Aims of Higher Education

Introduction

Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of dust and gives us the wealth of not things but of inner light, not of power but of love, making this truth its own and giving expression to it.

Rabindra Nath Tagore

Higher education occupies a special position in the educational system of any nation because it is at the apex of the entire educational structure and thus influences all levels of education. In fact, by providing manpower for many areas of production, planning, management and technological development, it influences practically every important national activity. Through ideas and innovations, its influence on the future of the nation is also very considerable. The importance of higher education has been very considerable. The importance of higher education has been very succinctly expressed by our first Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his address to a convocation of Allahabad University in 1947 in the following words:

“A University stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the Universities discharge their duties adequately, then it will be well with the nation and the people”.

Society’s expectations from higher education, however, have not remained the same always, but have kept changing with differing social concerns, economic situations and political conditions.

Learning outcomes

In this unit, we intend to give you an overview of what we mean by ‘education’ and ‘higher education’. An attempt is made to discuss the changing role and functions of higher education in different historical periods. Towards the end, we briefly discuss the aims of higher education today in order to affirm its importance to our society and its progress.

After working through this unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate the meaning and significance of education;
- discuss the changing role and functions of higher education through the history of education;
The term ‘education’ is used in a variety of contexts and with different shades of meaning. In its broadest sense, any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual can be called as educational. It is in this sense that travelling, reading, conversation or even living with someone can be an education. The famous author Maxim Gorky has written an autobiographical book describing his experiences of people, situations, family and social relationships from which he learnt a lot about life, and he has called the book ‘My Universities’. In the same sense, it is not surprising that an assessment of learning by children has revealed that the school contributes only a limited share in the education of children; the other part comes from family, life, society, playmates and reading of books and magazines – in modern times, from radio, television or the computer. Education is thus a very broad term as far as individual is concerned.

However, education may also connote a system of institutions organized by society to deliberately transmit its cultural heritage – its accumulated knowledge, values and skills – from one generation to another. The educational system of a society would, accordingly, comprise institutions such as schools, colleges, universities including teachers, administrators, curricula and courses, examination and certification procedure, and so on.

Formal arrangements for the education of individuals in present day societies are conceived in terms of stages arranged in a hierarchy. Our own educational ladder starting at six years of age, comprises the elementary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education stages. Since 1968, when the Parliament approved a National Policy on Education, we are committed to a structure symbolically called “10+2+3”. This means ten years high school education including five years of primary, three years of upper primary and two years of secondary education. The structure of higher education consists of three years of education (after 12 years of school education) leading to a Bachelor’s degree in Arts and Science and four years in professional fields like Engineering and Medicine. This is followed by two years of study for a Masters degree; and three years at least beyond the Masters degree for a Ph. D degree which generally takes longer. The new National Policy on Education, 1986, reaffirms the same structure adopted by most Indian States.

Higher education

Higher education refers to education in post higher secondary institutions, colleges and universities. It is higher education, firstly, because it constitutes the topmost stage of formal education and more importantly, because it is concerned with processes in the more advanced phases of human learning. The entrants are about eighteen years of age and, therefore, they are mentally mature and capable of performing at the abstract level. They can analyse, synthesise and grasp concepts and ideas of all kinds. Their creative faculties are also developed adequately. Consequently the content, methods of interaction and organization of work have to be very different from what they are at the school.

Three aspects of higher education are of relatively recent origin. One of them is that social, economic and industrial development have created a pressure towards greater specialization. Whereas two centuries ago, students could study Philosophy, Mathematics and Medicine in their university’s programmes, today these subjects are studied usually by different students in different faculties or institutions. Because of specialization today’s student in higher education knows more and more about less and
less and sometimes special efforts are necessary to create a broader understanding of subjects and disciplines.

