Innovative Conceptualization on Best Practices in Higher Education

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Abstract—Best practices in higher education are the practices which add commendable value to an institution and its various stakeholders. They are considered reliable benchmarks or standards of quality. According to NAAC best practices are quality-enhancing academic, administrative, and infrastructural strategies adopted by highly accredited institutions of higher learning in the present instance. This paper highlights some of the innovative ideas on best practices that can be followed by an institution based on various criteria.

Index Terms: Higher Education, NAAC, Best Practices.

I. INTRODUCTION:

NAAC is a national-level rating agency for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). As an autonomous institution, NAAC assesses and accredits HEIs through an informed review process. The main objective of NAAC is to make ‘quality’ - the defining element of higher education [3]. The process of assessment and accreditation by NAAC is very significant in the sense that it helps an institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

In the context of NAAC ‘best practices’ are somewhat different from their genetic meaning. NAAC has provided 100 points to “Innovation and Best Practices” under separate Criteria (Criteria-VII), NAAC has identified that the elements of the best practices contribute to the efficient and effective functioning of the institution. A description of at least two institutional best practices is required as per NAAC format including the title of the practice, objectives of the practice, the context, the practice, evidence of success, problems encountered, and resources required.

The practices which add commendable value to an institution may be considered as benchmarks of best practices [2]. Application of best practices largely depends on our ability to adopt the five-stage strategy:

1. Identification of best practices
2. Implementation of best practices
3. Institutionalization of best practices
4. Internalization of best practices
5. Dissemination of best practices

The above five stages can be described as the “Four I and D Model”.

Best practices can be individual, as a teacher taking up different efforts so as to improve a student or student community as a whole. Also, it can be departmental, just like a particular department of an institution taking up a special effort to educate the rural people economically or culturally in and around the college.

Some of the best practices [1] may be done institutionally so as to create a notable change in the upliftment of employers, universal development of students and stakeholders together, and for the community around it.

In this paper, a glimpse into some of the innovative ideas on best practices that could be followed by Higher Educational Institutions so as to face the NAAC Accreditation based on various criteria has been provided.

II. INNOVATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF BEST PRACTICES BASED ON DIFFERENT CRITERIA:

(i) Ideas for Best Practices in Curriculum:

1. Integration of theoretical and practical knowledge in value-based education and employability skills are needed. To inculcate a significant change among students toward tolerance and justice they must understand the cultural heritage of other states. Celebration of national festivals, promotion of national integration through creating awareness of the regional and seasonal festivals, and arranging lectures, and cultural events on national heroes and leaders could be made mandatory through the curriculum.

2. The introduction of the Gurukula system, Yoga, Adimurai, Silambam, and Karate in the curriculum can make an amalgamation of ancient techniques with the modern curriculum.

3. Instead of making English a mandatory subject in four semesters, English could be made functional in the curriculum and assessments could be made only through practical training involving public speaking, group discussions, narrating stories, writing essays, and attending live interviews.

(ii) Ideas for Best Practices in Teaching- Learning, and Evaluation:

1. All first-year undergraduate students could be made to take a diagnostic test in languages including their mother tongue. Based on their performance students can be categorized into “A” “B” or “C.” The course contents for the different streams are to be designed in such a way that they meet the needs of the respective groups of students. Remedial classes could be conducted for the C and B
stream students in the afternoons on all weekdays. Students could be evaluated regularly in both written and oral communication skills.

2. For the students who are underprivileged and for the students in their final year, who are categorized to be slow learners could be trained with their subjects, computing skills, spoken English, and soft skills so that confidence can be built up in their minds. For this purpose, no fees are to be charged to students and no remuneration is to be paid to teachers.

3. Every educational institution needs to provide worthwhile and standard knowledge on physical education. Various strategies could be used for disseminating information on effective methods of imparting physical education and the development of body skills. Compulsory sports at all weekends can be made for first-year UG students.

4. In the pattern of evaluation, innovation can be made by having a mandatory question that the students can answer only through practical knowledge.

5. Evaluation of students must not be entirely based on the marks obtained in examinations or assessments with assignments and projects, instead a mere quantity of marks must be provided on their understanding and application of knowledge in each subject.

(iii) Ideas for Best Practices in Research, Consultancy, and Extension:

1. Providing seed money grants to young researchers in the colleges, awarding minor research projects to eminent professors in the college, and bestowing special awards for the best paper published by staff members on the recommendation of a specially constituted committee.

