



Role of Academic Leadership in The Context of Transformation of Higher Education in India

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Abstract

The higher educational institutions have started witnessing initiatives taken towards restructuring and revamping existing educational structure as envisaged by the New Education Policy 2020. Strategic planning at all hierarchical levels of institutional structure is the need of the hour. Efficient leadership is the key to ensure necessary improvements and innovation at the institutions. College level institutions constitute 86 percent of Higher Education in India. Revival in colleges will have ripple effects at large. The role and responsibility of academic leadership on all organizational levels is crucial to effectively implement the NEW Education policy 2020 in its true spirit. Literature survey has been done on academic leadership aspects and Implementation of NEP 2020 which showed relevance for further study. The main research question dealt with is to understand the roles and responsibilities of academic leaders in Higher Educational Institutes in India to achieve and sustain quality and excellence in the light of New Education Policy 2020. Devise an applicable framework for institutional development plan commensurate to curriculum and pedagogy in HEIs as propounded in NEP 2020. The paper will be useful for Management and leaders of Undergraduate level of education.

Keywords: New Education Policy, Academic Leadership, Institutional Development Plan.

1. Introduction

National Education Policy [NEP 2020] approved by the Union Cabinet of India on July 29th 2020, is the first education policy of the 21st Century. The policy envisions Indian education system as second to none by 2040. High Quality, Higher Educational Institutions [HEI] with equity and inclusion is the forward-looking vision of the policy. The policy mentions, HEI's must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well rounded and creative individuals. Principles of [NEP 2020 Policy] states that, a good educational institution is one in which every student feels welcomed and cared for, Where, there is safe and stimulating learning environment, where wide range of learning experiences are offered, and where good physical infrastructure and appropriate resources conducive to learning are available to all the students. Attaining these qualities and ensuring integration and coordination across institutions should be the goal of academic leaders.

2. Objectives

In this paper an attempt has been made to Conceptually understand the roles and responsibilities of academic leaders in Higher Educational Institutions in India, with focus on Undergraduate colleges, in the light of New Education Policy 2020. Devise an applicable framework for institutional development plan commensurate to curriculum and pedagogy in HEIs as propounded in NEP 2020.

3. Process

This paper focuses on Understanding NEP 2020 proposed changes concerning Higher Educational Institutions [HEI's] with respect to undergraduate colleges in India. In view of the transformation phase of Higher Education, an attempt has been made to conceptually understand the onuses of academic leaders in Higher Educational Institutes in India [Under graduate colleges]. Previous researchers work has been explored to identify the academic leaders in HEI. In addition, their roles



and styles of functioning have been explored. The initiatives to be taken by academic leaders for effective governance and transforming HEI's as self-governing institutions as suggested by NEP 2020 is discussed. The vision of NEP 2020 to re-energize HEI's as high-quality educational institutes into reality is possible with effective academic leadership at all levels. To assist the academic leaders in the preparation of institutional strategic plan an overview of conceptual framework of developing Institutional Development plan is given with reference to curriculum and pedagogical skills.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of Academic Leaders

Effective academic leadership is a key contributor to academic excellence [4] [Dasha Grajfoner et al., 2022] Higher education continues to undergo significant changes in response to government policy, rapid economic development, continuing growth in demand for ever higher levels of educational attainments, information technologies, demands for increased access, internationalization, and globalization [12] [Pauline Joyce et al., 2013]. Leadership preparedness is critical to Academic, Administrative, Liaising, Globalization, Academic Standards and Assessments. The leadership task is a complex and variable mix of teaching, research, service and outreach. [6] [Hina Mohnot and Tania Shaw, 2017]. Leaders should have qualities like clear vision, strategic planning, strong communication skills, foster culture of collaboration and team work, they must hold themselves and others accountable to meet goals and objectives. [Nandita Mishra 1&2* & P. S. Aithal 2023 [1,2] Academic leaders are present at various levels of hierarchy within the institutions. [Dasha Grajfoner et al., 2022] The leaders at an academic institution typically include President or chancellor, vice presidents for academic affairs, deans of various schools and colleges, and departmental chairs and programme directors [Nandita Mishra 1&2* & P. S. Aithal 2023]. Academics define leadership differently depending on the level of leadership; They consistently refer

