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A case study on problems and prospects of corporate colleges in Telugu states

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Abstract
The last decade has seen significant changes in all aspects but most dramatically in the area of education and research. The scenario of Indian education has changed completely with privatization and liberalization of rules and regulation. One of upcoming trend in education is the 'branding of educational institutions' like other services and goods. Although applying the branding tactics and strategies seems to be an awkward idea at first, but it is not new as we still resonate with impressions, hearing the names of 'Nalanda' and 'Takshila', the ancient Indian universities. This paper explores the problems and prospects of branded colleges in Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Corporate (Branded) colleges, challenges of colleges, educational institutes

Introduction
There was a time when education was for privileged few. With the privatisation of education and then with the liberal rules and regulation to start and run an educational institute, the situation is reverse now. The number of educational institutes has been increasing but except for few premier institutions, rest are struggling for their survival. The reason is of course, not getting the desired number of admissions required for sustainability. If we look at education as an industry it seems that competition is growing at an exponential rate. And of course when the competition grows, one has to get better to survive and stay ahead. The Darwin's theory of 'survival of the fittest' stands true even in this case. So what these educational institutions have to do to get better? It is really not understandable that when the principles of marketing are applied on all the other industries, then why not on education? We have come a long way, from the era when we say 'the quality speaks for itself'. But it will speak only when it is given a chance and that chance becomes minimal when the competition is growing so fast. Developing a strong brand is beneficial for both, the educational institutes as well as the students. It makes decision taking easier for the students and efforts of the educational institute more focused and hence more fruitful. The process of brand building begins with identifying and creating the right kind of positioning. So to make a strong brand it is very much important to identify unique value proposition of your service with a prior identification of your target. But most of education branding has never been the subject of either advertising or marketing case studies and more is the pity. If you take a look around you, then you will see that brands, like IITs and IIM s, have already created superior consumer value. As brands go, they are cherished, they are valuable and, what's more, with every passing year, the brand benefits only get embellished. (Financial Express, 2005).

Today running an educational institution has become an expensive affair. A lot of investment is required to start and run an educational institution. No doubt, the educational institutes have started spending a fair chunk of their investment on promotion but the real accountability is missing. To make more sense out of this money spent and to make it an investment rather an expenditure it is required that this money should be spent in a more thoughtful and planned way. To make this investment specially on promotion more accountable, it is important to get right on your positioning strategy. It will bring focus and hence more productivity to the efforts that are put in. For example, a student-centered college or university will respond to changing student needs and expectations. But an attempt to be everything to everyone results in the dilution of effectiveness, first on the margins and then on the core function i.e. teaching and learning. A logical thing that comes out is that the very survival of universities rests upon their ability to be clear about who they are and then use that knowledge to attract students, partners and ultimately, funding.

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Literature Review

Branding is not new in its origin as it began, when the ancient Greeks marked their livestock, a practice that still prevalent in livestock industry. However, in case of institutional enterprise branding initiatives began in 1931, when Procter & Gamble introduced the labels on its products to facilitate product differentiate to help consumers in decision making. That's particularly true in case of traditional paid advertising. Now brand building efforts are extended to education industry but with limited success. The universities tend to be skeptical about branding and typically associate branding with marketing, which in turn is associated with advertising, often bad advertising. When universities limit their identity to solutions like advertising, following the outside in approach, key messages continue to be delivered throughout the internal branding process, and lead to the difference between product and corporate brand development. Most of the literature on the topic is theoretical and have focused on: gaining competitive edge (Mazzarol and Soutar, 1999; Czarniawska and Genell, 2002), sector and institutional image (George, 2000; Oplatka, 2002). However, the authors identified very a small number of papers (Gray *et al*., 2003; Lewis, 2003; Chapleo, 2004; 2005) that were related with the branding of universities or educational institutes. And also the papers that attempted to apply some of the recent theories of branding to the education sector were theoretical rather than empirical. Also, whilst these papers discuss branding, this was not the main topic of the research. There are only very few articles that have clearly explored the development of brands and branding of services especially education as service. Even, those that do exist tend to be contradictory (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1989). Berry and Lefkowith (1988) [2] argue that in services, the company name is the brand name and that services do not lend themselves to individual branding the way tangible products do (Turley and Moore, 1995). On the other side of demand, a remarkable number of papers have focused on the choice factors of the student-consumer (Baldwin and James, 2000; Umashankar, 2001; Pugsley and Coffey, 2002; Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003) [1, 3]. Much research is still to be carried out as the research field on higher education branding, is still at a relatively pioneer stage from a strategic and exploratory perspective (HemsleyBrown and Oplatka, 2006).

Problems of Corporate (Branded) Colleges in Telugu States

Quality: Quality education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and a dynamic concept. Ensuring quality in education is amongst the foremost challenges being faced in India today. However, Government is continuously focusing on the quality education. Still Large number of colleges and universities in India are unable to meet the minimum requirements laid down by the UGC and our universities are not in a position to mark its place among the top universities of the world.

Political interference: Most of the educational Institutions are owned by the political leaders, who are playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities. They are using the innocent students for their selfish means. Students organise campaigns, forget their own objectives and begin to develop their careers in politics.

Accreditation: As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, "not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".

Structure of higher education: Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted.

Faculty: Branded colleges complain about a paucity of senior faculty inclined towards meaningful research and industrial projects. Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET / PhD candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

Need for Independence: A section of universities feels the universities cannot emerge as world class if they are developed through government departments forcing their authority over institutions. Top class universities are nurtured possibly when faculty members, students¸ or other stakeholders are able to take decisions about the university independently and transparently. It is required to stay relevant in the era of high-tech competitions and in the absence of quality no organisation can afford to last in the long run.

