

# Complying to a continuous Self – Renewal mandate: Role of Leadership at Gujarat Technological University

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## Abstract

Universities are Institutions of Higher Learning providing facilities for teaching-learning and research with the aim to help meet the need for intellectually capable, professionally groomed and attitudinally contributory youth. These attributes and their dimensions change over time and contexts due to various macro-environmental factors like technological advancements, globalization, socio-cultural, economic and political developments, and ecological and demographic factors. Speaking of contemporary Universities across the Nation, Gujarat Technological University, India has committed itself to the same philosophy and has continuously taken initiatives through self renewal interventions. The case study approach used in this paper discusses the sensitive and able leadership exhibited in the process. Such transformational changes have happened through a deep thought process, courage to stand tall in all situations and the eye for changes in the people systems, organizational structures and work culture within the University and consistent integration with organizations – academic and non-academic, in India and abroad.

**Keywords:** Higher Learning, Development, Sustainable, Self-Renewal, Transformation, Leadership.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Role of Universities

Governments and societies as a whole, worldwide, have recognized the importance of Universities as significant contributors towards nurturing the youth by providing higher education. Universities thus help bridge the knowledge and skill gaps, equipping and empowering the youth to be contributory personalities – contributing to the society at large and to their respective professions in specific. From a broader perspective, Universities create responsible citizens and value-based human beings.

The market place is dynamic, and so are societal set-ups, organizational policies and practices and government regulations – all aiming at sustainable development and growth. While these stakeholders of a healthy nation must interact, integrate and collaborate to design ways to complement each other, Universities are found to play the role of knitting all these elements into one fabric through basic and higher education, skill-building, research orientation and facilitation, problem-solving interventions, facilitating policy-making, creating platforms for fruitful exchanges between various stakeholders, so on and so forth, leading to sustaining cultures, sustaining knowledge and its applications,

sustaining collaborative relations between various players in the National setup – all aimed at constructive, consistent and collective development in today's context and context of the future.

India has a long and venerable history in the field of higher education. In ancient times, the country was known to have been home to the oldest formal Universities in the world. (History and Revival, 2019) Nalanda University, the first University in India, was an important centre of learning long before Oxford, Cambridge, and Europe's oldest university Bologna was founded. With 10,000 students and 2,000 staff, Nalanda had a student-teacher ratio of 5:1, which accelerated the strive for both understanding and academic excellence. The structure of the University suggested a seamless co-existence between nature and man and between living and learning. Diversity, a knowledge ecosystem thriving on shared creation of new knowledge and an international outlook, have been the hallmarks of the ancient Nalanda.

According to new research in (2020, November 23), A celebrated seat of learning in the ancient world, Takshashila University was home to several great Professors. The campus accommodated over 10,500 students who came from as far as Babylonia, Greece, Arabia and China and offered over 64 different fields of study like Vedas, Grammar, Philosophy, Ayurveda, Agriculture, Surgery, Politics, Archery, Warfare, Astronomy, Commerce, Astrology, Music, Dance, etc. Admission purely based on merit, no structured syllabus or mode of instruction, taking courses based on liking rather than compulsion, attracting students from all over the world, vast libraries, lecture halls, laboratories etc., were the unique attributes of Universities like Takshashila even then.

India today has over 979 Universities, with 54 as Central Universities, 425 State Universities, 125 Deemed to be Universities and 375 private Universities. Gujarat houses 76 Universities – all types put together. Some of the key strengths of the best Universities of India lie in an industry-oriented course curriculum,

imparting essential life skills to the students through their Life skill programme, inculcating the right attitude and value system through their Value education programme, exposure to and education for global competitiveness, fostering creativity and excellence through project-based learning and application, research-intensive, multi-disciplinary quality teaching for producing professionals with high calibre and capabilities, contribution to various research initiatives through innovative young minds etc. (Desk, 2020).

