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# **SOME ESSAYS ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

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## ***Abstract***

*In the emerging global world order, India is trying to position itself as a knowledge driven economy. Higher education assumes tremendous importance in this context. Large scale changes are being talked about and may indeed be implemented. The challenges are many and momentous, and a successful transition in arena is full of possibilities. Here, I present some the recent pieces that I have been invited to write. In the first essay deals generally with the issues specifically focusing on action plan with regards to access and flexibility and has been published in MEDC Digest. The second one deals with the question of concrete steps that need to be taken in the context of Mumbai and has been published in The City. Third is a piece submitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan subgroup on State Universities of which I happened to be a member.*

## HIGHER EDUCATION: GOVERNANCE IS THE KEY!

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*I wanted to say so many nice things; but,  
that fool of a Shakespeare has already said them all!*  
--- A Wag

Whenever one sits down to write on the mess that one finds in the arena of higher education, one is struck by a sense of *déjà vu* as well as a sense of inability to say anything *new*. Pawan Agarwal's comprehensive paper that he wrote for ICRIER, the excellent report by National Knowledge Commission (headed by the irrepressible Sam Pitroda) are just two of the many articles that easily come to mind. The first one mentioned, has exhaustive data at a fairly disaggregated level so that this aspect need not detain us here. The issues and challenges in this context –that are fairly well understood – are diverse not typical. Thus, the challenge is not epistemological but one of political will and at a more mundane level of implementation. In India, it does not take a genius to point out the problems in any sphere, least of all in the higher educational sector. The point however is (ought to be) to identify workable solutions. In this article I will concentrate on the *capacity*, *flexibility* and *quality* issues that beset the higher educational sector in India and suggest some steps that need to be taken to remedy the situation. Rest assured, there will be no magic wand and no single solution. Help and initiative from whatever quarter must be sought and grabbed by both hands. A bouquet approach will alone be realistic, driven by pragmatism rather than ideology. *Whilst finance is undoubtedly important, I argue that governance is the key.*

The essentials of the story are easily told: Despite tremendous expansion in the sector, there is inadequate capacity and hence access; after all we have 350 universities with huge enrollment (one of the largest in the world). The system is characterized by rigidity with absolutely no flexibility; we have degrees being offered in a rigid framework with very little choice for the students (who should matter the most) and the

regulations are archaic with peculiar unresponsiveness to the current context. Thanks to the perverse hiring policies and protracted procedures (not to mention politics: with and without state interference) the quality of faculty is in a state of rapid decline. The reasons and solutions are well known and yet some of them bear repetition. Having made a first cut let us revisit the issues in some detail, but first some preliminaries.

India is at cross roads. It has all the pretensions of emerging as a knowledge economy and yet the time is running out for it to catch the bus. Surely, we don't require Thomas Friedman to point out the gravity of the situation. After all, what we do today – by way of investment – will have a decisive influence fifteen years from now. For that is how long (even in these fast paced times) it takes for changes in educational system to fructify. It is no secret that a genuine knowledge has a prerequisite of solid foundation provided by educational institutions characterized by *relevance* and *excellence in training and research*. This then must provide us with the parametric environment for what follows.

The long queues in front of the colleges as well as the screaming headlines in the newspapers, starkly present the scarcity of capacity in the higher educational sector. The premium that the seats in better colleges for almost all the courses attract is common knowledge. Whilst there are supervisory mechanisms in place (*de jure*) we know that supervision many a time means additional side payments. As an aside, the only solution lies in self enforcing system design which in this case would clearly imply removal of structural and overall scarcities through increased capacities. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) report talks of setting up 50 National Universities (over a period) with augmented resources leading to capacity enhancement. There is the private universities' bill which should help too. There is a scope for great enhancement of capacity in the PPP mode, for which the regulation has to be more welcoming if not friendly. Whilst there is a need to think out of box, there is no denying the fact that the traditional state funding mode will however continue to be of importance for at least some time to come. We must once and for all put an end to view that improvements are possible with just non-monetary means. This implies a self binding commitment on the