The second aspect is that as societies grew more complex, more selective and efficient means of cultural transmission evolved. The result is the formal, institutionalized system of education. The curriculum, due to specialization and paucity of time has crystallized into clear-cut ‘papers’ or courses. Formalism both in structure and content have crept in. The need of producing students of comparable base of knowledge and standard of achievement by a large number of institutions, has led to formalism in evaluating or examining of students.

Thirdly, research has emerged as one of the most significant dimensions of higher education today. Creation of knowledge is a tangible output of the educational system because of which the Universities have acquired a new social status, particularly, in the developed countries. In fact, there exists a symbiotic relation between research and specialization of knowledge and skills. Much research is a team effort of collaborative nature in which the combined intelligence of large numbers is brought to bear on the solution of a problem.

**Higher education — a historical perspective**

Higher education as we have it today, is the outcome of a long socio-historical process of evolution. In a brief presentation such as this we can only highlight some important aspects of a character of education and its development; a fuller account can be found in the literature some of which is listed at the end of the unit.

A basic character of education is that it informs a person and it enlightens her / him about things she / he does not know and thus initiates her / him into asking all sorts of questions about nature, about life, about society and its organizations. One is made capable of thinking for herself and finding answers to the questions which one considers important or significant for one’s life. In this sense, education is said to be a ‘liberating’ force. It makes the individual free and capable of ordering his / her life according to one’s own choice or playing a more active role in society either to preserve it or to change it. This basic feature of education has led, throughout history, to education being used as an instrument of struggle, for liberation or for suppression both by the individual and by the society.

In the earliest human societies, what mattered most for the primitive man was survival. In such a situation, education was not a separate component of human activity and it was a means of handing over racial experience from the older to the younger generation. But as social production increased and activities became differentiated in the sense that some people hunted, others engaged in production of crops and still others actively fought tribal wars, etc., education became a distinct activity. This was the stage in society when the most important question was whether to educate or not to educate individuals, and if they were to be educated to what limited or broad purpose were they to be educated. Those who came to rule over such societies were naturally afraid that education would liberate the individual and he or she would be in a position to challenge their authority. Societies are known to have had laws to deny education to large sections of their population because education would cause disaffection. This is the reason why for thousands of years, in recent human history, vast numbers were kept illiterate and uneducated. The idea of universal education or education for all, is a part and parcel of recent socio-political ideas of recognizing that all men and women are equal before the law or that every member of the society has a vote and possesses other basic human rights.
## Self-assessment

1. What were the priorities of Society with regard to education in the following eras?
   - Pre-civilisation
   - At the time that society was stratified by occupation
   - When democratic thought gained currency


We thus see that education is on the one hand, a liberating force for the individual but on the other hand, for this very reason it has been used for suppressing the individual in all societies; and for the same reason in the developing countries which have attained Independence, it would be tremendous social force for economic, social and cultural advancement.

With this general understanding, we can examine in some more detail how ‘education of the individual’ has undergone changes, and how ideas about ‘transmission of knowledge’ and ‘education and progress of society’ have evolved.

### Development and perfection of the individual

The highest development of the human individual is one of the time-honoured functions of education. But what constitutes such development has been interpreted differently according to the prevailing philosophical and social temper. To the ancient Indians, it was spiritual perfection or the attainment of Moksha. Higher education during the Vedic and Upanishadic times aimed at preparing individuals for such a life. Only the very select could think of joining such an endeavour. To the medieval Christians in Europe, the aim of education was to prepare the individual not for this life but for the life to come in the other world. The Christian ‘salvation’ promoted the values of humanity and self-abnegation.

A more secular interpretation of individual development which came as a result of socio-political developments produced the concept of liberal education. In the Graeco-Roman times, liberal education had meant the education of the ‘free’ man, as contrasted to the slave or the artisan. The slaves did the work of the world enabling the free men, the aristocrats to devote their leisure for the development of their mind and intellect. In feudal society of Europe, liberal education at the higher level comprised the study of grammar, logic and rhetoric (the trivium) and arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music (the quadrivium). In this genesis of ‘liberal education’, we can locate the concept of higher education as a means of learning; the creative use of leisure rather than providing a way to earn a living, or to develop a responsible citizen.