Universities have evolved as they continued to play their role as enablers for societal and national development through innovative change measures - both transactional and transformational. They have responded proactively to the Nation's call and the demand of global developments, be they in knowledge creation, dispersion, and application in all areas, leading to the socio-cultural, economic, and technological enhancement and governance. So, while the Universities have participated as an equal contributor as any other stakeholder in the balanced development of Nations, they have played a very crucial role in the development of market places, technologies, processes, products, infrastructure as well as socio-cultural value systems across the globe through continuous research and development. Universities have served as pivot points in developing youth power by pumping in knowledge, research tendencies, creativity and innovativeness, skills, attitudes of making valuable contributions, and exhibiting good citizenship behaviours. The outcome of this is that all other stakeholders of the Nation/society, including Universities themselves, stand to perform productively in their respective areas/functions. They have done so, not only in times of calm but also in rough times created either by natural or man-made reasons.

If we are to enter into an intellectual debate on subjects such as: whether it is the best Universities/Institutions that are key to Nation building and whether making second-tier Universities / Institutions effective is much more challenging than the first tier Institutions: such debates would be endless or rather

unwarranted! The fact remains that, whether tier 1 or tier 2, all Universities/ Institutions have their contributions to make, that too in a big way! Here, what is more important to discuss and debate is how leadership, collective and shared vision, conducive work cultures committed to the achievement of organizational mission, thoughtful organizational structures, well-crafted systems and procedures, motivated and talented personnel, all of these make a positive difference to Universities delivering beyond what is expected of them. For Universities to remain sustainable in purpose and meaningful in conduct – across changing times and situations – both favourable and challenging, all of these must go through a continuous self-renewal process. Such self-renewal initiatives may, at times, be in response to / compelled by the external forces, but more often should be an outcome of collective and pro-active diagnosis to make meaningful contributions to the youth power of the Nations and through them – to the balanced and all-round growth and development of the society, Nation and Universe.

## 1.2 Sustainability through Self-Renewal and the role of various players :

According to (Najafian & Karamidehkordi, 2018), a sustainable University should play an important role in innovation and technology research and development in sustainability; enhancing staff and students' sustainability knowledge and social capacities; changing the campus environment to an eco-friendly and sustainable environment, and enhancing social and human capacities of communities and public and private institutions.

Filho (2009) explains how sustainability can be explained in respect of "approaches and methods", communication, teaching-learning, research – all concerning the academic profession and campus operations. As far as levels of implementation of sustainability in University systems are concerned, higher education institutions differ in the extent of their efforts towards promoting sustainability at University operations, conducting various sustainability projects, research and extension in sustainability, and framing robust

sustainability policies. The emphasis here is on the statement that the highest level of sustainability is achieved only by those universities that have sustainability solidly embedded into their lives, both in terms of campus operations and in terms of Institutional philosophy, research, extension, and in their way of thinking. For this level to be achieved, all members starting from the top leadership, have to have very high levels of engagement and commitment.

As universities evolve in the self-renewal process, gradually but surely, to reach the highest levels of sustainability, they come across various challenges. At the same time, Universities also see a set of opportunities that leadership and team together must take advantage of. As a matter of fact, sustainability is one of the many tools Universities may use to improve the quality of education.

Some of the concern areas which need to be addressed in any University willing to integrate sustainability as part of its activities are as listed below:

- Do Universities acknowledge the relevance and usefulness of sustainable development issues in the context of campus operations
- Do Universities see sustainable development connected with the life-long education of their employees and in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values of their direct and indirect beneficiaries
- Do Universities re-orient their curricula through a rigorous process of re-thinking and re-designing?

While Universities must recognize and meet these challenges with constructive and corrective actions, seeing the opportunities will facilitate this change process. These opportunities can be stated in terms of:

- Partnerships can be built between Universities and government offices, local authorities, NGOs and the private sector, with a view to not only promote research on sustainable development but also towards

finding sustainable standard solutions to problems.

- Sustainability efforts may be integrated as part of the global efforts to improve education and learn at Universities across the globe.
- Establishing links between many subjects, from health to ethics, from economics to social affairs, hence allowing a wider sense of awareness to be built.

Given the VUCA world's imperatives for businesses and governments to re-strategize and frame policies for the future, and given that unprecedented natural and artificial events are causing a crisis with greater consequences, institutions of all kinds – be they businesses, government concerns, or educational establishments like universities – are all compelled to make calculated decisions. They must change the way they operate, their organizational structures, people strategies, infrastructural frameworks, working cultures, networks and partnerships with other marketplaces/society players, technical infrastructure, research-based information and skills orientation, and so on. A total re-orientation and re-alignment are, two at times, warranted.

