



STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION AND ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

P. M. Suresh Kumar

Srinivas Institute of Management Studies, Pandeshwar, Mangalore, Karnataka

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Abstract:

Higher education institutions strive to produce quality professionals by enhancing competency not only in subject knowledge and intellectual capability but grooming professionalism and employability skills, and still further emotional and social maturity, sound character, sharp business acumen, strong scientific temper and strategic thinking. This improvement is an ongoing process influenced by stake holder perception. The society at large looks up to the institutions to address their needs through creating a pool of human resources with increased employability, solving community based problems, manning institutions and maintaining harmony with outer environment. Many times the academic improvements have a bearing on relevant feedback from stake holders such as parents, employers and community at large. A sound interface between stakeholders and institution provide platform for changes to be introduced. This paper discusses the methodology and relevance of feedback from stakeholders in introducing academic improvements in an institution of higher education.

Index Terms: Stakeholder Perception, Academic Improvements, Feedback & Academic Audit

1. Introduction:

The multiple role higher education is reflected in its learning outcomes. The content as well as delivery of the curriculum is aimed at achieving the intended learning outcomes. All the staff are involved in creation of a learning environment. All students are valued equally during their learning journey with the Institution. Accordingly, the curriculum, teaching - learning and assessment and the entire atmosphere of the institution are essentially student centric. Stake holders are keen on the attainment of intended learning outcomes of the institution and the academic ambience necessary for its fulfillment. The intended learning outcomes of a higher education institution can be summarized below:

Subject Knowledge: The components constituting the teaching, learning and assessment strategy for acquiring subject knowledge are (1) Teachers, (2) Books and teaching materials (3) Motivation for teaching and learning and (4) Evaluation of both teaching and learning. The institution strives to create a learning environment which is essentially student centric.

Intellectual Capabilities: By devising suitable teaching- learning models, the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are geared to boosting creativity, challenge of thinking out-of the box and encouraging free expression of ideas.

Character Building: The institution could expose its members to spiritual development and character building, through programs conducted in association with external agencies.

Emotional Maturity: This is built-up rather involuntarily. The teachers act as models to emulate in the areas like: environment of the college, rules and regulations and culture and atmosphere.

Social Maturity: This is achieved through all programs within the class room and outside, which promote interactions, co-operation, collaboration, mutual help, concern for others and service.

Business Acumen: Professional and job oriented courses enables students to orient and sharpen their business talent and business acumen through teaching, guidance and industry interactions.

Professionalism: The institution should aim at creating perfect people who will be outstanding professionals in whatever areas of work they choose.

Employability Skills: The institutions require training and placement services. That apart, variety of certificate programs offered in addition to regular course to promote employability of the students, training in soft skill and projects and field practicum give a firsthand idea of job situations.

Scientific Temper: Curriculum delivery should provide opportunity to promote scientific thinking, spirit of questioning, expression of creative ideas, experimentation and learning by doing.

Strategic Thinking: The institution should strive to make the students pro-active to identify and encash opportunities.

Values & Ethics: The secular nature of the institution is reflected in its admissions, appointment and approach, provides equal dignity to both rich and poor students. Equality of opportunity is provided to both gender. Students respect teachers and students are recognized by the teachers.

2. Feedback on Curriculum:

The overall pass percentage and placement figures speak about the curriculum relevance to the job market. Still institutions usually collect feedback through the following mechanisms.

- ✓ Students give their feedback through a structured format at the end of the year which can evaluate their teachers as well as voice their opinion on curriculum (See Table 3).
- ✓ Parents of the students expect quality education and supply feedback on the achievements of their wards.
- ✓ Academic peers both in closer and wider circle such as those from other colleges affiliated under the same University and those working in different University both within (National level) and outside the country (International level) consult very often. They reflect on the relevance and the improvements on an up to date basis.
- ✓ Curriculum and its relevance to changing job market requirements form subject of discussion in meetings held with the alumni.
- ✓ Community and public prefer a high profile curriculum and good image of the institution and deliver responses in open forums, media, student admissions and field activities.
- ✓ Employers send their representative for the activities of the college such as guest lectures, college functions, judges for events etc. and they involve in the curricular standards followed. This also forms a source for feedback.

3. Enhancing Relevance of Courses:

The institution takes initiatives to enhance the social & economic relevance of the courses in terms of quality jobs, entrepreneurship, innovations and research aptitude based on the feedback. The following are some such measures adopted.

Table 1: Institutional Efforts to Enhance Relevance of Courses

Quality Jobs	Entrepre-neurship	Innovation	Research Aptitude
Offering speciali-zations intended to build quality professionals	EDP supplements	Creative and talent boosting activities	Project work, Industry Placement. Business Case Development
Choosing Electives with greater social & Economic relevance.	Certification programmes	Domain knowledge Seminars	Team Project work, Mini Project, Individual Project in Industries.
Soft skill & Communication Training.	NGO Manage-ment Training.	Encouragement for software development & maintenance	Summer Placement. Compulsory Project work, Field Case Report.
Equipping for entry level jobs through orientation & skill building. Interaction, Communication & Leadership training	Certification Programmes	Exposure to computer aided accounting and auditing	Team project work, Individual compulsory Project work
Equipping for entry level jobs through orientation & skill building.	Certification Programmes	Exposure to Computer based Auditing	Compulsory Project work

4. Stakeholder Perception and Feedback:

The stakeholder perception on the overall performance and quality of the institution is directed in the following ways:

Students: Students expect growth and development of their personality through confidence building, service mindedness, and sense of responsibility, and gain employability and career advancement.

