Unit 22
WTO, GATS, ICTS and Higher Education

Contents

Learning Objectives

This unit aims to examine the

- Interlinkages among the processes of globalisation, knowledge economy and higher education,
- Coverage of higher education under the GATS,
- Emerging social processes affecting the structure and functioning of higher education in the globalised world,
- Developing a critique of the free market philosophy on higher education.

22.1 Introduction

Education as a social process and an institution influences the processes of social progression, economic growth, political articulation, intellectual and human development and technological advancement of a society. Education also operates in time and space embedded socio-cultural, techno-economic and politico-administrative processes, which widely influence its course and direction. The emerging composite social processes have brought forth new opportunities and challenges to the education system in general and to the ODL in particular by way of fostering a new paradigm of economic, technological, cultural and political development and discourse.

In the wake of globalization and the exponential expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) driven service and knowledge economy, and fast flow of human and commercial capital all over the globe, contemporary societies have been marked by an extension of trade in all areas of human creativity, including education. With the increasing intensity of the human and capital flows, communities are no longer solely described in geographical terms, rather ordered across time and space in terms of cultural decontextualisation. These altogether have set in motion processes of fast diffusion of human resources, creativities and educational knowledge and their commercial integration globally. The formalization process of trade liberalization through the WTO and its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) have introduced trade in education with several new dimensions attached to it, which were hitherto unknown to the world of education, especially in the developing countries. In the changing socio-cultural and techno-economic environment, the higher education system, which has long been considered to be a potential force for achieving development in arts, science and technology and finishing higher levels of human potential and promoting human-centered development for a vast section of the population, has now largely emerged as an important vehicle for commercialization of knowledge globally.

In this background the changing state of higher education and its commercialization are required to be understood in the context of globalisation, advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), emergence of knowledge economy and the expansion of market forces all over the globe. Some of these processes we have discussed at length in Book-II of MSO-003. Let us discuss them further to contextualise higher education within these processes.

22.2 Globalisation, ICTs and the Emergence of Knowledge Society

The process of globalization has both ideological and empirical dimensions. Ideologically many scholars have seen it as an expression of the capitalist ideology (Ferguson 1992); as the alternative expression of cultural imperialism, and as the process of construction of transnational domination. According to Bartekson (2000) empirically it involves at least three processes– a process of 'transference' of exchange of things across existing unit boundaries, a process of 'transformation' of the identity of the unit, and also 'transcendence' that dissolves the divide between inside and outside (Bartelson 2000: 184-86). Globalization indeed is a plural phenomenon that includes the processes of economic integration, exchange of goods and services, and mobility of resources and adaptation to the structural adjustment programme of the IMF and the World Bank, transnational cultural flows and communication to territorialize culture (viz Americanization, hybridization etc cf. Barber 1992, Appadurai 1996), planetarisation of ecology (Meadows 1972), cultural extension and technological connectivity. Globalization, moreover, takes place in different socio-historical contexts, which provide very different meanings and implications in various parts of the world. It is posited in composite economic, technological, socio-cultural and political connectivity, 'with multiple tendencies to a worldwide reach and connectedness of social phenomena or to a world-encompassing awareness among social actors' (Therborn 2000: 154).

The process of globalisation needs a faster flow of goods and services across the globe. This is possible only with the help of advanced technology. Globalization is thus closely linked with the process of technological transformation and innovations. Human advancement is closely associated with technological advancement. Contemporary society is witnessing revolutionary innovative advancements in the field of technology, especially information and communication technologies (ICTs), which is characterized by phenomenal expansion of computer communication, and electronic technology. ICTs tremendously increase the pace of globalization and these together make a far- reaching impact on every aspect of society including economic, social, cultural political etc. A major outcome of this is the emergence of a knowledge society or information age where knowledge or information becomes the driving force for the all-round advancement of humanity. Gaining knowledge and applying it for knowledge production become the basic necessity for economic advancement.