2. Creation of a better research ambiance by providing special grants for all kinds of research activity (including 50% cost reimbursement for attending workshops and seminars), merit-based incentives to faculty, the appointment of national and international experts as adjunct professors to promote excellence and monitoring the qualitative initiatives within the college.

3. Entering into MoUs with high-level industrial agencies recognized for research and development in order to impart training in skills to students and of inviting guest lecturers from them to address students. Many industries with research and development wings could assist students during industrial training after which they are required to present a project report assigned to them which would be helpful for their campus recruitment.

(iv) Ideas for Best Practices in Infrastructure and Learning Resources:

1. Implementation of 5S pillars, Sort (Seiri), Set in Order (Seiton), Shine (Seiso), Standardize (Seiketsu), and Sustain (Shitsuke) in the institution which provides a methodology for organizing, cleaning, developing, and sustaining a productive work environment.

2. The practice of providing augmenting infrastructure such as bore wells, classrooms, auditoriums, inter-collegiate cultural centers, computers, and space for student service paves the way for academic growth and establishment.

3. Supply of learning resources that concerns the health of faculty and students may be encouraged.

4. Creating awareness on campaigns like “Go Green Campus”, “Tobacco Free Zone” and “Plastic Free Zone” so as to inculcate social responsibility within the student community.

5. Rendering the infrastructure within the college premises to the schools, public, and government departments around the colleges.

6. Infrastructure must be designed in such a way that students leaving the college have acquired some technical education like typewriting, mushroom cultivation, jewelry making, seed ball creating, and basic computer education.

8. Learning resources must include not only study materials rather all the equipment used in physical education also.

9. Involving students in the maintenance of infrastructure by conducting classroom decoration contests, campus cleaning assignments, library usage contests, and science exhibitions.

(v) Ideas for Best Practices in Student Support and Progression:

1. To eradicate child labour, students from rural areas can be given priority with the motto of providing “High-Quality Education at Low cost”.

2. Creating student self-help schemes where each student could pay a sum of Rs. 20/- or more per semester voluntarily to help their poor and needy friends in their studies.

3. Creating self-medical help schemes where economically rich students and teachers could contribute to the medical expenses faced by poor and needy students in case of accidents and health issues.

4. Appointment of permanent health consultants, doctors, and counselors in colleges must be made mandatory so as to take care of the physical and mental health of students admitted to their college.

5. Considering the poor economic status of students and with the view to inculcating in them the work culture, students could indulge in administrative duties including office, library, book depot, canteen, and stores for which they could be paid on daily basis.

6. Providing coaching for students to face competitive exams including TNPSC, Bank, NET/SET at a low cost.

7. Involvement of alumni in student development should be made mandatory by conducting regular meetings scheduled between the alumni (office bearers) and the college management. Alumni are involved in the planning, feasibility studies, finance generation plans, and the implementation of new projects and professional courses of study in the college.

8. Remedial teaching to acquire language skills in order to speak and write English correctly and with confidence is an urgent need for many students who come from rural areas and backward districts.

(vi) Ideas for Best Practices in Organization and Management:

1. To create a conducive environment for harmonious administration benevolent participating management is required.
2. Transparent admission procedure is required to win the trust of the students and streamline procedures more systematically and increase access to higher education for socially and economically deprived sections of students.

3. Faculty/Staff performance appraisal is required to improve the competencies among faculty to make pedagogy optimally effective and to streamline administrative functions to become more efficient.

4. Augmentation of student support and staff welfare to socially backward and economically poor students and faculty who need some assistance to have access to higher education. Provision of welfare needs to meet sudden expenses on family, education of children, medical assistance, etc.

5. To promote participatory management, creating model management by teams of faculty and students can be made to bridge the teacher-student in direct planning and also in the process of review of functioning.

III. CONCLUSION:

The best practice benchmarking approach is an inductive approach to quality management in higher education institutions with a focus on practice and continuous development. The best ideas should be the vision of every higher education institution in the country. Management has an important responsibility of creating an enabling policy framework for the effective functioning of the institution. They should ensure the provision of the best infrastructure and effective governance systems. Teachers have a critical role in building the competencies of learners through best pedagogic practices. Finally, students, for whom the whole system is designed, should desire and receive the best.

REFERENCES

