GLOBALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION: EMERGING HR CHALLENGES AND BENCHMARKING ISSUES BEFORE UNIVERSITIES IN 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The complexion of Higher Education sector underwent a sea change in the last two decades due to Globalization. Higher education, science, and technology have always been international endeavors, but have acquired new dimensions and features in recent years due to Globalization. As a result, studies on Globalization of Higher Education are gaining importance against the backdrop of numerous changes that have taken place in communications and Information Technology (IT). Internationally, majority of the institutions offering Higher Education are making attempts to revise their orientations and strategies in the light of the interplay of these Global influences. This has serious implications for academicians as well. The present research article throws light on the emerging Human Resources (HR) and benchmarking challenges before the Higher Education Institutions and suggests effective strategies to compete successfully in the Global Education arena.

Keywords: Globalization, Virtual Education, Educational Franchising, Electronic Document Management (EDM), General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and Benchmarking

The phenomenon of Globalization transformed world trade, communications and economic structure in the 21 century. There is an increasing body of research revealing that the pressures of Globalization have major implications for various facets of society including Higher education (Scott (2000), Schwartzman (2002), Wolf (2002) & Kruss, Glenda and Andre Kraak, 2002). Due to Globalization, people around the world are closely connected to each other, Information and money are flowing more quickly than ever and Goods and services produced in one part of the world are increasingly available in all other parts of the world. As a result, student options are no longer constrained by boundaries and it paved the way for the emergence of new internet based borderless virtual education, distance learning and educational franchising (Phillips, 2001). It is against this background that Higher education institutions operating in countries like America, UK, Australia, New Zealand, European Union (EU) and various other developed countries are trying to readjust to the new challenges and emerging Human Resource (HR) structures. Advanced countries responded to these pressures of Globalization rather more successfully with their vast resources but the developing countries are still making efforts to readjust both to the quickening phase of International exchange of students and to the Global reforms in Higher Education sector that are taking place from time to time (World Bank Report).This enabled many students from different parts of the world including the developing countries to study in a country other than the host country where world class global education is available at lower cost. This created a competition among the universities worldwide in attracting the International students. In this context, US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and few other countries emerged as natural educational destinations for student community world wide, by offering world-class Global education for Under Graduate and Post Graduate studies. Globally, majority of the universities are endeavoring to function as "service providers" standing at the heart of knowledge society aiming to deliver superior customer service to the student customer base. Student satisfaction gained importance globally in all educational institutions which was hitherto not focused and has a bearing on HR administration and benchmarking practices of the universities (Brennan, Mc Gonagale).

Globalization and HR aspect of University administration:

It is also argued that these contemporary pressures of Globalization arising out of new communications, Information Technology (IT) and scientific progress will have tremendous bearing on Modern University curriculum, classroom management, input delivery systems and call for a new breed of academic community. Class room situations are becoming increasingly dynamic and conventional strategies are becoming irrelevant. Research reveals that to meet the forces of Globalization successfully, teaching community has to shed its traditional mindset and make corresponding adjustments with respect to their role requirements and performances to deal with the new Global challenges of Higher education. Figure 1 displays a general learning process design framework (Mandviwalla and Hovav, 1996) for a Global Human Resources (HR) administration model. The model relates factors like pedagogy, communication channels, context and technology to various processes and establishes learning outcomes. The authors observed that this model becomes the basis for other designing models in the global context. The key element that ties the framework together is

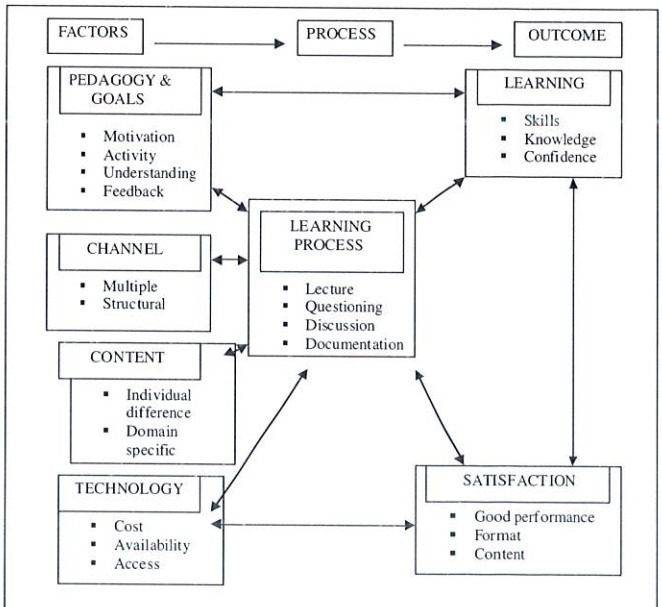


Figure 1: LEARNING PROCESS FRAMEWORK MODEL
Mandviwalla and Hovav, 1996
Source: http://www.sbm.temple.edu/~ahovav/proc5.html

learning process which includes lectures, questioning and discussions.

