



Shift to Market Orientation? The Changing Trend of the Higher Education Sector in India

Julie Vardhan

1 INTRODUCTION

With almost all the countries aiming to create global citizens, the effects of globalisation on the higher education sector are in the areas of growing internationalisation, massification, and marketisation. Foskett and Maringe (2010) note that a number of factors support the globalisation of higher education institutions—diminishing trade barriers, increasing student and staff mobility, higher education rankings, influence of international organisations like UNESCO, and increasing demand for a highly skilled global workforce. Among the requirements of a globally skilled workforce are individuals who are competent in the English language, are able to adapt multi-culturally, and are adept at critical and creative thinking. These individuals encompass the ideology of thinking globally and acting locally (Tan, 2008). Further up, the gradation in technology and communication has ensured an integration of knowledge and

J. Vardhan (✉)
Amity University Jharkhand, Ranchi, India

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191

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products with markets, processes, and ideas. The integration has led to an increased demand for highly skilled knowledge workers.

The focus of education since ancient times has been its ability to qualify and socialise (Nussbaum, 1998). While qualification is an indication of usefulness of the education, socialisation refers to the formative value of education (Bendixen & Jacobsen, 2017). However, there now seems to be a shift in the orientation of education, with the forces of globalisation compelling the education sector to include marketing and market orientation in its consideration. In continuation with this proposition, Mok (2002) has identified four major trends which affect the higher education sector in current times: denationalisation, decentralisation, autonomisation, and marketisation. While denationalisation refers to the inclusion of private institutions in the sector, decentralisation refers to a shift in the form of governance from that of control to one of supervision. Autonomisation refers to universities having more freedom and academic autonomy in terms of their offerings in programmes, courses, and curriculum. Marketisation refers to additional revenue-generating activities by universities. That market orientation has a positive consequence for customer satisfaction. There is also a relationship between customer satisfaction and profitability which have been corroborated in the study by Lings and Grenley (2009). Using the same principle in the educational context it can be interpreted that in a university setting, application of the marketisation principle would lead to more value for the stakeholders, and greater profitability for the universities.

The present study is undertaken with the objective of understanding the implementation of the market orientation in the higher education sector in India. Specifically, the following aspects of marketisation were considered: massification, privatisation, internationalisation, and financing. Secondary data were analysed on these aspects, especially data from the last five years from various government organisations and associations which are related to higher education in India. This chapter seeks to extend knowledge in the market orientation approach in the higher education sector in India by focusing on the strategies which are adopted by the entire sector, rather than on individual institutions. The study ought to provide leaders and policy makers in the higher education sector in India to orient the institutions towards providing the learning environment as per the need of the learners.

A review of the concept of market orientation and marketisation is discussed in the next section, followed by a description of the marketisation tenets as seen in the higher education sector in India. The discussion section highlights the myriad ways in which marketisation is applied at the institution level. The chapter ends with a discussion of the implications of the study.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON MARKETISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The influence of marketing has been well recognised and documented in a vast number of studies, and applied to both business and non-business organisations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Marketing itself has seen a transition from a product-centric view (Marketing 1.0) to being consumer-centric (Marketing 2.0) to a third stage in which it is considered to be human-centric (Marketing 3.0). Here, all the stakeholders are considered to be important, and marketing is intended to create sustainable value for all. Similar to the transition in marketing, there seems to have been a transition in the concept from marketing orientation to that of market orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). The construct reflects the extent to which an organisation has adopted the concepts of marketing into the functioning of the organisation (Camelia & Mariaus, 2013; Hammond et al., 2006; Ngo & Cass, 2011). It is considered to be linked to creating a sustainable and unique value to the customers, thus leading to the creation of competitive advantage for the organisation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). Market-oriented firms place the highest value on creating superior customer value (Slater & Narver, 1998; Zhou et al., 2009), and consequently such organisations would ensure deployment of necessary resources. Ngo and Cass (2011) in their study suggest that creation of superior customer value is the basic premise of market orientation and of the marketing function. Several studies have documented the role of marketing orientation in improving business profitability, innovation, employee commitment, and performance of the organisation (Kirca et al., 2005; Noble et al., 2002; Tran et al., 2015). Market orientation is considered to be an integrative and inclusive concept, and meant to incorporate the entire market, including all the stakeholders. In this study, the term ‘market orientation’ or ‘marketisation’ are alternatively used to denote the organisation-wide applicability of the marketing concept. Moreover, instead of looking at