Box 22.1: Social Development and Technological Advancement

History has proved that every form of technological transformation and innovation is linked to the emergence, proliferation and sustenance of a distinctive form of economy. The advancements in ICTs that is witnessed in the present day society is also linked to a new variety of economic activities which is a characteristic form of knowledge economy. Let us elaborate on this a little more. The process of knowledge generation, production and dissemination are challenged in the age of new ICTs. In the ICT-led knowledge economy, according to Romar (1990) as distinct from peasant and industrial economy where economic wealth is produced by using human manual labour and machines respectively, the processes of

generation, dissemination and exploitation of knowledge produce economic wealth predominantly. In the emerging society the ICTs have been envisioned as breaking the barriers to knowledge to develop human capabilities in all areas throughout the globe and among the poor and the rich alike. This is reflected in the work pattern of the society. Unlike the domination of the agricultural sector in the pre-industrial society and the industrial sector in the industrial society, in the ICT age knowledge-based service sector takes the dominant place. The service sector is marked by the creative use and exploitation of knowledge, which in turn depicts a significant role for the institutions that deliver knowledge.

By now the interlinkages between the expansion of globalisation, ICTs and knowledge economy must have been clear to you. You should also know that globalisation, ICTs and knowledge economy need a distinct variety of workers with educational process, which are linked to world market. This educational process is deeply embedded in commercially inclined life-long learning.

Box 22.2 : Knowledge Workers and Education

The knowledge economy and the workers have distinctive features and specific educational requirements. Let us examine some of the features of the knowledge economy and their relation with education:

a) The knowledge workers of the knowledge society are the "symbolic analyst" who manipulates symbols rather than machines. Significantly their emergence is becoming faster than ever before with ever increasing productivity in all sector of the economy.

b) The workers of the knowledge economy get access to work and social through formal education and training.

c) Formal education and educational institutions occupy the centerstage of the knowledge society in a way similar to acquiring and distribution of property and income have occupied in the age of capitalism.

d) In knowledge economy people are to learn throughout their life making the state of acquiring of knowledge a life-long process rather than an age specific affair.

e) Knowledge society is far more competitive than the earlier society, as knowledge is the key competitive factor for career and earning opportunities.

f) Knowledge workers own the tools of production. Unlike the capitalist society, true investment in the knowledge society is the knowledge of the knowledge workers, without knowledge the whole production process is unproductive. The higher the quality of education and training, the higher the demand of the knowledge worker.

Life-long learning is an important dimension of the knowledge society. New skill and knowledge are required to be imparted to meet the changing need of this society. Hence to fulfil this need several systems of education – convention system, open and distance system – dual mode system (combining both the conventional and the open and distance mode together) – have emerged across the globe. Significantly all these educational systems now draw heavily on the information and communication technologies (ICTs) both for the generation and dissemination of knowledge. There have emerged virtual universities and expansion of borderless education through ICTs. Indeed the ICT driven education system have acquired a place of prominence in present society.

The interlinkages among globalisation, ICTs, knowledge economy and education have not only thrown open new challenges to higher education, but also several opportunities that could be harnessed socially, economically and

politically. Thus there have emerged the following potential opportunities:

- Using of education as a tradeable commodity.
- Expand the boundaries of this trade all over the world.
- Institutionalise trade in education by creating new national and international arrangements. The new arrangements are those of the GATS and others.
- Extensive use of ICTs for the expansion of trade in education.

In the following sections of this unit, we shall be dealing with all these issues. As the ICTs are important components to deliver education across the globe and to commercialise education, let us examine the form and extent of ICTs use in the contemporary world.

Action and Reflection 22.1

Explain the significance of education in the knowledge economy. Discuss the relationship between the technological change and globalisation

As there has been greater realization about the potential of knowledge economy in the developing countries and the roles of ICTs therein, many of the multinational organizations including the World Bank, UNDP, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), etc., have fostered multiple initiatives in the Third World countries to create a framework for influencing policy formulation, opening up markets, introducing competition and deregulate the ICTs market (Balakrishnan 2001: 966). Since old structures and arrangements (like UN) are unable to accommodate the emerging flow and speed of economic engagements and interactions, now new structures are evolved to accommodate them. Now let us briefly explain the process of trading of education through the GATS.

Reflection and Action 22.2

Explain the major trends of access to ICTs in the contemporary world

22.3 General Agreements in Trade in Services (GATS) and Education

The emerging processes of globalization, expansion of ICTs and knowledge economy show an implicit and explicit relationship with commodification of education through GATS. Under the WTO regime education is a tradable service and this is to be traded in a unitary framework across the globe.

