

Role of Libraries in Building World-class Universities: India's Himalayan Region Perspective

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Abstract

"This paper highlights the role of Libraries in building World Class Universities in the Himalayan region of India by mentioning the spatial differences in quality of education in terms of ranking between the Himalayan region and the Plains in India. It also highlights about the capabilities of Universities of Himalayan region by using its assets of good climatic condition and attraction to foreign students and working on the key characteristics which is necessary to build a World Class Universities assessed, analyzed and practiced by world renowned authors and Universities. It relates the characteristics of World-class University to Library to build World Class Universities through specific role of University Library.

Keywords: University Library, World-class Universities, University Library in Himalayan Region of India.

1. Introduction

World-class universities commonly referred to as the most prestigious research universities, are essential in developing a nation's competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. These universities, at the pinnacle of the higher education hierarchy, play key roles in creating and disseminating knowledge, educating a highly skilled workforce for technological and intellectual leadership, and serving the needs of society 1. To build world class University in all areas of teaching-learning, research and recreational activities needs to be highly concentrated, including the Library. Not a single research paper has given the prior importance to the role of Library to build world class Universities, but utmost emphasis has been given to research and abundant resource areas and these areas without Library is unimaginable.

Jamil Salmi (2009) 2 has discussed the challenges of establishing WCUs, in his recent Report prepared for the World Bank. He describes "world-class" as synonymous with "globally competitive" or "elite" or "flagship". He identifies three complementary factors as prevalent in WCUs: "a high concentration of Talent (as represented by Faculty, Students and Research Scholars); abundant resources, to offer a rich learning environment and to conduct advanced research; and favorable governance features". Here the term resource implicates the special role of Libraries.

There are approximately 22123 universities in the world, but taking the various measures used to rank them – and, of course rankings only measure what can be counted, not necessarily what counts – the top 100–200 can be described as world class. Ellen Hazelkorn (2013) 3 in his paper 'World Class University or World class system: ranking and higher education choices' has highlighted eleven main global University ranker and at the same point he writes



'there is often no direct measurement; for example, there is no agreed way to measure the quality of teaching and learning.'

The University Library may in itself poses the quality of world class service but it is very hypothetical to say that it will bring the quality of University at the top position. Some time only a Library can have a world class facility and services but analyzing the overall aspect, it may not stand on the same.

Considering the top ten Universities in India according to the "Webometrics Ranking of World Universities", 4 only the two are from General Universities (Delhi University, 5, and Anna University, 10) and all other top eight Universities are special IT Institutes/Universities. The ratio of top Universities in India is 2:8. So, our idea here has to be clear that the General Universities are in need of extra care towards building world Class University.

Secondly, the type of University Library in contemporary world is very important. One of the reasons behind the success of IT Institutes/University Library is that they may get modern technical support from their parent institution itself in compare to General Universities.

The another very important question towards building World-class University is that How many Universities of Indian Himalayan region would be able to build World-class University? Let us talk in Indian scenario and ask ourselves that, how many Universities of Himalayan region of India would be able to come up in top position?

2. Development of Universities in Himalayan region of India

The development of Universities in Himalayan region of India is very slow. The Indian Himalayan

Region5 (IHR) is a range that spans ten states of India namely, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh as well as the hill regions of two states - Assam and West Bengal.

Apart from numerous private Universities this region has state and central Universities. Under department of Higher Education Jammu and Kashmir 6 there are seven state Universities and two Central University, Himachal Pradesh 7 holds six Universities four are under state government one is Central University and one is IIT at Mandi under MHRD. In Uttarakhand there are nine State Universities and four national importance Universities. The tiny north eastern Himalayan state Sikkim 8 has one Central University. Arunachal Pradesh 9 has five state Universities and one Central University.

According to "Webometrics Ranking of World Universities" Among all top 25 Institutes/Universities IIT, Gauhati ranks 24, though this Institute does not fall totally under Himalayan region, except this other Institute and Universities in the Himalayan region are not managing themselves to climb up in to ranking. The North Bengal University for Darjeeling Himalayan region also does not fulfill the class of top Universities even in India.

3. Spatial consideration for building World Class Universities

India has many physiographic regions but considering the Education particularly we can categorize it in two main regions, education in the Himalayan region and the Plain region. In comparison Plain region has dominated in the field of higher education. It may be due to land communication or Climatic condition. One sided development is leading the backwardness of Himalayan region.

The topmost Universities are located in Cold climate regions VIZ. California Institute of Technology, Oxford University etc., so the Climatic condition would not be a factor to attract students and to build World class University in India. The question arises that why the Universities of the Himalayan region are not in top position in India?