the marketisation concept from the institution level this study considers the various dimensions of market orientation from the perspective of the entire sector.

Market orientation has been considered as an area of study in the education field for over a decade, as a way to understand the university-student relationship (Lozano, 2006). The Balridge National Quality Program has emphasised the linking of market orientation to that of education. Among the seven criteria included in the Balridge Quality Program, three directly emphasise the market orientation role of the university. The first criterion, for example, emphasises the organisation's need to take adequate care of its stakeholders with the students being among the primary stakeholders or the key customers. The second criterion requires that the organisation must be able to meet the requirements and expectations of the stakeholders. The third criterion revolves around the organisation's need to be able to guide students in learning and succeeding (Tran et al., 2015). Few studies proposed the addition of new concepts to the fundamental concepts in marketing for the marketisation process to be included in the academic field. So, apart from customer value, cost, convenience, and communication, Newman and Jahdi (2009) added calibre, capabilities, and charisma, for marketing to be integrated with the education sector:

- Calibre refers to a change in the view of academic staff as employees to providers of a service, as people who are to be managed rather than as people who are engaged in intellectual activity.
- Capabilities are defined as the ease of obtaining information by the students, and relates to the responsiveness of the faculty and staff in responding to them.
- Charisma or collateral is the insistence on the value foundation of the university as a brand (Roper & Davies, 2007).

The transition of an academic system towards adopting business ideals means that a higher number of private players are invited to take part in the activities. Moreover, the changes mean that business ideals in organising, managing, and measuring the results of activities will increasingly influence the organisation. The shift also ensures that institutions undergo more evaluative and regulatory control, which would result in measurable rankings, away from the traditional universities' rules-based meritocracy

(Olssen, 2002). The traditional view of education places more emphasis on quality of education and the ensuing output of knowledge, whereas the shift in the education system towards a market orientation seems to be aimed towards ensuring that a positive image of the institution along with efficiency in academic outcomes are achieved.

Many studies on the marketisation of education have been conducted across countries (Bendixen & Jacobsen [2017] in the Danish context, Ginsburg et al. [2003] in Chile and Romania, Mok [1999] in Singapore, Tran et al. [2015] in the United States, and Naidoo & Wu [2011] in India). Among the higher education sector, marketisation seems to have been applied across a number of economic and social contexts, one having been termed as the ‘marketised system’ and the other, the ‘marketising system’. Loosely tied with the developed and the developing nations nomenclature, those in the marketised system of higher education have incorporated some degree of marketisation into their education sector, while the marketising system is where the education sector has yet to develop a marketisation approach.

The United States is often considered closest to the marketised system, because its higher education institutions have a high degree of autonomy. Among the prominent features of the marketised system is a significant number of private institutions, whose financing is derived from the tuition fees, the university’s own funds, and donations. In the United States, home to a number of rankings and league tables, a considerable amount is spent by the institutions in building brand image and managing reputation. The countries which are part of the marketised system are the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Netherlands. Japan and Korea stand a bit apart from this system, because Japan has a substantial private sector (more than 75% in terms of students and institutions) and a high level of private funding.