Box 22.3: GATS and Service Sector

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is the first and only set of multilateral rules governing international trade in services. The GATs was negotiated in the Uruguay Round, and was developed in response to the huge growth of the services economy over the past 30 years. In the global economy the service sector accounts for 60% of the global output, 30% of the global employment and 20% of the global trade (WTO 2005). If you look at the developed countries like the UK, the USA and Australia more than 72% of their GDP is earned from service and around 75% of the employed persons are engaged in the services economy (World Bank 2006 UN DP 2005).

The idea of bringing rules on services into the multilateral trading system was floated in the early to mid 1980s. The agreement was developed within the framework of rules and also in terms of the market access commitments. The GATs covers all traded services - for example banking, telecommunications, tourism, education, professional services etc.

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), a set of multilateral rules governing international trade in services, is governed by principles relating to coverage, principle of trade and issues of protection of patents and copyrights. The various modes of trade in services in general and education in particular governed by GATS shall be understood in the backdrop of the basic principles of GATS. Let us see them briefly here.

a) **Most-favoured-nation (MFN) treatment:** MFN means treating one's trading partners equally on the principle of non-discrimination. Under GATS, if a country allows foreign competition in a sector (for example education), equal opportunities in that sector should be given to service providers from all other WTO members.

b) **Commitments on market access and national treatment:** Under the GATS all countries committed to open markets in specific sectors - and how open those markets will be - are the outcome of negotiations. Through these negotiations the member countries can increase market access (for example allow foreign universities to operate in the domestic market), limit the market access and decide the national treatment (i.e. whether or not the foreign universities be given all the opportunities which are given to the domestic/national universities).

c) **Transparency:** GATS says governments must publish all relevant laws and regulations, and set up enquiry points within their bureaucracies. Foreign companies and governments can then use these inquiry points to obtain information about regulations in any service sector.

d) **Regulation by Government:** As per the GATS, the government shall be using objectivity, reason and impartiality. A commitment to national treatment, for example, would only mean that the same regulations would apply to foreign suppliers as to nationals. Governments retain their right to set qualification requirements for doctors or lawyers, and to set standards to ensure consumer health and safety.

e) **Recognition:** National governments can negotiate on the issue of recognition of each others educational qualifications to make them comparable. However, according to GATS "the recognition of other countries" qualification must not be discriminatory, and it must not amount to protectionism in disguise" (Ibid).

f) **International Payments and Transfers:** Once a government has made a commitment to open a service sector to foreign competition, it must not normally restrict money being transferred out of the country as payment for services supplied in that sector.

g) **Progressive Liberalization:** The WTO commits itself for progressive liberalization of trade including trade in services. Liberalisation of trade in services through the GATS requires more negotiations, which began in early 2000 and are now part of the Doha Development Agenda. The goal is to take the liberalization process further by increasing the level of commitments made under the GATS.

As already indicated, GATS covers a wide range of subjects. Work on some of the subjects started in 1995, as required, soon after GATS came into force in January 1995. Negotiations to further liberalize international trade in services started in 2000, along with other work involving study and review. The Articles of GATS which specify the broad guideline for negotiation has wider ramifications on services like education. Now let us learn more on the modes of trade in services in general and education in particular.

Box 22.4: WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

Another important international agreement relating to knowledge creation and education that falls under WTO is Trade Related Property Rights (TRIPS). TRIPS, negotiated in the 1986-94 Uruguay Round, introduced intellectual property rules into the multilateral trading system for the first time. The WTO recognizes that ideas and knowledge are increasingly becoming parts of global trade. The creators must be given the rights to prevent others to use them without acknowledging, rewarding and recognizing the creators. Internationally there are variations on the extent of protection and reinforcement of these rights. TRIPS aims to bring uniformity in this aspect. TRIPS laid down that patent protection must be available for inventions for at least 20 years. The agreement describes the minimum rights that a patent owner must enjoy.

