

**PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE AND
EFFICIENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

By

T. V. Rao

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PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE AND EFFICIENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

T.V. Rao
Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad

Abstract

Higher education has multiple goals of character building for social development, skill building for national development and teacher competency building for education development. Higher education today faces many challenges some of these include balancing between quantitative and qualitative aspects of education, increasing enrollment and at the same time providing employment, coping with fast changing technologies and incorporating them in the curricula, having systems of internal governance that encourages innovativeness, reluctance of client systems to participate in improving education and simultaneously growing expectations from higher education etc. In this paper it is proposed that Faculty Development and Institutional Leadership are two important keys to the excellence and efficiency in higher education. This paper highlights some of the current practices of educational planning and their limitations. The Paper also makes suggestions for professionalisation of management and administration of higher education and points out to the areas of international cooperation.

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE AND EFFICIENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

T.V. Rao
Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad

"Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialised knowledge and skills. It is therefore, a crucial factor for survival. Being at the apex of the educational pyramid, it has also a key role in producing teachers for the education system. In the context of the unprecedented explosion of knowledge, higher education has to become dynamic as never before, constantly entering uncharted areas"

(National Policy on Education - 1986, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, page 14).

There are three important roles assigned to higher education in the above quotation from the Indian National Policy on Education. These are (i) character building for social development, (ii) skill building for national development and (iii) teacher competency building for education development.

Current Scene of Challenges in Higher Education

Higher education in India and some other countries today faces many challenges. The following are some of these:

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1. There is demand for more and more educational institutions to be started and at the same time there is growing unemployment among those coming out of colleges and universities.
2. Fast changing technologies and environment and the inability of education systems cope with changes and incorporate them in curricula. More innovations and knowledge generation seem to take place outside than within the formal education systems and universities.

Higher education institutions are not able to cope up with the knowledge explosion taking place outside them. As a result many non-formal and informal centres of education outside the formal education systems have come up. A new challenge for higher education is therefore, to learn from these informal institutions and incorporate them in their formal systems of learning. A number of short duration courses being offered in the field of computers and management are good examples of the growing non-formal higher education. The characteristic of the informal systems is that they are flexible, offer short duration courses, provide good quality of skill training, charge reasonably higher fee, and cater to the needs of the learners. Of all these most important characteristic is the flexibility with which the informal education systems operate. A challenge therefore, is to learn from these "skill development centres" and to incorporate such flexibility in higher education.

3. A related challenge higher education faces is to have a system of internal governance that encourages innovativeness among its faculty rather than reinforcing conformity and rule boundness. Faculty, students and staff are much more sensitive and observant. They have high expectations from each other and react fast to non-participative or autocratic styles of administration.
4. Another challenge that faces the higher education today is the need to reorient their structures and systems of governance to facilitate efficiency and excellence. The present structure and systems are heavily examination-oriented. Examinations are seen as mere assessors of knowledge rather than evaluating the preparation for life. We have not yet developed the capacity to measure the impact of inputs provided by higher education besides measuring information acquisition. Where higher education institutions are aware of the methods of assessing their impact in terms of less easily measurable goals (i.e., qualitative goals like values, personality development, social concern, professional competence etc.) they lack the courage to use these indicators due to fear of criticism and lack of support from government system.

5. Another challenge facing higher education is, the growing interest and simultaneous reluctance of the client groups like the industry to participate in the improvement of higher education. Many users of the products of higher education are increasingly getting disillusioned with the kind of products they are able to get from the educational institutions. They have a desire to influence the educational systems but find that the educational systems are very rigid and resist change instead of promoting it. Hence there is disillusionment. For example, in the field of management education some industries have started their own induction programmes to reorient the students they select from management schools and departments. In some industries such induction programmes attempt to train the students to "unlearn" some of the things they have learnt in their institutes and departments.
6. Another challenge that some successful institutions face is in ensuring that their products do not become egoistic and stop learning after graduation because of the high level of confidence and image they developed in these institutions.
7. About 10 years ago some universities have started departments of continuing education. These were expected to provide short-term courses for those who are out of university to help them continue their education. Most of these have failed because the faculty who manned these departments could not cater to the needs of their clients. This is an excellent illustration of the outdated thinking and poor competency levels of teaching faculty in higher education. Faculty competency development and enhancing the responsiveness of educational institutions is an important challenge.
8. In some of the courses and particularly in social science the curricular inputs are perceived as very much irrelevant to the societal needs. Revamping the social science curriculum and bringing drastic changes including the use of the society as a laboratory is urgently needed. Universities have stressed, rather over-stressed the learning from books and have ignored learning from the realities that exist in the communities next door. Such a shift would require a shift in the nature of learning experiences provided by the institutions of higher education. Students and faculty need to spend a large part of their time in the field and the classrooms may need to move out from the educational institutions into the field.
9. Success of higher education depends to a large extent on the people who head these institutions. An important challenge facing higher education today is attracting, developing and retaining leaders and institution builders who can bring change in education systems. A few decades ago heading an educational institution was considered as most valuable and prestigious thing. Today heading an institution is

considered as a way of inviting troubles and wasting one's creative and professional talents. Very few people of excellence and competence are willing to take up administrative jobs in education. Mobilising and motivating institution builders to head educational institutions is a challenge of higher education.