The marketising systems are the higher education institutions in countries where the governments are initiating internationalisation approaches in the wake of creating global citizens. These systems are driven by a number of ideologies and pragmatics. Ideologically, many of the governments consider marketisation and the ensuing competition to be pushing the institutions for greater efficiency and responsiveness to stakeholders. Pragmatically, marketisation helps in sharing the financial cost, especially important given that many governments face financial constraints and must reduce public expenditures on education.

3 THE MARKETISATION PROCESS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Indian higher education sector is widely connected to the Indian culture of diversity, acceptance, and accommodation of disparate convictions and ideas. India had a rich system of indigenous education which though informal, was well established prior to the introduction of the Western education system imported by the British. The gurukul system not only ensured imparting the knowledge and skills which are required for an individual, but most importantly emphasised learning human values and life skills. With the onset of the British rule and prior to independence, India witnessed the emergence of the Colonial model of higher education, with limited access and imposition of the English language as the medium of instruction in selected institutions. The two systems continued well until the pre-independence era, and encompassed differing value systems. Since 1947, after independence, India has witnessed a high growth period in the higher education sector, with the government aiming to increase the reach and quality of higher education. India, with a population of more than 1.2 billion, has a young population base of 0.672 billion in the age group of 15–64 years old who constitute a major demographic dividend for the country. This demographic dividend would be an invaluable human resource to the country for uplifting the economy, and the society if people have access to higher education. With this objective, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was formed by the government as the regulatory body to advise, set standards, and coordinate between the centre and state in the management of higher education institutions and universities. With around 800 universities and 34,584,781 enrolled students, India is witnessing a tremendous growth in its higher education sector. The higher education system in India is considered to be the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. With a growing and young population base, the Indian government is eager to develop the human capital through internationalising its higher education sector, while making it accessible and marketable.

Although there are many studies which point to the negative consequences of utilising marketisation in the higher education sector, several studies also mention its inevitability and necessity. Molesworth et al. (2011) list the techniques which are used by the higher education institutions in their marketisation approach. It begins with each higher education institution trying to reduce its cost, and improve its offerings,

in order to differentiate itself from the competition; using a number of sales techniques to attract the potential customers; and highlighting the career prospects of the students through advertisements and linking up with the industries with promise of a better workforce. The marketisation is more pronounced from the consumer's end—the students who attend university not to gain knowledge of a subject but primarily to become an employable person. When there is an explicit focus on skills to be acquired in order to be employable, efforts to address other concerns are often dismissed by the institutions and the students. Analysts point out that critical thinking, abstraction, and creativity are oftentimes relegated to the background, because these are not considered the focus for learning. Termed as 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), a number of studies point to the shift in purpose of education (from public good and helping to create an equitable society) to that of institutions trying to compete for a share in the market.

Based on the review of literature on market orientation and the marketisation of higher education, the following four aspects would be considered as typical features to observe the marketisation of the higher education sector in India.

3.1 *Massification*

One of the ways the market orientation is facilitated by organisations is through the spread of its ideas or products across the maximum number so as to have the widest reach. Termed as 'massification', in the higher education system massification is considered as one which provides 15–50% of the relevant age group with access to higher education. Universal access is achieved when the higher education system is able to provide access to more than 50% of the relevant age group, which was termed as 'post-massification' by Reiko. The number of universities post-independence (1950–2017) in India has multiplied by more than 30. Along with the growing population, the number of students enrolled in higher education has been growing over the years. Figure 1 shows the enrolment number at various levels of higher education in India in 2015–2016. As seen in the Figure, 79% of the enrolled students are taking up undergraduate programmes.