The areas covered by the TRIPS Agreement are:

- Copyright and related rights
- Trademarks, including service marks
- Geographical indications
- Industrial designs
- Patents
- Layout-designs (topographies) of integrated circuits
- Undisclosed information, including trade secrets (WTO 2005)

It is now established that the remaining services economy needs an educational arrangement and programmes that can be traded across the border as commodity both through the ICT based distance and conventional education. Privatisation of education, production and promotion of market driven self-financing educational programme, quick adoption of ICTs, repackaging of available course materials, development of collaborative arrangements with foreign universities to trade education are some of the recent trends not only with the distance learning but also with several conventional universities. The hidden potential of the open and distance learning especially its flexible structure, capacity to produce innovative academic programmes and its wide adherence to the ICTs based virtual and online learning have attracted the attention not only of the proponents of the knowledge economy but also the multinational corporations (We have discussed about ODL in the last block of this book).

In the given context the higher education scenario has been characterised by

- Increasing demand in higher education in India
- Emergence of a demand for lifelong learning
- Emergence of open and distance learning system as important providers of education
- Emphasis on ICTs aided learning
- Growing emphasis on dual mode education system whereby conventional education system also provides education through distance mode. In India of the 327 regular universities, 176 now also provide education through distance mode. More than 20% of students in India are now enrolled in the open and distance learning system.
- Increasing commercialisation of education through ICTs.
- Proliferation of 'for profit' private providers of higher education especially in the technical and professional cover.
- Proliferation of foreign universities campus.

In the developing world while the democratic states perceive education as service with social commitment, emerging market forces influence the state to redefine the function of education as a potential tradable commodity - a trade that can be transacted across the globe with the help of ICTs. In the context of the changes in the economy and the GATS the state's approach to education has undergone a phenomenal shift. Let us see the implication of this on higher education in India.

22.4 GATS and Modes Education

The GATS suggests four "modes" of trading of all internally traded services - for example banking, telecommunications, tourism, professional and education services, etc.

Mode 1: Service supplied from one country to another officially known as "cross-border supply"

Mode 2: Consumers or firms making use of a service in another country, officially known as "consumption abroad"

Mode 3: A foreign company setting up subsidiaries or branches to provide services in another country, officially described as "commercial presence"

Mode 4: Individuals traveling from their own country to supply services in another officially "presence of natural persons" (WTO, 2001)

Under the GATS the modes in which education could be traded globally is shown in Table 4.

Table 24.1: Mode of Supply of Education under GATS

Mode of Supply According to GATS	Explanation	Examples in Higher Education	Size/Potential of market
1. Cross Border Supply	-the provision of a service where the service crosses the border (does not require the physical movement of the consumer)	-distance education -e-learning -Virtual universities	-currently a relatively small market -seen to have great potential through the use of new ICTs and especially the internet
2. Consumption abroad	-provision of the service involving the movement of the consumer to the country of the supplier	-students who go to another country to study	-currently represents the largest share of the global market for education services
3. Commercial Presence	-the service provider establishes or has presence of commercial facilities in another country in order to render service	-local branch or satellite campuses -twinning partnerships -franchising arrangements with local institutions	-growing interest and strong potential for future growth -most controversial as it appears to set international rules on foreign investment
4. Presence of Natural Persons	-persons traveling to another country on a temporary basis to provide service	-professors, teachers, researchers working abroad	-potentially a strong market given the emphasis on mobility of professionals

Table 5: Classification of education services under GATS

Category of education service	Education activities included in each category	Notes
Primary Education (CPC 921)	-pre-school and other primary education services -does not cover child-care services	
Secondary Education (CPC 922)	-general higher secondary -technical and vocational secondary -also covers technical and vocational services for the disabled	
Higher Education (CPC 923) Adult Education (CPC 924)	-post secondary technical and vocational education services -other higher education services leading to university degree or equivalent -covers education for adults outside the regular education system	-types of education (i.e., business, liberal arts, science) are not specified -assumes that all post secondary training and education programs are covered -further delineation is needed
Other Education (CPC 929)	-covers all other education services not elsewhere classified -excludes education services related to recreation matters	-needs clarification re coverage and differentiation from other categories -for example- are education and language testing services, student recruitment services, quality assessment covered?

Source: Night, J. 2002

As we have seen earlier under the principle of GATS all member countries will provide equal market access and national treatment to all WTO members and guarantee equal conditions for foreign exporters and importers of education and investors in this to do business. The member governments are to make all relevant laws and regulations to suit this requirement of GATS.

