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RESEARCH ARTICLE

OBJECTIVES OF ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUDIT

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the key structures and mechanisms needed for the sound academic policy in the institution of higher education. Drawing on the literature in the domain of educational change it highlights various bodies; and helping sub-organisations needed in the institution. The paper is exploratory in nature.

INTRODUCTION

With tremendous changes in the field of education, it has become extremely important for any college or institution of higher education to have the academic and administrative audit. The institute is to be assessed both by the internal and external agencies. The feedback thus received leads a college to introspect and have well-defined strategies for quality enhancement. The academic audit benefits the institute as well as the faculty. When the faculty is accountable to its performance at different levels, it naturally works harder to develop its professional skills. The thrust of my paper is on the objectives and outcomes of the academic policy in an institution of higher education. The change in world economy and the resultant knowledge-economy has forced the higher education sector around the world to reconfigure the concept of higher education (Hargreaves: 1991). The mechanisms like academic audit and academic policy play a key role in rethinking about higher education in the 21st century. In the following description, I have outlined the key details that constitute a good academic policy.

Objectives of Academic Policy

Objectives are essential in any academic enterprise. Objectives define the course of an academic venture and facilitates its evaluation mechanism (Maggard: 2002). What follows now is the narration of key structures and mechanisms essential for the sound academic policy for the effective functioning of educational institutions.

Most of the literature on educational discourse (Wedell: 2009 and Claxton: 2008) suggests that academic policy must have minimum one and maximum three objectives. For instance, the objectives could be stated as:

- To prepare learners so that they can foster and utilize their intellectual, emotional, physical, social and financial resources in the best possible manner for individual and collective development.
- Learners must contribute to the process of sustainable and inclusive development
- Learners must commit themselves to make human society a better, happier and prosperous one.

Outcomes of Academic Policy

- Learners learn to best utilize their intellectual, emotional, physical, social and financial resources
- Learners acquire skills necessary for the process of sustainable and inclusive development
- By using talent and capacity, learners develop sensitive and responsible behaviour to transform the society so that it can emerge as a better, happier and more prosperous place to live in

Programmes: Academic policy is expected to give the necessary scope and flexibility to introduce undergraduate and postgraduate programmes focussing on the following objectives:

- Upholding the dignity of college by practising cordial inter-student and student-teacher relationship
- Encourage the students to express their grievances, problems freely, frankly and without any fear of victimisation
- Suggestion and complaint box must be made available
- Advising students of the college to respect the rights and dignity of one another
- Advising all students to refrain from ragging of any sort
- Advising staff to be affectionate, and not to behave in any vindictive manner

Student Referees Activity Cell: It is a students' body of the college which consists of student representatives from all branches and is responsible for organising and conducting intra and inter college activities. All these activities help the students to improve their managerial, presentation and communication skills; and help them to develop self-confidence and explore their hidden talents.

Environment Cell: Environment conservation is a global issue. It is essential to make young generation sensitive enough to preserve our environment. Clubs should raise awareness about the following areas:

- Create awareness and take up activities for conservation of various aspects of environment
- Establish active association with various organisations working for environmental issues
- Take up various activities for underprivileged children and initiate environmental conservation
- Encourage and develop the role of technology to protect environment

Women Empowerment Cell: It is essential to empower women at all levels in the society. Women empowerment can certainly lead to a better society. One is always reminded of Prof. Irawati Karve's words, "If a man is educated, only a single individual is educated, but when a girl is educated the whole family is educated." Hence, the importance of women cannot be underestimated.

Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC): This particular mechanism promotes the measures for quality enhancement in academic and administrative activities for fulfilling the vision and mission by active involvement of stake-holders and consideration of social needs. Academic policy has to be flexible enough to indentify the needs of slow-learners, differently -abled students and those who come from lower socio-economic stratas of society. It should have adequate provision to address the needs of different students. In this direction following measures are recommendable:

- Provision for the remedial classes for academically weak and slow learners
- Provision for the resource person/special teacher to assist differently-abled students wherever they require such assistance
- Availability of assistive technology to such learners
- Availability of trained psychologist and counselling for all students in general and those who face problems in particular
- Provision for improvement so that the students who get low grades get an appropriate opportunity to improve

Attainment of Policy: The policy must promote qualitative teaching and learning processes. It is expected to uphold quality standards which can be summarised as follow: College should aim at continuous improvement of all the processes and shall strive to provide an environment that is conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and overall development. For, it is very essential to encourage all to adhere to the highest ethical standards and professional integrity and enhance the satisfaction level of all stakeholders.

Feedback: Good academic policy can thrive on continuous feedback from all its stakeholders. There should be two feedbacks from students in each semester. Feedback should be carefully analysed so that the teachers can get insights to improve their teaching methodology. Feedback must be obtained from parents. Interaction with parents provides valuable insights to teachers. From time to time alumni meets be organised so as to incorporate their experience in the framing of different syllabi. Institution should have an ongoing communication with the industry sector.

R and D Policy: A good academic policy must provide for a good research and development provisions. In order to promote Research and Development culture, various guidelines in the form of comprehensive R & D policy must be formulated.

- Proposal for external funding: It needs to be mandatory for each department to submit at least one proposal every year for a minor or major research project or an academic event like seminar or conference or workshop.
- Programme Logic Device (PLD) contributes to Research and Development activities.
- Research incentives: Incentives should be given to the faculty members for patents, publishing books, publishing research papers in indexed and reputed journals. Faculty members should be motivated and supported to attend national and international conferences, workshops and seminars, case studies, projects, etc.
- Activities like participative learning, use of audio-visual aids, educational and industrial visits, activities based methods, community service, written assignments, academic presentations, effective use of internet resources and group discussions should be promoted.

Other Bodies

Entrepreneurship Development Cell: This cell should promote following objectives: To create an environment for self employment. Promote innovation and entrepreneurship development through formal and informal programmes

To introduce the concept of entrepreneurship in curricula
To create employment opportunities

Cell against Sexual Harassment: In view of the increasing crimes against women the college should have a proper cell to curb these crimes. Representatives from women faculty, female students, and psychologists must be nominated on this cell.

Anti-ragging Cell: It is mandatory for every institution to have anti-ragging cell. It should consist of senior and junior faculty, students, alumni, parents, advocates, and psychologists.

Student grievance Cell: The objective of grievance cell is to develop a responsible and accountable attitude among all the stakeholders in order to maintain a harmonious educational atmosphere in the institute. A grievance cell should be constituted for the redressal of problems.

Framing the Policy: Academic policy can be framed by the appropriate body of college which is entrusted with its important task of framing the policy that must be interdisciplinary in character. It runs various graduate and postgraduate courses of different disciplines. This group must have adequate representation from industry, academia, research organisations and voluntary organisations working in the society.

Objectives and Outcomes of Policy: The policy must clearly define the objectives and outcomes that it seeks to promote. It is to be noted that these objectives and outcomes must define the scope of attainment of various skills and competencies of learners with regard to the development that is expected after undergoing a particular programme. Therefore, these objectives must not be confused with the objectives and outcomes of a particular programme or course.

Teaching and Learning Process: Teachers must be given necessary freedom to implement innovative practices in teaching learning process. Following may be viewed as guidelines to carry out teaching learning process:

- **Flexibility and autonomy:** academic policy must promote twin principle of flexibility and autonomy. Teachers must be given maximum autonomy with regard to the design of course material, teaching learning process and methods of assessment.
- **Support:** Teachers need institutional and financial support in the task of autonomously planning and delivering the quality courses.

To conclude, the given narration highlights the fact that academic policy design is a delicate and complicated affair. It needs to be framed in consultation with all the major stakeholders in education. However, the major pressure of the effective operation of the academic policy falls on the shoulders of the institution.

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