Thus, universities as crucial drivers of change and transformation are meant to play a very pro-active role in their evolution over time and help other establishments act pro-actively. Radhe Shyam Sharma (2015) highlights the role of Universities in bringing out economic, political, social, and cultural transformation in society.

### 1.3 Impact that Adaptive and Pro-active Universities create – What matters

Universities worldwide need to excel in planning, communication, and problem-solving tactics to respond to changing trends: globalization, advancement in technology, natural disaster, and Covid-19 pandemic.

The pace at which universities responded to fast-changing markets was slow in developed countries and even slower in developing countries. Uncertain funding and greater

competition that evolved due to globalization made it difficult for University governance to contribute through their position in this rapidly changing world.

An adaptive University holds on to its core operations and adapts to facilitate change and emerge better. The academic requirements are always complemented with the adaptive changes as such Universities believe that the academic stature is central to any change coming their way.

Universities are often looked upon as innovators, risk-takers and pioneers in laying the foundation of civilized culture and society. Any University willing to adapt and succeed in order to achieve sustainable development should focus on these key areas;

- **Relevance:** Universities must stay relevant to the societies in which they exist. They should foresee themselves as knowledge facilitators and builders of human capital. They must be willing to engage with the societal needs and trends and create and provide such knowledge as relevant in ever-changing times and provide capabilities to overcome counter-forces and evolve amidst turbulences/challenges.
- **Excellence:** Universities are meant to create and provide relevant knowledge for the learners and users of knowledge. Universities are also meant to be facilitating research to help peep into the potential future needs. The best of knowledge creators and knowledge givers are attracted to good Universities from where best and uptrend, as well as futuristic knowledge, is disseminated.
- **Agility:** Agility is a must for any University to adapt and respond to external influencers promptly. Agile institutions will have the ability to adapt to continually changing situations and are most successful compared to other non-agile institutions.
- **External Orientation:** Many universities' core ideology focuses on providing the best possible education with a myth that they are not intended for competition; however, this myth is dispelled as they understand that in

order to enable change, they must also change, and must keep up with changing trends. Additionally, Universities are no more limited in scope by the national boundaries. Research and knowledge sharing for global applicability and global participation are aimed at the collective betterment and development of the universe.

- Culture: An appropriate design of culture that fosters creativity, innovation, freedom of speech, creating and capturing social and ethnic values is essential. Such a culture leads to adopting a fresh approach towards success as it is always ready to embrace change.

- Leadership attributes: Leadership matters in the process. There is enhanced confidence in the University system when the leadership is strong and has the vision to see beyond today, design and implement sustainable development policies and other initiatives so that possible changes, challenges or crisis, sometimes pre-empted and sometimes sudden, can be circumvented smoothly. At the same time, Universities continue building the youth, society and Nation as a whole. This creates positive experiences/ returns such as brand building, increased reputation, increased student enrollment, expanding alumni network and participation, increased trust and contribution/participation from various stakeholders, receiving grants from the government, etc. It encompasses approaches, methods, and systemic solutions to solve problems and drive institutional policy towards a more sustainable organization.

Sustainable development should be based on the principles of balance and stewardship. According to the research of Leal Filho et al. (2020), specific Leadership traits, styles, and skills to be exhibited by Leaders in Higher Education may be summarized as below in order of their weightages (high to low). This article highlights the leadership requirements as mentioned below:

Table No. 1 – *Leadership Requirements*

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Leadership Styles    | Inclusive, Visionary, Creative, Altruistic, <i>Radical</i>  |
| Leadership Traits    | Systemic thinker/Holistic thinker, Enquiring/Open-minded / Caring/Morally-driven, Visionary / Courageous, Self-aware/empathetic                                 |
| Leadership Skills    | Challenge/ Innovate, Manage complexity, Think long-term, Communicate Vision, <i>Exercise Judgement</i>  |
| Knowledge Leadership | Connectedness, Organizational influence and impacts, Global challenges and dilemmas, Change dynamics and options, Diverse stakeholders views, Interdisciplinary |

