Challenges of Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract: Higher education institutions are large, complex, adaptive social systems like all other human organizations. Over the last decade, Higher Education around the world is facing an ample number of challenges and potential threats to effective learning and teaching support. In recent years considerable interest has focused on identifying those challenges, identifying opportunities and threats and proposing ways to address them. However, the relevant literature on higher education challenges is scattered over many textbooks, conferences and journals. This paper provides a comprehensive presentation of all those challenges found in the higher educational institutions. In the present scenario students are changing, their learning styles are changing, and the technologies to accommodate their needs are changing.

Keywords: Challenges, technology, students, staff

Introduction:

Over the past decade, not only has higher education in India doubled in size, but also everywhere in the world the higher education has doubled in size. There are lots of changes in the Higher Education, as the students are changing, and their learning styles are changing as well as their demands are changing. At the same time, much more has been expected of institutions in terms of their wider engagement locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Universities need to prepare students for a more global future. Higher Educational institutions around the world face the growing problem of relevance as they enter the twenty-first century. Higher Education if facing a number of challenges and most contributions mention curriculum design, student retention, new technologies, quality of learning and teaching, widening participation, quality of research, funding and the necessity to improve governance and management as the most burning challenges. To provide the best service to the new students, higher education institutions need to change and hence, they need to response to the challenges. This paper is intended to demonstrate all those challenges currently facing Higher Education and also we group those challenges based on their interrelationship and influence of those challenges.

Curriculum design/alignment

It has been argued that higher educational Institutions should listen carefully to the changing needs and expectations of the society. The Sem Tech (Semantic Technologies for learning and teaching) project identified curriculum design / alignment one of the HE challenges from learning and teaching perspective. In this context, universities should be more responsive when offering new study programme or course. To act globally in a competitive environment, the HE institutions must offer programs to students that will cover their needs and wishes and they can also provide interdisciplinary programs to meet the 21st century's higher education demands. HE institutions need to reformat and reorganize courses, programs, and structures to increasingly sophisticated

and market-knowledgeable students. As students are paying more, so their demands have increased in course and quality and higher education should respond their demands. However to make mobility feasible, it is essential to assure mutual recognition of degrees and credit points while at the same time allowing for individuality and diversity. So HE Institutions require to redesign or align their curriculum to support today's' students to fit globally. To ensure the quality of learning all institutions need to redesign of the curricula. In also mentioned curriculum design is one of the burning issues in today's higher education. No students will be leg behind through curriculum alignment; all of them can compete equally in this globalization era.

Student Employability

Employability remains high on agenda for HE Institutions in all over the world. People are seeking educational opportunities to survive in the world of work. As the financial burdens on students and graduates grow, they increasingly find gaining a degree as a necessary first step to starting their career hence employability is a major and growing concern. The new agenda for education, to sell education and to provide for market needs. Higher skills significantly influence life chances and earning potential. Employability has been defined as a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation. Employability is also defined by the learning outcome of a programme with parallel personal development for example work experience and extra-curricular activities. Higher education should take steps to enhance student employability. The choice of degree subjects and its relevance to the employment market is affected to some extent and HE institutions should respond to this by involving employers in course validation to ensure that academic standards meet employer requirements. Employers are responsible for offering work placement and practical experience for students and universities should become more flexible in providing employers needs.

Quality of learning and teaching

Maintaining quality has the highest priority to any organization and it is mostly appropriate to the HE institutions. HE Institutions should care about the quality of learning and teaching because it is the only way to become recognized globally. The HE institutions will lose their potential customers if they cannot assure high quality standards. To improve the quality of learning and teaching, HE Institutions can enable access to learning and teaching material across institutions. Therefore, students/learners can get more information about their subject area to learn as well as teachers can have also more information to teach broadly in an area. HE institutions need to take extra care to maintain the quality of learning and teaching to ensure best possible student experience. On the other hand as student fees now a high proportion of funding, universities have had to improve the quality of their teaching and also to attract international students they need to provide higher standard of teaching.

Quality of research: To be the best in the world wide in research, HE institutions need to strengthen their research capacity. In order to achieve this challenge HE Institutions need to develop

multidisciplinary centres bringing together many areas of expertise and building relationships between teams in universities and industries to well establish their research capacity. In maintaining the quality in research, it takes seriously and the government has increased funding for improving the quality of research. Also this will require a greater focus on world-class research and greater recognition of the potential benefits of research concentration in the key area.

Accreditation: One of the principal means of providing accountability for HE Institutions and programmes is accreditation, the most critical part of quality assurance in higher education. It affects institutions' ability to attract students (home, international), research funding bodies or to attract interest from the business and private sectors. In accreditation is also specified as one of the major challenges in HE. All accreditors make students' learning outcomes a central component in the accreditation reviews. Accreditation defined as a strong, meaningful assurance of academic quality.

Student retention: Today's' HE Institutions have wide range of students from different regions and countries. HE Institutions are increasingly recognizing that to gain public support and participation and to make higher standard of the institutions, they need to become more focused on student retention. Student retention becomes a concern for HE institutions in some other literature as well. HE Institutions need to focus on student retention with more effective student support. HE Institutions require monitoring students' overall progress, and on the basis of their information they can take necessary

steps for the students from the very beginning. They also need to take into account from the very beginning why students take off from a programme or from any specific modules. They need to focus on this issue to improve retention.

Adopting emerging technology: Today's world is driven by technology for its communications, its economy and increasingly its day to day organization. The rapid development of information technology has made available a plethora of new tools for higher education. New technology offers learning opportunities anywhere to anyone at any time anywhere. Further the response of HE Institutions to this new technology is uncharacteristically rapid. The lack of investment in technology based learning in higher education may prove to be a significant barrier to the ability of universities to compete in new or changing markets. Technologies like internet and its associated technologies can increase the capacity of an educator more quickly, easily and more scalably to help students make connections to content, context, and community— resulting in more powerful learning experience.

Assessment : Assessment is a key process in Higher Education. It provides how learners are assessed shapes their understanding of the curriculum and determines their ability to progress. At the same time, assessment and feedback form a significant part of practitioners' workloads and, with increased numbers, reduced budgets and higher learner expectations, continue to be a matter of concern for many institutions delivering higher education. According to institutions, it should have effective mechanisms to deal with breaches of assessment regulations.

New generation staff : The best-organized institution is worth nothing if it does not have a qualified teaching staff; an unqualified staff means poor teaching and unimaginative research. To teach the curriculum including employability skills successfully, universities need to develop the new capacities among their traditional teaching staff and new approaches to their teaching. HE institutions will need to develop faculty and staff dedicated to engaging a diversity of learners with more complex learning needs. HE Institutions can offer different types of training for their staff so that they can be up to date with current HE environment and can develop themselves where necessaries. New generation of staff should consider the education is a continuing process. Hence they always need to develop for being up to date with the current changing HE environment.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions are clearly in the midst of rapid change in response to environmental, social, economic, technological, and political transformations sweeping the globe. As a result, universities are facing a number of challenges. Addressing the challenges is a critical not only for the future of institutions but also for that of the world at large. Institutional repositories consist of formally organized and managed collections of digital content generated by faculty, staff, and students at the institutions which can help us at this end. Moreover these will assist to efficiently address those challenges.

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