The Idea of University: Perspective of Indian Academia

Rashmi Soni

Higher Education is at the forefront of change. During the last 853 years in the world and 150 years in India, the University has nurtured many great minds who on the one hand have served the humanity in their own typical ways and on the other hand they have expressed their love, views and expectations from university.

Great thinkers of the world, both Indian and Western, lived by their ideas and fantasies, which ultimately changed the world and the education system. The idea of university held by an individual may depend broadly on his/her needs and expectations from university, his/her cultural, social, political and economic background and his exposure to the world of higher education. The idea of university held by different sections of society is bound to differ because of their environment and perception. People in different walks of life have different perceptions and idea about University. The stakeholders’ idea of university is more in terms of expectations from it whereas the idea of university held by the students and other beneficiaries may be in terms of better infrastructure and facilities. The industrialists, scientists and other important professional people have different ideas and concepts of a university depending upon their professional receptivity and perspective. Similarly the academicians may hold a different idea of university. Since the university is an academic institution, the academicians’ idea of university may be more important to study. The present research has tried to address this question.

Very few attempts have been made in India to systematically analyze and assess the academicians’ idea of a University institution. It was felt that the assessment of the expectations of the academicians be done as they are the key individuals associated with the development of the institution. What is the academicians’ idea and concept of a university? How is this idea different for those academicians who are limited to any particular university or have had an exposure to universities abroad? The expectations of academicians today from this age-old institution should be a matter of concern and investigation for the stakeholders, beneficiaries, policy makers and nation.

* Sr. Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education (B.Ed.), Mahila Vidyalaya P-G. College, Lucknow.
e-mail: rashmi_psychologist2003@yahoo.co.in
builders at large. This may provide important perspective for guiding the system into future operation.

This study does not want to prescribe a generalized theory about the 21st century university in India, but to build up the idea of the academicians of the university from the bottom, by considering, first, the environments - the demographic, socio-economic and intellectual - in which higher education finds itself and secondly, its likely response to these new challenges. Out of higher education’s detailed accommodation to these new environments and more broadly, the synergy between the socio-economic and academic systems, it may then be possible to construct an ‘idea of the university’ that is rooted in practice but has normative force.

Research on the expectations from University is still a neglected area in India. The teachers of University of Lucknow voiced their expectations regarding different aspects of their university (Varma, Sodha and Soni, 2007)¹. The university teachers expected a redefinition of the role of university in the present global scenario. The study indicated a need for reforms in the university which policy-makers and the stakeholders should focus their attention on. In USA, the universities themselves as well as academicians have contributed to research in this area. A study was conducted on Expectations from the college System (Woodard Blenda, Ann, 1978)². The obtained expectations were compared with the present achievements of the Virginia Community College System when it completed 10 years. The study yielded prognosis for the future of the college system as highly positive changing community conditions, industrial sector and demography.

An attempt was made to study the Perceptions of University image of East Tennessee State University. (Jane Myers Jones, 2002)³. The study is a reflection on how the internal and external stakeholders of universities in USA are conscious of the University’s image in the community. The

universities themselves keep on surveying the perceptions of their image held by the stakeholders. Jones interviewed the focused groups of select members of the internal academy and the external communities to examine the extent of congruency between and within two constituencies. Results showed that incongruencies existed between external and internal stakeholders concerning their emphasis on University Image. The academy focused on process and external constituencies focused on outcomes and products.

Such studies have valuable implications for the research on Idea of a University Institution.

Methodology

Forty-one academicians belonging to different Indian universities, especially from the North India, were interviewed to explore their Idea of a University. This group consisted of three types of academicians: Academicians who have the exposure of only a single University, those who have an exposure of some important Indian universities, and those who have the exposure of universities abroad. The underlying hypothesis was that the exposure of academicians to various higher education institutions enriches his/her idea of a university. The hypothesis formulated for the present study can be stated as under:

1. The Universities started in India more than 150 years ago i.e. during the British rule. These were the examining bodies and had affiliating character. Afterwards a few residential and teaching universities were also established. Barring a few universities with nationalistic fervor and indigenous character (like Banaras Hindu University, Vishwabharti Shanti Niketan, Aligarh Muslim University, and Gujarat Vidyapeeth) most of the Indian universities today are running under the cultural hangover of the colonial period. India has comparatively a shorter history of modern university as compared to that of European and American Universities. This gives birth to a hypothesis that the sampled Indian academicians will reflect a limited vision and idea as far as the university institution is concerned.