The share of enrolment in traditional courses of humanities, social sciences, and pure sciences has declined, and there has been a growing appreciation for professional courses, and accordingly an increase in the

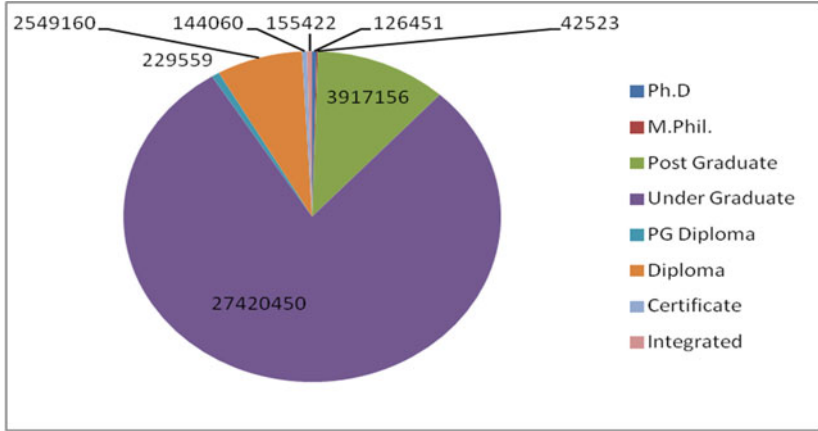


Fig. 1 Student enrolment at various levels in higher education in India (Source Adapted from All India Survey on Higher Education, MHRD [2015–16])

number of private institutions, from which graduating students anticipate better job prospects. The enrolment has grown considerably during the last five years, increasing from 32,336,234 in 2013/2014 to 36,642,378 in 2017/2018. The overall growth was 13.3% during this period which is shown in Fig. 2.

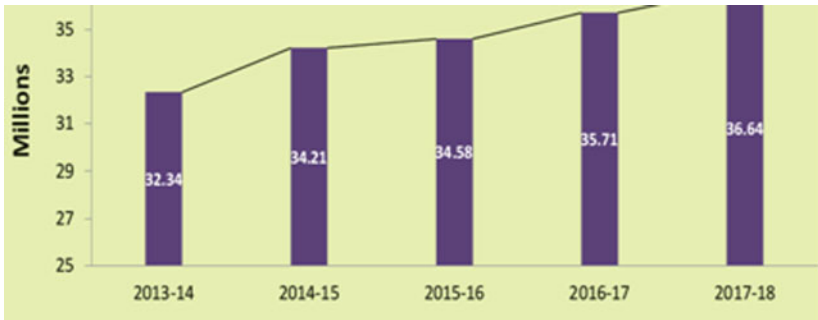


Fig. 2 Student enrolment in higher education sector (Source AISHE Report [2017–18])

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has increased during the last five years, from 23.0 in 2013/2014 to 25.8 in 2017/2018. The rise in the student enrolment shows that both the government's initiatives and institutional initiatives for increasing enrolment for expanding the reach of higher education have been working.

3.2 *Privatisation*

The liberalisation of the Indian economy in 1991 and the economic reforms led to an increase in the establishment of a number of private universities. There were correspondingly significant changes in the governance structure, with power transferred to private institutions or boards similar to corporations. The higher education sector continues to experience a change from the nationalisation model to that of a market-oriented model. The number of universities and similar institutions listed on the AISHE portal has increased from 723 in 2013/2014 to 903 in 2017/2018 as shown in the Table 1, with a consistent rise in the state private universities, from 153 in 2013/2014 to 262 in 2017/2018.

Table 1 shows the major university types in India and the growth in their number over the years. While the central universities in India are established by an act of parliament, the state universities are established by state legislature act. The deemed universities are those institutions which

Table 1 Major university types and the number of universities

<i>Major university type</i>	<i>Number of university</i>				
	<i>2013–2014</i>	<i>2014–2015</i>	<i>2015–2016</i>	<i>2016–2017</i>	<i>2017–2018</i>
State public university	309	316	329	345	351
State private university	153	181	197	233	262
Deemed university-private	80	79	79	79	80
Institute of national importance	68	75	75	100	101
Central university	42	43	43	44	45
Demmed university-government	36	32	32	33	33

Source AISHE, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2017–18

have been accorded the status of a university by the central government to award their own degrees, and the institutes of national importance are prestigious institutions which have been accorded the status by the parliament. The technical institutions are considered as a separate sector, and follow different regulations according to their respective sectors, like the AICTE and the Medical Council of India. The state private universities and deemed private universities are private institutions which have received the approval from the central or state governments to operate as universities, and award degrees under the regulation of the Universities Grants Commission.