to three distinguishable components: institutional management/administration, teaching and research [Bolden et al., 2012] There is shift away from leadership being responsibility of an individual leader to collective process dispersed across the organization. Therefore, distributed leadership is applicable to higher educational institutions [Dasha Grajfoner et al., 2022]. Leadership styles differ within the institution and also from one institution to the other. Academic leaders change style according to situations. Therefore, situational leadership is gaining popularity. [3] Anum Siddique et al [2011]. The roles of both leaders and followers have become more complex, elaborate and multiple perspectives exist on how leadership is conceptualized. Transformation leadership and its dimensions are analyzed [10] [Munevver Olcum Cetina et al., 2015]. Academic leaders have more challenges than the leaders of business organization. Main reason is the presence of various stakeholders. Academic leaders have to look upon every one individually and use different policies to deal with them [Anum Siddique et al. 2011]. Sathye [2004] suggest maximizing stakeholder value in Higher Education refers to maximizing value to stakeholders such as students, staff, community and funding agencies. The faculty with excellent academic and service credentials and established leadership and management skills will be identified and trained through a ladder of leadership positions [Hema kumar G 2021] The role of an academic leader is managing through information, monitoring, disseminating knowledge, delegating, designing, discussing, making, distributing, and managing staff, acting directly or indirectly [8,9] [Nandita Mishra 1&2* & P. S. Aithal 2023] NEP 2020 19 Effective governance and leadership: through graded accreditation and autonomy: "All HEIs in India shall strive to become autonomous self-governing institutions pursuing innovation and quality through a proper system of graded accreditation and graded autonomy, which would be phased in over a 15-year period. At all HEIs, steps will be



taken to assure high-quality leadership and develop an institutional culture of excellence.”

4.1. Discussion

Vision to make a paradigm shift from the existing system to the effective implementation as envisaged in the NEP 2020 is the main crux. To bring in the transformative changes in higher education the academic leaders have to not only monitor but have to solve various functional issues time to time, In the Undergraduate higher education institutions the heads of the institution and the stake holders have to understand their roles and responsibilities along with their respective affiliated Universities and other regulatory and statutory bodies viz., councils of higher education, state and central governments, MHRD, BOS, Governing bodies etc., to initiate necessary action for the desired outcomes. Academic leaders' role in realizing the fourth goal of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [SDG's] is imperative

5. Indicators For HEI's Transformation

Planning is defined as the activities colleges and universities formally undertake to determine their basic character and future courses of action. Each institution has to handcraft its own approach. [Frank A. Schmidlein 1990][5] [E.W.Esanklin ' Institutional planning is the milestone in the journey towards the improvement of education'. [Naik,1968,] However, in practice, only a few educational institutions world over seem to have the capacity to successfully plan their individual growth and development. [P.S.Aithal &Shubhrajyotsna Aithal,2019] Colleges and universities need a clear focus to achieve their missions- deliberate decisions are needed to steer an institution in a particular direction [cowburn 2005]. Globally higher education is experiencing rapid changes, requiring post-secondary institutions and their students to adapt accordingly. These rapid changes are associated with increasing and competing stakeholders demands. [P.S.Aithal &Shubhrajyotsna Aithal,2020] National Education Policy [NEP 2020] 9.3., envisions a complete overhaul and re-energizing of the higher education

system to overcome the prevalent challenges and thereby deliver high-quality higher education, with equity and inclusion. NEP 2020 14.4.2 suggested steps for HEI's like : a)Mitigate opportunity costs and fees for pursuing higher education (b) Provide more financial assistance and scholarships to socio-economically disadvantaged students (c) Conduct outreach on higher education opportunities and scholarships (d) Make admissions processes more inclusive (e) Make curriculum more inclusive (f) Increase employability potential of higher education programmes (g) Develop more degree courses taught in Indian languages and bilingually (h) Ensure all buildings and facilities are wheelchair-accessible and disabled-friendly (i) Develop bridge courses for students who come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds (j) Provide socio-emotional and academic support and mentoring for all such students through suitable counseling and mentoring activities (k) Ensure sensitization of faculty, counselor, and students on gender-identity issue and its inclusion in all aspects of the HEI, including curricula (l) Strictly enforce all no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules [m] HEI's should develop Institutional Development plan that contain specific plans of action of increasing participation of SEDG's.

5.1. Discussion

HEI's need to respond in the context of policy provisions as stated in National Education policy 2020. The policy contemplates to reenergize the higher education system. The NEP 2020 suggested steps direct HEI's to identify their vision, mission and development goals. The academic leader should articulate to all the relevant participants the process of developing Institutional Development Plan [IDP].

