

Globalization and 21st Century Higher Education: Innovation in Managing Global Challenges

OPJU BUSINESS REVIEW
11-22, (2022)
Published online in OPJU
University
(<http://www.opju.ac.in/opjubr/>)

Janardan Paudel

Department of English, Janamaitri Multiple College & Nepal Open University, Kathmandu,
For further information, please contact Janardan Paudel: janardanpaudel245@gmail.com

Abstract

Today globalization has affected different aspects of human life. If someone has to do any activity, it is necessary to think of globalization and its dimensions such as neoliberalism, technology, social changes and global challenges caused by globalization. Moreover, this twenty first century is governed by technology and education is also being related to e- governance which needs to use high level of internet connected modern technology. So, the purpose of this study is to analyse twenty first century education in the era of globalization and what innovations are being made to manage global challenges. Qualitative research design was adopted for narrative inquiry following interpretive paradigm. This study found out that people of this twenty first century era of globalization are not free to do things by themselves. The people are under the grip of unseen global forces looking at them from distant places. So, new innovations are being made to tackle the novel types of global challenges. The implication of this study underline that are new technologies applied in education and traditional systems of education such as classroom education systems are being replaced by digital and online education. Education is not only for reading and writing but it is for skills and knowledge to face global challenges of job markets for earning livelihood needed for sustainable development. Furthermore, its implications are that globalization and technology along with neoliberalism have continuously putting forces on social change and so is education sector.

Key Words: *Globalization, Neoliberalism, Technology, Innovation in Education, Sustainable Development and Social Change.*

Introduction

In the past, let us say before 1990s, education was easier than that of today. It was because people did not have to move from place to place and education was to give identity to people as learned people. They would do own work of teaching, farming or business at their own locality. But now life style has been more complex due to globalization and freedom of movement. Regarding such type of situation, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations [UNESCO] (2015) has mentioned, “What education do we need for the 21st century? What is the purpose of education? How should learning be organized?”

The world is changing- education must also change. Societies everywhere are undergoing deep transformation” (p. 3).” As mentioned by UNESCO, the model of this research study is also fixed same. This is a matter of great importance to find out the type of education people need today and what process is to be followed to obtain it. Similarly, there are global changes of societal changes and education model needs to be designed accordingly.

Furthermore, regarding present challenges, Abod- Her (2013) has stated that people need skills and competencies achieved through education so that universities are considered to develop societies with highly trained manpower; but for the process of social progress and economic

growth, university education sector is facing extraordinary challenges at the beginning of 21st century (p. 14). It is to mention that as a result of societal changes, universities have to change their terms and condition accordingly. Moreover, globalization has forced to make similarity in higher education along with the use of modern technology.

Similarly, Paudel (2021) has also pointed out, “Development of technology, media and the internet, has made it easy for the flow of issues, make collaboration and come to the solution of problems. This situation has also directed higher education to make more homogenized in response to globalization” (p. 2). In addition, the main problem of today’s higher education sector is how to make it homogenized with respect to the global trends of developed countries; this issue is main challenge of 21st century higher education.

In addition, privatization has forced to change the model of higher education with innovative model to manage global challenges. About such type of situation, Lichy and Enstram (2015) have mentioned that it is necessary to make efforts of business model innovation of higher education to improve the learning experience of the students and make it relevant to the dynamic environment of the 21st century (p. 119). Also, for innovation of higher education management, both internal and external resources need to be used for the enhancement of multi-sided business model. Moreover, today business model of higher education is going to be changed from traditional physical model to the present digital online model. Actually, this situation has created global challenges and innovation is needed to manage such type of global challenges.

Because of the increasing trends of globalization, there are many problems and challenges concerned with higher education institutions and universities across the globe. Regarding global context of learning UNESCO (2015) has mentioned paradoxes with intensification of economic globalization to reduce global poverty; also there is low employment growth and rise in the rate of youth unemployment; economic globalization has widened inequalities between and within countries; educational systems have contributed to these inequalities by ignoring the educational needs of students (p. 15). As mentioned by UNESCO there are gaps between needs of students and applied systems in higher education.