The kind of individual to be shaped through liberal education also underwent change periodically. As the social and economic conditions changed during the Renaissance (the revival of commerce, rise of urban life and decline of the rural castle and monastery), a humanistic movement began in education. The Humanists wanted learning for the express purpose of life in this world, which included appreciation of culture, inculcation of values, some teaching of skills (for example, in Mathematics or
The aim was the all round development of the individual who was now to be shaped as a ‘gentleman’ in the mould of a courtier.

The development of the individual has also been interpreted as his or her development as a citizen of a State. It has been believed that the individual has no existence apart from the State and that one’s development consists in the total identification with the State. Education, accordingly, has stressed individual development not as an end in itself but for extreme examples of educational systems which subordinated the individual to the State. On the other hand, there has been a trend throughout history to orient educational aims at all stages to the full development of the individual’s personality as a self-justifying end. It is believed that the ‘highest’ development of all individuals will contribute towards social good, rather than working against it. But of course, what is ‘social good’ and what is ‘highest development’, has been understood differently in different societies at different times. Society is an organized entity and education must prepare individuals to fit into a variety of jobs and responsibilities. Society must, itself be protected against minor conflicts between its various sections, sectors or classes, and society must generate resources to supply all the goods, service and education itself. Hence education’s claim cannot be just ‘highest’ development of the individual and nothing else.

The table below illustrates Bertrand Russell’s thoughts on the ‘aims of education’ in different societies. According to him these are perfection of the individual by building vitality, courage, sensitiveness and intelligence. This is a gist of his exploration of the aims of education in different societies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitality</th>
<th>Courage</th>
<th>Sensitiveness</th>
<th>Intelligence</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Promotes interest in the outside world leading to objectivity</td>
<td>• Combination of self-respect with an impersonal outlook on life</td>
<td>• Person is emotionally sensitive</td>
<td>• Intelligence means actual knowledge and receptivity to knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promotes the power of hard work</td>
<td>• Perfection of courage is found in a person who feels his / her ego to be small part of the world, not through despising oneself, but through valuing much that is not oneself. This happens when the instinct is free and intelligence is active</td>
<td>• The emotional reaction must be appropriate: mere intensity is not what is needed</td>
<td>• Intelligence demands an alert curiosity. Curiosity is inspired by a genuine love of knowledge</td>
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If curiosity is to be fruitful, it must be associated with a certain technique for the acquisition of knowledge. There must be habits of observation, belief in the possibility of knowledge, patience and industry. These things will develop of themselves, given the fund of curiosity and the proper intellectual education. But since our intellectual life is only a part of our activity, and since curiosity is perpetually coming into conflict with other passions, there is need of certain intellectual virtues, such as open-mindedness. We find it hard to disbelieve what we have emphatically believed for a number of years, and also what ministers to self-esteem or any other fundamental passion. Open-mindedness should therefore be one of the qualities that education aims at producing.
Courage is essential to intellectual probity, as well as to physical heroism. The real world is more unknown than we like to think, from the first day of life we practise precarious inductions, and confound our mental habits with laws of external nature. All sorts of intellectual systems – Christianity, Socialism, Patriotism, etc – are ready, like orphan asylums, to give safety in return for servitude. A free mental life cannot be as warm and comfortable and sociable as a life enveloped in a creed: only a creed can give the feeling of a cozy fireside while the winter storms are raging without.

Bertrand Russell

Jiddu Krishnamurthy, a contemporary thinker, talks about the aim of education being the development of a seeker of knowledge through the process of enquiry.

Alvin Toffler in his book ‘Future Shock’ talks about aims of education for an individual as:

- Learning how to learn
- Learning to relate
- Learning to make choices

As we explore these different perspectives, what comes out clearly is that the aims of higher education are universal across time. Our own Constitution, inter alia, mentions objectives of education – such as creating a scientific temper, or promoting national integration.

