INDIA'S MARCH TOWARDS BECOMING A KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY: A STUDY

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Abstract: - *We live in a post- industrial society where knowledge is the driving force to success. Developed nations are rich as they are information rich and spend significant amount in research and development. The present paper studies the changing meaning of knowledge and analyzes the initiatives taken by the Government of India to transform itself into a knowledge society.*

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge Society, SWAYAM, MOOC, Digital Locker, My Gov.

Introduction

With exponential growth of information resulting from increased research in multifarious subject fields, the entire global arena is flooded with new and unique information. Tremendous development of information and communication technologies has also contributed to this fast paced development worldwide. In the present day world the development and progress of a nation is entirely dependent on the quality of updated information available at its disposal. A nation is considered rich because it is information rich. Quality and updated information results in generation of wealth which in turn results in generation of more information through R & D and hence results in more wealth. The generation of mammoth first hand primary information differentiates the developed nations from the developing nations. G8 countries (France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, Canada and Russia) are world leaders as they spent a significant part of their budget on research and development as compared to developing countries. But the generated information is useless unless included in knowledge base of a nation. Though there are information rich and information poor countries where knowledge distribution is uneven yet it cannot be denied that an average person today has more knowledge than his counterpart had a hundred years ago. An average patient today has more medical knowledge, an average individual has more legal knowledge and an employee has more managerial knowledge than his counterpart

had say 50 years ago. These are all blessings of knowledge society.

The term 'knowledge society' was coined by Peter F. Drucker in his book 'The Age of Discontinuity' in the year 1971. The International Commission on the Development of Education Report of the UNESCO in 1972 introduced a new concept of education. The report known as Faure Report stated that education is no longer the privilege of the elite, nor it is meant for particular age group: it tends to cover the whole community and the whole life of an individual. Tremendous growth of capitalism and technology engulfed the world between 1750 and 1900, thereby creating a world civilization. Capitalism prevailed throughout all of Western and Northern Europe by 1850 and within next 50 years it grasped almost the entire world. Due to this radical change in society the meaning of knowledge has also undergone a sea change. From being considered as applying to being, its meaning changed to applied to doing. Knowledge started being considered as resource and utility and overnight it became public good from private good. Knowledge over the years has changed its meaning and scope. In first hundred years it was applied to tools, process and products, which resulted in Industrial Revolution. With Industrial Revolution came the concept of class alienation, new classes, class war and communism. Around 1880 and culminating around World War II, knowledge in its new meaning came to be applied to work, which resulted in Productivity Revolution, which in 75 years converted the pro-literate into a middle class bourgeoisie with near upper class income. The Productivity Revolution thus defeated class war and communism. The last phase began after the World War II when knowledge was applied to knowledge itself. This was Management Revolution. Knowledge was now fast becoming the one factor of production, sidelining both capital and labor, in other words knowledge was a familiarity gained by research an experience. It can include 'know what' knowledge about fact 'know why' (scientific knowledge of the principles and laws of nature), 'know how' (skills or the capability to do something), 'know who' (information about who knows what and how to do what).

Winston Churchill's statement at Harvard University in 1943 "the Empires of the future shall be empires of the mind" is aptly true when we see that knowledge society constantly works for a better tomorrow by engaging in innovative knowledge work by its members. As knowledge is regarded as a public good, every member of the society should be included in the knowledge society. Both young and old have a crucial role to play in development of a knowledge society. The young are the ones who use any new technology at their disposal while the older people have experience required to affect the relative superficiality of 'real time' communication and remind us that knowledge is but a road to wisdom.

Education and critical thinking are vital to the successful functioning of a knowledge society. Traditional sources such as press, radio, television and above all the schools, textbooks and teachers should be given priority before computers and internet access. The entire globe has become a global village due to developing information and communication technologies.

The features of a knowledge society can be summarized as follows:

- Greater emphasis should be given on Research and Development.
- Stress on increased use of information and technology.
- Knowledge and information being major sources of creating value.
- Rapid changes in technology.
- Greater use of information and communication technology.
- Increased networking and working together.
- Rising skill requirements.

