Higher Education: The Global Context and South Asian Development Countries

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This paper describes the current situation of globalization of higher education in South Asian developing countries, the changes taking place, considering mobility of educational institutions, students, , and programmes, across the borders and challenges they face in their efforts to design and expand higher education systems, the issues related to quality assurance and some of the remedies to get out of it. Statistical data is reported from world resources. This study did not attempt to include comprehensive studies of individual countries, instead it addressed the issues that overall influence these countries. It argues that globalization promoted higher education in all countries and resulted migration of skill from under developed to developed countries. It also decreased the monopoly of national public institutions alone in providing higher education. Financing of higher education had been shifted from public to the household domain. Although accreditation agencies are established yet this expansion has also created the quality issues especially in developing countries. The development of measures to ensure equity and quality is a major challenge faced by South Asian developing countries. So, the role of the state should be very crucial to develop policies for regulating the functionality of multiple institutions.

Key Word: Higher Education: The Global Context and South Asian Development Countries

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Introduction

The concept of globalization of higher education is thoughtful examination of how shrinking the globe is affecting universities, and how they are responding. Globalization causes flow of knowledge, people and capital among nations (Carnoy, 2005). It provides many opportunities and challenges to the universities and their staff for replication, collaboration and innovation.

Skillful and globally oriented human resource is vital component to any institution's effectiveness and critical to national development. Universities are the major source of such skilled human resource. According to Friedman (2005), the role of higher education becomes most apparent in this scenario.

Most of the developing countries have now realized that they have to fight an intellectual battle to be competitive in this globally focused world, so they are seen to take steps to connect their faculty, students and outside education systems. They also realized that the only way to promote national development is through the increase in the amount and quality of research that they consume and produce. They have to process and create new knowledge more swiftly and efficiently than they do presently (The World Bank, 2000).To meet these challenges, the primary focus of twenty first

century's universities is creation and commercialization of knowledge in the global context. As defining twenty first century institution of higher education, Wood (2012) argued that universities begin to be successful when they realize to construct interconnected and open campuses and follow a social culture that respect tolerance.

South Asia is among the most heavily-populated and poorest regions in the world, comprising 25% of the world's population only in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and with 31% of the population currently living under the poverty line with US$1.25 spending per day (World Bank Report, 2012). All are victim of some degree of political instability. Despite of these similarities, South Asian developing countries are also significantly different in their stage of development and size. Majority of them are developing countries whereas some of them have a bit developed economy with expanded systems of higher education. Some of them have a smaller economy but growing tertiary education sector. Despite this diversity among these countries, two factors appear to be common i.e. reliance on state to finance and develop higher education and dependence on English as a language of instruction (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013).

In past few decades, the private sector has also emerged as equal partner in the provision of higher education, employment generation and thus economic development. South Asian developing countries have adopted

many economic policies in the context of globalization which endorsed mobility of services, goods, and factors of production across borders. Likewise, their systems of higher education also supported the flow of students, faculty, institutions, and educational programs across the nations. Private sector, foreign providers, and technology based delivery modes revolutionized the whole scenario making higher education a business sector. This expansion of providers, programs, and institutions has raised quality issues of service delivery (programs), teaching- learning processes and the product (student) (Varghese, 2011).

This study was an endeavor to describe the current situation of global context of higher education in South Asian developing countries considering cross-border flow of faculty, students, programmes, and institutions, and confronting challenges in designing and expanding their higher education sector, the issues related to quality assurance and some of the remedies to get out of it. Statistical data from world databases was reported. It did not include comprehensive report of each country; instead it dealt with the problems that on the whole, influenced these countries. In the light of above dimensions, this study concentrated on the following areas:

1.   The effects of globalization and expansion in higher education in the process of economic and social development of South Asian developing countries.