4. Libraries role in building World Class Universities in Himalayan region

The great Universities in the world are not only the attraction of Education but also the attraction for the tourists. Himalayan region has great potential to attract the tourists from all around the world so the problem of attraction to bring the international students as well as inland students would not be a great problem in this entire region. The entire Himalayan region as mentioned above has at least one Central Universities and a State University, so the problem of money is also not a big deal. Then the question arises that, what hurdles the Universities of Himalayan region to come up in top position? And what can we the Librarians do to bring a world class Universities from the Himalayan region? We would analyze it by taking following characteristics

4.1 Characteristics of World Class Universities

To find out the answers one must analyze the criteria which are necessary to fulfill to become world class Universities. Jamil Salmi 10 in his book 'the challenges of establishing World class Universities' published by World Bank has mentioned many characteristics of World class University, but none of those characteristics specifically mentions the role of Library.

The University Library may take following characteristics and work on it to build world class University. A world class University.

- ▶▶ Has an international reputation for its research;
- ▶▶ Has a number of research stars and world leaders in their fields;
- ▶▶ Identifies and builds on its research strengths and has a distinctive
- ▶▶ reputation and focus (that is, its "lead" subjects); Can attract and retain the best staff;
- ▶▶ Can recruit staff and students from an international market;
- ▶▶ Attracts a high proportion of postgraduate students, both taught and research;
- ▶▶ Has a very sound financial base;
- ▶▶ Provides a high-quality and supportive research and educational environment for both its staff and its students (for example, high-quality buildings and facilities/high-quality campus);
- ▶▶ Often has a long history of superior achievement (for example, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Harvard University in the United States);
- ▶▶ Makes a big contribution to society and our times;

4.2 Working on above mentioned characteristics

The related areas of concentration for Library would be auctioned through following sub points:

4.2.1 Collection Development

No Library in the world can be self sufficient or no Library can possess all the published documents around the world. Galbraith (2012) 11 in his book 'Rare Book Librarianship' stated that 'Your collection development policy will define the library strengths'. In his book maximum importance has

been given to collection development either in print or non print form to make meaningful and valuable service to research works. The term like resource sharing and networking, Consortium, Institutional repository would play a key role apart from print documents with strong addition of rare books in University Library Collection.

4.2.2 Qualified Librarian and Staff

The recruitment of qualified University Librarian having international repute from India or from outside India would be an essential criteria for building a world class University as per the above characteristics. Maximum number of qualified and enthusiastic supporting staff is needed to facilitate a well service in research. History of superior achievement comes from maturity of University Library and the role played by Library personnel for a long time.

4.2.3 Maintaining Superior Achievement

Everyday efficient and effective work of the Library and its services would make it possible to achieve superiority. The Indian Universities needs to give utmost importance to preservation, conservation and archiving of documents for a long run reputation.

4.2.4 Value Added Services

The value added services like repackaging of information, Digitization of information, Open access resources, information in form of multimedia, with spacious Internet Laboratory for students, staff and research scholar would enrich the reputation of the Library.

4.2.5 Resource Sharing and Consortium

The M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries in UK 12 is a collaborative organisation that works to im-

prove library and information services within the M25 region and more widely across the East and Southeast region. This consortium of University Library is one of the strength of research in United Kingdom. Working with INFLIBNET and an agreement to share a resource through Library network would bring all the University in collaboration to share its resources and this would be one of the strength of University Libraries of India for escalating research activity.

4.2.6 Making Strategic Plans

The above stipulated areas need a proper concentration and action through strategic planning. Strategic plans can be fixed for every five years. Setting a goal in planning is very imperative to build world class University Library. The time higher education of UK has ranked Cambridge University 13 at number four. The strategic Library plan of Cambridge University 2006/7-2010/11 highlights on following goals of Library services:

- ▶▶ To strengthen the world class collections;
- ▶▶ To enhance availability and accessibility of the collections and other information resources;
- ▶▶ To optimize the environment for study and research;
- ▶▶ To ensure that the collections are adequately housed and preserved;
- ▶▶ To ensure that an adequate technical infrastructure is in place;
- ▶▶ To develop partnership and collaboration;
- ▶▶ To ensure support from high quality staff;
- ▶▶ To ensure that adequate resources are available to fulfill this plan.

5. Conclusion

In India there are very few Universities which have World class recognition. Building a world class University needs overall growth in different system including Library. The Library is a resource center and facilitates information for research and maintains a long reputation of its parent institution by housing many rare and authentic collections in print and non-print form. It is very much needed to focus on the criteria's in form of characteristics and objectives to build world class universities in India. Though the specific role of library has been mentioned in abstract within the area of research and resource by many authors who writes about the topic 'building of world class universities', but we as a Librarian know the indispensable role of Library in building world class University. Collection, Consortium, Co-operation and collaboration, will definitely add the values to library services and this would be one of the basic characteristics to build world class University Library. The spatial gap between Himalayan region and Plain region must be bridged if we would like to see our Indian Universities at top ranking.

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