Several research studies indicate that one of the important tasks before the Human Resources (HR) administration is the cost minimization at every stage, so as to meet the investment cost in bringing in technology to the classroom. Internationally majority of the universities are doing away with the distribution of classroom document process and are replacing with Electronic Document Management (EDM) technology. Important documents such as classroom assignments, syllabi, reading supplements, lecture notes and other related documents are circulated through EDM and World Wide (WWW) Web technology. Examples of EDM include Filenet, Canofile, Image Gen and MARS. According to Spurgeon (2001), the potential benefits of Electronic Document Management include:

- Lower cost of storage
- Improved communication
- Data any time any place retrieval capabilities
- Distant collaborative work
- Improved student satisfaction
- Improved quality of Information
- Preserving historical records
- Improved comprehension and readability by including multimedia such as graphics, voice ,video and hyperlinks to various documents
- Recording and sharing of lively discussions to enhance creativity

Several research studies conducted by various experts on the Human Resources (HR) effectiveness of university administration revealed that there is a relationship between the Electronic Data Management (EDM) technology used by Instructors and the Human Resources (HR) effectiveness. (Laurillard, (2000), De Wit, Hans (2002) &Hayes, Dennis, and Robin Wynyard 2002) It also revealed that this has implications for the Human Resources (HR) administration of the universities. There is an increasing body of research evidence indicating that globally,

Table I: The Redesigned Documents Process

Activities/Tasks to be performed by the Teaching community	Traditional Process	Redesigned Process in the Global context
Creation of Documents	Instructor creates a paper document and distributes in the class	Instructor creates a document on the world wide web WWW.
Storage of Documents	Documents are stored at the instructor's office	Documents are stored electronically relieving the storage burden
Organization of Documents	Storing in a sequence	Storage by Hyperlinks
Transmission to students	Manual delivery in class	Available on the WWW any time any place
Retrieval of Documents	Difficult if Lost	Any time any place electronically
Manipulation	Limited	Multimedia manipulations possible
Updates	Limited and costly	As needed at little cost on the WWW.
Disposition	Ad-hoc	Simple archiving and removal

Source: Source: http://www.sbm.temple.edu/~ahovav/proc5.html

Universities are spending huge amounts of money on training programs of the Instructors so as to reorient them to Electronic Document Management (EDM) methods and usage of technology in the classroom. Faculty development programs are conducted by various universities on WebCT and Blackboard platform for online Instruction. Free online training is offered to the teachers of all universities by Blackboard.com to enable them learn. The role requirements of the instructors and the skills needed to disseminate the classroom inputs have changed remarkably. Table-I (Redesigned document process) and Table-II (Comparison of traditional document processing and modern document processing) display the dynamic role requirements of the teaching community in terms of the tasks performed by them and Human

Table II: Comparison of Traditional Document processing and Modern Document Processing

Problems	Objectives
Lead time needed to prepare and distribute the class room material	Reduced lead time needed to prepare, distribute and receive
Impractical to update documents that have been distributed	Provides up to date material Reduces document errors
Manage delivery and receipt	Tracks the delivery and receipt Reduces class time spent on delivery and receipt
File and retrieval time Duplication and storage	Reduces labor and cost involved in documents preparation
Medium of paper limiting	Increases the richness of the class material
Type and amount of feedback	Improves feedback delivery to students
Difficult to share	Increases accessibility Increase sharing

Source: http://www.sbm.temple.edu/~ahovav/proc5.html

Resources (HR) implications in the present Global scenario.

Globalization and Changing scenario of Higher Education:

The global higher education scenario is changing as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are providing educational services across the international borders to meet the need in other countries. Many educators opined that knowledge has been an integral part of society, with a high degree of mobility of the students, teachers and scholars. It is also observed that the demand for higher education has been increasing steadily for years. A recent study (Larsen et al, 2002) estimated that the value of trade in educational services was about $US 30 billion in 1999 and will cross $ US 70 billion by 2006. This figure includes only international students studying abroad and does not include other types of education and represents only a small portion of the current level of trade. The future market is growing and this is one of the reasons why education is targeted by General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) as one of the major service sectors. Therefore, It becomes important that educators are cognizant of the impact of trade liberalization on higher education and make efforts to maximize the benefits and opportunities, and at the same time, minimize the threats to a robust and quality based higher education system. The survey also revealed

that Higher education is emerging as a viable service industry in the next two decades. In this context, General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) defined four ways in which Higher education service can be traded, which is known as 'modes of supply'. Table-III (Modes of supply) displays the four modes. These four modes of trade apply to all service sectors including higher education.