10. Balancing academic freedom and accountability is another challenge educational administrators face today.
11. There is a good degree of sickness in some educational institutions. In industry sickness is detected fast. When an industry goes sick it cannot sustain too long. Unfortunately in educational institutions a lot of sickness goes unnoticed and some of it is tolerated for a long time. It is rare to come across a "turnaround" in educational institutions. Very rarely an institution that is performing poorly is closed down. Closing outdated and sick institutions or turning them around is another challenge.

In this paper I would like to argue that Faculty Development and Institutional Leadership are the two important keys to excellence and efficiency in higher education. Both these keys are being neglected in the developing world and as a result higher education is suffering heavily. Planning and Management in Education have also neglected these important dimensions. Planners are too busy in finding and allocating money and material resources for education systems and have grossly ignored the human resources. Human resource development which is the most critical area for bringing a qualitative change in education cannot be planned fully by federal governments through budgets alone. Unfortunately in most developing countries the planners seem to be content by allocating a negligible portion of their resources for competency building of the chief agents of education. This can do little good for promoting efficiency and excellence in education. There is practically no concern and as a result very poor monitoring of faculty development and

institutional leadership.

Higher education all over the world is administered through "institutions". These institutions include colleges, universities, departments, faculties, schools and institutes. In India for example higher education is imparted through 150 universities, about 5000 colleges and several other national, regional and local level institutions. University Grants Commission (UGC) a federal body is the agency mainly responsible for monitoring and developing standards in higher education. The UGC also provides financial support of various forms to universities and colleges for undertaking research and developmental activities including faculty development.

The real education takes place in the institution through the main agent - the teacher (lecturer, professor etc.). If the main agent of imparting education or bringing about change in the learner is "weak" the quality of education becomes poor thus affecting both excellence and efficiency. If the teacher is not provided with an atmosphere to develop himself and if he is not guided in the right direction the quality of education suffers. It is here the leadership of the institutional head and the structural mechanisms that govern the institution becomes important.

Current Practices of Educational Planning and their Limitations

Educational planning in most countries today is limited to macro level planning. Although every institution is required to prepare an annual or in some cases a five year plan of the

institution most-often the parameters on which these plans are prepared have a limiting effect on excellence than promoting excellence. The national level planning limits itself to budget allocations, starting of new institutions, addition of faculty, location of institutions, intended employment generation, changes in enrollment rates, upgradation of research and other facilities, provision of infrastructural facilities and capital investments, opening of new types of institutions, courses and curricula etc. Very understandably the macro-level planning is limited to direct planning of inputs with the assumption that certain output will be achieved if the inputs are provided. What is visible and quantifiable (measured through numbers) is planned but what is important is not planned as what is important cannot be easily measured. For example, efficiency and excellence are important but are difficult to plan. The various processes of management that influence them like the institutional leadership, quality of faculty, institutional governance, faculty improvements, innovations, qualitative curricular improvements are not given the importance they deserve. This is illustrated by the low or no budgets allotted for faculty improvements and curricular changes.

At micro-level the institutional plans should reflect a concern for excellence and efficiency. Most often institutional plans are prepared as instruments to get resource allocations made and at the instance of the state or the funding agency. In some cases the plan documents brought out by the federal government become the guide posts for preparation of institutional plans

rather than the concern for providing quality education efficiently. Thus the chief motivating factor for institutional planning is the budget rather than internal improvements. Unfortunately therefore, the institutional plans also focus on staff additions, buildings, equipment, research facilities and other facilities. Very rarely do institutional plans focus on faculty development, staff development, curricular improvements, internal process improvements, methods of achieving excellence etc.

If excellence and efficiency has to be achieved "quality" factors need to be given equal importance and at institutional level and at national level educational planning should include "quality" planning.

At institutional level the following dimensions need to be included as a part of quality planning:

1. Planning for Curricular Renewals and Environmental Linkages:

It is important for every institutions to review its curricula once in three years or at least once in five years. In those institutions that deal with fast changing knowledge base three year reviews may be useful. This is in addition to annual improvements. Similarly educational institutions should plan for periodic assessment and renewal of their links with the environment and client systems they serve.

2. Planning for Faculty Development:

Institutions should also plan systematically various methods by which they intend to develop the competencies of the faculty. Such competency development may be by way of learning about new developments in their subject matter, teaching technology, research and their environment.

3. **Planning for Monitoring Quality Education and Accountability**

Institutions should look at ways in which they can improve the quality of inputs they provide to their students. This may include developing mechanisms to assess and monitor faculty performance and accountability.