The evolution of privatisation in the Indian higher education system has been described as “from half-baked socialism to half-baked capitalism” by Kapur and Mehta. According to these authors, the massive privatisation is not due to ideological changes but instead due to the fact that government funding over the years in the higher education sector for central and state universities has stagnated. Private funding, on the other hand, has witnessed a steady rise for private universities, deemed universities, and the unaided colleges.

3.3 *Internationalisation*

The demand and supply dynamics in the education sector has led to the growing marketisation of the system not just at the national level but also globally (Naidoo & Wu, 2011). A number of higher education institutions, therefore, develop marketing strategies in order to attract international students, or brand themselves as international universities. In a study by Casidy (2014), the marketisation of the universities has led to the increasing number of international education providers and the ensuing competition. There has been an increase in the number of students seeking international education through outward mobility and in some countries an increase in the inward mobility of students.

The growing aspiration of the young population to gain international degrees and knowledge has ensured a continued demand for international programmes in India. The internationalisation of higher education in India is mostly with the student mobility, with a large outward mobility of students. The number of Indian students abroad has increased from 55,444 in 1999 to about 255,030 in 2016. It is forecasted that 400,000 Indian students will leave the country to enrol in foreign universities by 2024. Inbound mobility has traditionally been modest, but reached

30,423 in 2014 (AISHE, 2017). Although many foreign institutions are establishing their centres in India, some Indian institutions have also established their branch campuses on foreign shores. The demand for open and distance education also seems to be growing, with many takers for the online and blended learning courses.

3.4 *Financing*

The responsibility of financing higher education is shared by both the public and private sector in India. Funding for public universities is the responsibility of the central and state governments, with 80% of public higher education funding being from the states and 20% of the funding being from the central government. About 82% of state funding goes in non-plan expenditure—routine administration and maintenance—and barely any in capacity-building (FICCI, 2011). The central government funding is more focused towards central universities and centres of excellence, which caters to a small percentage of total students. According to FICCI (2011), the private expenditure on higher education has increased about 12.8 times during the last decade. Among the household expenditure on higher education, it has been found that the share of tuition and other fees has increased to about 53%, which is due to an increase in the share of private institutions (FICCI, 2011).

With the reduction in funding of higher education institutions, they are finding ways to generate revenue and to reduce expenses. Consequently, institutions are relying more on tuition fees, thereby educing research grants for faculties, restricting scholarship schemes, increasing the number of programmes, and the raising of more revenue through the creation of short-term programmes or by keeping teachers on contract (Tran et al., 2015). Some universities choose to collaborate with industries in providing training or consultancy services, while several universities also tend to expand to other regions in the nation or even internationally as a means to generate revenue.

4 DISCUSSION

The growth in private institutions, and the emphasis on individualism, are emphasised in neoliberal market models (Fumagalli & Morini, 2013). Indeed, neoliberal market models are associated with policies of free trade, privatisation, and reduction in government spending, in order to increase

the role of private sector in the economy and society (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009; Goldstein, 2012). The higher education sector in India is finding fewer investments in the form of subsidies or grants by the central government, and the cost is shifted to the students, especially for private universities, the funding for which is based almost entirely on tuition fees. A number of studies which are critical of neoliberal principles in the education sector claim that as education starts being considered as a commodity, geared for consumption, all the policies and practices by the institutions will also be submitted to the market forces (Corsani, 2013). Education, therefore, is considered as a consumer good, meant for individual consumption, and the advancement of the student is measured in terms of income-generating capability (Thomas & Davies, 2002). Marketisation and globalisation mean that nations and regions compete for the best students, the most skilled researchers and instructors, and the best placement of their graduates. The linkage of educational objectives with marketisation is criticised by a number of scholars, because research and academic work are not immediately suitable for commercialisation. Education cannot be traded or marketed with the other commodities, but through the value which education provides. The increasing importance of educational markets compared to the value of knowledge has led to varying perceptions and debates on marketisation in the education sector.