The contemporary world has been conspicuously worked by a) sharp decline in public funding in higher education, b) sharp increase in the number of adults student seeking specialized educational training to start newer or to advance present career, c) proliferation of ICTs-based distance learning educational institutions and private corporate houses, e) increase in the potential of profitability of global market of education which is currently estimated to be US $ 50 billion industry, f) increase in the 'for - profit' providers of higher education. Against this backdrop, higher education which was considered a public good and agent for equal opportunity considered by many a lucrative business in the 'service economy. For-profit providers and investors visualize the WTO and GATS as essential to dismantle what they consider to be barriers to trade in educational services and maximise their profit making opportunities on a global scale (public citizens 2006). Thus there have been serious efforts to transform higher education from a public good to a global services market" through the GATS. These have several implications.

Implications

- The provision of national treatment emphasizes that both the foreign and domestic providers of education be treated equally. The developing countries in particular and all the countries in general have a special commitment to provide subsidies in education to the weaker section of society. There are also facilities of freeships, scholarship for the students in Government-run or non-profit educational institutions. Under the national treatment provision either these protective subsidies be extended even to the providers of education or be withdrawn to ensure national treatment to all providers of education.
- Cross border education services are to be recognized by members of the WTO and provided accreditation. Refusal and delay may give rise to trade complaints. The stringent provision in providing accreditation, which may be a necessity on the part of some countries to protect their specific cultural and societal interest, could be challenged in the WTO tribunals as "more burdensome than necessary to ensure quality of service".
- As cross-border education has provided enormous opportunities of making profit by trading education, there are possibilities of proliferation of fraudulent institutions. The online education service without proper accountability, standard and recognition would emergeas a tool for unscrupulous providers of education to exploit innocent students.
- It is also highlighted that the GATS has endeavoured to deregulate education to the advantage of the multinational firms by dismantling many of the domestic policies. Cross-border education and trade in education "does not simply entail students studying abroad to wide horizons and add depth, spice and culture to higher education experience". This rather ensures effective elimination of "trade barriers" for the benefit of large multinationals and standards and policies are relegated to the category of "non-tariff barriers to trade" (Public Citizen 2006)

It is significant in this context that the initiative to include education under GATS has not come from experts in higher education, but from corporations and bodies like Global Alliance for Transnational Education, a subsidiary of a multinational telecommunication firm whose interest was to promote 'for-profit' education institutions abroad.

22.5 ICTs, Marginalised People and the Higher Education in India

"Education as an enabling mechanism" is a corollary to the processes of empowerment of the marginalized people. *The National Human Development Report* 2001 writes: "Most importantly, education is a critical invasive instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion and a durable integration of people, particularly those excluded from the mainstream of society"(GOI 2001:48). Marginalized people like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, educationally backward minorities and women have always got low access to education in India. In recent years there have been serious debates on the issue of access of marginalized sections of society to higher education. India has high dropout rates at the primary and secondary levels of education. These dropsout rates are highest among the marginalized groups.

The large section of these populations lag behind educationally at all levels. State policies on education is mandated to promote the educational well being of these people who have been relegated at the margin of society and are excluded from the mainstream economically, politically, culturally, and socially.

Even though India spends around 20% of total educational budget on higher education, of the total student population only 5.7% go to the colleges and higher levels of studies. In terms of age group, in India only 7% of the population of age group of 17-24 attain higher education as against 92% in the US, 52% in the UK, 45% in Japan (UNESCO 1999). In India, students' enrolment in higher education has significantly increased in recent years from less than 0.2 million in 1950 to around 10 millions by the year 2002. There, however, has been a very slow rate of increase of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Trib and educationally backward students in higher education. For example the per centages of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled tribe students in higher education has been increased from 7% and 1.6% in 1950 to 7.78% and 2.7% in 2002 respectively (Rao 2002 cf. Weisskopt 2004). The per centage of girls' enrolment in higher education however has increased from 10% in 1950-51 to 40.5% 2003-03 (Govt. of India 2001-02).