part of governments at all levels to provide the necessary financial resources. The current spending on higher education that is pegged at around 0.7% of GDP must be doubled. This will require a serious lobbying effort. In this context, it may be noted that there is much that can be done by the institutions on their own in terms of raising resources. Alumni represent a huge potential source, so also setting up of off shore campuses and attracting foreign students are other obvious sources. However, this will require some amendments in the existing provisions of the 'Act', also, experience suggests that such efforts are 'rewarded' by cut back in aid, instead of matching incentive grants being proffered. Such efforts in the past have been – post facto – subjected by the government, to severe restrictions on the use of monies so collected. Clearly there is a governance issue involved here. This apart, the required enabling (through regulatory changes) of private sector is a must for the purposes of raising supplementary resources. The private endowments which at one time were significant, have to be restored through incentive based legislation. At the same time the interference – as distinct from engagement – of the State in all aspects of education has to be significantly reduced, especially in the 'operations' and procedural aspects. This has been a major cause that led to the Universities being converted into patron saints of mediocrity! The state must truly practice private enablement with '*oversight from a distance*'. Of course, the processes involved in the setting up in the national universities (or even investing in old ones!) are so long drawn and convoluted that with the given absorption capacity of the institutions it will be some time before the plan becomes a reality. Also, and more importantly, the paucity with regard to the attendant requirement of quality faculty (which we shall look at later) is so great that even with physical infrastructure the delivery will not be assured. This requires some bold and innovative thinking and application which requires a key governance initiative. The external agencies like the corporations and industries will have to play (be enabled to do so) a major role. In the interim, I would suggest that IT enabled distance learning mode as well as the platform for e-learning have to be exploited to the fullest extent. This will require huge organization and collaborative effort of the best minds. It is especially required to mention this here because these avenues (particularly the first mentioned) are pretty much have received step treatment and have been left to the whims and fancies of the second raters. This has created sections of milch cows that

fraudulently extract money from the hapless students and give nothing in return. Just as in case of fundamental/ foundational courses so also in case of e-learning material creation, we have to identify first rate minds and incentivize them to get involved with the tasks in a time bound and target oriented fashion. Let me now turn to the extremely important aspect of flexibility in the system.

Flexibility has to be understood in various ways, so as to encompass the entire spectrum of stakeholders. These clearly, are the students, teachers (faculty) and the managements. The students in India are to a very great extent presented with a rigid degree/ diploma system with 'papers' defining the course as given. Academic reforms – e.g., through choice based credit system – need to be carried out. Academic autonomy has to be bestowed. This will mean that students will have the choice to pick and choose various components that would result in a degree or diploma. This is an aspect of capacity (not necessarily to do overall availability but concerned with the structure – viz., capacity to provide access to relevant education. The credibility of courses/ degree, even as a signal, is severely eroded. It has to be understood that the mismatch between the demand and supply that is reported by various agencies (such as the OECD) is essentially a result of the rigidities inherent in the system. That employability requires imparting of soft skills – including articulation – is well understood but how will this be achieved when the faculty themselves, by and large, lack in soft skills. At least since the mid sixties (Kothari Commission) we know that vocational education must get a serious consideration through imparting skills in partnership with industry, but precious little has happened. As an important aside, I believe that such job orientated courses must be more and more provided by private agents. The government's role should be limited to provide incentives for such service providers to help them implement their programs in a *needs-blind* way. The government should use its resources at higher level of intensity to provide education in foundational areas, such as liberal arts, culture, languages and humanities as well as basic sciences where it is not possible for the institutions and agencies to *pay for their lunch*. After all, without state patronage in these areas not only the superstructure of applied fields but the very existence of the civilized society in the modern global world

will be in jeopardy. Thus, what one is arguing is for delimitation and a redefining of the role of the state within sharper contours and hence keeping it to manageable proportion.

Workload of teachers as well as the type and wage contracting while hiring the teachers will need to be flexible. The current practice with regard to the pay structure as well as ‘clerical’ work ethic is not conducive to face the current challenges. There are no incentives for faculty with quality and excellence, to self select themselves in this sector. Indeed, as a rule, persons with low or no quality find secure cocoons here. Incentive compatibility in wage contracts as well as flexibility in hiring of teachers (enabled through private endowments) is essential if one is to attract good persons to this sector. A good sign here is that due to resource crunch at the state government level, this is perforce happening – at the lower end and to a very limited extent – in case of ‘self financing’ as well as professional (especially management) courses.

Even if we grant that the modern ‘*shikshan samrats*’ are no saints, there is much to be said for liberalizing the environment that confront the managements today. The rules have to be clear and unambiguous and the oversight by government has to be non-intrusive. There is clearly no place for harassment in day to day operations. It is my firm belief that after the transitory problems a fair system will prevail that is both transparent and accountable. The case of state aided institutions is much worse. The archaic rules and procedures (Act and the Statutes) have to be more responsive to the changing ethos and needs. This again is a governance issue – for it entails, letting go! For example, much greater ‘accountable’ power needs to reside with the Vice Chancellors, who are currently constrained by the ‘authorities’ who have little or no stake. It is a well known fact in University politics it is so very easy to procrastinate with no one questioning and so very difficult to do a small thing even if it is right and legal.

