

# Strategies for Dynamic Leadership in Institutions of Higher Education

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The greatest challenge in higher education is the dilemma of quantity vs quality in all the key dimensions such as teaching, research and extension. Maintaining a balance between market driven forces and community oriented programmes poses another challenge. The more and more the inclusiveness in higher education is stressed, the greater are the complexities. The steep deterioration of standards in higher education in all its dimensions is a major problem that should be immediately addressed to. The graduates coming out of the portals of the University system are becoming more and more unemployable. Even those with professional qualification find it hard to get suitable placements. Barring a few premier institutions, the scenario is common among all the Universities.

The dilemmas of quality vs quantity, creativity vs conformity, equity vs excellence, uniformity vs diversity faced by higher education are to be successfully tackled through a dynamic leadership with a long term vision and continual commitment.

The responsibility of the heads of Universities and other higher institutions is becoming more challenging and demanding. Only a dynamic, constructively critical, creative, resourceful head can lead the institution in the right direction. As very powerful instruments of social and academic change and desirable revolution, the Vice-Chancellors are to adopt certain strategies urgently to keep a check over negative tendencies witnessed in the higher education.

This paper attempts to suggest a few strategies worth trying for successful leadership. But before implementing them, one should be cautious that human behaviour, because of its com-

plexity is only contextual and never textual. There can be no omni-efficient strategy to be tried by an 'omni-competent' leader on account of wide variations among the individuals, differences in contexts and the interaction between individuals and situations resulting in complexities which are difficult to predict. In spite of all the limitations, based on consistency in human behaviour, certain strategies are suggested for effective stewardship.

In the major dimensions of teaching, research and extension, these creative approaches may be tried out. The entire leadership should be supported by appropriate technology for speedy execution avoiding loss of time.

## Teaching

Since the destiny of a nation is shaped inside its classrooms as stated by the Kothari Commission Report, the success of any institution of higher learning depends on the teaching-learning process. To meet the challenges of declining quality in teaching, burn out among teachers and curriculum related issues, there are a few strategies.

1. Regular, systematic assessment of teaching by self, peer teachers and students is to be done as a measure to maintain internal quality control. Frank, unbiased discussions based on objective feedbacks are found to have effect on the teachers. The Vice-Chancellor should take personal interest in this key domain as this internal monitoring decides the quality of every other activities in the campus. Teacher recruitments should be very strictly based on merit only without considering political or monetary compulsions.
2. Systematic, periodic, need-based curricular revisions are to be made. Regular academic auditing is to be done at the Faculty level. Every University should have a Nodal Curriculum Development Centre which will co-

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ordinate, monitor, assess and enrich the curriculum of the courses offered for various disciplines and through various modes.

3. Innovative practices in curricular transaction (teaching) should be identified, encouraged and rewarded. There are hundreds of resourceful teachers at all levels who strive hard to individualize teaching techniques through innovative approaches. Such competent teachers are assets to Universities and colleges and through Professional Enrichment Forum. periodic sharing of innovative teaching experiences should be done. Lack of encouragement to creative and original work leads to frustration among academic community. Therefore every possible step should be taken to promote creativity and commitment.
4. Periodic updating of competencies of the teachers in the content and methodology of teaching the subject should be done. Feedback from the participants of ASC-UGC Orientation / Refresher courses should be obtained both orally and through writing. Frequent short-term in-house workshops and refresher programmes will be helpful in making teachers professionally dynamic.
5. Automation, e-learning, e-governance, technology-supported teaching – learning process, individualized, experiential teaching approaches will go a long way in enhancing learning among the existing students. The entire educative process should be student-friendly to attract a maximum number of students. Adequate publicity should be given about uniqueness and innovative practices of the University through websites.

#### **Research**

1. Research revolutionizes policies, programmes and practices in the society in general and in education in particular. Strict quality auditing with special reference to research programme is to be done. A critical assessment of M.Phil., Ph.D. work already done, a trend report of what is presently being done and the future orientation needs to be done. To maintain quality, Pre-registration and Pre-submission presentation by doctoral candidates are to be done.