**Pursuit and transmission of knowledge**

The role of higher education in relation to knowledge has been so predominant in history that higher education has come to be equated with production and dissemination of knowledge. In fact, the emergence of higher education as a distinct stage of education with its own aims, content and pedagogy was due to the substantial increase in the fund of knowledge and even more to man’s increasing desire, and need, to know more and more. The medieval ancestors of the modern universities started as *universitas* (corporations), communities of scholars, committed to the search for and dissemination of knowledge.

As in the case of individual development, the knowledge transmission function also has not been free from controversies. The basic questions that have been asked are what knowledge is of most worth? For example, in scientific research is basic research more important than applied research? And whether knowledge should be pursued for its own sake or for its utility, or for both?

Ancient Chinese education represented both the views. Confucius looked upon education as a process of socialization and knowledge as existing for the sake of harmony in society. Against this, Lao Tse argued for learning for the sake of internal growth and understanding.

The Vedic Indians classified knowledge as *paravidya* (knowledge that transcended human experience, spiritual knowledge) and *aparavidya* (knowledge based on human experience) and held the former as the worthy goal of education and of life itself. Such knowledge, again, was not to be pursued for its instrumental use in this world but for attaining spiritual perfection or *Moksha*. The *parishads* which were assemblies of Brahmans, learned the Vedas, functioned as centers of higher learning to provide the seeker with such knowledge. Even the later universities of Takshashila and Nalanda essentially concerned themselves with spiritual learning. The same was the case with the medieval Christian monasteries in Europe.

There was a broader, secular interpretation of knowledge too. Originally education in India was restricted to Theology, Philosophy and Logic but later to win over a larger
number of people from the laity, curriculum was broadened to include Medicine, Law, Administration, etc., so as to enable them to enter into government service or follow the professions. In a way, this paved the way for the modern university education. In Europe, the trivium, and the quadrivium (the seven liberal arts) dominated the curriculum of higher education right until the last century. Apart from general education, the medieval universities of Europe also specialized in Medicine, Law and Administration. The Madrasahs in India founded during the medieval period by Muslims were basically centers of Arabic learning and religious scholarships, but the curriculum also provided knowledge of Logic and Philosophy, Law and even Astronomy, much like their counterparts in Europe.

The sheer weight of tradition sometimes decided the kind of knowledge to be transmitted through education. Latin, for example, continued to be taught in Europe for centuries, although it had lost its relevance, on the pretext that it trains the mental faculties of reasoning, memory, concentration, etc.

The growth of Science and Technology during the later centuries not only vastly increased man’s fund of knowledge but also opened up more avenues for creativity. Knowledge came to be differentiated and specialized into different disciplines. The need now was manifold: to preserve what is known, to refine it and transmit it, to explore new knowledge and to expand its frontiers.

Preservation and Progress of Society

The third abiding concern of higher education has been the society itself. In relation to society, higher education has performed three kinds of functions. These could be described as conservative, creative and critical.

In its conservative aspect education has tried to preserve and transmit through instruction, the existing social culture, its belief and value systems, customs, traditions and mores. In this way it has acted as an agency to preserve the status quo, an existing pattern of social life and give society at any point of time a stability. Educational systems in the early stage of their evolution all over the world were predominantly conservative in this sense. Even the medieval universities which are the fore-runners of modern universities primarily concerned themselves with the transmission of established traditions in knowledge handed down from Aristotle.

However, in history, education has not only functioned as a residual institution merely to preserve existing social patterns but also taken on a more active role, that of enriching social heritage by adding on to it and by creating new knowledge, ideas, technologies and forms of art and craft, and by creating among students the urge to think independently. As explained earlier, it is in the very nature of education to disseminate cultural heritage and the same time to develop new thinking and urge for change. Even the most conservative and traditional societies have, therefore, transformed under the impact of education, conservatism only slowed down the process of change, but could not stop it.