According to Visser and Courtice (2011), the trait which matters most in Leadership in this context is the ability to appreciate the interconnectedness and interdependency of the whole system," which means that a specific change can affect the whole system. However, the successful implementation of a sustainable University, whether in terms of research, teaching, or campus management, is confronted with significant barriers as configured in the same study. These barriers include, for instance: the often legally guaranteed freedom of research and teaching, the lack of recognition of teachers who work with and for sustainable development, the lack of a desire for change/ the lack of interest from the academic community, and the lack of pressure from society, the lack of support from the administration/ bureaucratic system, the lack of expertise and the lack of materials/resources. Among other barriers were: political and business interests, lack of understanding of sustainability issues; diversity not valued; lack of vision; no clear mission/targets defined; vested interests; lock-ins and barriers sustained by the paradigms of growth; lack of enthusiasm among stakeholders; unwillingness to change; lack of broad inclusion.

Referring to the research of Leal Filho et al. (2020), to overcome these difficulties and ensure proper sustainability leadership, several actions were indicated by the respondents, as presented in the table below:

Table No. 2 – Leadership Actions

| Leadership Action                 | Description   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Involve Higher Administration     | Sharing, involving and convincing higher administration that sustainability mandatory for remaining a relevant Institution/University and Leading by Doing  |
| Partnerships and Public Relations | Establishing a partnership with benchmarked Institutions through joint research/projects etc. Development of networks with stakeholder organizations, Leadership based on local knowledge practice  |
| Education and Communication       | Creating awareness and raising the degree of consciousness through events, training, etc. Communication and participation across all Universities of global and local importance, Potentializing the sustainability actions in areas of education, projects, support to the community, encouragement to reflective thinking among students etc. |
| Financial support and planning    | Making a continuous investment in Education for sustainability across all levels in the University, Funding for creating solutions for the common benefit, etc.   |
| Policy concerns                   | Having broader societal   |

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
|                         | and governmental concern about sustainability challenges, Existence of Role Models  |
| Curriculum and Training | Ensuring more rigorous professional credentials of the staff, establishment of agreed sustainable principles that should be embedded in educational and operational practices, establishing a link to the curriculum and making sustainability part of academic assessments |
| Behavioural Changes     | Being open-minded and going beyond the status quo, sincerity of purpose, persistence and patience, More inclusivity   |

University Leaders exhibiting such leadership characteristics, skills, knowledge and styles as mentioned above, should not only focus on acceleration in ways an Institution engages on matters related to sustainable development but should also lead a culture of institutional change, being in continuous pursuit of best ways to respond to local, regional, and global challenges.

## 2. Research Methodology:

The methodology adopted for the purpose of data collection in this research paper is the Case Study method through the interview technique. Further, the researchers have also used the secondary sources of data such as newspaper articles, official records, information from various departments of the university, etc. for the purpose of data collection.

## 3. Interventions at Gujarat Technological University:

### 3.1. Landscape of Universities in India

The University framework in India is multi-layered. Degree awarding Universities are

classified into five types based on their operative functions: (i) Central University, (ii) State University, (iii) Private University, (iv) Institution deemed-to-be-a-University, and (v) Institute of National Importance. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), along with other professional bodies, grants approval to run the courses. In contrast, University Grants Commission (UGC) states down the regulations binding upon the Universities, consisting of eligibility criteria and the minimum requirement to run the course. Two accrediting institutions, namely the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) established by AICTE and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), established by UGC, rates these universities' performance on various pre-defined parameters.

Any University consists of Departments, affiliated Colleges, infrastructural set-up for teaching and research, qualified teachers, various committees/councils/boards etc. (as per the University Act) to run its operations smoothly.

### 3.2. Features of Gujarat Technological University:

Gujarat Technological University, a very vast University, has to its credit the following features which differentiate it from other Universities in Gujarat per say:

- 360,000 plus students
- 427 affiliated colleges
- 17,000 plus faculties.
- Catering to the entire field of Engineering, Pharmacy, Management, Computer Application, and Architecture with the programs from Undergraduates to Doctoral study.
- 87 Majors (Specializations and Electives)
- 14 Post Graduate Research Centers and Schools in the advanced fields of Technology, Business Management, Pharmacy and Skills.
- International Collaborations:

□ Collaborations with 30+ Universities and Institutes of America, USA, Canada, Europe, Asia and Africa: Making GTU an "International Innovative University.