More importantly, the problem statement of this study is “What model of innovative education do we need to manage 21st century global challenges?” Furthermore, educational systems, as brought into practice today, have reproduced inequalities. Another essential point is how equality among people is obtained through higher education. Moreover, higher education today is not for employment to many learners, because of their low socio-economic status, which need to be addressed.

The purpose of this study is to analyse globalization and 21st century higher education. More specifically the objectives of this study are: (1) to apply innovative policies in higher education (2) to manage global challenges through higher education and (3) to find major impact of globalization in higher education sector.

The research questions of this study are: (1) How should higher education be managed for the learners of 21st century? (2) Why is it necessary to develop innovative learning model in higher education today? and (3) What are some of the impacts of globalization in higher education sector? This study has got great significance to develop higher education systems at present for 21st century learners. This study has focused on innovative learning process with the use of learning technologies related to global job markets. In other words, students, teachers and

policy makers will be aware of the needs of skills to be cultivated in the learners rather than only study on surface level. This study follows qualitative method with design of narrative inquiry. The data are collected through open-ended interview and document analysis. The participants are professors and policy makers involved in higher education sector, in universities. The area of the study is Kathmandu, Nepal.

The review of related literature is made on the themes globalization, higher education for 21st century learners, neoliberalism, technology and theoretical background. The review made in this study is as follows:

Globalization

Today it is a kind of discourse among people that people are living in an era of globalization. Furthermore, it is necessary to what globalization is. The clear answer is found from Knight and De Wit (1999), "Globalization is described as flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas across borders, as it affects each country in a different way due to nation's individual history, traditions, cultures and priorities" (as cited in Mishra, 2013, p. 9). Furthermore, globalization is combination of different kinds of processes, systems and items. Also it has made flow of everything across borders of different countries. Similarly, Ritzer (2010) has also mentioned for globalization. "Globalization is a transplanetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multi-directional flows of people, objects, places and information, as well as the structures they encounter to the barriers, or expedite, those flows".

In his writing, Ritzer has also supported to the processes of the flow of people and ideas which involve modern technologies, too. This makes known that every activity is open now but not hidden.

Internationalization and Globalization of Higher Education

Globalization has produced the situation that educational policies of a country are not under the control of the nation state. The universities of a country have to face global challenges and they are going to the trends of internationalization of higher education. Regarding this situation, Sidhu (2011) has stated, "The processes of internalization and globalization have become salient features of the contemporary world, particularly in the economic sector, scientific and technological competition, communication media or tourism." (p. 11). Also these two processes are going together to run the present higher education. Looking more closely at these two systems, Sidhu (2011) has stated, "Internationalization of higher education is seen as one of the way a country responds to the impact of globalization, yet at the same time respects the individuality of the nation" (p. 12). It means that there is impact of globalization in higher education sector and the process of internationalization of higher education shows response to globalization. Similarly, Knight (1993) has described internationalization of higher education as the process of integrating an international / intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service functions of the institution (as cited in Sidhu, 2011, p. 13). In addition, because of globalization, there is mobility of students in selected colleges and universities all over the world which has expanded internationalization of higher education.

Challenges of 21st Century Higher Education

Due to emerging trends of present civilization due to globalization and development of technology, higher education is not free from challenges.

Access and Equity. Regarding challenges in higher education, Agarwal (2010) has mentioned, “Issues of access and equity are central to the higher education debates in countries around the world. The expansion of higher education and growing private share had obvious impact upon access and equity” (p. 39). At the present time, due to global flow of students in foreign universities and colleges, enrollment of students seems to have been increased. But the expansion of colleges has not supported to the skills needed for employment in global job market. Moreover, the disadvantaged and vulnerable group of people is still deprived of higher education. Furthermore, this situation has created inequality among people in societies and communities. This situation shows problems in equity in nation states for inhabitants.