As culture grew in complexity due to industrialization and its social effects, and particularly in democratic societies, higher education assumed an additional role to its traditional one of transmitter of cultural heritage. It functioned as an objective critic of the social order – its value and belief systems, its customs and traditions. In modern times, societies look up to higher education to create an intellectual climate to examine all policies, plans and achievement, and to enable discernment of the directions in which society is moving. We expect higher education today not only to preserve and transmit the best in our culture and enrich our fund of knowledge but also to be an assessor of our social life, its ideals, values and its institutions: For we believe that such criticism will pave the way for further progress of the society.
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Self-assessment

2. How has role of higher education transformed through history in the areas of:
   a) development and perfection of the individual
   b) transmission of knowledge and
   c) preservation and progress of society

Write at least three points for each.

Higher education in the changing Indian context

After India became free and set about the task of reorienting its educational system to suit the needs and aspirations of an independent nation committed to Democracy, Secularism and Socialism, intensive and widespread discussions have taken place on the aims and purposes of its higher education. These discussions have involved all concerned with higher education, teachers, students, parents, educationists and leaders in the community. Their considered views have found expression in important national documents like reports of Commissions and Committees and statements of National Policies. Like always, the various aims proposed revolve around the abiding concerns of education, viz; individual, society and knowledge. We present below a synthesis of these different expressions on the aims of higher education.

1. The first step taken by the Ministry of Education after Independence (1947) in higher education was to appoint a commission on university education under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (who later became President of India) to report on Indian university education. Dr. Radhakrishnan recognizes that “If India is to confront the confusion our times, she must turn for guidance not to those who are lost to the exigencies of the passing hour but to her men of letters and men of science, to her poets and artists to her discoverers and inventors. These intellectual pioneers of civilization are to be found and trained in the universities, which are the sanctuaries of the minor life of the nation”.

   What he was trying to say was that the University is the place where the right kind of leadership in all walks of life is developed. Gifted youths in different pursuits of excellence are identified. The University then helps in inculcation of physical fitness, the development of the powers of the mind, cultivation of the right interests, attitudes and promotion of moral and intellectual values. In the modern days, the University should promote a rational outlook and nurture scientific temper among the youth. It should wipe out dogmatism, fundamentalism and prejudices from the minds of the youth. On the other hand, it should develop right kind of temperament and ability to judge between right and wrong, good and evil.

2. The report of the ‘Education Commission (1964-66), popularly known as the Kothari Commission says about the universities that they are the dwelling places of ideas and idealism, and expect high standards of conduct and integrity from all their members. Their’s is the pursuit of truth and excellence in all its diversity
- a pursuit which needs, above all, courage and fearlessness. “Great universities and timid people go ill together”. It is instructive to study what kind of mind was to be cultivated in the universities according to the Education Commission. Dealing with the special responsibilities of the Universities the Commission says: “... The universities must learn to encourage individuality, variety and dissent within a climate of tolerance ... that man will be able to live wisely and intelligently.

The Commission set out the aims of university education in the following terms:

- Higher education policies and programmes should be in line with the social purposes which we profess to serve;
- There should be a sufficient unity of purpose in the diversity to produce a community of values and ideas among educated men and women;
- Institutional forms may vary as time and circumstances require, but there should be a steadfast loyalty to the abiding elements of respect for human personality, freedom of belief and expression for all citizens, a deep obligation to promote human well-being, faith in reason and humanity;
- Mere vocational and technical education, important though they are, do not necessarily serve the spirit. We might have a number of scientists without conscience and technicians without taste who would find a void, a moral vacuum, within themselves;
- We should preserve the values of democracy, justice and liberty, equality and fraternity. Universities must stand for these ideals which can never be lost so long as men seek wisdom and follow righteousness;
- The Indian Constitution lays down the general purposes of the State. The universities should educate people on the right lines to make the understanding and vision of the framers of the Constitution, the common possession of all the Indian people.