□ India's most intensive Foreign Study Program in which around 350 plus students visits foreign universities every year for 8 weeks.

□ 70 Professors from North America and Europe as adjunct professors at GTU's Ph.D. program.

□ 820 plus international students from more than 48 countries of the world.

### 3.3. Interventions at Gujarat Technological University in the direction of making Higher Education sustainable:

Pioneering and salient interventions have been evolved through consensus of all concerned right across the university's hierarchy, including the inclusion of affiliated Institutions in all faculties at the University, namely, Engineering, Pharmacy, Management, Computer Applications and Architecture. Some of them have been mentioned below:

- GTU Innovation Council: A Large set-up in the country to nurture creativity and innovation within the university community.
- Student Start-up Support System (S4) and GTU Incubator: An Initiation by GTU to encourage Incubation & Innovation amongst the GTU student's fraternity and the small & large scale industries.
- Community Innovation & Co-Creation Centre: A Unique and perfect platform for all hackers/makers/developers/students to showcase their skills, ideas, passion and connect with the visionaries, industry experts who can mentor them and help transform their ideas/projects into realities.
- GTU is Gujarat's First University to set up a WIPO - Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC). This centre is approved by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. Professors and students have filed 350 patents.

- Introduction of Design Engineering syllabi: Introduction of Design Engineering syllabi in 2nd and 3rd year of degree engineering courses to infuse the design thinking among the young engineers.
- Introduction of Contributory Personality Development Program: Introduction of Contributor Personality Development Program (CPDP) in Engineering, Pharmacy and Computer Science and Integrated Personality Development Course (IPDC) Program in Engineering, Pharmacy to ensure Value-Based Education.
- Program of 'Rubranization': With the inclusion of 400 plus Colleges at 500 plus Villages, the most extensive program of 'Rubranization' was carried out as a study project by the GTU engineering students to re-imagine and re-design the infrastructure of the villages of Gujarat.
- GTU inked MoU with CII-IGBC for Green Buildings and building environment courses: The Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) recently signed an MoU with Gujarat Technological University to initiate a green education programme. GTU and CII-IGBC have collaborated to create courses for students, train faculty, and prepare students to be industry-ready as part of the MoU.
- Introduction of 100 Activity Points in Engineering Courses: First time in India by any technological University, such an initiative is taken as a mandatory provision in engineering courses to develop the students as per needs of the industry as well as society and in turn, through the students, solve industry and society level problems.

#### **4. Results of interventions implemented**

##### **4.1. Confirming sustainability in University Systems, Processes and Outcomes:**

Efforts towards sustainability have always been rewarded in various forms – at times in the form of measurable direct benefits coming to

the stakeholders and at times in the form of appreciation, which in turn motivates Professors and Students and all concerned staff, to continue serving one or many stakeholders thereby building a stronger Nation.

The list of such achievements of the last two years alone will speak volumes in this direction:

- Graduate School of Engineering and Technology, GTU is awarded 5th Rank in the category of "Govt. & Govt. Aided Universities and deemed to be universities "in Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievement (ARIIA) 2020 in the presence of Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu Hon. Vice President of India on 18th August 2020.
- Graduate School of Management Studies, GTU is recognized as a member of the National Rural Entrepreneurship Mission for the establishment of Rural Entrepreneurship Development Cell by Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education (MGNCRE), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India on 3rd October 2020.
- GTU has received an essential QS-IGUAGE E-LEAD certificate.
- GTU received an award for 'Most Promising University of India 2020' in the presence of Prof. (Dr.) K. K. Aggarwal, Chairman, National Board of Accreditation (NBA) organized by Integrated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on 24th February 2020, New Delhi.
- GTU has been selected as Best State University for its outstanding performance in promoting "Innovation & Startups" and appreciated by SSIP Prashansa" Award on 6th & 7th June 2019 by the Government of Gujarat.
- GTU received National Level' Outstanding University in West India 2019' Award on 18th April '19 by the Centre for Education Growth & Research (CEGR).
- GTU receives 1st Rank in Gujarat State Institutional Ratings Framework (GSIRF) on



27th February 2019 by the Government of Gujarat.