2.   Existing situation of the South Asian developing countries regarding higher education in the context of globalization

3.   Recommendations and suggestions to overcome the obstacles

Effects of Globalization

Globalization may create severe problems for academic institutions in South Asian developing nations. They cannot grow independently in the competitive global higher education system comprising the world-class universities in the developed countries. Foreign authorities come up with contrasting national values and priorities which resulted in the problems of planning and national control in their higher education sector. Foreign and private providers offer market oriented profitable subjects and local universities have to face severe competition, as they may offer non-profitable traditional courses for which the market demand is poor. Small developing countries have to face serious consequences in the form of social division in mainly two ways. Firstly, well off students prefer to be enrolled in foreign universities, leaving already poorly funded public institutions and the states where spending on per student is very low as per student average spending is US$ 1000 in south Asian developing countries; in China about US$ 2500 and in US about US$ 10,000 (The Economist Intelligent Unit, 2013).So public universities cannot provide the best educational atmosphere to the poor students. Secondly, local private employers and foreign providers choose to

employ foreign qualified graduates, thus the best brains go to the foreign universities which again widened the gap.

Globalization has positive aspects too. Universities in South Asian developing countries have been facing increase in student enrolment. This change has been occurred because of growing number of secondary school students, increased involvement of females in higher education, and expensive education in foreign countries (Varghese, 2011). At a time when countries in the Europe and Central Asia are involving about 55.6% of their youth to participate in higher education, South Asia having 12% of its youth enrolled in higher education (Global Report, 2011). It is believed that the knowledge gap can only be narrowed between the developing and developed countries and national development can be sustained, if the enrollment rate in higher education is of the order of 20% (The World Bank Report, 2012). In developing countries, the increase in public funding on higher education has not been matched by the growing enrolment in universities. One reason behind their reluctance to finance higher education might be the advice of world funding agencies that they can get more financial aid by investing into primary and secondary level. Higher education has also been believed as a "private good". Individuals should finance their own studies as they get personal economic benefit from higher education, thus mitigating public sector from that burden. In this sense, higher education is regarded as a

commercial commodity. As a result, new for-profit universities and providers encouraged to enter into this sector. Foreign institutions of higher education from developed countries move towards developing countries as they serve as a fertile land with favorable conditions for them. Developing countries generally welcome them and even facilitate them, so that their wider population may have access towards higher education without increasing higher education budget. Students can get many quality options of education at lower price than going abroad.

The Existing Situation

Since last few decades, five powerful influences have been seen in South Asian developing countries those are:

- Expansion

- Differentiation

- Knowledge acceleration

- Cross border mobility
- Quality assurance

Expansion: is characterized as tremendous growth in the number of tertiary education students. In the past, few students and graduates from developing countries had been enrolled in higher education. Today, about half of the world's population of higher education students has been coming from developing countries. Between 1980 and 1995, developed countries have

roughly five to six times more enrollment than that of developing countries. In 1965, literacy rate was less than half the adult population of developing countries. This situation was worse in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where less than one third of their adult population were literate. This trend improved by the end of previous decade. In 2007, more than three fourth (76.6 %) of adult population of developing countries were literate. Even in Sub-Saharan Africa literacy rate was 60.3 percent (The World Fact Book, 2008).

In recent decades, elementary and secondary school enrollments have risen rapidly resulting more students wish to enter in higher education. Between 1980 and 2005, the secondary school gross enrollment ratio significantly raised from 8 to 46 percent in Pakistan (World Development Indicators, 2008). During last two decades, enrolment in higher education institutions was increased significantly. According to the UNESCO–UIS (2008) report, between 1991 and 2006, more than double increase in enrollment was observed comprising from 68 to 143.9 million students worldwide. Recently, China, India, Indonesia, Russia, and Philippines, have expanded higher education sector catering more than 2 million students. The comparison of different regions of the enrolment ratio of the world is given under as:

Table 1: Gross Enrollment Ratio (%), in higher Education (2004)

Countries	GER in higher Education (2004)
High Income countries	66.7
Least Developed Countries	8.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	5
Arab States	22.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	28.6
East Asia and Oceania	19.6
South Asia	9.7