Let me now turn to the most important aspect of *quality*, which is clearly of essence in the context of India emerging as a front runner in the comity of knowledge society. Here again we consider the various stakeholders.

The subsidy – partial as well as total – is leading students to make wrong decisions about seeking admissions. Reverse discrimination as is currently practiced should be seriously reviewed and modified. Rather than mere access through quotas, *it should be strengthened by serious mentoring processes*. Otherwise we would be found guilty of doing actual disservice to the students whom we seek to benefit. The only way is to take the ‘needs blind’ approach as proposed by NKC seriously. It must be articulated in no uncertain terms and adopted in a forthright manner.

Teacher training apparatus and research ambience have to be created with serious and focused thought. This has to do with much more than finance. It has been one of the imponderables for me that teaching in higher education requires no additional qualification/ training except that Master’s degree. The other requirements such as NET /SET and M Phil/ PhD (of late) are so badly designed that there are no elements that test the qualities – save basic knowledge – of the prospective teachers *qua* teachers. The on-job training programs (orientation and refresher courses) are little more than a farce and are in serious need of a complete overhaul. There is of course no denying the fact that much public resources and private efforts are expended in their conduct. The pay structures are an example of incorrect pricing that leads to ‘right’ kind of persons entering the profession. The quotas for jobs in academics should be dispensed with at higher levels or promotions at least. Of course to do this, the Government will have to sacrifice petty politics and indulge in visionary statecraft.

Research is a bird of another feather. Not only do we require first rate infrastructure in terms of laboratories, library resources, equipment, and internet connectivity but also a *threshold sized group of dedicated researchers that interact and work and play together*. The current regime of government *babus* who indulge in *chickenery* of organizing lectures of 48 (!) minutes and use every excuse to disallow filling up of vacancies is hardly conducive to creation of research environment. But this is the easiest way for the bureaucrats – who have very little idea about research ethos – to bring about expenditure management. Faith and angelic patience here are of essence. In the current context, with well paying jobs available to the ‘good’ students, it is difficult to



attract students to research. Indeed, as Kaushik Basu recently pointed out, most students always went out in search of well paid careers, but what has changed of late unlike earlier times is that even the ‘best/ top’ students do not enter the research arena. This means that mostly, only the not so good come in to do research – because they have nothing else to do! Ambience apart, it is necessary to use innovative ways to rectify the situation. The research scholarships – not numbers but amounts – have to be seriously enhanced. Also, to attain threshold level groups, multi/ interdisciplinary centers of excellence have to be created. Such centers will be in keeping with the current ethos of research and will have the advantage of reaping economies of scale. Whilst this is a strategy that will find many positive receptors, it is clear that this is well beyond the scope of government alone. It is here that private sector – in an enlightened self interest mode – play a vital role. It has to take a center stage – it is already involved marginally – in providing endowments and apprentice scholarships. The centers of excellence –which require serious funds – will ultimately serve their own collective self interest in the long run. Of course the government will have to take the minimum steps required for creating an enabling environment and provide suitable fiscal incentives. The overall structure of human resources involved in education (including wage contracting) must be informed by concerns of meritocracy and embedded with incentive compatible systems. It is well to remember that mediocrity rarely ever breeds excellence!

Finally, and to repeat, finance very crucial as it may be, is not all. Even more importantly, governance is perhaps the key. Governance here has to be related to the regulatory framework, as articulated, as well as the way it is put into practice. It also deals with the building of capacity and encouraging, enabling and empowering private players. So, a well designed and committed expenditure plan along with (most importantly) a bouquet of ingeniously designed enabling and empowering governance initiatives to achieve, efficiency in state institutions as well as maximum private participation in a flexible mode is the way to go. It is a moot point whether the state will continue to indulge in myopic rent seeking behavior or indeed will have the courage to *let go* thereby demonstrating visionary play in the realm of *real politik*?!

