Report on Examples of Innovation in Indian Universities

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Structure of Undergraduate Programs & Learning Environments

• Traditional education is failing to deliver on its own vision, and falls short of preparing students for the challenges of the modern world.
• Innovation in the structure of education and the learning environment is needed
• Changes are not sweeping, countrywide changes, but efforts at individual universities that are bearing fruit and which others can learn from them.
• Some examples were shared yesterday.
Delhi University

• Delhi University is a very large and old University.
• Ms. Lal shared, on behalf of the Vice Chancellor, the following 5 new initiatives to transform traditional education:
  – The Cluster innovation Center;
  – Innovation project in Colleges;
  – Meta University Concept;
  – Meta College Concept and
  – Train journey around India.
• Collaboration between colleges and universities in the Delhi area.
• A new structure is being proposed for undergraduate degree programs which will make these programs more student-centered and multi-disciplinary.
Shiv Nader University

- Shiv Nadar University is new philanthropic University offering a broad, multi-disciplinary education.
- Vice Chancellor, Prof. Nikhil Sinha, described how they developed their Undergraduate program from scratch.
- An exploration of their Vision and Values led them to establish an Undergraduate College that incorporated all their disciplines including professional schools.
- Students choose their courses from across disciplines within broad parameters.
- The degree structure follows an American style Academic Credit System.
- Courses are spread over 8 semesters.
Kerala

• Some of these changes are also seen in Kerala where, Mr. Sreenivasan explained, reforms have included:
  • Clustering of colleges
  • Enhancing research
  • Strengthening accreditation.
Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology

• Dr. Geetha Narayanan, founder and director of the Srishti described how their efforts to move beyond an elite vision of education...to allow democracy into education (rather than just preparing students for democracy)... has produced a unique, highly innovative and vibrant center of excellence in art and design that is solving contemporary challenges at all levels of Indian society.
Miranda House, affiliated college of Delhi University

- Dr. Pratibha Jolly, Principal of Miranda House described how the teaching-learning experience is being transformed at her college.
- Hands-on – minds-on approach
- Facilitating co-operative, collaborative and social learning.
- Changes in infrastructure have supported these changes.
- Exemplify innovations that can bring improvements to the learning environment without requiring structural change.
Some common themes emerged in these examples
Clustering and Technology End Isolation

• The walls around schools are coming down. Academic isolation is being replaced by clustering to allow sharing of resources across colleges and universities.

• The need for linkages and feedback between academia and industry and society was emphasized.

• Collaboration of institutions and technology replace isolation of the institution and of the learner.
Academic Credit System

• The structure of Undergraduate degrees was put on the anvil for change.
• Innovations in the structure of the undergraduate programs involve adoption of the academic credit system
• Result in programs of study that are student centered and multi disciplinary.
• Programmes typically take 4 years to complete.
• Varied exit options and lateral entry are permitted.
Active Learning, any-place

• Innovations in the class room and curriculum begin with the idea that degree relevant learning can take place outside the class room.
• Within the classroom these innovative programs have abandoned the view of the student as a sponge (learning silently from a teacher’s lecture).
• Innovative learning environments include more group learning and practical applications.
• New infrastructure and technology is incorporated to facilitate this.
Democratic and Local

• Another theme has been that while students have much more choice about what they study, the curriculum and degree requirements should be such that they:
  – broaden the learning,
  – democratize it,
  – embrace diversity,
  – address inequality,
  – include the study ethics, and
  – encourage the application of learning to the local context - the Indian context.
Accreditation and Assessment of Faculty

• Assessment of institutions through a rigorous accreditation process was favoured.

• Assessment of faculty is being practiced already by innovators.
Pro-Research climate

• A final theme that emerged in all the presentations is the need for:
  • More research, and
  • Fostering a climate for research and innovation. The need for the application of research to solve Indian problems was stressed.
4 examples of Innovation in India

• Delhi University’s new initiatives and Shiv Nadar University were presented as examples of innovations in the structure of Undergraduate education. Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology provided a case study in an innovative university with an active and democratic learning environment. Miranda House provided an example of how innovations that are useful and educationally stimulating can be introduced into a traditional educational system without requiring structural reform.