# Indian Education in the Globalised Knowledge Society - The Way Forward

## Parveen K. Bangotra[1] and Dr. Bhupinder P S Chahal[2]

1. PhD Scholar, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Mohali, Punjab
2. Associate Professor, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Mohali, Punjab

**Abstract:** Globalization is the increasing interconnection of people and places as a result of advances in Information and Communication Technology that results in political, economic, and cultural convergence. While Globalization offers tremendous opportunities for progress and growth of a nation, unless handled with caution, it has its own dark side. Global Warming, Global Terrorism like 9/11 are some major examples of the pitfalls of globalization. In the last two decades, subsequent to globalization and economic liberalization of 1991, India has made a tremendous progress in the Information Technology, Internet Connectivity, Mobile Telephony, Broadband Connectivity, Satellite TV Channels, Wired and Wireless Networks that has transformed our Indian Society, or at least the urban Indian society into Knowledge Society. Coupled with globalization, Indian society today is a Globalised Knowledge Society. Globalised Knowledge Society demands a matching Educational Systems and standards. This paper proposes to put forward the features of educational system that shall meet the demands of a globalised knowledge society.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Knowledge Society, Education, Globalization, Information Technology.

## Introduction

Earlier economies depended on our knowledge about how to farm, how to build and how to manufacture. However, all this has changed in the modern day economy. With the information revolution spurned by the modern day computing, internet and broadband technologies, it is possible to manipulate, store and transmit large quantities of data very economically and at very high speed. As the processed data is knowledge, application of knowledge has become the predominant factor in the creation of wealth. As much as 70 to 80 percent of economic growth is now said to be due to new and better knowledge. This is the emergence of new economy called the knowledge economy and the new society called knowledge society.

According to eminent economist and Chancellor, University of California, Cark Kerr, "On a global scale, wealth and prosperity have become more dependent on the access to knowledge than the access to natural resources."

This Information Revolution has led to Globalization. Through the application of information and communications technologies, enterprises have the ability to diminish the impact of space, time and distance. In globalization, companies backed by Information Technology, break apart business functions that were previously thought to be best collocated (i.e. within the same geographic area), and spread them across the globe in a manner that is most economical. This global restructuring has a cascading effect on the social, political and economic structure of nation. One critical issue that emerges from all of these restructuring processes is the central role of knowledge, education and learning for the success of the Global Information Society and Global

Information Economy. Knowledge is becoming an increasingly important factor of production. More important, some analysts would argue, than land, labor and capital.

## India and Globalization

As a nation, we have more than half a decade of democratic independence behind us while Globalization in India is comparatively a new phenomenon. True globalization is yet to happen. We must not mistake globalization by the availability of foreign goods, internet bandwidth, presence of MNCs, Call centres etc. It is much more than that. Typically, Globalization begins with economic globalization and moves on to encompass other facets of life. For any nation, Globalization in its true mature holistic form can be found Economically, in the freedom of exchange of goods and capital; Culturally, in the growth of cross cultural contacts; Politically, in the governance especially relationships among nations; Religiously, from the tolerance and acceptance of all religions and Socially, by the free circulation by people of all nations.

In these times of globalization, let us look at India. In India,

- Economically, while takeovers and acquisitions of global organizations by Indians is becoming everyday news and global business giants are trying to find a foothold on Indian soil, rural India is still reeling under poverty with farmers committing suicides due to debt.

- While the young Indian generation is proving to the whole world their innovations, entrepreneurship, zeal and technical capabilities, the beneficiaries are global giants.

- Politically, while people have started realizing their electoral strength in democracy, electoral verdicts are coalition governments.

- Socially, while Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams have virtually touched the sky in grandeur, female feticide has almost lopsided the population.

- Religiously, while our religious tolerance has been known world over, everyday communal riots are bringing disgrace and shame to the whole nation.

- Culturally, while the west has been almost envy of our rich cultural values, our blind imitation of western culture has created a heady mix of meaningless cultural values. Vandalism during St. Valentine day, New Year celebrations, fashion parades etc is the order of the day.

Amidst this entire gross cross, one thing has come to stay and that is globalization. Globalization is realty and for India – an opportunity to come in the exclusive league of developed nations if not super power. Be it because of India's English speaking population, the logical thinking country of Araybhatta or purely geographical 12 hour time lag from USA that gives advantage of 24 hour work cycle, globalization is realty for India and here to stay.

While, the globalization has come to stay. How good is globalization for India in its present form? Globalization in the present form is good for nations using India as a market place - more than a billion mouths to feed, two billion feet to shoe. It is a dream market for any country to sell their products and services. Is it just about one-way? Perhaps, Yes as of now. But for a few streaks of

success in the area of Information Technology, no major globalization of advantage India has taken place.