## **REVITALIZING EDUCATION IN MUMBAI: A FIVE PRONGED APPROACH**

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The Indian economy has attained *cruise control* within the environment of LPG almost in an irretrievable fashion. The Indian growth story is now too well known and does not bear repetition. The brave new *global* world is driven by the ‘knowledge economy’, one of the arenas in which India has a comparative advantage. In order to press the advantage however, it is essential that we get the policies and architecture right as far as the educational sector is concerned. The other relevant strand here is informed by the fact that India’s future is urban. In a global knowledge economy the role of cities (especially metros) is undisputed. These – apart from several other things – represent hubs of education, innovation and connectivity. Mumbai as a premier *mega polis* has a special role to play in assuring continued success of the Indian story.

Mumbai has an area of only about 437 square kilometers populated by over 12 million people packed at an average density is 27000 persons per square kilometer. The growth is taking place in suburban areas with the population size in the main city having attained a plateau. The share of migration in the growth is to the tune of 36%, clearly indicating that Mumbai is still a major attractor for ‘outsiders’. Of the total population about 50 to 55% live in slums, encroaching on 3500 hectares of prime land. Mumbai is one of the great and certainly the largest cosmopolitan cities of India. It has aspirations to becoming one of the premier cities in the world. Mumbai represents the quintessential dream world with all its sweat and blood, its skyscrapers and slums, its education and industry, anonymity and glamorous city-lights it affords, but above all its spirit and resilient character is what makes it tick. In this piece we take as read the aspects of Mumbai in its varied dimensions – emphasizing its prowess – and go on to comment on

the educational sector and what needs to be done, so as to transform Mumbai into a world class metro. In this, I have been informed by the position (so aptly put by Thomas Friedman in his World is Flat) that once the ‘wholesale reforms’ by way of prerequisite have been accomplished, what is important is to get urgently into the business of retail reform agenda concerned with the micro-design. *This involves looking at four key aspects of the society – infrastructure, institutional or regulatory reforms, education and culture.* Here I shall concentrate on education and with specific focus on Mumbai.

Education is one of the crucial areas that urban areas and mega cities like Mumbai are specially supposed to cater to from the stand point of the entire country. As Amartya Sen has aptly put it, *education (along with health), especially basic is not an instrument but a very constituent of development and its instrumental value is secondary.* The spectrum is large, extending from *KG to PG* and from Liberal Arts to Pure Sciences and from Technology to Professional streams. Finance and Entertainment apart, educational set up is huge in Mumbai. Technological advancements allow us to not only cater to the city but can set up extension services –qualitatively and quantitatively enhanced – to the immediate hinterland and indeed all over the country and the world. Let me turn to some doable things that ought and must occupy our attention in our stated quest.

1. It is clear that our efforts at rigid, institutionalized universal primary education (and adult literacy) for all have failed. What is required is ***an extension and informal approach enabled through the instrument of Civil Society organs.*** The clinical approach that was embodied in the Municipal schools structure has not delivered and is anyway on the decline. An extension approach therefore is called for. The private schools’ structure is not big enough to take care of all the potential recipients and is not affordable for all. This issue needs to be looked at in a way that is integrated with livelihood issue. Thus child care system has to go with education hand in hand. ***Out of box thinking is called for and the grass root NGOs will have to be empowered to use general guidance in terms of circular content and skills to deliver.*** This alone will ensure comfort to the kids in learning using idioms and montages that they can identify with.

2. For higher (University and Professional) level learning we need to set up ***institutions of excellence*** if we want to cater to the kind of economy for Mumbai that we have been talking about. The ***huge infrastructural needs*** mean that the state has to provide the requisite resources. Also the human resources required will have to be of a very high quality. That will imply that the wage contracts will have to match the best alternatives available. The government sector will have to identify and focus on ***nurturing few such institutions and back it with requisite resources***. This will require a self binding commitment on the part of the government that unfortunately seems unrealistic to assume in the present socio-political climate. The problem of access is so gigantic that there is no realistic solution that ignores the fruitful use of distance mode of learning. *There are issues of reverse discrimination that become contentious and can be ignored only at one's peril. These issues will have to be squarely faced. Best practices such as bridge/ remedial courses and mentoring will have to be recognized and introduced as serious activities.*
3. The ***private sector will have to play a role in this context in a big way***. This has already started happening in Mumbai. Whilst we are hopeful of the emergence of this new institutional mechanism of private Colleges and Universities there are teething problems. There will have to be a proper mix worked out of un-intrusive supervision and regulation that allows private enterprise to thrive but will have transparency vis-à-vis admission policy and fee structure. With academic freedom to devise market driven courses we are hopeful that such a policy will deliver to a great extent.
4. **Technology** provides a tremendous opportunity that will have to be garnered with ingenuity. With Mumbai emerging as a gaming and media hub interesting kits and modules can be easily created. Also, there is a huge potential for **e-learning** that needs to be tapped. Again the skill sets and economically viable solutions exist

that are waiting to be exploited. Here too the private-public as well as formal and informal sectors will have to forge synergistic relationships. It is advised that this be done as far as possible outside the formal governmental sector (but indeed with its help) in a mission mode.