Source: UNESCO, 2006

Even in this scenario of worldwide growing enrolment in higher education, some of the South Asian developing countries are small enough for establishing viable higher education sector. Whereas some of the comparatively larger countries such as India with (more than one billion), Pakistan (more than 180 million), Bangladesh, (over 160 million), and Nigeria (around 150 million) population have several universities. According to UNESCO-UIS (2008), the gross enrolment rate (GER) raised from 13.8 to 25 percent during past few decades in this region of the world. As table 2 showed gross enrolment rate in Malaysia was highest among all South Asian developing countries throughout the years.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Rate among South Asian Developing Countries

Country	1985	1995	2006	2008
Bangladesh	5.1	6.0	7.0	7.0
India	6.0	6.6	12.0	13.0

Malaysia	5.9	11.7	29.0	32.0
Nigeria	3.5	4.0	10.0	----
Pakistan	2.5	3.0	5.0	5.0
Sri Lanka	3.7	5.1	----	----

Source: UNESCO-UIS, 2008

It seems from the above table that expansion in higher education remained faster in those developing countries of the South Asia that had a sound private sector with non public resources. Since 1990s many countries introduced legislations to permit the private and international institutions' functionality, and during last few decades many such institutions were established. Since 1980s onwards, tremendous increase in the number of private institutions was observed in Asia and Africa. In 2008, only China has around 1200 private higher education institutions and sixth largest country of hosting international students (Wikipedia, 2015).

Differentiation: is characterized as a process in which new types of institutions and providers are flourished and enter into the higher education sector. Distance learning (example of differentiation), has gained enormous popularity and expansion since last few decades. Students primarily get education remotely through internet, television, or radio without face to face contact with the teacher in the classroom. Deb (2011) reported that only in UK, one of the public open university has been offering more than 100

courses. 4,000 students per day connected through internet and use information technology as a central part of their teaching-learning. Some larger countries in south Asia also have some larger virtual universities and several largest distance-learning programmes as well. These national open learning universities have enrolled a significant number of foreign students. For example, Indira Gandhi National Open University in Delhi, enrolled almost 11,000 foreign students (Varghese, 2011). Students from 14 countries of the world have also been enrolled in Allama Iqbal open University, Pakistan. China also offers several programs through distance learning and plays an important role in emerging differentiation of higher education (The Economist Intelligent Unit, 2013).

The Knowledge acceleration: Ever growing volume of knowledge has become more powerful, effective, and accessible due to dramatic progress in information technology. Computers, mobiles and fax machines etc. transfer data and information around the world in a magical way and turned many isolated offices into active nerve centers. In past two decades, the number of scientific research papers published across the world has become twofold. Research publication rate in countries like Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and China, with growing scientific capacity, has more than doubled in the past few decades. Roughly, in every five years, the number of academic journals is doubled with new titles and new specialties. There is revolution in the use of personal computers and the Internet (The World

Bank, 2000). In 2006 world's 15.8% of population use internet (Wikipedia, 2008).

Robots and sophisticated computer controls have been increasingly used as a factor of production. Academics, entrepreneurs, and the general public can use huge quantities of consolidated information in one place conveniently and rapidly. Due to low cost and ease of transmitting data it is possible to transmit 100 times as much data as in 1980s (The World Bank, 2000). But higher education institutions in south Asian developing countries have been remained lacking in above areas.

Cross-border mobility: Many factors are responsible for mobility across border as a means of globalization of university education. Firstly, English is considered as a source of success in the world's labour market. People willingly choose programs offered in English. So English language plays an important role in encouraging cross-border mobility among these countries. Secondly, many developed countries shifted towards market-oriented higher education from state funded sector of higher education (Varghese, 2011). They have moved towards diversified and specialized tertiary education systems and permitted the operation of private providers and international institutions. As according to Knight (2002), cross-border education is delivered through following four modes:

1. Cross-border supply of services (e.g. distance education programmes)

2. Students' cross border mobility to pursue education

3. On-site delivery of the services as branches, campuses or franchised institutions

4. Staff mobility to provide the service.

Program Mobility (Distance Education): Technological changes have permitted to introduce distance education using learning management systems, thus allowing expansion through program mobility. Distance learning has also been gaining success in the developing countries as it has a powerful potential for those who cannot afford to get regular education and thus reducing cost and immigration rate,. Following is the profile of worlds' largest distance education institutions.