Essentially speaking, Globalization in its present form is a technology driven possibility, materialistic by nature, almost devoid of human face. On the contrary, Indian value system is family based by nature and more human faced. In this dichotomy, globalization in its present form has the potential to make us materialistic, market driven, profit seeking society devoid of human values unless the right corrective measures are taken. And thankfully, there are not many corrective measures required. There is just about one. And that one is Right Kind of Education and Knowledge for the success of the Global Information Society and Global Information Economy.

The objective of education is no longer simply to convey a body of knowledge, but to teach how to learn, problem-solve and synthesize the old with the new.

"Knowledge" is the accumulation of skills and "Education" is the process of imparting instructions to enhance these skills. Our existing Education system has served us well so far but in the context of Globalization, the demands on the workforce requires a different education. Education that enhances the ability of learners to access, assess, adopt, and apply knowledge, to think independently to exercise appropriate judgment and to collaborate with others to make sense of new situations. The objective of education is no longer simply to convey a body of knowledge, but to teach how to learn, problem-solve and synthesize the old with the new. In Globalization environment, Information Society and global economy requires a holistic understanding of systems thinking, including the world system and business eco-systems. Thus inter-

disciplinary research approaches are seen as critical to achieving a more comprehensive understanding the complex reality facing the world system. This is hardly taught to the students in our existing systems of education.  For India that challenge is even tougher. That is to say that we must not loose sight of Indian Value System that is more human faced and less materialistic while globalization is materialistic by its very synthesis. Moreover the Indian Education system even today is based on Rote Learning. The key perhaps lies in building upon our existing education system and introduce processes, practices, curriculum, delivery mechanism that makes our education more relevant to globalization.

In the following sections, we will broadly explore the globalization needs and the compatible educational requirements to address such needs:

**Learning Method - Rote v/s Understanding**

Globalization is a complex phenomenon and the problems are rarely defined. Each day, each situation perhaps throws a challenging problem that would need some innovative solution. Minds that are trained to handle such situations shall be required to tackle them. In contrast, but for few exceptions here and there, the whole system of our education is based on learning the formulas, procedures, facts by heart and reproducing them to solve predefined problems that are being done year after year or perhaps generation after generation. Students even mug-up the answers. This is the way to score marks in the examination and that is the system prevalent. However, seen holistically, rote learning is not wrong entirely as proven globally by Indian students. Especially at a younger age i.e. Primary Classes when the student minds are young-Tables, Formulas, Calculation Tricks learnt by heart stay with you through out your life. This has

often been seen that while Indian students can calculate fast in their mind while their counterparts are calculator / computer dependent.

Our existing system of Rote Learning need not be written off in totality. For a successful globalization model, we need to build upon our existing system of rote learning.

What needs to be incorporated is syllabus that makes students think critically and inculcates problem-solving skills. Something that can ignite the minds of students.

**Rigid v/s Flexible Approach to Learning**

Our existing system of education provides for a teacher imparting education to students in a class room within fixed time frame and parameters. In this manner, by no means can the latest information be shared or the knowledgebase can be increased. This is possible by way of access to internet, CD-ROM, audio, video and other electronic media forms. Extensive use of Multimedia, Educational Channels, EDUSAT, World Wide Web should be brought in to update the student knowledgebase.

Academic institutions must become less rigid and more flexible in their attempt to meet the varied needs of learners and the global economy. This includes variety in time, place, approach and curriculum offerings. As new issues and industries emerge within the global economy, academic course offerings should be adapted to reflect these new knowledge, education and learning requirements.

Development of a global telecommunications infrastructure and greater transborder data flow, using such technologies as the Internet, communication satellites, submarine fiber optic cable, and wireless telephones is required to be

established, perhaps in association with private sector.

**Synchronous / Asynchronous way of Learning**

Using advanced information and communications technologies, a new system of knowledge, education and learning should apply a wide range of synchronous and asynchronous activities that aid the professor and student in breaking the boundaries of space and time. Synchronous activities can include real-time lectures (featuring audio, presentations, web sites, and even video), quizzes and group discussions; all of which can occur with the instructor being at the same location or even a different location from the learner. Asynchronous activities can include archived lectures (in audio and video), and other archived course material that can be accessed at nearly anytime, anyplace.

**Student Exchange Programmes**

Understanding of the socio culture features and living conditions of various nations is an essential component of the globalization especially the nations we are interacting as a part of globalization. Although there are student exchange programme, but they are at a very small scale and very limited opportunity is available to students for such an exchange programme. By way of involving the corporate, especially the international brands, more student exchange programme should be devised.

There are costs involved and implementation issues, however, innovative approach involving NGO, Corporate Sector, Government bodies, Parents, Schools, Parent Teacher Organizations should be put in place and such exchange programmes be organized where students are actually required to work with their own hands, live among the host nations and learn their way of life.

At the same time, host nation students are undergoing the similar exposure in India.

**Multi Language, Multi Cultural Capabilities**

Obviously, globalization means dealing with persons of different nationalities having different language, different cultural value system, different attitudes etc. While globally, advanced nations have been training their people to adapt to the cultural values of host countries. Many an American companies are sending their staff to India just to understand the cultural values before assigning them tasks here.