3. The Education Commission (1966) said in its report: “While the fundamental values to which the universities owe their allegiance are largely unrelated to time and circumstances, their functions change from time to time. Their tasks are no longer confined to the two traditional functions of teaching and advancement of knowledge. They are assuming new functions and the older ones are increasing in range, depth and complexity”

The Commission set out the following functions of the universities in the modern world:

- To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth and to interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries;
- To provide the right kind of leadership in all walks of life by helping the individuals develop their potential;
- To provide society with competent men and women trained in all professions who, as cultivated individuals, are inclined with a sense of social purpose;
- To strive to promote equality and social justice and to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education;
- To foster in the teachers and students, and through them in the society generally, the attitudes and values needed for developing the "good life" in individuals and society;
- To bring the universities closer to the community through extension of knowledge and its applications for problem-solving.
4. Two decades later, the Government of India undertook a comprehensive review of the nation’s education policy. The Policy statement which emerged following this review reaffirmed: “Education is a unique investment in the present and the future”. This cardinal principle is the key to the National Policy on Education.

Higher education, according to the 1986 Policy, provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. It is, therefore, a crucial factor for survival. Being at the apex of the educational pyramid, it has also a key role in producing teachers for the education system.

The Policy urged that in the context of the unprecedented explosion of knowledge, higher education had to become dynamic as never before, constantly entering uncharted areas, and it proposed that the large number of universities and colleges in the country needed all-round improvement and that the main emphasis in the immediate future should be on their consolidation and expansion.

5. The country paper (Government of India’s) articulating the vision of India on higher education in 1998 reflected the following views:

- Education aims at liberation – liberation from bondage and ignorance, backwardness and gravitational pulls of the lower human nature;
- Education, being an evolutionary force that enables both the individual and the collectively to evolve various faculties and to integrate them by the superior intellectual, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual powers, should aim at developing a new type of humanity highly humane, cultured and integrated;

   Education should be so designed as to become a powerful carrier of the best of the heritage and it should, therefore, aim at transmitting to the new generations the lessons of the accumulated experiences of the past for further progress in the present and the future.

The paper further suggested that considering the contemporary problems of environment, of conflicts and of asymmetrical relationships need to be resolved as early as possible, the Indian system of education aims at the promotion of the goals of universal peace, harmony and unity, based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Within the broad canvas of these objectives, the specific objectives of higher education that are evolving especially within the Indian context are:

- To seek and cultivate new knowledge, to engage vigorously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth, and to interpret all knowledge and beliefs in the light of new things and discoveries;
- To provide the right kind of work ethos, professional expertise and leadership in all walks of life;
- To strive and promote quality and social justice;
- To foster among teachers and students and, through them in society generally, integral development of all values inherent in physical, emotional, rational, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual education; and
- To promote synthesis of knowledge, with special emphasis on unity of scientific and spiritual pursuits that would revitalize our country’s heritage and promote the ideal of the whole world as one united family.
Universities and contemporary changes

The 1980s and then 1990s have witnessed rapid changes in the domain of higher education. Internationalisation and globalisation today are high on the agendas of governments and universities. The global economy is only now beginning to bear upon the international role of higher education. Universities are at present engaging in enrolling international students, becoming partners in inter-institutional schemes, and pushing forward in the drive towards globalisation, students, academic staff and curricula are transferred and exchanged between institutions, accreditation agencies ensure promptness in accrediting learning experiences and governments append their signatures to cooperative projects in higher education. In the context of the above changes Coffield and Williamson take the view that universities, in general, must take the initiative in defining radically different arrangements for their future if only for their own good: “Universities must themselves change, as otherwise their future will be defined by political and business elites” (1997; 5). According to this perspective, universities have to envision their future in a most creative way in order to escape the trap of offering more of what already exists: “The task facing people in higher education is to think beyond the constraints of conventional wisdom, if universities are to respond to the challenges and uncertainties of the new century, they must find fresh ways to do so” (ibid, 1997; 117).