5. Mumbai has been growing at an impressive growth of around 9% for the last few years. All indications are that this is likely to continue at an accelerated pace in the medium term. It is well to remember that such growth – which is essential for any developmental aspirations – is unsustainable unless it is also accompanied by employment generation and has an inclusive character. This is crucial for socio-political viability which is of essence in any democratic society. Any growth that is either jobless or is based on imported employment is self defeating. Thus, given the magnitude of vulnerable section in Mumbai, it will be required that government intervene in setting up or facilitating setting up of **vocational institutes/ polytechnics** in a big way. This will ensure that the *young marginal citizens will be able to acquire job skills that will ensure them livelihoods*. This is one area where Mumbai is lacking and warrants serious attention.

Mumbai faces huge challenges in its march towards transforming itself into a world class metro. Infrastructure, governance and finance are top of the list. Education and health-care are equally important. It is imperative that Mumbai shows its famed spirit, culture and resilience in pushing forward the agenda on all fronts and emerge triumphant as a *Prima Donna* amongst Indian megapolises.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON PLAN SUPPORT TO STATE UNIVERSITIES

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- The situation of higher education in India as serviced by the State Universities is not particularly rosy, although it continues to be officially recognized as an important 'merit good'. Of course the plans over years have identified several issues of great import and suggested several initiatives and made – not always adequate – provision for the same. It has been conservatively estimated that the total resources – from all sources – available to the sector reflects a 40% short fall. The problems or challenges whilst diverse are not epistemic in character but rather are need of a generic and comprehensive solutions conceptualized within a framework informed by healthy dose of realism vis-à-vis implementation and adequate provisioning.
- The situation of State Universities represents a picture of expansion without commensurate quality, in terms of performance. The funds flowing to the Universities are a major 'excuse' that is often sighted. It has also been argued – even in the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan – that the priority in the share of the pie that is going to higher education will have to be in the sphere of non-University education. Thus realistically, the increase of resources will have to come – in a proportionate manner – from the increase in the overall pie that is meant for education. Given that currently we are spending around 4% of GDP on education and there is a consensus that ideally we should be aiming for 6% (indeed that is one of the NCMP mandates). There is a marginal increase that could be sought in tune with the overall increase in the plan outlay. Strategically, a time path needs to be chalked out that will at least monotonically increase and culminate in a 6% of GDP coming to education and on a pro-rata basis to State Universities.
- There are *five general principles* that are important in the current context that need to be kept in mind whilst discussing any policy issues.

1. *The role of the state needs to be redefined* so that rather than spreading resources thinly on everything, we can do a few essential things properly and ensure effective delivery. This is not based on the principle of cutback but rather threshold effort and against the background of pragmatic realism. Thus, the government or the state is not expected to do less but may indeed be called upon to do more but in well defined areas. This also implies that role of the state as an enabler and facilitator through well thought out regulatory mechanisms will attain prominence. This is particularly relevant in the context of Public-Private- Partnership (PPP) for expansion and financing activities.
2. *Incentive compatibility* must be an integral hallmark of any policy packages that are suggested. Thus after taking care of the bare essentials the incremental flow of funds has to be linked to observable performance.
3. In the policy packages that are suggested *do not propose creation of new institutions*, as far as possible. The establishment costs eat up 80% of funds upfront and the vested interests involved are detrimental to the service delivery to the actual target group. It might be a better idea to strengthen the existing agencies – in our case the UGC and its regional offices – by assigning additional and clear and specific mandate to them.
4. The governance structure needs a re-look. All the overlapping and duplicating jurisdictions need to be sorted out. Again and specifically calling for a clear and accepted role of MHRD, UGC and State Government. This will lead to greater clarity and efficiency as well as time saving in delivery processes.
5. There needs to be a comprehensive data base of all the State Universities comprising of all the relevant (physical included) characteristics. This would enable a transparent devolution of funds based on objective and comparable characteristics. This is rather crucial for any rational scheme

of plan support and presents a conceptual as well as empirical challenge and yet is clearly doable.