Quality Assurance. Furthermore, Khanna (2012) has mentioned quality assurance as a challenge for 21st century higher education and has written that internationalization of higher education has raised the issue of quality assurance which also has been the buzz word of this knowledge driven society (pp. 251- 253). In general term, quality assurance is known as main challenge in 21st century higher education. In other words, the employers do not accept people for work according to their certificates but they require skills. So, innovation in higher education is needed to manage global challenges of societal changes. Regarding this situation in Nepalese higher education sector, University Grants Commission has stated that although the want of people for higher education is increasing rapidly, the enrollment rate of students has grown and the number of higher education providing institutions is increasing, this expansion has not been well managed till now (p.3). Similarly, this situation is known as a global problem. Furthermore, the lack of management in higher education institutions has affected in the quality desired by the learners of 21st century. So, for quality education, innovation in managing global challenges and establishing world class universities have been in urgent need today.

Furthermore, regarding quality assurance, University Grants Commission [UGC] (2018) has stated, “Quality assurance is the activity of providing evidence needed to establish quality in work and the activities that require good quality are being performed effectively to provide confidence and satisfy the requirements for quality” (p. 40). Similarly, it needs to be followed that quality in education will be proved by the rate of students’ employment after they have completed the degree. The quality of education of a programme in a university will be thought to be agreeable when a learner can transform enhanced knowledge with an acceptable level of professional development to compete with others in the global markets.

Globalization and Privatization. Today, globalization has made everything changed. What situation people saw and experienced thirty years ago, now cannot be evaluated them as the same of that time. Many activities have changed after the changes occurred in 1990s, since the collapse of Soviet Communism, and the world entered the global era. Regarding such type of situation, Ritzer (2010) has pointed out, “Globalization is increasingly omnipresent” (p.2). Albrow (1996) has remarked, “We are living in a- or even the global age (as cited in Ritzer,

2010, p. 2). Similarly, Bauman (2003) has pointed out, “Globalization is very clearly a very important change: it can even be argued that it is the most important change in human history (as cited in Ritzer 2010, p. 2). Furthermore, Ritzer (2010) has argued, “This is reflected in many domains, but particularly in social relationships and social structures, especially those that are widely dispersed geographically” (p. 2). As depicted here, the changes are that previously government owned institutions have gone for privatization. It means that government in a country tries to take less financial burden of educational institutions. Due to this reasons there are many more private colleges in a country than government funded colleges. Universities have been grown as in affiliating nature.

Furthermore, Ritzer (2010) has acknowledged that INGOs have arisen as part of globalization; but when neoliberalism spread around the world, it has become integral part of economic and political globalization and made the functions once handled by the nation-state scaled back or eliminated (p.166).

As mentioned here, this is nature as well as characteristic feature of globalization, which has promoted privatization. On the other hand, regarding privatization of education, UNESCO (2015) has focused on the impacts of privatization by writing that it can have positive effect on some groups of people as it increases learning opportunities but it can also have negative effects on some other social groups because it produces insufficient or inadequate monitoring or regulation (p.73). In this way, privatization may be a challenge for the present world because it prioritizes survival of the fittest.

Technology and Innovation in Higher Education

At the present era of globalization, higher education is not believed for only the activity of talking; but it needs to have some real functions. On the other hand, delivery of education needs to have made evidence based by the use of technology today. Because of globalization, people are aware of global trends and higher education is in transition from elite to mass education and it is the most important feature of 21st century higher education. Regarding the situation of 21st century higher education, The Economist (2005a) has claimed that with growing student mobility and increasing demand of highly skilled workforce in global labour market, higher education has grown international so that there is high level of intense competition in higher education (as cited in Agarwal (2010, p. 26). Based on the ideas of The Economist, the skills needed for global competition for employment can be taken as global challenges and there is need of innovative management to face the challenges of 21st century higher education. Furthermore, Agarwal (2010) has pointed out that higher education provides skills to the people needed for competition to discharge technical and economic roles and these roles obviously depend on the nature of country’s economy and the use of technology in it (p. 27). Undoubtedly, innovation in managing global challenges is based on technology to be used today. Higher education has to provide the learners with high skills by the use of innovative technology so that learners can have capacity to compete in the global job market. Regarding present need of innovation, Agarwal (2010) has stated that information technology (IT) has accelerated the process of globalization and consequently the entire society is abruptly transforming into something new and unexpected; as a result, social system is vibrated due to the system of globalization,