2. A good number of Indian academicians have studied or worked in several universities in India and thus are exposed to various types of academic cultures and environments of higher education. It may be hypothesized that their idea of university will be grounded in the soil of indigenous socio-cultural background.
3. There is another category of academicians working in Indian universities who are exposed to the universities and higher education institutions of various countries. It may be hypothesized that such widely exposed, travelled and experienced academicians will express quite versatile, creative, broad based and modern idea of a university institution.

The collection of data was done by interviewing the academicians in open conversational sessions. The views expressed by the academicians were recorded, formulated into transcripts, content analyzed and finally synthesized to find out their idea of university.

The findings of the study are based on the responses of only forty-one academicians who were interviewed on their idea of a university institution. The sample is geographically scattered in various parts of the country and the academicians belong to various State and central Universities. However, the academicians in the sample group predominantly come from universities in North India. While generalizing the findings this limitation is to be considered. The study does not claim to reflect on the national sample as a whole.

**Findings**

**Idea of a University: Perspective of 17 Academicians having exposure of only a single University**

University as a retainer of intellect is a source for the creation and generation of knowledge of every kind. It is a place where ideas are created within a democratic atmosphere and which provides an opportunity for both teachers and students for global learning to ultimately connect to the global world. It provides an intellectual freedom to interact openly with each other. It is not just an institute to conduct examinations or provide degrees; rather it is a place to develop the individual faculties and to develop the overall personality of the student. University should be a place for learning, largely connected with the rest of the world, helping it self in a more concentrated way, to think cohesively, coherently, imaginatively and creatively and then contributing back and forth by helping everybody to reap the benefits.
Universities in India are not completely accepting the changes taking place over the world. Teaching and research have been considered to be the main functions of university. Consultancy and extension is another important function of the university. It was also felt by the academicians that the research implications should be taken to the society because the main function of the University is to provide leadership to the society and develop trained manpower to look into the problems of the society and to form the clear-cut policies for the same. Every department of the university should work for the society. Involvement of parents in the programmes of the university has also been considered as important. University has a large youth force and energy lying latent. This energy should be channelized which will help to regulate the student unrest in the universities. The academicians also forcefully emphasized the university and industry interaction.

University should provide empowering education, which can expand the frontiers of knowledge and not just create new boundaries of knowledge. It should help people to think critically. Undoubtedly university has to produce men for the industry, but today there is too much technical orientation of the university courses and more and more market-oriented courses are attracting the attention of the students. Therefore, many academicians idealized that University is not just meant for professional development. It should also cater to basic fundamental disciplines and general education.

For the academicians an ideal university is a place where there is academic atmosphere, freedom and discipline. University is basically established to create and to preserve knowledge and to add something by research. But specialized knowledge of various fields is also essential for the overall development of the personality. There is a need to inculcate the spiritual attitude in the students by the teachers. The academicians strongly felt that a university teacher should understand the students’ needs, interests and aspirations, strengths and weaknesses and must guide them accordingly. There must be free and open interaction between the teacher and the taught.

**Idea of a University: Perspective of 12 Academicians exposed to a variety of Indian universities**

These academicians felt that university education has to be differentiated from primary and secondary education. University should maintain and create a culture of higher-order thinking,
which should manifest sincerely in the university staff. University is an apex educational organization and it has to regulate a gamut of academic activities. It is the highest seat of learning, a storehouse of knowledge and a generator of innumerable ideas. University is a social institution in search of truth, a place meant for creating, modifying, replacing and refining knowledge and to build up new theories. The University institution should be humanist and liberal in nature, where visionary people openly and freely adventure in ideas.

For the academicians the University should be without walls with a scope to accommodate people from different fields. People from any part of the country should find relevance in the university. Thus, the idea of a university for the academicians is very broad. Historically the role of university has changed. Universities have been treated as ivory towers, established away from the hustle-bustle of the society. But it cannot be devoted purely to academic pursuits and academics cannot be away from the realities of society. Main purpose of university education should be to produce good and productive citizens and to provide leadership in all walks of life.