Parents: Parents look for discipline oriented growth in their children so that they will become useful and responsible citizens of the country. The institution materializes their expectation through time and punctuality in classes, regularity in attendance, assignments and presentations, transparent internal evaluations, student counseling and mentoring, hassle free environment, friendly support services, close interaction with faculty, open door policy in communicating and acquisition of employability skills.

Teachers: Teachers look for holistic development of the students through knowledge gained by learning, and qualities developed such as discipline, honesty, service mindedness, compassion to fellowmen and respect to others. The institution realizes their expectation through providing congenial environment for growth and exposure through activities and programmes, value added courses and curriculum enrichment.

Employers: Employers look for industrious, honest, co-operative, helpful and competent employees. The institution materializes their expectation through various industry– institution interface programmes such as industry internship, project work, summer placement, many projects, team projects, guest lecture by industry managers.

Community: Students are moulded into good citizens through quality and service oriented education system to build a strong community for the country. This is achieved through a wide range of social service activities,

spiritual and cultural programmes, curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

University: The government (regulatory body) expect that each passing out student is moulded by the institute to be a responsible and useful citizen to the society. The institution materializes the expectation of the university through pursuit for quality, adherence to standards and maintaining high profile.

Table 2: Sources and Application of Feedback

S.No	Source of feedback	Type of information	Use of Feedback data
1	Alumni through participation in association activities	Curriculum relevance and employability	Enrich curriculum through supplements
2	Students opinion through Suggestion box	Quality of teaching	Collective FDP programs
3	Students appraisal through feedback forms	Pedagogy and Fair evaluation	Sharing feedback with individual teachers
4	Parents during direct meeting, telephone and website	Satisfactory service	Changes in policy and improvement in administrative decisions.
5	Industry Employers during visits and contacts	Expectations and training requirements	Additional Certification programs and skill building.
6	Public	Image of the Institution	Conveyed to management for necessary improvement

Table 3: Student Feedback on Faculty

S.No	Performance Indicators	Degree of Ranking (High → Low)									
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
1	Regularity in Conducting classes										
2	Time Consiousness										
3	Preparation for the class										
4	Syllabus completion in time										
5	Competency in the subject										
6	Language and presentation										
7	Voice										
8	Clarity										
9	Methodology in teaching										
10	Interaction with students										
11	Accessibility to students										

Total marks $11 \times 10 = 110$ (Good 100 and above)

5. Academic Audit:

Academic audit is a useful exercise to take stock of the performance efficiency of the system.

Table 4: Outcomes for Academic Audit and Improvements Initiated

S.No	Audit Outcome	Improvements in institutional activities
1	Need for increase in admission	1. Increased publicity 2. Website up-dating 3. Additional skill development programmes 4. Concessional fee for female students
2	Need of improvements in result	1. Counseling 2. Tutorials 3. More assignments 4. Close supervision of weak students
3	Need of enhancement in faculty performance	1. More motivation through faculty meetings 2. Organizing more FDP's 3. Retaining experienced faculty
4	Need for improvement in research publication	1. Providing opportunities 2. Research centres 3. Organizing workshop on Research methodology and publications
5	Need for further strengthening co-curricular activities	1. Introduction of certificate programmes 2. Compulsory projects 3. More programs and events.
6	Need of increasing the placement	1. Exclusive placement cell 2. More collaborations with industries 3. Conduct of Job fairs

The top management of the institution receives the feed-back about each faculty member in the

form of self appraisal and appraisal from head of the institution to know their teaching and learning performance. The details of the subjects handled, percentage of pass, and students' performance in the tests and examinations, participation in faculty development programmes, participation in the external conferences and seminars, books or papers published, and programmes organized in the college. The observations from the audit are passed on to the head of the institute for institutional improvement. The following are some of the examples of improvements in institutional activities initiated due to the outcomes of an academic audit.

6. Conclusion:

Stake holder perception and feedback forms a potential source of academic improvement. This is possible only if the institution organize interactive meetings periodically with all its stakeholders in order to communicate its quality assurance policies, mechanisms and outcomes. These meetings are aimed towards reaffirming the quality conducive of the institution and its compliances. Parent-Teacher Meetings are conducted to inform them the initiatives taken by the institution to attain quality resulting in progress of their wards. Suggestions on curriculum to include newer areas of knowledge and skill development as per industry requirement are incorporated to satisfy the employers requirements. The representatives of the affiliating university who inspect the quality standards maintained by the institution provide feedback. Orientation Programmes at the beginning of every semester make students follow the quality concerns and reinforce the culture of excellence in all aspects. In the meetings with alumni quality mechanisms and their improvements are discussed. Community appreciation will enhance student admission and increased cooperation in social service activities.

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