6. Common Framework of IDP

An IDP can be viewed as a strategic planning tool for Higher Educational Institutions, describing the mission, goals, actions, objectives, dead- lines and results to be achieved [11] [Mauricio Andrade Lima et.al.] Strategic planning should not only show general corporate guidelines, such as the vision and medium-term strategic objectives, it is



also necessary that these concepts can be taken to the level of programs, projects and operational plans to put them into pedagogical practice, which should be observed in four fields: Teaching, Administrative Management, Research and Linkage with the Collectivity. These fields must be oriented from a diagnosis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, attached to the institutional reality and the environment in which they live [The Strategic Institutional Development Plan and its Impact on Educational Projects downloads] Strategic plan is an institutional leadership document built on consensus and trust. The particular framework indicates that all parts are linked and reflects a top-down approach to strategic planning. All stakeholders must understand the process involved and commit themselves to completing tasks well and on time [7] [Hana El Ghali, 2013] The University Grants Commission [UGC] chairman recommends adoption of IDP by all higher educational institutions, highlighted that every educational institution has two missions the social mission and the academic mission. To achieve these missions all educational institutions must prepare an IDP that is unique to their respective missions. [Hindustan times march 11, 2024] The academic leaders of HEI's have to identify missions and define goals of the institution. The frame work of IDP as suggested by UGC are a) Identification of Strategic goals through SWOC analysis. The interconnections among the various aspects like academic programs, curriculum delivery, research promotion initiatives, community engagement, support services need to be aligned with goals. b) Defining relevant, specific, measurable, attainable and time bound objectives c) Identification of alternative ways to achieve objectives like sequencing of initiatives, allocation of resources, partnerships, mobilizing financial support partnerships d) Developing a detailed plan of action with specific timelines, targets, responsible faculty and other stakeholders for each initiative. E) Executing the plan, monitoring timely progress and make necessary adjustments accordingly F) Reviewing progress

against objectives, analyzing linkages with S-Curve, make necessary changes for continued success [UGC GUIDELINES]

6.1. Discussion

IDP can be prepared for a minimum period of five years to fifteen years. It can suggest measures for even a longer period of time. The head of the institution needs to identify the coordinator/coordinators and assign them responsibilities to carry out SWOC analysis. The SWOC analysis should guide the HEI's to assess the present and future needs of the institution. The draft of the IDP needs to be shared with all relevant stakeholders for suggestions. On the basis of the comments received IDP needs to be finalized by the academic leaders of the institution. To achieve the goals annual activity plans needs to be implemented and monitored by the assigned parties regularly.

7. Vision and Mission

9.3. NEP 2020 policy's vision includes the following key changes to the current system: a) by 2030 all stand-alone TEIs should offer 4-year integrated teacher preparation programme and convert to multidisciplinary institution. b) Moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy c) Governance of HEIs by high qualified independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy; d) Targeting 50% gross enrolment ratio by 2035 e) Revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support for enhanced student experience. [13,14] NEP 2020 has fixed timelines that by 2025 at least 50 percent of learners in HEI's should have exposure to vocational education. f) Reaffirming the integrity of faculty and institutional leadership positions through merit appointments and career progression based on teaching, research and service. g) Increased access, equity, and inclusion through a range of measures, including greater opportunities for outstanding public education; scholarships by private/philanthropic universities for disadvantaged and underprivileged students; online education, and Open Distance Learning (ODL); and all infrastructure and learning materials



accessible and available to learners with disabilities. [NEP 2020 19.2.] Through a suitable system of graded accreditation and graded autonomy, and in a phased manner over a period of 15 years, all HEIs in India will aim to become independent self-governing institutions pursuing innovation and excellence

7.1. Discussion

The Autonomous degree granting college should transform to a multi-disciplinary institution of higher learning and need not restrict to imparting only undergraduate teaching. They would generally be smaller than a typical university. Over a period of time, it is envisaged that colleges will be either Autonomous degree granting college or fully constituent college of the university. Hence, the Autonomous UG colleges and the affiliated colleges need to chalk-out the strategic goals and development objectives of their respective institutions as envisaged in NEP 2020. HEI's have to outline their overall mission, quantify their goals with suitable indices and timelines to transform themselves from one level to another. In consonance with NEP 2020 vision and mission statement, institutions can frame their strategic goals, identify activities and set time bound targets.

8. Enablers

Basic Institutional data collection and needs analysis is prerequisite for assessing the requirements of the institution. Information like: 1. Establishment details 2. Courses offered 3. Enrolment details 4. Students profile including social status 4. Fee structure 5. Scholarship facilities 6. Dropout rate 7. Result analysis, 8. Achievements 9. Teaching and Nonteaching staff profile 10. Vacancy position 11. Provision to engage faculty 12. Staff Salary particulars 13. Infrastructure facilities 14. Library resources 15. Digital Learning Resources 16. Sports facilities 17. Support facilities 18. Technical Assistance 19. Examination pattern, Accreditation details 20. Stake holder's participation 21. Feed- Back Mechanism 22. Financial Reports, 23. Budgetary Support 24. Accreditation details 25. Autonomy