Academicians expected a university teacher to perform five important functions - teaching, research, dissemination, reference and extension work. Teachers should update themselves from time to time. They should be specialists in their subject but at the same time must be aware of other subjects too. Education provided by the teacher should arouse curiosity in the students. He should be able to quote his own experiences and must have an experimenting attitude and seriously involved in researching and publishing some good books and papers.

University should fulfill a social cause, as it is an instrument of social change. Extension has been considered as an important function of the university along with teaching and research. The university is expected to address the national and social problems giving direction to the society. University cannot remain aloof from the larger society but should always be engaged in the country’s development. By and large it should respond to the needs of the society, industry and commerce. The planners and policy makers should decide the role of university and should frame the curriculum according to the needs of the community and the demands of international markets. University should aim to develop a universal man, a universal society and to achieve these aims, university should come forward to change and reform the society.
University is a temple of learning and should teach universal truths. It has to cater to the needs of the universe. Most universities should be residential universities where teachers and students interact more often to produce some good work, a place where a team of sincere and dedicated workers work together. University should have a campus life for long hours where discipline is understood as self-discipline and where there is maximum utilization of the infrastructure. Values like humanity, love, compassion and kindness ought to be inculcated in the students. These academicians expected higher education to be only for those who have love for it. One intellectual voiced that the Universities should be closed for coming ten years and university teachers should teach at the primary and secondary levels, which will help in upgrading the faculty of the school.

University should develop human resource and provide trained personnel to the industries. Its aim is to develop a holistic personality. University structure and functions need to change simultaneously along with the technological and scientific changes. University has to educate people for a better quality of life. Every course of study in the university should be directly related to the society and concerned with the social issues. University research should be devoted to different social problems. The university should reflect the culture of the country and must always be ready to assimilate the culture of the other countries. It should provide opportunity to both students and teachers to connect to the global world.

_Idea of a University: Perspective of 14 Academicians exposed to various Indian and foreign Universities_

These academicians viewed university as a unique place for sharing and experimentation of ideas, a place where intellectual minds get together and where there is inter-generational exchange of ideas. It is a storehouse of knowledge, place for academic pursuits and a platform for exchange of ideas on a universal plane. University is expected to show a new light to the society.

Generation, preservation and transmission of knowledge have been considered to be important functions of a university. Generating knowledge is research and preserving knowledge is its documentation and passing the same to the students. It should generate new knowledge and apply existing knowledge for the benefit of the society. It should be considered as a platform where
people toy with various ideas, explore various possibilities and come out with creative solutions. University education should aim to train people in thinking and in basic research that which is excellent and original. University is not meant for the masses but should admit only those who really want to gain higher education. University has to produce leaders who can lead the country with adequate ethics and values.

University has been idealized as a place with autonomy, freedom of choice, complete decentralization and cross-fertilization of ideas taking place at high rate. It is a nucleus to which everything else is attached, whether an idea, philosophy, ideology, everything should germinate in a university from where it is tested, verified and validated. University ought to have ideally flexible structure where democratic aspirations of the people of the nation should be expressed. It should have larger departmental autonomy, minimum structuring, maximum flexibility and a lot of interdisciplinary and inter-departmental collaborations. There is a need for a cafeteria approach.

University should aim for academic excellence. Universities have to address to a wider cause and thus bring change in the larger society to bring social transformation. It should become a center for socially relevant projects, interventions and create immense emphatic environment for social life. Ideal university is a place where brilliant minds are engaged in teaching young energetic minds who are keen to learn from this interaction. The aim is to generate a super class of students who are internationally acceptable and excel wherever they go and come up with wonderful work when given opportunity. The university life should be intensely vibrant with different academic colors. The relationship between teacher and taught should be idealistic and exemplary where each and every teacher is easily approachable.

