



Public Interface Programme – A Case Study on Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam

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Abstract: The University today holds the function of transmitting, discovering and distributing knowledge to society, by responding to the needs of companies and adopting mechanisms that facilitate the transfer of knowledge. Therefore, one of the larger objectives of the university is to make knowledge a differentiating element within the society and the economy since this motivates competition, creates wealth and employment and improves the work conditions in companies and countries. In fact, for some years researchers have been concerned with the problematic of interface between university-society, namely with respect to university-company cooperation. In order to create a better insight into the needs of the society and help the students to obtain knowledge on the reality Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University has started a Public interface programme. The key findings by each department assignment has highlighted in this case study.

Keywords: Progressive Society, Social Change, Peoples' University, e – Governance, Result-oriented.

Introduction

A University is a laboratory for the development of a progressive society. This is seen through the institutions ideals in all fields of human thought and endeavor, and by the development of education and research programs that impart these ideals. A university needs to have a handle on the problems confronting society and a clear understanding of its own role in cultivating the ideals for its progress. One of the tasks at hand is to develop a framework wherein the knowledge assets of a society (human, structural and social capital) may be effectively enhanced and sustained through the mission of universities. The quality of life and its sustainability is to a large extent fashioned by the society, while society is itself a collectivity of human beings.

With the able administration and dynamic leadership by the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor **Prof. H.**

Lajipathi Rai of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, India has taken a drastic decision to make a linkage between University and the Society. The University having the Vision as creation of an enabling environment where in universities would act as agents of social change and transformation through innovativeness and outreaching. The mission of the University is by invoking the strengths of faculty in mitigating the economic and social sufferings of the region through various extension service activities thus to make it a "**Peoples' University**".

Linkages with 20 – Point Economic Programme

The basic objective of the 20 point programme is to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality of life the poor and the under privileged population of the country. Twenty point economic formulas is a panacea to address socio-economic ills of the nation. It is resolved to award 25 marks to the

students every semester towards some field work so as to expose the student to some practical problems in the selected panchayths with in the University area.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam Consisting of 15 departments and around 1200 students were studying in various courses. The students of the concerned departments have to be entrusted with the relevant topics based on the pre field work and resolve the problems by proper representations to the district administration.

Key features of the programme

- Service to Society through University Faculty
- Faculty expertise to the doorsteps of the common man
- Translation of theory and concept taught in classroom into action outside university
- Utility based research and need oriented approach
- Interdisciplinary approach to solve peoples' problems

Department of Computer Science has identified a thrust area which fits in the 20th point in the 20 - point programme restructured in 2006 which is “**IT enabled & e – Governance**”. The thrust area the Department has taken up for this work is “Observing and Examining IT services provided to the public in the panchayaths so as to Strengthen IT Enabled & e – Governance Services” They guided the educated unemployed rural youth in computers, so as to increase their employability. Also created awareness among the rural people about the services provided by the e-seva and me-seva centres.

The Department of Mathematics has taken one of the twenty point programme i.e. “**Education for all**”. For this the Department has taken up for this work is “reduce mathematics phobia for non-Mathematical students”. With same point of “Education for all” by the Department of English has created awareness as well as to impart practical knowledge of English for all the competitive examinations for the students in Jr. Colleges in and around Etcherla, mandal where the University is located. Department of Library and Information Science ensured the implementation of guidelines for up keeping of libraries in all colleges in the University area.

Department of Social Work under the point of Education for all prepared graduate students for professional social work practice and professional leadership within a multicultural, global environment that is based on the concepts of human rights, social and economic justice, religious and spiritual tolerance. Department of Telugu initiated by identifying illiterates and educates them to sign their own.

Department of Rural Development assigned with topic of “**Health for all**” and Convergence is planned with Departments namely DRDA, DWUMA, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Housing Programmes , Rural Women Health Care and other developmental programmes. Department of organic chemistry under the programme of “**Support to Farmers**” has tested the soil from different areas around Etcherla mandal or any other area. Basing on soil test reports the farmers will be suggested right type of crops.

Department of Law intends to organise various programmes as a part of Twenty Point Programme of “**Power to People**”. They tried to create awareness on the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Also sensitize the consumer in identifying in defective goods and deficiency of services. They educated the public on consumer rights and helping the people in solving the consumer problems. The Department of Economics has adopted all villages in Etcherla Mandal of Srikakulam District, as a part of academic and extension programme of “Poverty eradication & Women Welfare”.