Table III: Modes of Supply

Mode of supply	Explanation	Examples in Higher Education	Size/Potential of the market
1.Cross border supply	Provision of service where a service crosses the border (does not require the physical movement of the consumer)	1) Distance Education 2) E- learning 3) Virtual Universities	1.Currently relatively a small market 2.Seem to have great potential through the usage internet technology
2.Consumption abroad	Provision of service involving the movement of the consumer to the country of supplier	Students who go to another country to study	Largest share of the global market for education services
3.Commercial Presence	The service provider establishes or has presence of commercial facilities in another country in order to render service	1. Local branch or satellite campuses. 2. Twinning partnerships. 3. 3.Franchising arrangements with local institutions	1. Growing interest &strong potential use for future growth. 2. Controversial as it sets international rules on foreign investment.
4.Presense of natural persons	Persons traveling to another country on a temporary basis to provide service	Professors&researchers working abroad	Potentially a strong market given the emphasis on mobility of professionals

Source: NCITE (2001): National Committee for International Trade in Education, USA

Globalization and Virtual Education Challenge:

The thrust of the forces of Globalization of Higher education paved the way for the emergence of virtual education (Knight, 2002). Some hail it as a new paradigm and few others view it as new mode of 21st century learning process. Virtual universities are built directly on the computer networks and offer online education. Many institutions are taking up online education because of the economies in staff costs, increased access and Internationalization spirit. Once a course is created it can be repeated to the indefinite number of students without further staff intervention. In reality, Virtual education is different from the conventionally face to face modes of knowledge dissemination and calls for a specialist skills and roles. It also implies new training and development systems to enable them learn effectively.

There are few Global virtual universities which claim to undertake all operations online right from student admissions to teaching, learning and assessment. Jones International University (USA based) and International Management centers Association (UK based) are two such institutions. The second group consists of the traditional distance education providers.

Due to Globalization, Efforts were made to offer educational opportunities collectively (as a consortia). This initiative culminated in the formation of worldwide universities network (with 5 American and 6 British Universities) and Global University alliance (with 9 Universities and operating in 4 continents). Virtual educational projects are emerging as an innovative mode of delivery and are envisaged at various levels by a majority of universities and community colleges. These projects are operating at regional, national and international levels. Sometimes at regional levels, virtual projects may link a number of institutions particularly in remote regions. Examples include,

- University of the Arctic which links universities in Russia, Scandinavia, Finland and University of Highlands and Islands project. This project links a number of other education colleges in remote parts of Scotland.
- At national level, a growing number of virtual universities are planned worldwide, for example, the Finish Virtual University and Virtual Polytechnic, the Canadian Virtual University (linking 7 institutions) and UK's e-university, (a holding company which include more than 165 universities).
- In addition to these virtual projects a wide range of networks both formal and informal exist worldwide to support the development of virtual education. This includes the International Council for Open and Distance Education and European Distance Education.
- Internationally Stanford University and British University are focusing on the entire Middle East for conducting short term corporate training programs in Business and Information Technology suited to local settings in the Middle East. The presence of large number of American and British universities in the Knowledge Village of Dubai is a case in point.

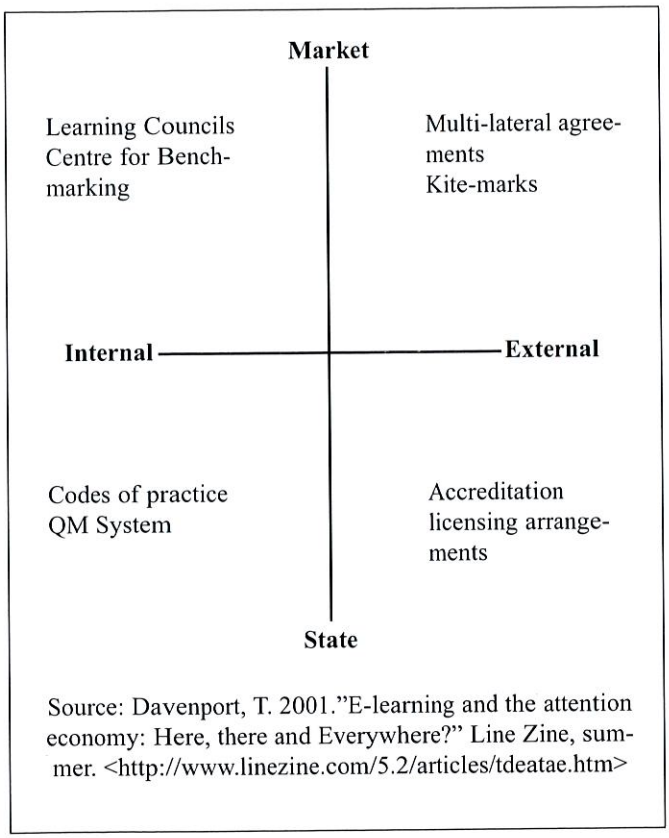
Globalization and Quality Assurance challenges:

Recent reports draw attention to the quality aspect of the borderless virtual education. The crossing of these boundaries gives rise to particular quality assurance challenges (Twigg, 2001).Many countries are reviewing legislations on the title, rights and responsibilities of universities (eg New Zealand) and are designing accreditation systems for private institutions (eg South Africa and Middle East countries). Other countries are changing their national regulations with regard to distance education. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is allowing universities to grant credit for online courses but is setting specific rules for such courses. Argentina and Chile have put all distance education courses offered in their countries under the purview of their National Accrediting agencies. Majority of the Middle East countries are focusing on designing viable accreditation systems to bring quality in education. Several Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia are revamping their educational systems in tune with the world class standards. Other quality assurance issues

that are being tackled at national level include customs and visa regulations for trans-national students, telecommunications regulations and pricing controls, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for virtual courses, recognition and licensing arrangements for providers, arrangements and regulations for the transfer of educational credit and methods of controlling fraudulent providers(Altbach, 2002).

Quality assurance models and strategies:

Quality assurance approaches can loosely be divided into two dimensions such as market-state and internal-external, with different systems occupying different places in the resulting four-quadrant model. In the market-external quadrant, quality assurance arrangements might include formal multi-lateral agreements between institutions and companies or between institutions in consortia. This is displayed in Figure 2



Source: Davenport, T. 2001."E-learning and the attention economy: Here, there and Everywhere?" Line Zine, summer. <http://www.linezine.com/5.2/articles/tdeatae.htm>

The state-external quadrant will contain other strategies such as accreditation, licensing and external peer- review systems. Within the internal-state quadrant, Quality assurance arrangements include Codes of practice and Quality Management Systems while in the Internal-market quadrant includes Learning Councils and Centers for Benchmarking.

Within the external-market quadrant, the external kite-mark approach offered, for example, by the British Association for Open Learning (BAOL) is a means of Quality assurance. The criteria used to assess Quality (through a self-assessment and external review process) are taken from the 'Business Excellence Model' developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management.

The various issues in enhancing the Quality in the Curriculum Design, Instructional Delivery, Student Guidance, and Assessment of Student Performance, Academic Planning and Co-ordination and the corresponding interventions are displayed in Table IV.

Table IV: Comparison of QA functions in Global organizational settings

Issues in Quality Control	Interventions
Curriculum design and revision	Learning Councils: standards and innovation, personal development planning, alignment with global needs
Instructional delivery	Faculty of Learning: technical support, measurement and standards
Student guidance	Learning resource centers
Assessment of student performance	Learning Councils/Learning Faculty
Academic planning and co-ordination	Chief Learning Officer and Deans

Source: Tait, A. & Mills, R. 1999. 'The convergence of distance and conventional education: Patterns of flexibility for the individual learner', in A. Tait and R. Mills (Eds), The convergence of distance and conventional education: Patterns of flexibility for the individual learner, London, Routledge, pp.1–4.

Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) aspect of Higher Education:

Expansion of Higher Education has led to the need for improved efficiency in administrative services and greater flexibility in offering global education. This paved the way for the emergence of new organizational structures (National Education Association Report, 2000). In this context, Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) emerged as a major change management strategy for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) arose at the beginning of the 1990s due to the attempts made by large US companies to use Information Technology (IT) as a tool, for linking business processes that cut across functional boundaries (Hammer, 1993 & Short, and Venkatraman (1992). The aim was to secure competitive advantage. The same method was applied successfully in Higher education sector as well by Bevan,(1996) & Cullen and Stephenson(1995), who viewed re-engineering as a suitable technique to ensure that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) adapt easily to the changing demands.