knowledge economy and IT explosion (p. 270). So, as a process, to keep global challenges in equilibrium, innovation in management of higher education is needed to keep up with the globalization process of 21st century.

Theoretical Perspective

In general term, a theoretical perspective denotes how the world is viewed and adjacent functions performed. A view of theory keeps a research person in a right direction. Regarding theory Sekaram (1992) has mentioned that theoretical framework is the foundation on which the entire thesis (a research work) is based through interviews, observations and literature survey (as cited in Wolff and Pant (2000, p. 17). Regarding present theme of this study, the theoretical framework of this study is termed as “Social Change Theory”. It is because people and societies have changed drastically due to modern technology. Regarding this situation, Kofman and Youngs (2007) have pointed out “Two of the central dimensions of diverse processes of globalization are technology and social change. These have presented significant challenges and have also reflected substantive development related to economy and political affiliation” (p. 8). Based on the ideas of Kofman and Youngs the theoretical perspective of this research study is ‘social change theory’ along with modern technology.

Methodology

This is qualitative research as Creswell and Creswell (2018) have mentioned “It uses words rather than numbers”. This research study covers human problems and data are collected from participants in naturalistic way using interview and document analysis and data are analysed in holistic form. The data are interpreted and described in words and sentences along with verification. Analysis is made thematically. This study follows constructivism world view following interpretive paradigm. This is a narrative research study. The participants of this study are professors and policy makers of higher education in Nepal. There were fifteen participants selected for this study for sampling and collect the data.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis and discussion are made here descriptively using thick language in words and sentences. There are no any numerical data in this study. Also, the analysis and discussion are carried out research question- wise. In this context, the first research question of this study is, “How higher education should be managed for the learners of 21st century? The participants, who are professors and policy makers in Nepal have conveyed their views effectively on the themes as follows:

Flexibility in Higher Education

Regarding the management of higher education, a policymaker showed his responses as follows: There is no more access to higher education for all people at present. The learners of 21st century need flexible type of study as they do work and study side by side. For this purpose, distance education and open learning systems are in need. Education should be managed for knowledge and skill by applying multiple channels in higher education.

The view of the policy maker seems to be the reasonable way to meet the challenges faced in higher education sector. There are global effects on higher education sector. Although there are many rich people in Nepal, they have developed by hook and crook system so that their economic growth has not added to the economic development of the country. Regarding this situation, Joshi (2018) has claimed, “Nepal would not be able to fulfill people’s aspirations for prosperity by perpetuating the status quo scenario of economic growth because Nepal is not only the second poorest country in Asia but it is also growing slower than others” (p. 13). Mainly, higher education is for economic growth of a country. Similarly, to follow the track of economic growth, higher education has to follow flexibility in education systems. Also, the use of multiple channels means the use of technology in higher education in comparison to traditional system of education. Moreover, higher education management needs to have made for distance and online mode of education.

Modification in Higher Education Management

Furthermore, regarding management of education for the learners of 21st century, a professor has shown his view as follows:

Management for quality education is a must for the learners of 21st century. Particularly, technical and professional education are to be applied for the learners today. Similarly, policies should make commitment to modify present higher education system to improve competency among the learners to get employment globally.