Department of Bio-Technology and Geo Sciences has assigned the programme of “**Clean Drinking Water**”. They were Collected the water samples from different villages and eestimated the Coli form in the water samples. They tested the Hydro geochemical constrains to understand the groundwater dynamics in Etcherla Village. For instance examining the elemental concentration like existing of fluoride, heavy metals like arsenic which is enough for causing cancer

Department of Education has concentrated on “**Women and Child Welfare**”. They have observed and examined Women Welfare Services provided to the public in the Panchayaths so as to strengthen in education. They trained the educated unemployed Rural Women for employment opportunities. They also created awareness among parents and community about the Education of the mentally retarded children in the community.

Department of Commerce & Management Studies has assigned “**Entrepreneurship Development Programme**” as a part of Twenty Point Programme.

Under the precious guidance of **Prof. G.Tulasi Rao**, the students of M.B.A. and M.Com. has divided in eight groups and each of the group led by a faculty member. Each group selected a separate topic like Rythu Bazar Activities, DWACRA groups, Consumer problems and Stock Market situations and successfully made the

fieldwork by understanding the problems in the particular area and also suggested the measures and solutions for those problems.

They been indentified many rural families need to diversify their sources of income and employment in view of low agricultural productivity, volatile weather conditions and soil erosion. Help creation of micro enterprises that are considered as an effective tool for sustainable livelihood, poverty alleviation and employment generation. Help the rural youth establish a small business, repay the loan and still own the productive assets.

It is a result-oriented strategy for initiating the process of economic development in the region. It is to create job opportunities for rural youth in today's competitive and over populated environment and to generate viable business opportunities in rural areas and motivating the youth to start their micro enterprises.

Responses from the Programme

- A tremendous response to the Programme from the public.
- A feeling of credibility about the efficacy of University extension activities could be generated.
- Awareness about faculties' responsibilities could be built up.
- Universities make use of their academic inputs safeguarding the public interest in society.
- Lack of awareness among faculties/academic bodies how best can they serve social interests.

- Institutional activities without relevance to social needs
- Extend Faculty expertise to the needy in society.
- Universities confined to mere production of graduates
- Whether Research conducted is socially oriented / beneficial research.
- Share the unique experience with the counterparts in other universities
- Rededicating the various departments in universities to the cause of public welfare

Social Responsibility of Universities

Social responsibility of a university is often confused with community service, its third function, but it is a far broader and deeper concept. It is not a separate activity; it should be the very essence of a university, its ethos, its way of being and operating.

A possible definition could be: "the responsibility of a university to preach and practice a set of principles and values through its core functions of teaching, research, community engagement and institutional management". These principles and values may include commitment to fairness, truth and ethics; promotion of social equity and sustainable human development; recognition of an individual's dignity and liberty; appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism; and promotion of human rights, democracy and civic responsibility.

There are several reasons why social responsibility of universities in a knowledge-based economy is very important. First, because of continuously diminishing public funds for the sector, higher

education is increasingly being regarded as a private good. It must be recognized that it is essentially a public good. That does not mean that the state must provide all the funding; but the state has the responsibility to plan and regulate the sector.

With trade liberalization through WTO/GATS, higher education is also increasingly regarded as a commodity or a tradable service. This has given rise to Cross-border higher education, mainly from developed to developing countries, and not all the providers act fairly or ethically.

Because of crisis in their funding, universities are being run as corporate entities, the main objective being to generate income to cover costs, at times at the expense of quality or even ethics. Large numbers of private, for-profit, and business-oriented higher education institutions now exist, and are on the increase. Generally, universities are adopting a short-term, market-driven approach, ignoring long-term visions and challenges of society.

With improved technology, fraud and deception in higher education are on the increase, e.g. fake diplomas which can be purchased online and false accreditation bodies. Major advances in research, for example cloning, are raising ethical issues that could have serious social impact. The major disparities in human and social development between countries and regions affect global sustainable development and these need to be addressed by universities in knowledge-based economies. They also need to address global challenges such a climate change, poverty, water, food security and health. To promote world peace, universities in knowledge-based economies must instill in students an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, the desire to assist

those less fortunate and the will to make the world a better place to live.

Conclusion

Because Universities train future leaders and decision-makers, it is incumbent on them to ensure that their students become socially responsible citizens. Universities must resist the wave of commercialisation and commodification brought about by globalisation. Responding to short-term market demands must not be their sole mission – they also have a responsibility to cater for long-term societal needs.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University with its effort on Society Interface Programme is going to more result oriented and societal beneficial Programme. Initiation taken by the VC and supported by the Faculty and the Students were deserved for making towards a model University. Also need for a separate department or agency in the university to coordinate with all other faculties and formulate new programmes of study to match society needs.

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