□ GTU team reaches in top 10 of Mitsubishi Electric Cup National Level Competition for Factory Automation during 15th -16th February 2019

□ GTU Motorsports team has won the First Prize in Formula Bharat 2019 held during 23rd to 27th January 2019 at Kari Motor Speedways, Coimbatore.

Besides these achievements, GTU and its entire team, including administration and administrative staff, students, faculty members, industry partners, etc. have played a significant role in supporting the state and central government and the members of the society to combat the impact of covid-19 by taking various initiatives/measures, to name a few, they are :

1. Introducing work from home for the very first time in a University set-up
2. Organizing various seminars and conferences online thus engaging people constructively
3. GTU's 13th Foundation Day was celebrated in an online mode on a larger scale
4. GTU's 1st Alumni Meet was organized in an online mode on a huge scale
5. Admission and orientation programmes were conducted in online mode
6. Teaching-learning and examination/evaluation process shifted from offline to online mode
7. Corona Test measurement was set up within the premises of GTU to ensure the health and safety of all employees as well as other stakeholders who had to visit GTU
8. Employee leave policy, as well as work hours policy, was modified to suit the covid crisis
9. Sanitizers as per WHO guidelines were prepared and distributed to Corona workers
10. Covid-19 safety masks were distributed

11. Employees individually as well as GTU as a team contributed to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund

12. GTU was among the first runners in organizing a hybrid format of the Annual Convocation, followed by many.

Many other activities apart from the ones mentioned above have been carried out as a supportive measure to combat the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 4.2. The role of Leadership at GTU - A Diagnostic and Futuristic Approach:

While leaders do not wait for a crisis to happen for taking long-term and transformational steps, certain things that this covid pandemic did teach everyone at GTU also as in any organization.

More than anything else, the art and skill of connectivity and positive communication, constructive communication and timely communication was put into practice. This was something that not only came from the cognition of fear and anxiety that everyone experienced but also out of emotional connection with stakeholders and the future of the students and the staff. The art of keeping calm though worried was a call for the senior authorities at GTU. Exhibiting maturity and parental care to ensure a safe present and a calculated future amidst the risks to life and work/studies/job placements was indeed a huge challenge!

At GTU, though, it seemed as if resilience was in-built in the system and culture! Diagnosing the situation from all perspectives, evaluating the risks on all fronts, visualizing the steps to be taken, then on, validating and re-validating the thought process with all stakeholders – internal and external, prioritizing action plans and implementing them with the consensus of all concerned. At the centre of all this remained the concern for students, their careers on the one hand and their safety and common welfare of the society, on the other hand. This was not only for handling the covid and covid related situation; in fact, since these were existing practices in the University system,

these qualities also helped handle the covid situation.

Such resilience is an outcome of a culture of teamwork, hard work, positivity, selflessness, duty boundedness, futuristic thinking, continuous learning and development, goal orientation and many more such cultural and systemic characteristics of the organization. These characteristics are not built overnight! It takes leadership vision, commitment and consistent perseverance to do so.

The leadership behaviours exhibited at GTU may be explained as given below:

- Creation of appropriate work culture, work systems and bridging the deficiencies/gaps proactively:

The various technical laboratories, the requisite schools of knowledge, the industry linkages, the development of people skills and attitudes, aligning individual goals to organizational goals, setting up a family-like environment, the establishment of a culture of motivation, teamwork, participative decision making, standardized work processes, commitment and sincerity, creating an engaged workforce, taking calculated risks to experiment new and unique initiatives, continuous improvement, and above all – a spirit of consideration and contribution towards the society at large and the underprivileged in particular, enabling government and industry with innovative and effective solutions to small and large problems and concerns, etc. All these cultural values and good practices, strengthened over time so much so that each employee of the University stood as a front line warrior and directly and indirectly solved all issues / stood up to the call of all changing times, be it, using of technology for all academic administration, be it strengthening the team within to serve all stakeholders better, empathizing with the problems of the society we live in and using the youth talent and intellect to provide state of the art and perennial solutions, working hand in hand with the government for academic excellence and societal well-being in general and during the covid pandemic in specific.