While the focus of these Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is on re-engineering of administrative services and Human Resources (HR) processes, attempts were made to redesign teaching and learning outcomes. The focus was on the incremental improvement of Human Resources (HR) services and creating a congenial Human Resource Development (HRD) climate for the growth of higher education business. In this process, Business Process Reengineering (BPR) techniques proved to offer more to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in terms of co-coordinating Human Resources (HR) activities with an emphasis on Information Technology (IT) and other related processes.

There is an increasing body of literature revealing that, if 'traditional' working practices are not efficient in the modern university system, contextually then, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must determine effective ways of implementing change management techniques. The experience with Business Process Reengineering (BPR) in the private sector worldwide demonstrated that failing to implement change management systems has emerged as a major barrier to success. In this context, several research studies have been constructed to analyze the applicability of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs,) focusing on the extent to which organizational culture influences the change implementation process. It was revealed, that achieving a successful change in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a dynamic process, and application of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) methods in universities is a challenge to be reckoned with.

Benchmarking the Higher Education:

Benchmarking is one of the important Business Process Reengineering (BPR) techniques used in the change management of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Benchmarking is the process of seeking out and studying the best internal practices that produce superior performance. Research reveals that, the application of benchmarking strategies delivered impressive results in the Higher Education sector (Willcocks, (1995) and Francis& Southern (1995).

Hence, it follows that any Higher Education Institution (HEI) seriously considering introducing benchmarking strategy needs to consider carefully both the relevant benchmarking strategies and the appropriate Methodology that it wants to adopt. A number of choices in both areas are available in the present global context of higher education, and from these a framework may be constructed. A well designed Benchmarking can yield more benefits in the education sector.

In addition to this, benchmarking can be used to determine strategic areas of opportunity in the Higher Education sector. In this context, research by Alstete (1996) identified four categories of benchmarking based upon the voluntary and proactive participation of institutions. Alstete opines that these four strategies are not mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. According to him, they can be used depending on the situational requirements and subjective judgments. These benchmarking types include:

1. Internal benchmarking is a process in which comparisons are made with respect to the performance of different departments and campuses or sites within a university, in order to identify the best practices in the institution, without necessarily having an external standard against which comparison is made. Alstete opines that, this technique may be appropriate to the universities where a high degree of devolvement (in terms of the constituent parts of the institution) exists. This method is more relevant in the case of multi-campus environment with an extensive franchise arrangement, whereby standard programmes are taught by a number of partner colleges in different locations. Majority of the Virtual Universities which are operating in diversified countries are using this method.

2. External competitive benchmarking is the strategy in which comparison is made directly with the existing competitors in the market. In this method, comparison is also made on the performance in key areas and it is based on the information obtained from peer institutions which are perceived to be competitors. According to Alstete, if properly conducted, this could emerge as viable method of benchmarking. However, care should be taken while identifying the actual competitors. Reliability in the data collection is one of the limitations in this method. Majority of the American and United Kingdom (UK) universities are using this method.

3. External collaborative benchmarking usually involves making comparisons with a larger group of institutions who are not immediate competitors. In this method efforts are made to identify the overall potential competitors as well. The methodology used for data collection is relatively open and collaborative. Such schemes may be run by the institutions themselves on a collective basis, or in few cases a central agency or a consultant may administer the scheme in order to ensure continuity and sufficient momentum. This strategy is used by some Australian and New Zealand Universities while targeting the international students.

4. Trans-industry (best-in-class) benchmarking strategy compares multiple institutions with new and innovative practices, irrespective of their source, background and courses offered. According to benchmarking practitioners this method is perceived to be the most desirable form of benchmarking, because it can lead to major improvements in performance. NACUBO (North American Colleges and Universities Business Officers) described this process as "the ultimate goal of the benchmarking process". In practice, it may be extremely difficult to operationalize the results of such cross-institution comparisons, and may require a very high level of institutional commitment to cope with the inevitable ambiguities that may result thereof. Research reveals that globally many Universities are looking forward to use this strategy. This is used by some Middle East Universities which are aiming for continuous quality improvements.

Conclusion

There are continuing debates on the impact of the contemporary pressures of Globalization arising out of new communications, Information Technology (IT) and scientific progress on the modern university systems. Despite these concerns, Higher education scenario is changing globally, as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are providing education across the international borders with computer networks and online education. This initiative culminated in the formation of worldwide universities network. In this context, the issue of Quality assurance and efficiency in the Human Resources (HR) administration of universities is gaining importance. While the focus is on re-engineering of administrative and other Human Resource (HR) sub systems, attempts are made to redefine the scope of teaching and learning outcomes world wide. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) techniques are emerging as major tools for creating a congenial HRD climate in the higher education sector. In this context, benchmarking of Institutions can be contemplated to determine the strategic areas of opportunity in the higher education sector.

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