According to the idea of these academicians, the University institution can be considered as a lighthouse for the community. It is the responsibility of the university to observe whether the society is treading towards a desirable goal. It should have a vision and a mission, which can transform individual’s potentials into leadership, create harmony and instill the community with the power so that it becomes capable of solving its problems. Every course of study in the university must have a direct relation with the issues of the society and should be able to give concrete solutions to the social problems.
The academicians’ vision of university portrays it as a completely autonomous institution whereby it is free to do what it wants to do, has the ability to generate its own resources government or non-government and pursues excellence in knowledge. The intellectuals have emphasized on the development of entrepreneurship in the students. They have realized the importance to develop skills and attitude in the students. Education plus is what is required. The idea is that university should make the student fit for a useful role in society and provide an impetus for social transmission. Development of high employability will help the nation to acquire wealth and make a man successful in life. Academicians strongly felt that self-reliance and self-renewal are the two important factors on which the higher education and Universities in the 21st century need to emphasize on. Liberal education is the soul of higher learning. University is also expected to open new horizons of learning and must move beyond traditional limits and styles.

**Discussion, Comparison and Generalization**

**Discussion**

The academicians having exposure of only a single university have given the idea of a university basically in terms of what they expect from this institution. Like Jaspers these academicians have regarded the linkage between teaching and research as fundamental to the idea of the university. These twin pillars of the academy — teaching and research — would be guided by philosophy, which Jaspers believed was the guardian of the idea of the university. For Jaspers, research and teaching seek to contribute to intellectual culture as a way in which truth becomes meaningful and manifest.4

No doubt the academicians voiced teaching and research to be the main function of university, but what constitutes university teaching and how is it different from a school teaching, how teaching and research are interrelated and move side by side in the academia, has not been talked about by the intellectuals. Like Jaspers believed that the university fulfills its tasks--research, instruction, training, and communication--within an institutional framework. It requires buildings, materials, books and institutes and their orderly administration. Privileges and duties must be distributed among its members. So for him the university represents an independent corporate

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whole with its own constitution and dedicated to the pursuit of science and scholarship. But the sampled academicians have not given any such deep thought regarding the two main functions of the university.

The academicians in this sample group have considered university to be a place for the overall development of the personality of the students. The academicians have strongly felt that there is an interaction between university and industry and university and community. University has to produce professional people fit for the market and industry. They also emphasized specialization in higher education. A.N. Whitehead was of the view that the way in which a university should function in the preparation of students for challenging career, such as modern business, engineering etc, is by promoting an imaginative blend of the various disciplines underlying that career.⁵

Extension has been considered to be another important function of the university but what kind of extension and consultancy services can be provided by the university teachers and what will be its modus operandi and dynamics, has not been thought of by the academicians. Because of poor level of professionalism in academicians, they have also not been able to differentiate between the aims of education in general and aim of a university. It seems that they have anticipated the functions of a university in terms of their aspirations but they somewhat lack the power of imagination where by they could have put forward some creative ideas regarding the different aspects related to their expectations.

How the universities can be a partner in the overall national and economic development of the country could not be imagined by the academicians. The academicians could not see even the existing functions in a new light. They have exhibited poor receptivity to the new experiments in higher education. The academicians have not stated any new expectations and idea of a university system in a broader perspective.

Academicians having exposure of various universities in India considered the main function of university education to improve the quality of life so that the individuals can largely connect to the global world. They have emphasized the aim of university and higher education to develop higher-order thinking skills in individuals. J.L.Nehru considered university as an institution, which

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stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. Academicians too like Nehru idealize university as a place for creating, modifying, replacing and refining knowledge and to build up new theories. Importance was given on inculcating universal values in the students. The academicians expected a university teacher to perform five important functions - teaching, research, dissemination, reference and extension work.

The impact of exposure of this category of academicians to various Indian universities can be felt to some extent in their expectations and imaginary ideas about a university system. Although they have fantasized a university without walls and talked about globalizing the university education so that higher education can be connected to the larger world, still their ideas are not lighted up with imagination. Their expectations and ideas are very descriptive rather than being creative and visionary.

Moreover, as they talked about university reflecting the culture of the country and linking higher education more with the society and social issues, the hypothesis that their idea of university will be grounded in the soil of indigenous socio-cultural background, seems accepted.

Expectations vibrant with great ideas, vision, fantasy and imagination definitely were put forth by the academicians exposed to numerous Indian and foreign universities. This exposure enabled these intellectuals to construct an intellectual vision of a new university. They could visualize to some extent a proper background behind the establishment of new universities. The academicians belonging to this category of sample seem to be well read, receptive and well aware of the new and different developments in the field of higher education not only in India but also in many countries abroad.

