

Ensuring sustainability through Innovation Management in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Digital world and the advanced learners have created a great demand for innovations and creativity in the institutions of learning formally called colleges. The teachers now called as mentors and facilitators have to be on their toes with constant use of grey cells. Colleges have to work as incubation centers to channelize the young energies in creating something new that are easily accepted by the society making them entrepreneurs' in the long run. The higher authorities have to keep themselves alert so that the innovative minds are not suppressed with the routine duties and their intellect can be enhanced with the facilities and the atmosphere provided for their solid output. This paper is an attempt to bring out the challenges of innovation management in the higher education institutes and ends up with the strategies suggested to solve the same. If tapped at the right time and in the positive manner, these innovations can create a win-win situation for the institute, the students and the innovator themselves.

Keywords: Innovation Management, Higher Education, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Most of the Universities are operating with huge budgets and creative activities in order to develop the entrepreneurship and innovation demanded by the digital learners. The mandatory requirement for quality enhancement is highly competitive leaders and managers i.e. the role of teachers changing as facilitators and mentors. To satisfy this dynamic role, a person needs exceptional talent and multi-faceted skills. The modern era where higher education institutions are constantly facing the dual competition one from the other institutions from the same area, region or city and other from the foreign universities known for quality at the same time is posing constant challenges due to limited resources and other administrative duties making people tired and unable to give their best intellectual performance.

Professional faculty provides a competitive advantage leading to the enhancement of the goodwill and status of the college. More number of admissions leading to huge finance for development and research contributes in the form of cascading effect thereby helping to construct a positive and creative environment. The outcome in the form of skilled and trained ready to work as per the global norms creates a win-win situation for the institution as well as the trainers. All this makes it compulsory to strategically manage the innovations and the innovators in the higher education system.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Various studies conducted internationally has proved that the universities are constantly working to provide opportunities in order to enhance the exceptional talent shouldering multi-faceted responsibilities as shown in the study (Kearney and Yelland 2010). Although in 2009, in a study Salmi asserted three conditions to be present for innovation management viz. gifted faculty, good governance and solid resources. OECD, 2008 highlighted the effect of adopting professional approach in higher education on various aspects of management including finance and increased admission.

The importance of research in innovations management in higher education is already been recognized by several writers and researchers. This gives a further boost to the study to find out what are the issues of innovation management as far as government aided colleges in the selected area are concerned. So the key areas identified related to such government aided colleges are:

- The level of autonomy and the governance of the institutions

- The level of funding available for research compared to teaching & learning
- The level of collaboration with nearby institutions
- The level of research activities and its outcomes
- Natural and geographical differences affecting the nature of research priorities

It is always observed that some institutions find these changes to be a threat to the traditional academic life and hence are reluctant to invest in such ventures. But some institutions consider such research on innovations management as beneficial and necessary to ensure sustainable development (Khavul and Bruton, 2012). Constant competition and continuous demand for strategies making higher education sector more effective, encourages the institutions to adopt innovative structures (Powell, Gilleland and Pearson, 2012). Therefore, the current study is needed to highlight the various challenges faced in the process of innovations management.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the factors required for innovations management in higher education institutes
- 2) To study the problems faced in the process of innovations management
- 3) To suggest the strategies for innovation management in higher education institutes

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data is collected through a well-structured questionnaire from 50 staff members of the aided colleges in the suburban areas of Thane District. The sample selection is done using convenience random sampling method. For the secondary data, various journals, websites and online resources are used.