For a successful globalization model, the education should include system to provide multi language capabilities and exposure to multi cultural environment.

**Lessons in Team Work**

More often than not, our education system is designed for students to think of their personal growth leaving aside the important skills of a team effort like group dynamics, compromise, debate, persuasion, organization, leadership and management skills which are so essential in a globalised society.

Globalization is a complex phenomenon with multinational, multi locational groups interacting with each other to achieve the desired results. Mostly, the operations, projects or logistics are so large that one single person cannot handle it. It is always a group or a team working in unison, each one doing his part of the job that contributes to the overall projects.

Not only should students learn to work in teams; but also they should learn to work in global networked virtual teams. These global virtual teams

are being used increasingly in industry and international organizations for R&D activities. Chris Dede argues that "Computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) enhances team performance through tools for communicating each person's ideas, structuring group dialogue and decision making, recording the rationales for choices, and facilitating collective activities."

**Building up Globally Relevant Knowledgebase**

Globally, the world's store house of knowledge is increasing at a very high rate. New technologies, new products, new materials, new processes are being introduced on almost daily basis. The kinds of industries emerging in the age of globalization—such as biotechnology, new materials science, human genetics, advanced computing, artificial intelligence, and human/computer interfaces—demand that employees remain highly trained in science and technology. To draw upon the strength of this new development, updation of relevant knowledgebase is very important.

International relevant areas like global standards of copyright laws, global patents, world trade agreements, international criminal court, international justice movements, anti dumping laws should be promoted more vigorously.

**Recommendations**

To meet the Education challenges of the global world as broadly stated above, extensive use of advanced information and communications technologies shall be required. Technically, it is possible to remotely deliver interactive lectures through EDUSAT ( An Indian communication satellite exclusively devoted to meet the demands of educational sector )  to a large number of students geographically spread all over the country; it is possible to archive the lectures and use them

time and again thereby achieving anytime anywhere education by using available technologies of EDUSAT, Multimedia, Internet, video etc., it is possible to overcome all the above said challenges.

However, the bigger challenge is availability of resources, its successful implementation and perhaps even bigger is Rethinking of Education.

To meet these challenges and to reap the benefits of the opportunities presented by globalization, the following action points are recommended:

## Private Sector Participation in Primary Education

Primary Education by state governments and so also by central government especially in the rural areas is much below even the satisfactory level. Governments have resorted to all kinds of means just to increase the count of students visiting school perhaps to improve the statistics.  Mid Day Meals can perhaps make a student visit the school but cannot make him learn the basic education but to talk of global education. Lack of monitoring, Lack of accountability, Lack of will on the part of political bosses has almost ruined the primary education especially in the rural areas. With the availability of Technology, monitoring is no difficulty. It is in fact possible to even remotely take the attendance of the students and the staff with the help of Smart Card and Internet / Mobile SMS services. Monitoring will fix up the accountability and accountability will bring in performance.

Suppose, running of the government schools in the rural area is opened up for private participation!! There will be more opportunities for the private sector to provide educational services with a competitive edge based on efficiency, flexibility,

management style, and information technology. It would be easier for the private player to introduce technology and thereby bring in better monitoring leading to accountability. This is challenging task but can bear results. However, a Business Model shall have to be worked out that can meet the costs of the private participant, first on the Pilot Basis and then depending on the success, take it forward with necessary corrections.

This can also be meaningful way of creating meaningful jobs.

## Setting up of Community Education Centres

For a country like India, it is not possible to equip each and every school with technical advancements purely because of the costs and maintenance involved in such a huge infrastructure. However, it could be feasible to set up a Community Education Centres for a group of schools in a region. These Community Education Centres shall be equipped with Computers, Internet, Multimedia, Educational Software etc. and schools should be able to visit these centres of learning periodically. These Centres could act as Centres of Knowledge, Education and Learning. Over a period of time, these Centres could be interlinked to share the resources available among themselves.

## Formation of National Core Group on Global Education

National Core Group on Global Education should be a forum of eminent engineers/ scientists, information technologists, educationists, policy makers, and practitioners for rethinking education in the age of globalization and information. Agenda of the National Core Group on Global Education should broadly include the following :

§ To work out the mechanism for exchange of ideas and experiences in the use of global educational technologies and use the same for effective learning.

§ To work out the Development of Technology based system using Smart Card, Internet, and Mobile Messaging Technology for Online Performance Appraisal of the schools.

§ To work out the Financial & Technical Viability Model for Community Education Centres.

§ To work out the model for private participation in running the rural schools against well established targets.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Education in the Times of Globalization is a challenge for India that can be met through the available technologies and private participation by setting up Community Education Centres that can address the Education Needs of community at large. This is perhaps BIG Thinking but then Big Problems would need Big Thinking.

National Core Group on Global Education can be a beginning in this direction.

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