Indian Scenario

Honorable former Prime Minister of India Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee while addressing ASSOCHAM (The Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India) summit in 2000 once very correctly remarked that "A knowledge based society will enable us to leapfrog in finding new and innovative ways to meet the challenges of building a just and equitable social order and seek urgent solution". Knowledge implies depth and breadth in understanding, rather than a mere acknowledgement of the presence of information or the ability to make information circulate. It is this knowledge that transforms a society into a knowledge society. This feature is aptly stated by Francis Bacon who said 'knowledge itself is power'.

Indian society is predominantly an agricultural society from ages, which concentrated on producing natural products like grains, fruits, ores and natural minerals, etc. The industrial society added value to these products by incorporating explicit knowledge to it. This not only added value to products, but also increased the productivity. The information society adds further value by widely making available the explicit knowledge through the electronic networking of information centers, and thus making available information products worldwide.

After seventy six years of independence, India is still regarded as a developing nation outside the ambit of highly industrialized nations (G8 countries). India's population is highest a whooping 1,221,156,319 in 2012 (Canada 34,342,780, France 65,338,149, Germany 81,797,673, Italy 59,379,449, Japan 127,817,277, U.K. 63,258,918, U.S. 311,721,632 and Russian Federation 142,960,868). The World Development Report 2015. It is clear from the statistics that India has far more population than

the developed nations. Now it is up to us to take this mammoth population as a blessing or a curse. It is for sure unless new ways are developed very soon, it would even be difficult to feed this population in the coming decades. GNI per capita (formerly GNP per capita) income of India in 2012 was dismal $1530 as compared to (Canada $51,020, France $43,180, Germany $46,700, Italy $36,020, Japan $47,830, U.K. $40,600, U.S. $52,540 and Russian Federation $12,730). But when we compare GDP per capita (growth %) in 2012, India secured 1st position in comparison with G8 nations at 5% (Canada 1.9%, France 0.2%, Germany 0.4%, Italy 2.8%, Japan 1.8%, U.K. 0.7%, U.S. 2.3% and Russian Federation 3.4%). The World Development Report 2015. Thus it can be seen that India is slowly but surely rising as an economic superpower.

Indian Strategies

As it is clear that India is one of the fast developing nations in the last few years and boasts itself to be the fifth largest economy, its huge population can be turned into an advantage by engaging maximum citizens into knowledge workers or at least dependent on knowledge work. To achieve this objective, along with conventional education, members of the society should be provided with an opportunity to achieve highest quality information from the best resources available throughout the world. Information technology will play a pivotal role in shaping Indian knowledge society as it reaches remotest corner of the country, be it rural or hilly areas. IT has provided citizens an opportunity to receive world class learning and be the world beaters. The Government of India has come up with several initiatives that are sure to give a push to the Indian society. The foremost objective of any knowledge society is to make the life of its citizens informative and simpler. A few of the initiatives are discussed hereunder:

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

In a country like India where achieving cent percent literacy in true sense is still a distant dream, SWAYAM is a rainbow of hope in the horizon. SWAYAM is the Indian adaptation of the MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) that are making waves in the world academia. The concept of MOOC got momentum in the year 2011, when artificial intelligence expert Daphne Koller along with her colleague Andrew Ng both of Stanford University left academics to start a new venture partnering with elite universities to provide courses online. At present there are three big players in the global arena namely Canvas Network (https://www.canvas.net),Coursera(http://coursera.org),Udacity(http://www.udacity.com) , Edx (http://www.edx.org), Future Learn (https://futurelearn.com) , iversity (https://iversity.org), Kadenze (https://www.kadenze.com), Khan Academy (https://www.khanacademy.org) and Udemy

(https://www.udemy.com) which provide various courses from the world's leading universities and institutions.