Table 3: Profiles of the Largest Distance-Learning Institutions

Jung, (2004). Lifelong Learning & Distance Higher Education

Student mobility: Students from small states of the South Asian countries

usually use this mode of pursuing higher education. In the past foreign

education programmes were financed by the state or external funding

Institution	Year	No. of Distance Education Students	No.of Full-Time Academic Staff	No.of PartTime Academic Staff (Tutors)	No. of Admi tive worfo
Anadolu (Turkey)	1958	884,081	1,729	653+300 (lecturers)	1,763
KNOU (Korea)	1972	186,402	271	108	546
AIOU (Pakistan)	1974	456,126	145	23,000	1,426
STOU (Thailand)	1978	181,372	375	----	904
CCRTVU (China)	1979	2,300,000	52,600	31,500	16,50
UT (Indonesia)	1984	222,068	762	3,600	730
IGNOU (India)	1985	1,013,631	339	35	1,337

agencies. Presently, individuals have to finance all or part expenses by

themselves because quality of the education offered in these institutions

persuade them to study abroad. In 2006, nearly 2.9 million students from all

over the world were seeking cross-border education (OECD, 2008),

producing an investment of worth US$40–50 billion in the higher education

sector. Bashir (2007) explored that the USA earned US$14.1 billion; the UK

earned US$6.1 billion; and Australia earned US$5.6 billion in 2005. In 2005, only six developed and industrial states hosted 67% of outwardly mobile students. These are the United States (23%), the United Kingdom (12%), Germany 11%), France (10%), Australia (7%), and Japan (5%) (Institute of International Education, 2007).

Organization for Economic Co-operation and development (2008) argued that Asian countries are top of the list in sending their students abroad. Asian countries sent 45.3 % of students abroad, followed by Europe (23 %), Africa (9.9 %), South America (5 %) and then North America (3.5 %).

In 2008, a total of 0.74 million foreign students were hosted by some commonwealth countries such as Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and the UK (UNESCO-UIS, 2010), amounted for approximately one fourth (24.8 per cent) of the cross-border flow of students. According to The Economist Intelligent Unit (2013), in most of the south Asian developing countries, nearly average twofold increase was observed in sending students abroad for higher education. In some countries, such as Bangladesh and Nigeria, this increase was three fold, and four fold respectively. India being the larger south Asian developing country with a broader system of higher education even having branch campuses of foreign universities also experienced a huge increase of nearly 3.5 times. However reduction in the number of students travelling abroad was experienced in Malaysia.

Institutional Mobility: Foreign providers operate in form of franchising and managing branch campuses in other countries. It is how Institutional mobility takes place.They offer market oriented programs like mass communication, economics, business administration, accounting, computer science, and marketing. Local private universities also get benefited by collaborating with these transnational institutions. It helps them to gain academic trustworthiness and increased their reputation in terms of quality education. Consequently, this credibility owes them in form of higher fees. For example in Pakistan Lahore university of management sciences, Beacon house National University, Comsat university, Islamabad and superior university, Lahore (all privately funded) have been offering split programs with the collaboration of foreign universities which raised their credibility and reputation.

Sometimes these foreign private universities in South Asian countries catch the attention of students from neighboring countries. For instance, students from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and other countries are enrolled in the North South University of Bangladesh (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004). Similar is the case with foreign universities located in Malaysia. Thus Australia, USA and UK are the major players in the context of institutional mobility whereas India serves as a most fertile land for hosting foreign institutions from these countries.