As mentioned above by a professor, good management is in need to manage higher education system at present. In the past only theoretical system of education was in practice but now the world population needs novelty and innovation, new methods, idea or introduction of new things. Regarding such type of situation in Nepalese higher education, Joshi (2018) has written that the centralized curriculum and examinations have restricted the role of the faculty and campuses to delivery of programmes following the prescribed textbooks leaving no space for them to innovate for better meeting the demand of the work place (p. 21). In this way. Innovation in management needs to transform higher education for job oriented with skills and knowledge. So, the views of both groups of participants have focused on social change theory. Furthermore, education should be related to the needs of society. Society is in transformation phase from theoretical aspects to technological mode of lifestyle. Similarly, higher education needs to be taken care according to changes occurred in society.

Similarly, the second research question for this study is “Why is it necessary to develop innovative learning model in higher education today?” Regarding this question, the respondents have given their response on the themes as follows:

Innovation in Higher Education

Innovative learning model in higher education is needed because education should be for productive purpose. Higher education should have excellent setting of quality for market. For this purpose, universities should come ahead for ranking in the globalized context. Moreover, universities should be free from political grip (A Professor).

As shown above, higher education should be for economic development, social advancement and job opportunity; these are the characteristics of productive higher education, which also

support for social change. Similarly, globalization is thought to be economic globalization. With respect to this situation, UNESCO (2015) has stated that humanity has entered a new phase in its history with increasingly rapid developments in science and technology to have sustainable way of higher education; and making this possible should be the fundamental purpose of education and learning in the twenty first century (p. 84). As mentioned here, human beings are in dynamic mode of lifestyle due to the use of science and technology. It means that any work needs to be productive so that higher education is for sustainable development of people. Furthermore, management in higher education should be related to economic growth of both people and the state.

Characteristics of Higher Education Model

Similarly, a policy maker said:

Higher education should be managed for the provision of accessibility, affordability and excellence (A Policy Maker).

The policy maker's view is towards privatization of higher education as found at present. In fact, private education is very costly and the majority of poor people are out of the access of higher education. Furthermore, the learners of higher education should be excellent in skill for job opportunities. Mishra (2013) has mentioned that globalization has enhanced economic interdependence, increased cultural influence, rapid advances of information technology, and novel governance and geopolitical challenges; the traditional contributors of economic development and economic power such as material resources and production capabilities have been replaced by knowledge and information resulting in knowledge economy (p. 8). Although globalization has promoted to privatization and it has also contributed to the development of knowledge, it has not been accessible to common population of the world, which needs to have been managed.

Impacts of Globalization in Higher Education

Furthermore, the third research question of this study is "What are some of the impacts of globalization in higher education sector"? Regarding this question, the responses are as follows:

Impacts of globalization are access to knowledge and information as well as openness of higher education policies, multi university concepts, wider public involvement, expansion of higher education through private institutions, narrow social justice and use of ICT in higher education. (Policy Maker)

As mentioned here, most significant impact of globalization is that of openness. Every policy is open these days and nothing is hidden. This situation has made higher education of higher or lower rank. Because of privatization and ICT, wider public participation is found in higher education and this needs more effective management than that in the past. Regarding this situation, UNESCO (2015) has pointed out that there are issues in formation of policies in higher education in this complex world and greater attention is to be paid in education policy to knowledge (p. 83). So openness model of globalization has forced to create new innovative policies in universities and their colleges.

In fact, globalization has made Nepalese higher education weaker in the global scenario. It has made educational policies as engines to deliver quality education and focused on the needs of multidisciplinary courses along with independent education systems for generation of

competition.

In the case of Nepal, globalization has, in fact, made higher education behind other developed countries. Recently, globalization has forced to commence higher education through online mode and students have to get the opportunities to select courses according to their needs and interests. Also, education systems need to have made free and autonomous to face competition in global trends. To verify modern education, Long (2001) has written that development is dependent on the transfer of technology as well as international capital in promoting change and social construction of society according to societal changes (169). In this way, every aspect of this study supports to social change due to advancement of human civilization. Also, new social construction needs new type of innovation in managing higher education.

Findings

The findings of this study are based on the discussion and analysis as mentioned above. From the above analysis and discussion, the findings of this study are relevant to the present 21st century people and societies. The findings obtained from the first research question is that the learners of this 21st century need flexible type of education rather than rigid management of traditional systems. It is found that online education with distance mode is in demand for the learners of 21st century.