and Governance Structure, etc., should be reviewed. The analysis sets the platform for setting futuristic short term and long-term goals of the institution. Institutional development plan must specify the indicators for achieving the strategic goals of the institution. Benchmarks along the timeframe needs to be set for attaining excellence: in Governance, Curriculum, Pedagogical Skills, Equity and inclusion, Examination reforms, Administration, Financial robustness, Infrastructural development and maintenance, Research and development, Stakeholders engagement, Faculty development support, Facilities to students, Social out -reach programs. Internationalization etc., Institutional strategy of curriculum changes and pedagogical skills is to be conceived and developed as propounded in NEP 2020. They are: 1. Flexible curriculum 2. Multidisciplinary courses 3. Integration of vocational education 4. Holistic Education 5. Multiple entry and exit options 6. Four-year Undergraduate courses. [15,16] Institutional leaders have to make a self-study of the existing courses, curriculum structure, prevailing affiliating university norms and procedures to device a suitable plan of action within the stipulated framework. The UGC has suggested various innovative academic enablers for analyzing the courses like : ‘‘Courses catering to future requirements, industry requirements, curriculum embedded with 21st century employability skills, entrepreneurship skills, focus on competencies, computational thinking, skill enhancement courses in the era of digitalization and automation, industry 4.0 and beyond with emerging technologies etc., The pedagogical skills ought to be : Updated learning material, Question bank, appropriate mix of traditional and modern techniques of teaching , blended mode of learning is suggested, Teaching learning material for PwDs must be made available, Academic support to develop research and innovative thinking skills, Organizing Hackathons, International collaborations, Faculty exchange and collaborations’’. These are some of the reference



points to plan and execute according to the institution frameworks.

Conclusion

Implications For Academic Leaders

- Framework of rules and regulations should be formulated by HEI's in accordance with the guidelines in force.
- Key stakeholders should be harmoniously involved in sketching out institutional objectives, resolutions and appraising the progress.
- The role of academic leaders is challenging those affiliated to a university shall obtain the prescribed accreditation by NAAC AND OR NIRF Ranking to become an autonomous degree college.
- HEI's with accreditation status should benchmark with highest performing institutions within the country and or abroad to achieve and sustain quality and excellence.
- The concept of excellence to be realized by an academic leader is a relative term and applies to both internal and external aspects to an HEI. It can be in the context of curriculum restructuring, curriculum delivery, students learning outcomes, faculty development, Learning resources, infrastructural facilities, financial aspects etc.
- Academic leaders at the institutional level should communicate to the faculty and all stakeholders NEP 2020 goals of effective governance and leadership for accountability and action.
- Study material to be updated with assignments and learning outcomes to all categories of students including PwDs.
- Necessary Curriculum changes to be introduced to incorporate 21st century skills. Conventional courses if obsolete to be scrapped and innovative, employable, industry driven and Entrepreneurial courses to be introduced.
- Research culture to be motivated among faculty and students, those who do not have Doctoral degree to be encouraged to pursue

research. Collaborative projects, internships, patents to be promoted.

- Experiential, participative, project based etc., innovative learning strategies to be devised.
- Plan and execute innovate changes in examination pattern, evaluation methods and structure and pattern of examinations.
- Infrastructure facilities needed for expanding courses, laboratory facilities, student support facilities, incubation centers, digital and networking facilities, to be planned and implemented. Support facilities for PwDs to be developed.
- They should have the motive and ability to guide and inspire stakeholders of an institute towards achieving academic excellence. Striking staff members to be identified and trained for leadership tasks
- They have to Identify areas of functioning for Effective Governance and leadership in HEI as envisaged in NEP 2020. Highly qualified Independent Board of Governors [BOG's] with academic and administrative autonomy to be setup.
- Comprehensive Institutional plan by identifying key enablers: for Governance, Financial, Academic, Research, Human Resource Management, Networking, Collaborations, Digital, Physical from the suggested list given by the UGC to be selected and incorporated in the IDP's.
- Academic leaders should undergo the faculty development training programmes conducted by University Grants Commission's Human Resource Development Centres and get oriented through flagship schemes like Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission On Teachers and Training [PMMMNTT].

To conclude, the academic leaders in higher educational Institutions should essentially understand the policy initiatives of NEP 2020 and play a visionary role for its effective implementation. The academic leaders in HEI's are the key drivers of the NEP reforms at the institutional levels. They have to foster an



environment to analyze, review the prevalent structure and functioning to plan for adopting for upgradation. HEI's should make an Institutional development plan for implementing the required policy initiatives at their respective institutions.

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