Staff Mobility: Foreign investors cause severe problems for local publicly funded universities regarding recruiting or even retaining good faculty. Firstly, they hire most of their faculty from their native country. Secondly, they offer huge remunerations and may draw the best qualified but poorlypaid faculty away from local universities. Situation becomes worse as universities in developing countries have already been facing a serious problem of lack of best qualified faculty.

Demand for quality assurance: Most of the South Asian countries relied on already established mechanism for the quality assurance of academic programs offering by their public universities. Their quality-control mechanisms followed status quo mainly focusing on factors, such as: selection and admission criteria, qualification of the faculty, resource allocations, and students' results, etc. Presently, in most countries, state is not a single provider of higher education. Entrance of multiple providers (public, private and cross-border modes) increased the quality issues in the higher education sector (Varghese, 2011). Quality assurance in this context might also concentrate on teaching/learning process as well as on outcomes. Although, many of the South Asian larger states have set up accreditation councils for ensuring quality in this sector yet their mechanism are national in nature. For example in Pakistan, National accreditation council for teacher education (NACTE) is functioning efficiently to measure the quality

assurance of teacher education and categorize them according to their met standards and keep them on the course of quality. The Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC) in Pakistan is also there to maintain the quality of higher education and protects students from bogus degrees and qualifications in the country.

Examining the external quality of higher education Martin and Stella (2007) argued Globalized higher education also demands for the globalization of accreditation councils and quality assurance programs. Most of the developed countries have the accreditation mechanisms that also offer their services in other countries. For Example, USA based Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) offers its services across the globe as well. a set of quality provision guidelines for cross-border higher education has also been established by UNESCO and OECD (UNESCO and OECD, 2005).

Although most of the South Asian developing countries have established accreditation agencies yet only their establishment is not sufficient for quality assurance. Their autonomous and effective functionality involving all public, private, and trans-border institutions of higher education is a need of the time.

In the above perspective, Higher education in South Asian developing countries is significantly weighed down because there is lack of a shared vision about the potential contribution of higher education to development.

Policymakers face serious issues of political interference and financial resource constraints. South Asian Developing countries spend far less than developed countries on each student. According to UNESCO report (2010) Public expenditure per tertiary student in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are 19.4 %, 69.7 % 39.2 % and 26.4 % respectively which is far less than many other developing countries also. Although comparative spending is low, South Asian developing countries are already spending a major proportion of their smaller budgets on higher education. Especially research universities face serious problems who have to play combination of roles of transmission of existing knowledge and creation of new knowledge. The inability to pursue research makes their scholars and scientists unable to keep up to date with the recent trends in their fields. In addition to these, lack of authority to make key decisions and poor governance in higher education sector, tempers their ability to spend what resources they have.

Recommendations

The most important reform involves designing a vision on rational basis which may be suited to a country's development stage, social and cultural structure, political system, economic potentials. For this purpose, a transparent and informed dialogue is needed, among state, academia, industry, prospective students, and all other stakeholders. More effective and efficient use of physical human and capital

resources is needed. It will help in improving the infrastructure; designing, testing, and implementing new curricula and academic programs; recruiting, and retaining well-trained faculty and conducting more scientific research.

A balanced approach for all sectors of education is needed. The dictated concentration on elementary and secondary education can be dangerous leaving south Asian developing countries unprepared for future. Institutions of higher education in South Asian developing countries need to offer in-depth study of particular fields that can provide a solid base for life-long learning and later specialization.

South Asian developing countries should promote public interest in higher education, by setting and retaining standards for degrees. All planning issues need to be addressed in a global context, and consider their potentials to be linked to the wider world. They might share the challenge on international level and to discuss this issue as a global challenge.

A national regulatory framework might be established to manage the functions of foreign providers and to protect students against bogus institutions.

External funding agencies need to promote collaborative projects between universities of developed and developing countries by

facilitating student and an more productive faculty exchange programs, and equity through scholarship programs. Such partnership could be beneficial for both institutions and the country in terms of efficient resource utilization.

An information supply channel regarding global concept of higher education is needed which can guide students about the certifications, curricula, and degrees. Thus they can choose their own suitable higher education.

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