Corporate Universities in India: Meeting Challenges of the Growing Economy

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Abstract—*The world is evolving at a very fast pace and so is the scenario in education sector varying. Newer technologies and digitalization is taking up the space of traditional methods. Education outreach and the cost effectiveness is also evolved over last few decades. With the development of the corporate sector and the service sector playing a key role in India's GDP, things have changed rapidly at the education front also. With the advent of MNCs in India need for skill variety and diversity has increased. Constant change is there resulting in the corporate universities cropping up. This paper attempts to understand the need of these universities and their role in imparting education. These universities are open due to different constraints and challenges encountered internally or externally in the education environment the focus of the universities are education and research as economies develop and major shifts have happened due to from agricultural sector to service sector, from capital intensive businesses to human capital as assets driving the competitive advantage of the new emerging markets. Workforce diversity, demand on leadership, and different and unique skills requirements are the challenges faced by these new educational hubs. The paper uses cases of different corporate universities operating in India and understands their objectives.*

Keywords*: Corporate Universities, Challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

India while heading forward in 2016 is facing three major economic challenges like population growth, in sufficient infrastructure and corruption. However if on the growing phase one cannot just focus on keep doing the same things over and over again. Else it becomes obsolete and market demand decreases. Economy stagnates. Therefore innovations and new products developments keeps the market flowing and economy growing. As India emerges in this new era of fast development one realizes that for a growing economy plenty of opportunities should exist for jobs for which jobs should be created. These require skills of varied nature. Most of the educational systems prevalent since ages were not able to deliver what the world was expecting or what India needed to grow.

Corporate universities are an answer to these skill gaps that exist. With the distinguishing nature of being the only way to ful fill all these existing requirements.

Despite increasing attention being given to the role and development of corporate universities, the debate as to what constitutes a corporate university remains. A review of the literature reveals the two broad themes which can be identified. The first is the functional approach, where the corporate university focuses on day-to-day training issues. As Meister (1988) says,

Corporate universities are essentially the 'in-house' training facilities that have sprung up on the one hand, and the need for life-long learning on the other. They have evolved at many organizations into strategic umbrellas for education not only employees, but also secondary customers and suppliers.

Walton's (1999) definition emphasizes the strategic focus of knowledge creation and management across the whole organization when defining corporate universities. The author states that;

The notion of a corporate university is becoming increasingly fashionable as an overreaching designation for formal learning and knowledge creation activities and processes in an organization.

To improve an organization's human capital there are a number of common elements to both definitions, including a focus on formal in- house training and development and an on-going investment. This second approach fits with a key theory in the area of human resource development; that of human capital theory, which links investment in the organization's key assets, employees, to increased productivity and sustained competitive advantage. For further developing the organizations competitive advantage the resources based as career progression, increased security and higher remuneration, the firm's resource base is enhanced.

The management of learning and knowledge within organizations, in a more complex and a competitive advantage, which is increasingly reflected in the literature. As

such, the concept of the corporate university is identified as an emerging aspect of the field of strategic human resources development; this means that the corporate university must strategically develop a diverse and adaptive approach, to ensure each area within the organization has access to appropriate levels of training and development to meet these objectives.

2. FRAME WORK OF CORPORATE UNIVERSITIES

Corporate university is categorizing in order to understand their role and focus. This generational structure, describes a 'First- Generation' corporate university is approach to a standardized work organization as characterized by formal, narrow training, specific to the organization. 'Second-Generation' corporate universities emerged as a response to increasing organizational flexibility and responsiveness. Empowering employees to become responsible for the work, broadening the approach to training and development. 'Third-Generation' corporate university moves to a virtual mode of communicating training and reflection of technology advancements.

Development of corporate universities to the changing environment, this evolutionary framework is one dimensional and static in its assumption of uniformity in type of development. And the dynamic environment requires a variety of responses of training, development and knowledge management across different organizational levels.

Taylor and Paton (2002) have framed the development of corporate universities along two dimensions: learning continuum and spatial organization.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper uses a case study approach to understand organizations perceptive of looking at issues of education industry it allows an open- ended research to get an in depth understanding of various concepts.

4. INFOSYS

Is one of the leading company in consulting, technology, and outsourcing services? We approach clients in more than 50 countries to perform the competition and innovation curve with US$9.5 billion in financial year 2016 revenues and 194,000+ employees, Infosys helps to new enterprises to create new avenues to generate value. We help enterprises transform and thrive in a changing world through leadership, and co- creation of breakthrough solutions, including those in mobility, and cloud computing. Infosys was started by seven engineers with just US$250. From the beginning, the company was founded on the principle of building and implementing. We recognize the importance of nurturing relationship that reflects our culture.

5. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Infosys operates Educational institutions within the company for training internal employees.(Khan and Sharma, 2009)

These are:

1. **Education and Research (E&R)**
2. **Infosys Leadership Institute (ILI)**
3. **InStep - Infosys Global Internship Program**
4. **Campus Connect**

1. Education and Research (E&R)

Infosys is the largest corporate 'technical university' in Asia. And run of its E&R department. In a year Infosys provides training about 30,000 new joiners. Infosys E&R conducts technical and project management related education programs for both in-house and strategic customers of Infosys. The E&R departments create and manage the infrastructure for learning and knowledge. This includes courseware, library service, and online services.

In addition, the E&R division supports universities in improving the quality of their IT education programs and anchor external programs for school children. Infosys E&R offers training and learning programs for employees. Some of the programs are detailed below:

1. E-learning: On-Line Learning Program to enable access to training programs from remote locations.
2. Foundation Program: Freshman graduate engineers undergo a 12-14 weeks full-time rigorous educational training program before induction into production.
3. Just-in-Time (JIT) courses are delivered to Infosys employees based on sudden or unforeseen requirements to meet the urgent requests of Infosys clients.
4. Knowledge Management group is the hub of all knowledge sharing activities in Infosys. This is a very active platform and works through multiple channels of knowledge sharing.

2. ILI

The Infosys Leadership Institute (ILI) is a blend of leadership and managerial development. It as role based training programs and a global business school for in house development of employees' managerial and interpersonal skills.

Global Business Finishing School

The Global Business Finishing School at ILI has received the ASTD Citation for excellence in practice in the year 2002-03. This initiative is a milestone and focuses on making every fresh entrant to Infosys ready for the job in quick time.

The Finishing school runs either as a short cycle program, (6 weeks for trainees from IT backgrounds) or as a long cycle program, (14 weeks for trainees from non-IT backgrounds).

Role Based Training Programs

Learning is a continuous process. At the essential of learning in a human being are contribution, craving to excel, and enthusiasm to extend horizons of knowledge; use this culture productively.

The ILI has created numerous learning forums which offer a mix of all options to suit various learning styles, increasing the entities desire for knowledge and guiding his efforts to quench his thirst while allowing him to take responsibility for this journey himself is at the core of this philosophy.

3. In Step

Global internship program to attract students from the best academic institutions around the world. It includes premier institutes such as Harvard, MIT, Oxford, Princeton and Tsinghua. It helps students to work on live,

Organizationally relevant technical and business projects in the company. The interns benefit from learning first-hand in a corporate environment in India.

The In Step Program is largely responsible for exposing students from all over the globe to living and working in India and experience firsthand the challenges of working in one of the most exciting emerging markets of the world.

4. Campus Connect

Engineering and management colleges are the natural bedrock for IT talent in the knowledge economy. The educational institutions and the IT industry have realized the need to scale up industry-ready quality students to meet the growing demands of the industry.

Campus Connect aims to be a forum where some of the best practices at Infosys can be shared with educational institutions and also aligning the needs of colleges, its faculty and students, with those of the IT industry.

Campus Connect helps them apply their learning to practical situations, with special emphasis on teamwork, project management, cross functional networking and effective communication.

6.   CONCLUSION

Infosys education and research takes care of the education program for both in house and other customers providing learning regarding different production aspects. They also share a common platform for knowledge sharing. Leadership institute provides programs for managerial and interpersonal skills. In Step programs works like a live project for students to undertake organizational relevant issues. The students get an opportunity to work for some challenging issues for the emerging markets. This builds students skills that are required to perform various functions in their prospective employers.

For a country like India where majority of the population is youth with the problem of lack of job opportunities; development of new sets of skills are required to fetch up with these growing challenges not just for India but also for the emerging economies. Infosys as an example of a corporate university has exemplified the same with its variety of programs.

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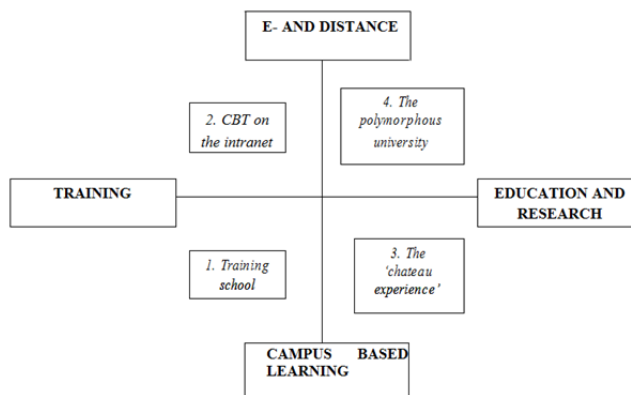
(*Source Adapted from*: Taylor, S., & Paton, R. (2002)

Fig. 1: A tentative typology of corporate universities along two axes