Any idea, philosophy, ideology which takes birth anywhere can be tested, verified and validated in the university. An intellectual emphasized the importance of a cafeteria approach where there can be a lot of interdisciplinary and inter-departmental collaborations. They visualized a University system with larger departmental autonomy and flexibility and minimum structuring. They have voiced that universities are the chief agencies for the fusion of progressive activities in
the society into an effective instrument of progress. Of course they are not the only agencies, but it is a fact that today the progressive nations are those in which universities flourish.

Some senior academicians emphasized on the privatization of higher education, whereby the universities should find ways to generate its own resources. Gandhi, who strongly believed that university, at the majestic top could only be sustained if there is a sound foundation, expressed some similar view. To him, higher education should be left to private enterprise for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts, or fine arts. The programme of higher education should be linked with the national needs of rural uplift with a view to promote education conducive to the grass-root levels of the society.  

They have fantasized university of the 21st century as self-reliant and self-renewed. It has been considered important for the university and higher education to move beyond traditional culture and limits and set up new horizons and to open new vistas of knowledge. Gandhi too wanted to reorganize university education in the country on altogether new pattern. Although the sample academicians have talked of providing specialization and increasing professionalism in university courses but at the same time they have emphasized the undue importance of liberal education. Developing entrepreneurship in the students is a new idea voiced by the intellectuals, which were not thought about by the other two categories of academicians. Mahatma Gandhi also strongly felt that the universities should be vocationally reoriented in order that youths may have economic independence after having university education. Moreover the academicians exposed to universities abroad have definitely talked of international standards and rankings, which was lacking in the expectations of other academicians.

**Comparison and Generalization**

As stated earlier the history of Indian university is not old. There is still Colonial hangover as the universities in India were established during British rule. The thinking of the Indian academia is still heavily dominated by the same British thinking on which the university was established. The

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intellectuals, in this study conducted in North Indian setting, very sparingly have exhibited lateral thinking as far as expectations from a university institution is concerned.

It is felt that the academicians of the Indian universities, especially those sampled in this study, are predominantly the practitioners and professionals of their own areas of specialization and that they rarely attempted to philosophize the idea of university. The academicians appear to be more concerned about their own discipline. The academicians still have the age-old stereotypical vision of a university. It seems that the academicians are working more as a technocrat or a professional in an industry and are engaged in the process of production as a productive unit but the predicament is that they are not in a habit of professionalizing their ideas regarding higher education and lacked clear professional vision about Higher Education. Their expectations and ideas are very descriptive and not creative, visionary and reflective.

The level of realization of sampled academicians has not been able to reach that level of abstractness and metaphysical reality, which has been achieved by the academicians belonging to universities in Europe and USA. For example for Newman the goal of university is not a patent or professional competence but "a habit of mind . . . which lasts through life." This habit of mind is embodied by the faculty, supported by the administration, and acquired by the students. Such an idea has yet not been inculcated and thought about by the present sample of academicians for whom university is simply an institution for higher learning where students get degrees and become eligible for job outside. The concept of habit of mind and the process for developing the same does not appear to be a food for thought for many of the sampled Indian academicians.

The academicians have also firmly believed that the major function of a university should be to produce skilled professionals and leaders in different fields. This expectation is very unlike the idea of Newman who believed that the university is not limited to the training of professional men. In India, university education has still to work literally hard and focus on developing consciousness in its students, which Newman had emphasized long before.

The academicians and intellectuals in India till now have not been able to accept the fact that university should be dedicated to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They have considered university to be an institution that is accountable to the public, as it has been established by the
society for its own benefit and transformation. Whereas, Newman firmly believed that it was necessary to separate the search of knowledge from the cares of mankind. A university, he believed, should be dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. He visualized it to be “the high protecting power of all knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery, of experiment and speculation.” He considered universities to be ivory towers, far separated from the cares and influence of society, where scholars could indulge in the pursuit of knowledge, in whatever area they chose, without being accountable to anyone.

