



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: In this study, we examine university libraries as fundamental pillars of higher education. They provide access to essential resources, promote research, and cultivate dynamic learning environments that facilitate academic objectives such as teaching, research, and publication. Education plays a crucial role in the advancement of a nation. It is essential for education to evolve in accordance with the times and the changing dynamics of the world. It provides a significant opportunity to engage in critical thinking regarding the economic, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual challenges faced by humanity. India urgently requires a greater number of educated and capable individuals to propel our economy forward. There are numerous Indians, both locally and globally, who are recognized for their skills and expertise. To establish India as a Human Resource Hub and to become a valuable contributor to the global economy, it is imperative for India to enhance the quality of education, particularly in higher education, with a focus on research and development.

Keywords : University Library, Higher Education, Opportunities, Quality of Education, Improvements.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Higher education plays a vital role in the development of any nation, particularly in countries like India, where it acts as a driving force for human progress. The advancements in higher education within India are clearly visible in the achievements we witness today. The nation has produced a vast array of professionals, including scientists, engineers, technologists, doctors, educators, and managers, who are in high demand on a global scale.

In this context, libraries serve a vital function as repositories of knowledge, containing a diverse array of intellectual resources. They do not simply act as passive storage spaces; instead, libraries operate as dynamic instruments for education. They nurture the minds of students, inspire faculty researchers, and invite all visitors to immerse themselves in the rich cultural and intellectual offerings available. It is certainly not an exaggeration to assert that a well-organized library is a fundamental necessity for the successful implementation of higher education programs.

Presently, India ranks among the top ten countries in terms of industrial and technological prowess, a status that can be attributed to the significant contributions of skilled labor and resources that higher education, especially in technical fields, has facilitated. India is on a transformative journey marked by an explosion of knowledge, with its impressive capabilities showcased through milestones in nuclear technology and space exploration. The next few decades are anticipated to bring further advancements in spacecraft, satellites, the internet, and various other scientific endeavors. Higher education not only broadens individual opportunities but also encourages reflection on the urgent cultural, social, economic, moral, and spiritual issues facing humanity. It provides individuals with the specialized knowledge and skills necessary for national progress. Looking ahead, India is set to have the largest youth population in the world, positioning it for significant influence in the global landscape.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA:

The higher education system in India is primarily regulated and funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC), which is the only body responsible for granting financial support to universities and colleges across the country. The UGC not only provides funding but also plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining academic standards within higher education institutions. Beyond the UGC, there are numerous professional organizations that also contribute to the funding of undergraduate programs. These organizations include the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), which oversees technical education, and the Distance Education Council (DEC), which focuses on promoting distance learning. Other significant councils include the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), which supports agricultural education, and the Bar Council of India (BCI), which regulates legal

education. Additionally, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is responsible for teacher training programs, while the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) oversees rehabilitation education. The Medical Council of India (MCI) regulates medical education, and the Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) governs pharmacy education. Other councils such as the Indian Nursing Council (INC), Dentist Council of India (DCI), Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH), and the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) also play vital roles in ensuring the quality and standards of their respective fields of education. Together, these statutory professional councils contribute significantly to the structure and funding of higher education in India.

3. GROWTH OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA :

India has long been recognized as a center of excellence in higher education, dating back to ancient times. Notable institutions such as Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Takshashila were among the earliest and most prestigious universities, not only in India but also in the world, serving as prominent centers for advanced learning during their time. Students from various nations traveled to these esteemed universities to further their education. Today, India is home to one of the largest and most dynamic higher education systems globally. The establishment of universities such as Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857 marked a significant development in this landscape, followed by the founding of the University of Allahabad in 1887.

The first major initiative to create a national education framework in India took place in 1944 with the publication of the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post-War Educational Development in India, which recommended the formation of a University Grants Committee. This committee was established in 1945 to manage the operations of the three Central Universities: Delhi, Banaras, and Aligarh. After India gained independence, a comprehensive Ministry of Education was created on August 19, 1947. In 1952, the Union Government decided that all matters related to the distribution of grants-in-aid from public funds to Central Universities and other higher education institutions would be handled by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC was officially established in November 1956 as a statutory body of the Government of India through an Act of Parliament, with the responsibility of coordinating, determining, and maintaining educational standards in universities across the country.

4. ROLE OF LIBRARIES :

The role of libraries is continually changing, moving away from traditional print media and embracing digital formats that allow information to be organized directly on users' desktops. In this digital age, users increasingly demand immediate access to information, often relying on the metadata available online. Consequently, the responsibilities of librarians are evolving, blending traditional staffing models with new roles to meet the diverse needs of library patrons. In India, the education system employs a combination of formal and informal strategies to encourage higher education through various learning and teaching methods.

Libraries serve their essential function by disseminating information, a role that has remained constant since the inception of information storage and preservation within their walls. They are vital in providing access to a wealth of knowledge and information, including books, periodicals, magazines, ancient manuscripts, archives, articles, standards, reports, government resolutions, and much more. The significant changes observed in libraries today are largely due to the integration and application of technology. The library's role can be framed within the broader context of the university's mission and a comprehensive library development program.