- Specific to the matter at hand I have following thrusts to suggest that would sometimes call for reorientation and sometimes readjustments and breaking new grounds in the realm of plan support to State Universities.

1. The funding process through plan support needs to rectify the *perceived imbalance as it is biased in favor of Central Universities* vis-à-vis State Universities.
2. The financial scheme of plan support must be informed by conceptual frame that is articulated transparently in terms of principles of Equity (Adequacy/ Level playing field), Efficiency, Incentive-Compatibility, (Delivery Performance) and Clarity.
  - This presumes availability of user-friendly data-base and working out of schemata.
  - This (Data base and the scheme) may be suggested as a pre-requisite work to be undertaken by an agency.
  - This will also have the added benefit of creating more focused subsidy scheme that will efficiently reach target groups. Also innovations like vouchers can be implemented rather than wholesale/misdirected subsidies through price distortions.
3. There need to be special thrusts in some specific areas that will have financial implications and are in a sense part of the State Universities. These would need to be estimated and provided for by the Plan if they are to be implemented in a proper manner. These areas are:

- **Academic Staff Colleges:** The vehicles/ instruments of teacher training are very important and need to be bolstered further. Also the Orientation and Refresher Courses need to be substantively



looked at and improved so that they result in actual improvement of teaching content and techniques.

- **Vocational Courses:** These need to be tailor made and associated/introduced by department(s) within the State Universities. This will enable the students to imbibe skill sets that are required by the market place. The start-up costs are quite substantial if this has to be done properly.
- **Mentoring and Remedial Activity:** This is one activity that has to be encouraged and recognized. This is extremely crucial – and often under estimated – in the context of the undoubted goal of *inclusive* education. Some of the management schools have started building up expertise in the area of mentoring where it is an accepted practice. This requires serious finance because such activities are to be done by the best – which costs – money. Otherwise we have the experience of such programs being run in a substandard way with equally poor results.
- **Distance/Open and E-learning:** In today's knowledge economy where India has a perceived advantage, the felt need is for greater coverage and access. Fortunately we have the technology platforms available. While in due course we will invest in infrastructure and create greater number of institutions and or increase the capacity in existing ones, the short to medium term remedy lies in strengthening the aforementioned avenues. But here again the financial needs are stiff if the content development and actual access is to be of high quality. Thus, dedicated resources need to be earmarked for State Universities to have their presence felt. I argue for this as an activity integrated within the Universities aware of the fact that there are specialist institutions for the purpose.
- **Extension:** In the same vein – as in the above paragraph – the *Adult and Continuing education* should be strengthened in an

integrated fashion. This will serve as a vehicle for fulfillment of social responsibility as also for floating useful value added and vocational courses which are difficult for traditional departments to deliver.

- We now turn to some of the other things that the Plan should support with regard to functioning of State Universities. These are things that have implications for architecture and processes and are relevant in the current context.

➤ **Globalization and Collaboration:** The fact of globalization cannot be denied and the challenge/opportunity of GATS amongst other things is upon us. In this context there is need to facilitate and encourage off-shoring and outsourcing arrangements that have potential for raising huge resources for this sector. This requires regulatory changes that will enable and initial financial support for setting up academic and administrative cells at least in some of the quality Universities that would allow them to explore and reap benefits. *All the proposals for international collaborations will be under the supervision of the UGC through its regional offices in a fast track mode.* Of course what is being suggested here in the domain of external scene could well be (indeed should be) enabled and encouraged within the country, between different State Universities.

➤ **Capacity Building:** This in a sense is a governance issue and deals with the administrative/ management and academic skills not being in step with the changing ways. There is a need to support activities (along the lines of Senior Fulbright fellowships for administrators and academics) that may be administered by Academic Staff Colleges already in existence. This has to do with things like absorptive capacity to spend and utilize budgets, writing

proposal and projects to enable one to successfully get the benefit of existing schemes and then to implement them effectively. Thus the training could be at various levels and calls for a serious ‘seed-money’ support.

- **Administrative Strengthening:** Thanks to various reasons, the state governments have not been able to properly fund the non-salary grants of the Universities (in some cases even the salary grants are a problem!). Also this has led to a situation where as a consequence of expanding University activities, many persons have been hired but are not approved (due to resolutions based on principle of expenditure cuts). This has led to severe problems of maintenance as well as carrying out of legitimate activities of the University in an efficient fashion. Thus, some funding on a regular basis (properly evaluated) is called for. This is important for otherwise, there is a serious danger of *the best laid plans, coming to a naught!*