Majority of the Indian academicians interviewed have emphasized that University should have a close relation with the community and society so that it can ultimately contribute to social change and should be accountable to the public cause. Whereas, Newman voiced that universities should build up individuality and variety within a climate of tolerance. He believed that universities are neither community service station, passively responding to popular demands and thereby endangering its intellectual integrity nor is it as an ivory tower into which students and teachers can withdraw for teaching and research accepting no responsibility for the improvement of the society. Rather it has to maintain an ambivalent position between the two. Such a clear differentiation is lacking in the expectations of the Indian academicians.

Some have very forcefully emphasized on university being a completely public institution meant to serve the public cause, while others have emphasized that university should purely indulge in basic, fundamental and applied researches. Few academicians in this study have tried to give any mature statement regarding the balance between these two dimensions of a university institution. Majority of the sampled academicians failed to reach that level of idealization whereby they could visualize university as being constantly in a state of creative tension knowing where to interpret, where to criticize, where to pioneer and where to support traditional values.

There is a point however, where the vision of Newman and that of Indian academicians about a university institution can be stated to be standing on a same platform. Just like the Newman’s vision of a university was in accordance with the traditional belief that university had the freedom of thought and action, which was based on the maxim that there should be no hindrance to the search of truth, similarly the Indian academicians’ idea of university have been in accordance with the traditional belief that has formed the basis of our Indian universities since Colonial times.
As far as the university education is concerned A. N. Whitehead gave much importance to the relationship between teacher and student. He believed that university ought primarily to be regarded as the arena in which there is to occur the electric contact between teacher and pupil. As compared to this spiritual idea, the Indian intellectuals have not given any deep thought on how to improve the contact and relation between the teachers and taught as envisioned by Whitehead, so that new and unique ideas are generated. To our great misfortune, the Indian students themselves do not always know what universities are for. For them it is merely an institution to prepare people for examinations. The unfortunate part is that the academicians themselves have failed to convey the idea to the students that university is beyond educational and vocational orientation. It is not just an institute to prepare for examination and profession in life but it is an institute to prepare an individual for a complete life.

Comparison of Nehru and Gandhi’s idea of university with that of the present academicians was also done. The great modern Indian visionary Jawaharlal Nehru considered universities to be institutions, which lay stress on those standards of thoughts and action, which make an individual and a nation. He emphasized on developing values like tolerance, humanism, reasoning, scientific temper, adventuring for ideas and searching for the truth as the main goal of university education. Indian University Commission, 1948-50 gave much importance to Nehru’s idea of university. But unfortunately not many of the academicians in India have given any such importance on inculcating these values or rather what should be the modus oparendi for imbibing these values in our youths through the content of higher education being provided in our universities.

Gandhi visualized such education by which the youth may feel proud to fight for the cause of his or her motherland, the nation. He wanted professionally oriented education so that the youth could earn while he learns. The academicians have undoubtedly voiced their expectations related to developing professionalism in the youth and starting more vocationally oriented courses but what should be the picture like or really how and which course would be ultimately related to the overall national and economic development of the country have not been idealized and thought upon by the academicians. Their expectations actually lack the depth, the concern, care and the feel, which was so very deep rooted in the vision of our great thinkers.

7 J.L. Nehru (1947), Convocation Address, Allahabad University, Allahabad.
Higher education in ancient India was regarded as a source of illumination, giving a correct lead in the various spheres of life. In its wider sense education was regarded as self-culture and self-improvement and a process which goes on till the end of one’s life. In its narrow sense, ancient thinkers regarded education as the instruction and training, which a youth receives during his student hood before he settles down to his career and profession. Whereas in the modern times, as voiced by the academicians in the sample, the wider sense of education is to develop professionalism in the students and in its narrow sense, education means to earn a degree which will ultimately help the student to get a job. Education was never regarded as a mere bread and butter preposition; in fact persons entertaining such a view were condemned in Ancient India. Higher education was meant to promote material as well as spiritual welfare, both in this and in after life. The ancient thinkers had such a high perception of higher education that they expected the education to strengthen the moral nature and enable one to stand the severest temptations of life. Unlike today, it was not the allurement of the degrees or the prizes but the thirst of knowledge or the desire to preserve the national heritage and culture, which was the main aim of all the educational effort and activity.