Against the backdrop of globalisation and linking education to industry and the world of work, certain changes in the basic aims of universities seem in the offing. For example, it is being envisaged that traditional degree programmes will increasingly be replaced by continuing education / lifelong learning, more teaching than research will take place, teachers will become facilitators than the main transmitters of bodies of knowledge, different forms of knowledge generation to suit the diversified student population and different markets is likely to emerge along with varied mechanisms for dissemination and delivery of knowledge.

Further it is not only the developments of globalisation and liberalization which will play a crucial role in setting the aims, role and functions of the university in the near future. The limits on what universities can achieve are also set by the societies in which they function. In this context it is being felt that “universities, despite all the changes they have made, have not responded and are also responding, with sufficient speed or at an appropriate level, to the technological, economic, social and demographic changes of the past twenty years” (Coffield and Williamson, 1997:2). Further, “it is not enough for universities to reform themselves. They must seek to engage in a wide-ranging and critical dialogue within society to secure the conditions of both the future growth and sustainable development of both” (Ibid; 5). We will discuss all this in greater detail in Block 3.

To conclude, the contemporary changes have generated new social meanings and understandings regarding the aim, purpose and function of higher education. To what extent will these displace the old understandings is a matter of debate to be resolved over the passage of time.

Self-assessment

3. Visit the website http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/unighedu.html#objectives and briefly describe the development of the aims of higher education in India since Independence.
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4. Discuss the various trends in our world today (Knowledge explosion, availability of various options for specialization, globalization, telecommuting, etc) and how do these impact the aims of higher education in the present context.

5. How can education lead to social change? Discuss the important functions that a modern university is expected to perform in this context.

Summary

In this unit, we have seen that there has often been a broad correspondence between the values of a society at a given point in time and the aims of education. Today, however, certain aims of education have been widely adopted – education should develop the all round intellectual, moral, physical and aesthetic capabilities of individuals and that education should contribute to the improvement of society economically and, depending on circumstances, politically and socially. These aims are, however, interpreted in different ways.

The wide range of actual aims and goals of education, seen through a historical perspective can be said to revolve around three major concerns namely: development and perfection of the individual, pursuit and transmission of knowledge, and stability and change in society. Educational institutions preserve cultural traditions they can also contribute to social change. Colleges and universities are centers of creative thought and discovery and all contemporary educational institutions disseminate new knowledge and values to younger generations. They can modify and transform traditional socio-economic hierarchies. Finally, because education also promotes critical attitudes and analysis it may contribute to scepticism toward traditional institutions and become bases of rebellion and revolution. The range of functions and uses that education can assume also highlights the fact that conflicts exist among some of these functions and uses. For example, using educational institutions to preserve cultural traditions may conflict with using them to maximize talent and develop a technologically sophisticated workforce. Using education to promote ideological purity may conflict with promoting science and creativity. It is also worth noting that although the traditional aims of education remain undisputed yet in the context of changes brought with the onset of globalization, the emergence of information society and withdrawal of public finding for higher education, there would be an occasional blurring of the roles that the university system is expected to perform in the future.

Unit-end activities

1. “Education is such a huge undertaking, it has so radical an influence on man’s destiny, that it will be damaging if it is only considered in terms of structures, logistical means and processes”. Elaborate what is meant by this statement.
Points for discussion

1. The Education Commission (1964-65) recommended the model of the National System of Education based on three significant assumptions: 1) the type of future society one has in view; 2) the type of educational system one visualizes; 3) the relationship between society and education which one postulates. Discuss your own views on each of these aspects.

2. Educational systems are expected to be capable of adapting themselves to changing circumstances. Why is this change important? Discuss with your colleagues the important changes in your college/university.

Suggested readings


http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/unhighedu.htm#objectives


Krishnamurti, Jiddu, On Right Education.