Regarding this concept, Government of Nepal (2019) has focused on changes in curriculum to make it relevant in global trends, changes in general higher education institutions into technical institutions, competency-based education, use of technology for open and distance education as well as for the establishment of innovation centers (pp.-25- 39). These ideas prove that higher education needs to be changed according to social changes and learners' needs. Moreover, technical and professional educational systems are on demand.

Similarly, the findings from the second research question of this study are that innovative learning systems in higher education and productivity in higher education is counted. Similarly, learners need excellent quality of higher education based on global trends. More importantly, accessibility, affordability and excellence are the main activities to be managed in higher education sector. Likewise, according to Lowe and Neubauer (2019) globalization in this view is often viewed as outside conventional and accepted notions of restraint and character—a term that for many calls forth a process that is proceeding recklessly and without measure or control; or, framed somewhat differently, one can suggest that the ideological drivers of globalization in turn also influence the ideological interpretations of the international or internationalization (p.11). As these views, higher education needs to be managed to make it of international standard which will be different from more traditional systems.

In addition, the findings from the third research question of this study related to the impacts of globalization, which is a burning issue of the present higher education sector. The findings are that globalization has done many things in higher education sector. It has provided access to knowledge and information to many people all round the world. More significantly, the impact found from globalization is that of openness of policies, which has forced to follow similar trends in higher education. Next impact of globalization found at present is expansion of higher education through private institutions. In other words, globalization and its forces have reduced investment in higher education to be made by government side. In turn, this situation has promoted private higher education institutions barring entry of low-income group of people.

Similarly, another impact of globalization on higher education is the use of ICT in developed countries and same is needed in poor countries but it is much costlier for poor nations. Regarding present need of education, Government of India (2020) has focused on holistic development of learners and stated, “The key overall thrust of curriculum and pedagogy reforms across all stages will be to move the education system towards real understanding and towards learning how to learn- and away from the culture of rote learning as is at present” (p. 12.) Global forces of education have forced to make education in terms of creative and critical learning. Furthermore, Government of India has added, “The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills (p.12).

As mention in Indian education policy to develop creative form of education is of great importance. So it is necessary to address the impacts of globalization to reform higher education management with innovative steps to make balance of global challenges.

Conclusion

This research study relates to 21st century higher education with respect to globalization. At the present era of globalization, there are many challenges in higher education. Some of the challenges are transformation of education from traditional rote learning systems to development of creativity in higher education. Furthermore, changes in education policies are in need to support social changes. For such situation, Long (2001) has mentioned that the need of research today concerns with the requirement of new analytical insights of social differentiation (p.236). To support present societies in need of new dimensions from education sector need more fields than that in the past. This study shows that education policies need to apply new methods and ideas as innovative process. For global challenges, Long (2001) has mentioned changes in production, work, economic life, appearance of new social movements, as well as the issues of knowledge science and technology (p. 215). With respect to these points, innovative learning model in higher education needs to have been applied. Similarly, 21st century learners need flexibility in higher education; they need online and distance mode of education so that learners can attend classes according to their own time, conveniently.

In addition, neoliberalism has provided flexibility in the movement of people all over the world. Consequently, as the impact of globalization, people have got access to more knowledge and information from all-round the world in no time; and the policy of openness has great impact on higher education. Moreover, globalization promoted privatization so that there is massification of higher education through private institutions. These all activities are concerned with social changes occurring at present. Regarding social changes, Hunt and Collaner (2017) have stated, “The rate of social change has gradually gained momentum through the course of human social development. Social change has behaved much like a snowball rolling down a hill. Accelerating change has been the development of rapid transportation and communication” (p. 73). As shown above, social changes are inevitable because people have entered this digital era crossing over from the Stone Age to the industrial revolution. More changes may have got possibilities to take place in the future which human beings are compelled to welcome.

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