In India there has also been a phenomenal growth of govt. recognized educational institutions from 209671 primary school in 1950-51 to 664041 in 2001-02; 7416 to 133492 high school, 587 to 11146 colleges (including colleges for professional education) and from 27 to 272 universities/institutions of national importance during the same period. More than 9.2 million students have enrolled in higher education in 2002-03 (Govt. of India 2001-02)

In spite of these developments higher education has remained beyond the reach of more than 94% of the Indian student population. The concept of open and distance learning is mooted for the educational well being of the marginalized. Can ICTs-based ODL be an effective tool for higher education among the marginalized in India? Let us examine the state infra structure or digital divide in India.

Experts often suggest several measures to integrate the ICTs and ODL to suffice the educational need of the marginalised. It is suggested that the ICT and ODL experts are to be sensitive to the need of the marginalized people in general and that of the workforce in particular. Educational curricula should focus on both their immediate and long-term knowledge need to pave the way to integrate them locally and globally through ICTs

Box 22.5: Digital Divide in Accessibility of ICTs

ICTs, however, function in a societal context. The Indian societal context is ridden with unequal distribution of resources, and divides based on caste, class, ethnicity and gender. Illiteracy, low income and spatial isolation widely contribute to sustain the pre-existing social exclusion. Along the time, there are also the dimensions of digital divides of various sorts. These divides are between rich and poor, between urban and rural, between English speaking upwardly mobile literati and non-English speaking rest of people. This digital divides are again accentuated with the varied extent of access to electricity, telephone and computer in different states in India. Table 3 shows the emerging form and the extent of digital and infrastructure divides in India. All parts of the country do not have full access to electricity and telephone connections, which are a pre-conditions for ICTS access. In the globalised world while there have emerged areas of inclusion; there also exists a vast section as excluded from within. While most of the urban areas have been connected with the forces of globalisation and ICT networks and a distinctive category of elites has emerged therein as the ICT-driven 'digiterati', within the same urban set a large segment of the work force working mostly in the unorganized sector and surviving in a sub-human existence has remained excluded from ICTs access. In rural areas, on the other hand, while the rudimentary forms of connectivity have only touched the upwardly mobile gentry, agricultural labourers, tenants, poor peasants and the artisans who represent the vast section of the marginalized people of India have remained excluded. Their educational and economic status often bar them from getting integrated with the information age.

22.6 Globalisation, Free Market and Higher Education: A Critique

The process of globalisation has exposed higher education in India to multiple tendencies, reach, connectedness and contradictions. While there has been concern for the educational well being of the marginalized, the market triumph over education can seldom be denied. Significantly in the Social Development Summit 1995 Copenhagen, the Heads of States and Governments recognized that the importance of the ICTs and the Structural Adjustment Programme to ensure the process of empowerment of the marginalized people. They committed:

- 'to promote open free markets, to prevent or counteract market failure, promote stability and long term investment, ensure fair competition,
- to ensure that people living in poverty have access to education and training, technology knowledge and information,
- to promote lifelong learning by seeking to improve the quality of education to ensure that people of all ages are provided with useful knowledge,
- to ensure equal education opportunity for girls, women, youth, children and adults,
- to 'strengthen the links between the labour market and education policies realizing that education and vocational training are vital elements in job creation and combating unemployment and social exclusion in our societies,'
- to 'implement at the national levels structural adjustment policies to establish a more favourable climate for trade and investment to ensure human recourse development'(UNDP 1995)

It is usually pointed out the Social Development Summit was a prelude to the GATT and GATS in order to get the Heads of the States and Government committed to the free market philosophy and to initiate trade in education largely to protect the interests of the for-profit provides of educations.

The provision of 'cross-border supply' under the GATS has opened up a new horizon for transference and commercialization of education through ICTs. With the 'commercial presence' in other countries through local branch, satellite campuses, twinning partnerships, and franchising arrangements, the process of transformation of local identities has also been smoothened. However, these processes have not been able to resolve the contradiction between local cultural values and sensitivities inbuilt in education on the one hand, and the global drive to commoditize education on the other.