Every year good pieces of research reports for different disciplines are to be selected and rewarded through transparent techniques.

2. All teachers should have a through knowledge about funding agencies, priority access for research and preparation of proposals for funding agencies. An in-house orientation by the top 'fund tapping' teachers can work wonders.
3. Special Assistance Programme and similar Programmes offered by the UGC and other agencies funding higher institutions should be given wide publicity to the staff; simply circulating the communication will not suffice. Vice-Chancellors should ask every Department to prepare proposals to be sent to funding agencies.
4. Special incentives and awards to staff who generate maximum funds separately for social sciences and sciences through research should be given. This will motivate other faculty members also to emulate the example of brilliant researchers.
5. Signing MoU with leading National and International research institutions and taking up long-term research projects will fetch finance for infrastructure especially equipment. The Vice-Chancellor should not be just satisfied with the quality of research done in their institutions but should take earnest efforts in publicizing the potentials of his staff. This will certainly draw the attention of funding agencies. Leading research organizations are well aware of the fact a project undertaken by University staff will always be cost-effective compared to the ones done by other institutions. This can fetch patents also.
6. Vice-Chancellors should be sensitive and alert enough about priority areas of research in every discipline. This demands wide reading in various subjects to know the trends. It is always the early bird that gets its food first, so the alertness of the heads of Universities will get ample funds from agencies.
7. No stone should be unturned when it comes to obtaining funds for research. There are some knowledgeable faculty members familiar with research funding organizations who

have established contacts also and it is necessary tap the resources of these expert researchers.

8. Universities can sponsor researches on successful educational leadership witnessed at any level or any section; it may be at a Department level, or at a School level or at a College level. Pooling of strategies for effective leadership will be highly educative if brought out as publication in the form of monographs. Attempts may be made to identify a set of core leadership competencies independent of institutions.

### **Extension**

Extension at the University level has two dimensions - one is organizing regular conferences, workshops, seminars to benefit faculty members of other Universities and Colleges. Extending services of University staff to other institutions of higher learning also is a part of extension activity.

The Vice-Chancellor should plan for the whole year and circulate it to the concerned institutions.

The second dimension of extension is outreach programmes. Nowadays Universities are set up in rural areas also and those studying in urban areas should have at least a glimpse of rural life. To develop an understanding and empathy among students, it is necessary to expose students to village life.

In addition to organizing conferences and symposia at National and International levels, every University should take up outreach programmes by adopting a village or a small town. Adoption does not mean extending social welfare activities, only it includes academic help in the form adopting a primary / second-

ary / higher secondary school or an institute / a college and focusing on the quality. Support in the form of infrastructure and expertise will be helpful in strengthening institutions with academic malnutrition. Technology transfer, minimizing the digital divide and inclusion should be the focus of extension activity of the University. Optimizing resources in a University should be the watchword of every Vice-Chancellor.

### **Publication**

Publication is an inseparable part of all the earlier said three domains of teaching, research and extension and every University should have a Publication Section which must be very active. Publishing newsletters alone is not enough. Good Lectures, research findings and Report of Conference Proceedings should also be published.

Every Vice-Chancellor should be conscious of the fact that they are the powerful agents of change in the academic institution thereby bringing a change in the society. They should realize that education is a powerful instrument of social change and work very hard.

Vice-Chancellors should be experts in delegation, decentralization and discipline maintenance. The work culture and professional ethics can be built up among the colleagues only through being a role model. Nothing can be achieved through coercion. Democratic Approach, Transparency, Perseverance, Patience and Persuasion alone will be rewarding. Regular value auditing is to be done by every teacher.

Vice-Chancellors should learn to ignore streak cases (faculty members) because they consume a lot of valuable time and focus on committed teachers. A strong will power and a shared commitment alone can take up higher institutions to great heights thereby making a nation a superpower.

**JAIHIND!**