Besides all these softer issues, there were initiatives like continuous upgrading technology, building infrastructure, well-equipped research labs, an empowered organizational structural framework, a meaningful and focused network of global collaboration, and a strong network with all stakeholders – the industry more so the MSMEs in specific, etc. All of these visionary, proactive initiatives proved the focus of consistent efforts towards sustainability, for example, in the period of covid. The technology setup helped conduct, unlike other Universities, all activities flawlessly, especially the exams and academic deliberations in an online mode saving the loss of a whole year for all students and also engaging them positively by counselling them while also progressing with their academic learning. The strong network with industry, NGOs, and government bodies helped find technical solutions to the covid induced concerns. The industriousness built through industry immersion programmes helped individuals work day and night in finding solutions to the covid pandemic induced problems. The industry mentors for research support worked with students to produce and distribute products of varied nature for life protection in society. These traits have now become a personal character amongst individual students and staff.

- Undergoing a continuous self-renewal process:

The IITs and IIMs in our country have success stories of producing academically worthy individuals and individuals who have contributed to Nation building. The spirit of making technological innovations to enable the most humble segment of society, the spirit of entrepreneurship in areas that talk of a win-win situation, has made these students create innovative products and processes that contribute to raising the living standards of individuals.

This spirit, this enterprising temperament and the empathetic thought process are seen in the Indian society as a result of such great seats of learning is unimaginable. In the worst situation of covid, the most humble of craftsmen and

individual household workers complimented the more knowledgeable segment of the society, the more robust work organizations in the National endeavour on compacting the negative impact of covid. India has a created a success story for the world to follow. While IITs and IIMs have many such success stories of sustainable higher education, starting from curriculum design to consultancy assignments and field projects, GTU leadership has benchmarked against these Institutions of National importance to produce the same impact on the students, teachers, staff and society at large.

- The Next Step at GTU - The Persistent and Ethical way:

Under the NEP – 2020, GTU is now poised to become a Multi-disciplinary Research University, for which it has been one of the first Universities to initiate the de-affiliation process. An academic audit of all affiliated colleges has been conducted. Based on the grades in the audit, all these colleges will be classified under the A, B and C category. Appropriate strategies will be then adopted to strengthen them before they are de-affiliated. Such hand-holding attitude exemplifies the orientation of leadership towards building a culturally healthy and academically worthy society, where healthy competition shall enable the best all-round and multi-disciplinary education to be provided to all citizens, thus making them holistically strong and best personalities. Research says that where there are positive cultures and orientations, there is always a collective strength to stand against all odds – by sharing and collaborating on strengths while also maintaining individual autonomy in following benchmarked practices.

If we were to list some significant characteristics in academic leadership, we could mention the critical ones as:

- Zeal
- Goal orientation
- Commitment / dedication
- Cooperative

- Self Confidence
- Duty-boundness, responsible to the larger good
- Systematic working
- Practising participative management
- Consultative decision making
- Humbleness and being approachable
- Open to ideas, opinions – a good listener
- Motivating
- Long term orientation
- Diagnostic and planned approach
- People orientation
- Problem-solving approach
- Empathy
- Prioritization
- Reflective
- Self – monitoring
- Networking
- Global exposure/knowledge of best practices
- Resource mobilization
- Acknowledging others' strength and being open to learning
- Creativity and out-of-box thinking
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Continuous learning for improvement
- Righteousness
- Risk-taking and experimentation oriented
- Rigour in goal persuasion
- Adaptation
- Justify one's position

□ Nationalist spirit

Such leadership, which has been exhibited at GTU, makes Gujarat Technological University a great University and gives us a feel of re-creating our traditional Universities of repute – the Nalanda and Takshashila.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of building India as a visionary society – consistently strong, anti-fragile and sustainable in all aspects, especially her culture, are evident if more and more Institutions and Universities follow this path. Orienting the graduate students to the rural masses and their concerns through various initiatives like the NSS programme, the Vishwakarma Programme, taking them through the life of Vivekananda through the Contributory Personality Development programmes etc., have all sensitized students to the grass-root level concerns of our Nation. Setting up an INDIC centre is also an initiative in this direction. All globally well-known Universities are strongly connected to their cultural and traditional roots. With the INDIC centre, the ancient wisdom which the world, once upon a time followed, will again be revived, spread through education to re-create a Nation that had pre-emptive solutions to all potential problems. GTU is thus poised to be a world-class and work renowned University, poised to benchmark other global Universities and Indian Universities to follow to co-create sustainable higher education.

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