All countries of the world however are not equally posited in relation to their technological development. Comoditisation and commercial expansion of education will immediately help promote the interest of those countries which have already reached a higher level of technological development, access to ICTs, and have the capacity to invest a higher proportion of their GDP in education. It is widely recognized that the GATS has introduced market driven competition among unequal partners. The developing and least developed countries, which are yet to fully develop their markets, infrastructure, domestic capacity for investment, etc., face added disadvantages while encountering the process of harmonization. The market driven competition of GATS contribute to the decline in the uniqueness of educational institutions, elimination of cultural focus, thoughts and educational themes. It is apprehended that 'with corporate controlled education, the security of an educational institution will disappear as it loses out to big merger deals and high-stakes investing. In fact the very ideal of education will change. No longer will truth be sought, but rather whatever suits the interests of the multinationals (Frase and O'Sullivan 2003).

Education has a social concern, especially in developing countries. Government subsidizes education to meet the national goal. As subsidized education is a barrier to free trade, government controls are to be minimized on education through GATS. "Government may be forced to allow private companies to issue accredited diplomas, even if there is little control over what is being taught by these private institutions. The potential for education to increasingly serve only as a corporate training ground is more encouraged, rather than encouraging critical enquiry and other democratically agreed upon ends (Ibid 2003)

Dissemination of knowledge, creation of knowledge and service to community are three tasks performed by educational institutions for nation building in the developing countries. GATS would undermine this task by converting education into a commodity and by altering the content of education in terms of the market need (Gill 2003)

There has been a perceptive change in the attitude of the Government towards higher education in the wake of introduction of the General Agreement in Trade in Services (GATS). Now there has been the added emphasis on private funding in higher education by way of (a) hiking student fees (b) introducing students' loan, (c) increasing role of private sector, (e) introducing self financing courses (Government of India 2001), (f) encouraging the private universities.

There is no denying the fact that the 'let the users pay' philosophy may work very well for the economically affluent or elite section of society. This approach however will adversely affect the students of the marginalized groups of society. As private investment in higher education will not go to the non-market-oriented courses and to research and development of knowledge, it would hid the interest of the students of the marginalized groups very hard. In the emerging scenario higher education is no more a luxury: It is essential to a nation's social and economic development (UNESCO 2001). Skilled human capital is to be developed in the country with the philosophy of access and equity, marginalised groups access to higher education is to be smoothened.

The country paper of Government of India, presented at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education 1998, expresses its commitment to ensure the 'reach of higher education to the youth as well as to those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of explosion of information, fast changing of occupation, and lifelong education' It also recognized that "the university has a crucial role to play in promoting social change and it must make an impact on the community by a new emphasis on the community based programmes and the roles of ICTs therein"(GOI 1998).

In the mission to promote social change and to develop community-based programme for the marginalized, social science education has a lot to contribute to contextualise the ICTs and lifelong learning in terms of the local need. In spite of initiation of the process of harmonization through globalization, GATS and the Structural Adjustment Programme the world has got digitally divided, a large section of the marginalized has remained excluded, new identities are formed, and a new culture of resistance has emerged. The challenge lies for the social scientists in the ODL in undertaking the risk to integrate the localized plural values and cultural sensitivities of the communities with the process of global learning.

22.7 Conclusion

In this unit we discussed the broad context, in which the ODL is to function today, i.e. the frame of globalization, and the emergence of ICT based knowledge economy therein. In the wake of globalization, proliferation of ICTs and the emergence of the free market philosophy through the GATS and WTO, ODL has acquired several new dimensions and possibilities. The changing facets

of ODL are also presented in this unit. The roles of the ODL in empowering the marginalized through appropriate education and technology in the context of persisting socio-economic and digital divide in India are also discussed at length. Besides highlighting the opportunities as unfolded for the ODL for becoming an effective tool for the empowerment of the marginalized in developing societies, a critique of the functioning of the ODL has also been presented here. Throughout the unit our aim has been not to impose a conclusion on the interface between the ODL and globalization, but to facilitate you by way of providing you some crucial interrelated information to locate socio-cultural sensitivities, market underpinning and the emerging significance of the ODL in the globalised world.

22.9 Further Reading

Night, J. 2002. *Trade in Higher Education Services : The Implications of GATS.* The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education: London

Chanda, R. 2002. *GATS and Its Implications for Developing Countries: Key Issues Concerns.* Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Bank: Washington