Innovations: In a lot of private branded colleges, major innovations are reflected in their latest curriculum, globally practiced pedagogy and industry tie-ups.

According to Madhu Chitkara, Vice Chancellor, Chitkara University, Punjab, survival of the fittest and fierce competition also drive the will at private colleges to be being innovative and sustainable. "So, for them, innovation is always on agenda unlike state and central educational institutions, which are heavily funded and marginally accountable to the need of education system."

One can also count introducing new courses "to help students become employable, imparting professional skills for knowledge economy… creating state of the art infrastructure… recruiting efficient and bright faculty members and imparting high quality education" among other prominent challenges.

Prospects of corporate (branded) Colleges in Telugu States

India is a large country, with an estimated population of young people aged between 18 to 23 years to be around 150 millions. The sheer size of the market offers huge

opportunities for development of the higher education sector in India. India now boasts of having more than 33,000 colleges and 659 universities, which has been quite a remarkable growth during the last six decades. The year 2012 witnessed 21.4 million enrolments, which makes India the 3rd largest educational system in the world. Unfortunately, the educational infrastructure of India is inadequate to handle such huge volumes. In spite all the government spending in the educational sector, it is just too insufficient to meet the growing requirements. Therefore, higher Education sector has now been identified as one of the promising areas for private and foreign investments. It offers immense investment opportunities in both non-regulated and regulated segments (Nexus Novus, 26 July, 2013).

Indian higher education system is growing very fast irrespective of various challenges but there is no reason that these Challenges cannot be overcome. With the help of new-age learning tools, it is easy for country like India to overcome these problems and bring a paradigm shift in the country's higher education sector. With such a vibrant country with huge population properly educated, the possibilities are endless. If knowledge is imparted using advanced digital teaching and learning tools, and society is made aware of where we are currently lagging behind, our country can easily emerge as one of the most developed nations in the world.

There are opportunities for strategic engagement and capacity building in higher education leadership and management at the state level. There are opportunities for India to collaboration at national and international level on areas of systemic reform, including quality assurance, international credit recognition, and unified national qualifications framework. Equality of educational opportunity in higher education is considered essential because higher education is a powerful tool for reducing or eliminating income and wealth disparities.

The idea of equalising educational opportunities also lies in the fact that "the ability to profit by higher education is spread among all classes of people. There are great reserves of untapped ability in the society; if offered the chance they can rise to the top. A great deal of talent of the highest level is, in fact, lost by an inegalitarian system of education" (Balachander, 1986).

The need to enhance the employability of graduates is presenting entry points for collaboration in enterprise education and entrepreneurship, links with industry, research skills and the wide range of transferable skills, including English. The emerging interest in Indian higher education institutions in the vocational skills market provides areas for potential engagement with international partners. There is a need to build stronger relationships and increase mutual understanding in higher education by increasing support and participation in platforms (conferences, workshops, seminars) which enable debate and dialogue with other countries of the world. (British Council, 2014).

Honourable Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu's vision is "to transform Andhra Pradesh state into a knowledge hub by providing quality education and giving opportunities for students to develop employability skills among the Universities and Colleges in the state." Post bifurcation, State government which accorded top priority for starting higher educational institutions promised under the State Reorganisation Act, to facilitate setting up private institutions for which an Act was enacted, government constituted an expert committee to go through scores of applications and recommend the best ones.

Suggestions for Improving the Corporate (Branded) Colleges
- There is a need to implement innovative and transformational approach to make the branded colleges globally more relevant and competitive.
- Branded institutes need to improve quality and reputation.
- There should be a good infrastructure of colleges which may attract the students.
- Government must promote collaboration between Indian education institutes and top International institutes and also generates linkage between national research laboratories and research centres of top institutions for better quality and collaborative research.
- There is a need to focus on the graduate students by providing them such courses in which they can achieve excellence, gain deeper knowledge of subject so that they will get jobs after recruitment in the companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to the higher education.
- Colleges in private must be away from the political affiliations, Favouritism, money making process should be out of education system etc.
- There should be a multidisciplinary approach in higher education so that student's knowledge may not be restricted only up his own subjects.
- The positioning should be in line with the institution's internalized values. Because the brand which is not supported by an organisation's strategic business decisions, is ineffective and difficult to sustain over a long period of time.
- Every university should have a documented positioning statement and brand strategy. Marketing plans are fluid and change over time but brand strategy should remain intact over a long period of time.
- All the branding decisions should be backed by a research outcomes and not be intuitions based as the effective branding requires a critical understanding of consumer needs and perceptions.
- Institute's internal resources like faculty and staff should be intimately involved in developing the brand strategy.

Conclusion
Education is a process by which a person's body, mind and character are formed and strengthened. It is bringing of head, heart and mind together and thus enabling a person to develop an all round personality identifying the best in him or her. Education in Andhra Pradesh has expanded very rapidly in the last six decades after independence yet it is not equally accessible to all. Still a large section of the population remains illiterate and a large number of children's do not get even primary education. This is not only excluded a large section of the population from

contributing to the development of the state fully but it has also prevented them from utilising the benefits of whatever development have taken place for the benefit of the people. No doubt Andhra Pradesh is facing various challenges in higher education but to tackle these challenges and to boost higher education is utmost important. Andhra Pradesh is a state of huge human resource potential, to utilise this potential properly is the issue which needed to discuss. Opportunities are available but how to get benefits from these opportunities and how to make them accessible to others is the matter of concern. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance, infrastructure and at the end the Responsiveness.

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