined with the emergence of the discipline of knowledge management and unprecedented availability of social media tools make an excellent opportunity for libraries to become important partner in the knowledge scene. However, it requires quick and bold decisions on part of the community of information professionals to be responsive to the imperatives of the social library in order to take full advantage of the new opportunities (Chaudhry, 2016).

ix) Emphasis on standardization:

A major strength of libraries has always been an emphasis on standardization where predetermined structures played an important role in organization of information resources and design and development of services and programs.

x) Fostering deeper collaboration:

Information professionals and were highly dependent on experience and knowledge of professionals. For example, bibliographic community has successfully developed and used controlled vocabularies, classification schemes, and metadata creation rules. These tools and standards were always used with the objectives of consistency and uniformity. Therefore, libraries always tried to keep this work to highly trained and experienced LIS professionals. The new initiatives place an emphasis on collective wisdom encouraging participation of users in library work which was always done by professionals.

xi) Supporting knowledge workers:

There have been some concurrent developments in the information field that make it easy for libraries to prepare for more active role in supporting knowledge workers. Notable among these developments are use of social media, social software, and social networking websites; sometimes referred to as Web 2.0 tools. A closer look at these tools indicates that it is not only the use of technology but a change in attitude that is

required to take full advantage of the potential of social media for supporting KM.

Conclusion:

Ideas, innovations, creativity and knowledge are the foundation of transformation of the nation. The prosperity and progress of a nation is depend on availability, access and adaptability of information and knowledge to solve particular problems of the country. Libraries strongly support development targets on access to information. The contribution of libraries in transforming India is essential as key stakeholders providing access to information, education, research and social participation. It is certain that Higher education institutions in general and libraries in particular could play vibrant role in transforming India.

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