The function of education in ancient India was to remove prejudice and make the student more reasonable and considerate by enabling him to understand viewpoints different from one’s own. The education of today, as stated by the academicians, is more urgently required to help the individual to adjust in the global world rather than helping and enabling the youth to inculcate the value of tolerance and empathy by which he or she can understand others, which will ultimately bring more peace in this era of globalization.

The Ancient Indian education was able to develop character and personality, inculcate civic virtues and turn citizens well qualified to follow their professions and discharge their duties in life. It was not only able to preserve the heritage of the past but also to enrich it from generation to generation. It produced a galaxy of able scholars and thinkers. It enabled India to achieve high material prosperity by the excellent arrangements it made for training young men in arts, crafts and professions. A real university atmosphere prevailed in the centers of education during that time which is intensely lacking in most of the Indian universities today. Nowadays, very rarely a true
university culture can be seen in some of the Indian universities. The academicians interviewed simply ignored the ways and steps to develop such a culture.

The Convocation ceremony was given so much importance in ancient India, which has not been talked about by any academician. The Convocation was important, because it was the time when the Chancellor particularly exhorted the student not to neglect his/her duty of daily revision.

Looking at these ideals, it can be said that the main aim of modern Indian education to pass the examinations with high honors, was practically non-existent in ancient India. It was not the allurement of the degrees or the prizes but the thirst of knowledge or the desire to preserve the national heritage, which was the main spring of the educational effort and activity. As compared to most of the modern scholar, the scholar in ancient India could not take shelter behind the buttress of a degree. Rather he had to keep his scholarship fresh and up-to-date for he could be challenged at any moment by the society, which used to judge his merit by the way in which he acquitted himself in such discussions. Such in depth sincerity about the acquisition of knowledge and the preservation of national culture and heritage unfortunately could not be felt in the expectations of the academicians.

It thus, seems clear that since Indian universities do not have a long history and since higher education has not yet developed into an independent discipline, the Indian academicians and intellectuals’ idea of a university is not that mature as the ideas opined by great thinkers of the West, where they have a long experience of Western universities, almost 853 long years (since Bologna). The ideas also very rarely match with the ideas of the great ancient Indian thinkers. The sampled academicians have still not been able to form a philosophy of higher education. Higher education needs to be established as a separate discipline and a higher education culture has to be developed in the present universities so that the idea of the academicians professionalize as far as the concept of higher education is concerned. But then whatever ideas the academicians have put forward, either by those exposed only to a single university or by those exposed to variety of Indian and foreign universities, are definitely rooted in the Indian soil.
Conclusion

The findings of the present research give rise to the following conclusion in terms of the three main research hypotheses framed earlier.

It was found that the academicians’ idea of university was mostly confined to their own or single university (of their own). The idea was quite narrow and mostly restricted to the infrastructure aspects and the traditional functions of the university viz, teaching and research and to some extent student support. Thus the hypothesis that the academicians specially belonging to the North Indian universities will reflect a limited vision and idea as far as the university institution is concerned, stands proved.

The second group of sampled academicians was of those academicians who have studied or worked in several universities in India and thus are exposed to various types of academic cultures and environments of higher education. They have mostly given their ideas embedded in the Indian socio-cultural perspective. They have talked of developing curriculum based on national objectives and national goals. Thus, the second research hypothesis that the idea of university of this group of academicians will be grounded in the soil of indigenous socio-cultural background has been accepted.

The last category of academicians was those who are exposed to the universities and higher education institutions of various countries. They have somewhat put forward varied and creative ideas regarding different aspects of university. For example, they have talked about university without walls, higher education for all, both for the elite and the masses, developing professionalism and entrepreneurship in the students. But still, as has been discussed in detail under the heading of comparison and generalization, the ideas of these academicians lack professionalism and a true and in depth philosophy of higher education. Their ideas have not been that creative and visionary like the ideas of our great ancient thinkers and Western academicians. Thus, the third and the last research hypothesis that such widely exposed, traveled and experienced academicians will express
quite versatile, creative, broad based and modern idea of a university institution stands partially accepted.

This exploratory study, in general, thus led to the acceptance of the hypothesis that the exposure of academicians to various higher education institutions enriches his/her idea of a university.

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