



## Students' engagement in higher education institutions

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### ***Abstract***

*As a matter of fact, in every country the policy makers, educationist and scholars are seriously concerned about the quality of higher education. In India many studies have pointed out that only 30% of graduates passing through the portals of the higher education institutions are employable. Such a situation has arisen because of a variety of factors including lack of relevance of curricula, poor quality of the teaching-learning process, lack of students' centricity, and excessive emphasis on examination. Consequently, the HEIs have a large number of disengaged students, who are withdrawn, and inactive. It is known fact that student engagement in educational institutions is a strong proxy of quality education. The HEIs that actively engage their students in academic, co-curricular and extramural activities are successful in promoting and strengthening the learning and development of students. Highly engaged students are the best students of any institution. In our changing scenario, the challenge before the HEIs is how to maximize student engagement. Unfortunately, academics have not paid much attention to this paramount issue. The present article proposes various strategies to promote student engagement, with a view to enhance the quality of learning.*

***Key Words:*** Curricula, Institutional Philosophy, co-curricular, extramural, teaching-learning.

### **Introduction:**

As a matter of fact, in every country the policy makers, educationist and scholars are seriously concerned about the quality of higher education. In India many studies have pointed out that only 30% of graduates passing through the portals of the higher education institutions are employable. Such a situation has arisen because of a variety of factors including lack of relevance of curricula, poor quality of the teaching-learning process, lack of students' centricity, and excessive emphasis on examination. Consequently, the HEIs have a large number of disengaged students, who are withdrawn, and inactive.

It is known fact that student engagement in educational institutions is a strong proxy of quality education. The HEIs that actively engage their students in academic, co-curricular and extramural activities are successful in promoting and strengthening the learning and development of students. Highly engaged students are the best students of any institution. In our changing scenario, the challenge before the HEIs is how to maximize student engagement. Unfortunately, academics have not paid much attention to this paramount issue. The present article proposes various strategies to promote student engagement, with a view to enhance the quality of learning.

### ***1. Sense of Belongingness***



There are many ways of promoting a sense of belonging among students. Every institution has a culture that enhances or diminishes student motivation. It is important for an institution that a student identifies with his institution and values the opportunities made available to him. Few strategies are mentioned below for strengthening sense of belongingness among student.

**A. Open Communication**

A student develops sense of belongingness for an institution when he lives with it and knows about its history, vision, mission, goals, and achievements. The HEIs expect their students to know such information. They hardly make efforts to inform their students about them. A wide gap in knowledge about an institute can be a serious cause of disengagement. Therefore, an institute should use a variety of channels to inform and integrate students.

Equally importantly, communication has to be open and there should be ample space for student voice. Student feedback for institutional approach and activities has to be acknowledged and acted upon. Open forums and meetings with students by institutional officials should be organised from time to time.

**B. Enhancing Campus Facilities and Quality Service**

Today designed campus, well crafted classrooms, comfortable library, and spacious study areas are minimum requirements for student satisfaction and success. Learning takes place in physical place. For example, classroom – where a student spends a good amount of his/her time – plays a critical role in creating positive

climate. Space, lighting, design etc. are considered in constructing a classroom. Spending more quality time in campus is essential as it leads to greater learning and developing of students. In the same vein, vibrant canteen and mess are a must for student interactions. These are very important social spaces for them.

The main reason behind poor services seems to be lack of student centricity. Educational institutions have become self-focused. The student has moved on, while the institutes continues to live in past. Institutes, therefore, have to come out of their Inertia.

**C. Student Support and Care**

Students are human beings first. They have social and personal needs, career goals, and social difficulties. All institutional members, who are touch points of students, need to understand student requirements and must held and support them. Faculty is the most important service providers. The faculty-student bond builds the foundation upon which sense of belonging grows. This bond plays crucial role in learning and developing. Faculty generally sees their role as instructional and evaluative. They often do not see themselves as appreciative, developmental and supportive. Finally, support and care by organizational members, especially faculty, are vital for creating a high level sense of belonging.

**2. Ways in promoting individual engagement**

Learning occurs in mind of student, who changes in the process of learning. Therefore, individual engagement is must for learning. In the learning process an individual starts alone.



Then he interacts with his peers to learn facts. In this section few strategies are mentioned for promoting individual engagement.

**A. Advancing student centricity**

In the past, the HEIs were self-centered. Generally the HEIs were funded by public money, employees had full job security, institutions were largely autonomous and global benchmarking for quality was missing. Competition among different institutions was unheard of and institutional excellence was hardly rewarded. Students were not demanding. They got education free of cost that was indeed a great bounty for them. Hence, they hardly minded. However, times have changed fast. Currently, student centricity is not only desirable for an institution, but it is a must for its survival.

Important aspect of student centricity is preparing a student for his/her career. Hence, an institution has to commit itself to the career development of its students. Appropriate structures need to be created, competent personnel have to be appointed, and student participation has to be evolved. Simultaneously, student development for employability should be done from very beginning of an educational programme. Enhancing general knowledge, providing exposure, developing employability skills are necessary activities throughout the conduct of a program.

**B. Enhancing Faculty Engagement**

Students have maximum interaction with faculty in a classroom, in a small group, and in a one-on-one meeting. The level of students' engagement is largely decided by faculty engagement.

Student engagement is a combination of motivation and active learning by faculty. When faculty invests sufficient effort and time in the teaching-learning process, student engagement increases. Self-centered and indifferent faculty can hardly have engaged students. Hence, an institution has to engage faculty first.

***Conclusion***

Student engagement is the hallmark of quality. It is desirable that student engagement becomes a part of institutional philosophy, and practice. Besides academic offerings, co-curricular, social and cultural activities have to be scheduled rigorously. In addition, a proper structure needs to be designed. Further, faculty role holders should be selected carefully for this purpose. Finally, regular monitoring and review of student engagement activities should be done and properly documented. Hence, by these strategies the student engagement can be improved and changes can be brought in the higher education system which is fruitful.

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