Among the other features of market orientation which are adopted by universities are the initiatives taken up by the universities so that they are perceived as being effective in their objective by all their stakeholders. The way in which universities attempt to attract and build the brand image, range from renting or purchasing of prime sites at city centres, spending on infrastructure, or conducting open-house sessions in order to attract new students. In this new regime, academic knowledge circulates not just through traditional forms of classroom seminars but also online learning. The increasing use of blended learning where the faculty and students interaction is based on minimal contact hours in person and more through the Internet, is among the changing pedagogy to ensure learning goals are met keeping the students convenience. Among the various branding techniques adopted by the universities are the ways in which potential students are made aware regarding the programmes of the universities, the coordinated use of logos and promotional tools, university uniform and sportswear as a form of identification by the universities, creating non-degree certificate programmes, customised training programmes, industrial tours, alumni and parents meetings, and being a part of a

number of cultural and sporting events. The university becomes an institutional player in the new economy through public–private partnership and other organisational networks to capitalise on the knowledge capital. Among the increasing collaboration with the institutions in the economy, many private industries are interested in having their say in curriculum development and instructional methods.

Studies have found a positive correlation between the level of market orientation within a firm and the ability of the firm to achieve its objectives (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Lings & Grdenley, 2009). The marketisation process in the higher education sector has been introduced to gradually replace the traditional forms of academic management (Santiago et al., 2006), with policies which are more suitable for knowledge-driven global economy. Tran et al. (2015) and Chapleo (2015) consider that marketing and branding remains key in an environment beset with sweeping changes. Among the benefits of adopting marketing strategies, researchers mention that branding and marketing provide the students with the awareness which is required to provide decision-making regarding selection of the university, help in increasing the loyalty base, and the reduction of student attrition (Angulo-Ruiz & Pergelova, 2013).

5 CONCLUSION

The study by Murphy (2011) draws on the conflict which is being faced by universities in this age and time. The earlier notion of universities being sequestered ivory towers away from the vagaries of the marketplace has shifted to that of an institution which is bound by cultures of accountability, competition, and market forces. While many argue that these cultures seem to be weakening the sense of purpose and societal prestige of the university, the market forces seem to be too strong to leave the institutions unaffected. The review highlights that in an increasingly competitive environment, the higher education sector in India has been adapting to the marketisation process considerably. Arguments in favour of the marketisation process include the market's capacity for generating social and economic benefits, and increasing efficiency in the sector, encouraging differentiation due to an over emphasis on competition and performance related reward schemes.

The four dimensions which were discussed show that the market orientation concept has been increasingly integrated at the institution level, and

also as a strategy by the entire sector. The increasing massification and corresponding rise in student enrolment show the growing accessibility of higher education which has been the guiding force behind a number of government initiatives. The study also focuses on the increasing role of private institutions in the higher education sector. As students become more discerning and with a greater number of options, universities are forced to adopt marketing strategies in order to attract the prospective students. The growing competition from international universities and the growing mobility of students across countries are other factors which seem to have an effect on the globalisation and the ensuing marketisation process in the higher education sector.

This chapter contributes to knowledge of the market orientation concept in the higher education sector in India, focusing on the strategies which have been adopted by the entire sector. Future empirical studies on these four aspects would further corroborate the role of the market orientation approach in higher education. The study ought to provide leaders and policymakers in the higher education sector in India guidance on how to orient institutions towards providing the learning environment as per the need of the learners. The practices of marketisation only need to ensure that the value of knowledge continues to be the driving objective for institutions.

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