As Dr. S.R. Ranganathan famously remarked, 'Libraries are not mere storehouses; they are rich springs from which knowledge flows out to irrigate the fields of education and culture.'

The primary function of the university library is educational. It should not merely serve as a repository of books located in a reading room, but rather as a vital tool for education. This has been highlighted in various reports issued by different library and educational commissions in India. A university library is established with the aim of supporting the successful achievement of objectives such as teaching, research, and publication programs, among others.

In India, the University Education Commission (1948-49), led by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, states that educators must possess the essential resources for teaching, which include libraries and laboratories, as well as the appropriate type of students. He asserts, "The library is the heart of the University's work; directly concerning its research activities and indirectly regarding its educational functions, which are invigorated by research. Scientific research requires both a library and laboratories, while for humanistic research, the library serves as both library and laboratory in one. The education in advanced levels of learning and research fundamentally revolves around mastering the tools, and if the library resources are absent, how can students be expected to learn to utilize them?"

Dr. S. R. Ranganathan chaired the report of the Library Committee of the University Grants Commission in 1957, which thoroughly examined the role of the university library in academic advancement, particularly in the realm of higher education.

The observations mentioned earlier can be summarized in the following key points:

- i. The library is fundamentally important to the educational process, acting as its foundation.
- ii. While educational methods and trends change with each new generation, the library remains a vital resource that every generation depends on to achieve its educational goals; therefore, it continues to serve as the primary custodian of knowledge.
- iii. Achieving a high standard of education is impossible without access to a well-resourced library.

- iv. A library plays a crucial role in maximizing the use of our intellectual resources effectively.
- v. A library is essential for ensuring that individuals have free access to a wide range of ideas and for fostering the development of an open and unrestricted mind.

5. AIMS, OBJECTIVES OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY :

A library is regarded as the 'heart' of a university, serving as the focal point for higher education learning. Each university is equipped with a central library and may also feature various constituent libraries associated with its different teaching departments or constituent colleges. The aims and objectives of a library are outlined as follows:

1. The library must facilitate the change process that is crucial for the development of a growing society.
2. The university library should enhance facilities for advanced study and research in education.
3. The library must provide opportunities for professional students to enhance their knowledge and skills through summer and evening classes, short-term courses, seminars, and other avenues.
4. The library must offer teacher training and guidance to prepare candidates for Master's/Ph.D. degrees in educational disciplines at the university, as well as other educational diplomas that may be established.
5. The library must engage in research across various branches of education, publish the findings of such research, and function as a center for educational information dissemination.
6. The library should assist in the preparation of educational leaders in teaching, research, and administration.
7. The library should stimulate high-quality educational research, both fundamental and applied, necessary for the improvement of education.
8. The university library serves as a dynamic and high-quality academic environment for teaching, research, and human services for aspiring teachers and leaders in the field of special education.

6. FUNCTIONS OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES :

- *Resource Provision:* Libraries provide a wide array of information, encompassing academic journals, databases, digital resources, and physical books, thereby supporting teaching, learning, and research across various disciplines.
- *Support for Research and Scholarship:* They serve as essential hubs for researchers and faculty, offering the necessary tools and resources to facilitate innovative research and enhance knowledge.
- *Information Literacy Instruction:* University libraries instruct students and faculty on how to locate, assess, and utilize information effectively, a skill that is crucial for academic achievement.
- *Fostering Learning Environments:* Libraries offer physical spaces conducive to focused study, collaboration, and intellectual engagement, acting as vibrant centers for learning.
- *Bridging the Digital Divide :* In an age of increasing reliance on digital resources, libraries ensure equitable access for all students. They provide essential technology, including computers and internet access, to those who may lack these resources at home.
- *Adapting to the Digital Age :* University libraries are constantly evolving, integrating new digital technologies to enhance access to information and improve services. They leverage digital tools to manage, store, and disseminate information more effectively, playing a key role in a library's ability to function in the 21st century.
- *Community and Collaboration :* Libraries serve as community spaces, facilitating networking and offering a platform for students, teachers, and researchers to connect and collaborate. They are integral to the development of intellectual and cultural contexts, functioning as more than just storehouses of information but as active instruments of education.

7. CONCLUSION :

The information landscape is highly dynamic, incorporating libraries within higher education and a variety of research organizations. While it is challenging to make a definitive decision about the future, it is essential to carve out individual pathways and identify the necessary conditions for success. For libraries to effectively implement knowledge management strategies, strong leadership and a well-defined vision from top administration are crucial, as these elements can significantly enhance the organization's initiatives for knowledge sharing. As libraries evolve into the knowledge-centric phase of the 21st century, we must avoid a passive stance regarding the progress of knowledge management. Instead, by utilizing our professional skills and experiences, we should proactively take the initiative and lead the way in this important area.

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