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The data collected from the sample was analysed by calculating percentage and trends using excel. The findings are as follows:

FACTORS REQUIRED FOR INNOVATIONS MANAGEMENT

As per the research findings, the following responses regarding factors were received based on their importance in an educational institution to boost innovative environment:

Table-1.1: Opinion of the sample regarding factors responsible for Innovative Environment

Sr. No.	Factor	Yes		No	
		Number	%	Number	%
1.	Management Commitment	42	84	8	16
2.	Involvement of Principal and Vice-Principal	46	92	4	8
3.	Strategic orientation	38	76	12	24
4.	Clear responsibilities	31	62	19	38
5.	Innovation culture	26	52	24	48
6.	Full autonomy to the innovator	45	90	5	10
7.	Integration of all employees	23	46	27	54
8.	Collaboration	25	50	25	50

The above table clearly shows that the maximum sample responded that the involvement of higher authorities including principal and vice-principal is important for boosting innovative environment followed by autonomy to the innovator. 84% respondents opted for management commitment to innovations as important factor followed by strategic orientation and training to the innovative staff, promotion of innovative culture, collaboration within and outside the institution followed by the integration and support of all the employees.

PROBLEMS FACED IN THE PROCESS OF INNOVATIONS MANAGEMENT

However, the process of innovations management suffers from the various challenges at the individual and at the institutional level. These challenges were listed and the respondents were asked to rank them from 1 to 5. The responses helped to infer which is the most important challenge faced in the process of innovation management among the list provided according to the sample.

Table-1.2: Opinion of the sample regarding challenges faced in the process of Innovation Management

Sr. No.	Challenges	Opinion				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Absence of Autonomy	42	4	2	2	0
2.	Outdated course structure	23	21	0	4	2
3.	Lack of trust by higher authorities	46	2	0	2	0
4.	No appreciation or incentives	44	1	0	5	0
5.	Administrative burden (paperwork)	33	7	3	5	2
6.	No freedom from routine duties	29	2	3	2	3

Thus, it can be seen that the lack of trust by higher authorities, followed by no appreciation or incentives and absence of autonomy are the challenges faced in the process of innovations management. However, the administrative burden, routine duties and outdated course structure is not so important problem as shown by the responses.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE INNOVATIONS MANAGEMENT

Indian higher education system is the third largest after China and US in terms of numbers. The last decade has witnessed an extraordinary growth in the number of institutions providing higher education. Innovation offices and recognizing innovative officers have become imperative in colleges and universities. After looking at the factors and the challenges from the research, a properly thought out process involving the following steps is suggested to be followed:

Step 1: Clarify the Goals and Gaps

This step involves involvement of all from the higher authorities including management, Principal, Vice-Principal, innovators, administrative staff, students, teachers and non-teaching staff. A clearly specified goal and the gaps to work for is a must for everyone to realize the importance of innovation management.

Step 2: Build the Strategy

In this step, after identifying gaps, proper strategies must be specified. Everyone must be clear with the roles assigned to them. The dos and don'ts must be clearly listed out. Many times traditional roles are responsible for killing the intellect and working instinct of the innovative staff leading to incalculable loss. Therefore, long-term direction and deliberate strategy must be made keeping in view the goals to be achieved.

Step 3: Implement a Portfolio Approach

After goal setting, comes the step of actual investment. Here the importance of autonomy to the innovative staff is a must. They should be provided with finance to start with their projects and expend in the manner they like. For educational institutions, portfolio approach is summarized as quality enhancement through innovations in the areas like:

- Changes in course curricula from outdated to new areas of specialization
- Industry integration and linkages ensuring employability
- Pedagogy of teaching must be altered by adopting new methodologies of active learning and wisdom

- Skill development, training and involvement of learners instead of providing only theoretical base through participative group learning.

Apart from this, recognizing the intellect minds and providing them incentive for their innovations along with the freedom from the routine duties can help the sustainability of the innovations leading to cascading benefits in the form of goodwill and increased admissions in the institution. There is a special need for the management and higher authorities to be committed and interested in pooling the efforts of the innovative staff and students in the positive direction.

CONCLUSION

Thus the higher education institutions have to invest in innovations management. The survival and the growth of these institutions in future depend on its capacity to innovate and continuously improve the quality of education. As pointed out by one Principal 'if the traditional courses become dynamic and result oriented with innovations management, then only the institution can ensure more number of admissions in self-financing classes. This has become a thumb rule in modern times.' So gone are the days of traditional courses with outdated curricula and now is the time to follow strategies for the innovations management in higher education institutions.

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