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RESEARCH ARTICLE

UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI – TOWARDS THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE!

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ABSTRACT

University of Mumbai, a 150 years' institution, can be looked forward as a centre of excellence. Some of the points which should be given serious thought are overviewed in this article.

Key words:

University of Mumbai,
Social responsibility,
Financial autonomy,
Experiments in education.

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INTRODUCTION

Mumbai University's geographical place in financial capital of country as well as the mega city of international importance can play a unique role. The vast area of operation, availability of all sort of students and subject experts, time tested administrative set-up, many learning and research institutes in the vicinity (such as Indian Institute of Technology (Bombay), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hafkin Institute, Tata memorial cancer research centre etc.), corporate and industrial belt in and around area, high probability of generating resources and 150 years' tradition are some of the strong points. The progress at various fronts can make it the centre of excellence.

Social responsibility

University can take up various research projects on social issues and come out with solutions. For example, environmental issues in and around university area, efforts towards eradication of superstitions and ignorance from society, cultivation of scientific attitude, generating awareness of social responsibilities of hygienic conditions, efficient management of energy, fuel and water etc., various problems and their solutions of different social groups, from slum

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dweller to hi-fi society, generating and updating subject, skill and knowledge-wise data bases of manpower requirements of offices and industries in and around Mumbai, data-bases of students passing out from university. These data-bases are not only useful or guidelines for relevant people but for planning for future programs of university also. University can work on these subjects and can increase her social involvement.

Experiments in education

University can perform variety of educational experiments in its own area of operation. This will not only enhance the educational standard but can provide leadership in innovations also. For example, post-graduate teachers for undergraduate students, undergraduate teachers for secondary and higher secondary students; can develop and execute many educational projects, in which models can be developed, simple experiments can be designed to understand difficult laws and theories, actual class-room teaching, work-shops for teachers, imparting latest knowledge in their discipline and so on. This can improve students' academic performance and develop their interests in various subjects.

Development of Marathi language

Though day-by-day English is pervading all walks of life, it is one of the duties of university to preserve Marathi language and see that it grows. Very sincere efforts are needed for this. For development of Marathi language, university can execute

many projects. For example, publishing books in Marathi, written by eminent persons in that field, providing latest knowledge in Marathi, simplification of various technical/engineering and scientific terms, terminologies and concepts in Marathi, producing encyclopedias, reprinting classical literature, writing history of language, preparing period-wise indexes of authors and literature, publishing critics, etymological studies of various words in different spoken languages of Marathi and their social implications and so on.

Research

Research of international level in various disciplines is the hall-mark of excellence of any university. There are many areas and subjects, which can be studied for past, present and future. For example, in past subjects, social, political, industrial history of Maharashtra, 150 years' critical history of university herself, researched biographies of eminent people in Maharashtra, India-centric history of science and technology, scientific biographies of Indian scientists etc. In present subjects, social implications of bomb blasts and riots, rise and fall of textile industry in Mumbai and its social and economic consequences, existence of slum – an unavoidable social reality and its effects, implications of Mumbai police and mafia/criminals relations, social effects of public celebrations like *Ganeshotsava* and *Navaratri* etc. In future subjects, nature and effects of modern (that is, computer and information technological) industrialization of twenty-first century, cyber-crimes, eradication of unemployment of educated and skilled workers, various measures and their effectiveness at the time of natural and man-made disasters, like bomb blast, terrorist attack, earth quake, flood, tsunami etc., short and long range consequences of globalization and liberalization, efficient public transport systems, probable threats for the city, realistic preventive measures for contagious diseases, effective curb on air, sound and water pollution, practical tab on mafia activities and so on. The list is endless.

Publication division

University can establish her own publishing house, similar to Cambridge, Oxford, Princeton or MIT. It can publish quality books for undergraduate and graduate students, research monographs under the editorial board of experts in the related fields. Publishing own journal of international standard is also one of the duties; through which researchers under the wings of university can publish their work rapidly. If the editorial board is selected properly and the process is standardized, one can avoid, internal rivalry and competition; and can raise the standard of journal at international level.

Department of Engineering and Technology

University should have her own separate department of engineering and technology, where besides teaching, basic and applied research can be carried out, which will be useful for the industry in and around university area. It can help industry as well as university by way of financial returns. So many projects can be executed in so many subjects. For example, design of uninterrupted power supply and communication network, saving of electricity, maximum use of solar energy and sunlight using optical fibre techniques, solution on ever increasing garbage problem, some practical remedy on helpless Mumbai at the time of heavy raining, various

problems of local railway system, effective rain-water harvesting, studies of fault-lines to predict earthquakes, geological studies of Mumbai island, topographical study of city and suburbs and so on.

Creating chairs/professorships

Creating maximum number of chairs/professorships of attractive remuneration should be one of the major tasks. It will attract eminent scholars leading to the research of high standard, at least in some subjects. The professorships in university's own engineering department, created mostly by industry can result in excellent applied research, relevant to our industry. There will be more flexibility in this research.

Modernization of libraries

The role of library is very important in research in any branch. Therefore latest library, its computerization, its communication network with other libraries, richness of reference section, hassle-free administrative system, forming pools for journals etc. will enhance the quality of research.

Financial autonomy

University's growth can be badly affected without enough financial resources. The university should find her own way of self-support. Total dependence on Government cannot make university's progress. It should concentrate on generating resources, for example, searching for new avenues, optimization of available funds, setting up a system in such a way that there will never be misuse or wastage of money etc. In this task university should involve the people of high rank, who are influential as well as active in the society. Building of powerful alumni and setting up the financial reservoir with strict control is one of the tasks of university. The effective tapping of massive industry in and around Mumbai, corporate sector, film-industry and construction industry can generate financial and other resources on a scale unheard of. For example, alumni of IITs are doing excellent work in this connection. Importance to the financial self-reliance in planning can make university's future bright.

Monitoring

There should be some central autonomous system of university to monitor academic standard, which will comprise of various sub-committees, for example to look after standard of different diplomas, degrees awarded by university, its relevance and up gradation etc., to evaluate quality of research, to identify thrust areas etc. Some of the members of this committee should be outside the university territory, for example, industrial experts, educationalists, scientists from different organizations etc.

Conclusion

To become center of excellence, university should concentrate on social involvement, research at various levels, innovation in education, publishing quality text books for undergraduate and graduate students, rapid publishing of research work, modernization of library and communications, creating Chairs and Professorships with flexible conditions to attract talent, autonomous monitoring mechanism for quality control and steps towards financial autonomy.