Features of MOOC

- Anyone with an internet connection can access the courses irrespective of his/her geographical location.
- Courses under this platform are available either at no or minimal cost. Some platform offer courses for free but charges for providing certificate of credit after course completion.
- Anyone from students to scholars can participate in the course.
- Courses are run by MOOC platforms in partnership with world's elite universities, thereby facilitating global exposure.
- Participants can select courses in which they want to participate without depending entirely on the university curriculum.
- Though the courses are offered entirely online, yet there is an element of human touch in it. Interacting with fellow participants, receiving of congratulatory e-mails on prior accomplishments makes learning fun.

Seeing this huge success of this medium the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development in collaboration with U.S. department of State launched a MOOC platform named SWAYAM, which is operational from the academic year 2015. Professors of centrally funded institutions like IITs, IIMs and Central Universities teach these courses. In the initial phase IIT Bombay, IIT Chennai, IIT Kanpur, IIT Guwahati, University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, IGNOU, IIM Bangalore, IIM Calcutta and Banaras Hindu University was brought onboard. Presently there are several courses going on under the umbrella of SWAYAM as Annual Refresher Program in Teaching (ARPIT), Architecture and Planning, Design, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences, Humanities and Arts, Law, Management and Commerce, Mathematics & Science, Teacher Education etc. These are provided by AICTE, CEC, IGNOU, IIMB, NCERT, NIOS, NITTTR, NPTEL and UGC.

In future SWAYAM is expected to conducted courses in almost all disciplines. News about latest technology and knowhow in the field of agriculture would greatly reduce the dependency of Indian farmers solely on monsoons for harvesting. Inputs about improved seeds and innovative techniques are sure to increase crop production many fold. Everyone in the society would have something for them in SWAYAM.

DIGITAL LOCKER

Digital Locker or Digi locker refers to a locker which is maintained in digital environment. With ambitious project of Digital India, the Government of India, Department of Electronics and Information Technology has launched a Digital Locker, which enables to keep vital documents like admit card, ration card, voter

identity card and other such documents in cloud. Anyone with an Aadhaar Card can register to digital locker (http://digitallocker.gov.in) against which they will be provided with an OTP (One Time Password) which will be sent to their UIDAI registered mobile number. Aadhaar number and Aadhaar linked mobile number is required to sign up for Digital Locker.

Objectives

- Enable digital empowerment of residents by providing them with Digital Locker in the cloud.
- Enable e-signing of documents and make them available electronically and online.
- Minimize the use of physical documents.
- Ensure authenticity of the e-documents and thereby eliminating usage of fake documents.
- Secure access to Govt. issued documents through a web portal and mobile application for residents.
- Reduce administrative overhead of Govt. departments and agencies and make it easy for the residents to receive services.
- Anytime, anywhere access to the documents by the resident.
- Architecture to support a well structured standard document format to support easy sharing of documents across departments and agencies.
- Ensure privacy and authorized access to resident's data.
- Candidates need not carry their physical certificates every time to their employers and in turn employers can login to digital locker and verify the certificates themselves.
- Candidates are relieved of the tension of losing original documents.

At present there are 173.12 million users and 5.62 billion issued documents which belong to categories Central Government, State Government, Ministry of Defense, Transport Departments, Education & Learning, Banking and Insurance, Health & Wellness, National Service Scheme, Sports and Culture etc.

MY GOV

On 26th July 2014 Government of India with the help of NIC (National Informatics Centre) has launched a website named "My Gov" with the aim of providing a chance to its citizens to voice their opinions on national issues and help in nation building through their feedback and suggestions. The issues can be anything from skill development to clean river Ganga. Its main aim is to integrate the executive with the masses. A mobile App has also been launched, which can be downloaded from www.mygov.in. Once the app is downloaded it shows menus like Forms, Schemes, Services, Who's Who, Documents, Embassy & Consulates, Calendar and eGreetings, which are of immense help as one gets single window information seating at comfort of his or her residence.

Conclusion

The initiatives of the government can only be fruitful by its successful implementation. Through many of the discussed initiatives are still in their infancy, still there remains a high potential if judiciously implemented. It is us who need to step up and create a social order which will have knowledge as its base. Knowledge based society can do amazing things in field of agriculture, education, research, governance etc. and make us world beaters.

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