4. **Planning for Participation of Client Systems to Provide Feedback and Assistance to Improve Quality:**

This may include conducting periodic workshops and interactions between the institution and its client systems (employers of students, parents, alumni, governing body members etc.)

5. **Planning for Efficiency in Institutional Governance:**

This may include improvements to be made in the administration of the institution covering areas like library management, hostels, time-table, placement, office administration, sports etc. In large institutions it may include improvements in various administrative systems.

6. **Planning for Administrative Staff Development:**

This may include efforts to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative and other support staff.

The macro-level plans should also pay attention to these aspects.

In addition the macro-level planning should include the following:

1. Planning for closing institutions or phasing out institutions that outlived their utility and that have become redundant.
2. Leadership training of the institutional heads.
3. Changes in the administrative structures and processes to ensure support for quality education and continuous improvements.
4. Provision of autonomy and freedom to institutions that are pursuing excellence and that have demonstrated their capabilities to provide quality education.
5. Renewal exercises to overhaul the systems or institutions that need drastic changes.

6. Participation of various groups like the industry and practitioners in improving the resource base as well as the quality of education.

An exercise conducted about five years ago by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India illustrates a step in this direction of planning for quality improvements. The following extracts taken from the "National Policy on Education" as well as the "Programme of Action" illustrate that at least a few of the dimensions raised above are capturing the attention of policy makers.

Extracts from National Policy on Education

5.26 There are around 150 universities and about 5,000 colleges in India today. In view of the need to effect an all round improvement in these institutions, it is proposed that, in the near future, the main emphasis will be on the consolidation of, and expansion of facilities in, the existing institutions.

5.27 Urgent steps will be taken to protect the system from degradation.

5.28 In view of mixed experiences with the system of affiliation, autonomous colleges will be helped to develop in large numbers until the affiliating system is replaced by a freer and more creative association of universities with colleges. Similarly, the creation of autonomous departments within universities on a selective basis will be encouraged. Autonomy and freedom will be accompanied by accountability.

5.29 Courses and programmes will be redesigned to meet the demands of specialization better. Special emphasis will be laid on linguistic competence. There will be increasing flexibility in the combination of courses.

5.30 State level planning and coordination of higher education will be done through Councils of Higher Education. The University Grants Commission and these Councils will develop coordinative methods to keep a watch on standards.

5.31 Provision will be made for minimum facilities and admission will be regulated according to capacity. A major effort will be directed towards the transformation of teaching methods. Audio-visual aids and electronic equipment will be introduced; development of science and technology curricula and material, research, and teacher orientation will receive attention. This will require preparation of teachers at the beginning of the service as well as continuing education thereafter. Teachers' performance will be systematically assessed. All posts will be filled on the basis of merit.

5.32 Research in the universities will be provided enhanced support and steps will be taken to ensure its high quality. Suitable mechanisms will be set up by the UGC for coordinating research in the universities, particularly in thrust areas of science and technology, with research undertaken by other agencies. An effort will be made to encourage the setting up of national research facilities within the university system, with proper forms of autonomous management."

10.1 An overhaul of the system of planning and the management of education will receive high priority. The guiding considerations will be:

- a) Evolving a long-term planning and management perspective of education and its integration with the country's developmental and manpower needs;
- b) Decentralisation and the creation of a spirit of autonomy for educational institutions;
- c) Giving pre-eminence to people's involvement, including association of non-governmental agencies and voluntary effort;
- d) Inducting more women in the planning and management of education;
- e) Establishing the principle of accountability in relation to given objectives and norms.

10.5 Special attention will be paid to the training of educational planners, administrators and heads of institutions. Institutional arrangements for this purpose should be set up in stages."

Extracts from Programme of Action

- "(a) Certain norms of performance must be laid down for observance by the administration (Government as well as managements of educational institutions), teachers, students and educational institutions. It should be made clear that these norms are non-negotiable, and not conditional on fulfilment by any other category of organization or individual of their obligations.
- (b) Non-observance of these norms should inevitably lead to certain consequences, and neither fear nor favour should affect it.
- (c) Some immediate measures have to be taken to improve the working conditions of teachers and the conditions in which students study and live. Similarly, the essential conditions which enable educational institutions to effectively play their role have to be fulfilled. The faith manifested by the nation in the teachers and students, as reflected in NPE, implies that they will be systematically consulted at various stages of planning and implementation of Making Systems Work. Indeed, much of the responsibility for this will rest on teachers and students."

Teachers:

"A comprehensive, open, participatory and data-based system of teacher evaluation will be established. This system will take into account the work of teachers in the area of research and innovation, regularity and attention to teaching, and extension and social service activities. While each State Government or university or management may create a system of teacher evaluation as may be appropriate, it would, generally speaking, include self-evaluation, evaluation by peers and, in appropriate cases evaluation by heads of institutions/departments and by students. It will not be open for teachers not to undertake self-evaluation where such evaluation is prescribed. Selection of teachers to higher positions and promotions will take these evaluation instrumentalities into consideration. The small number of nonperformers and negligent teachers will be isolated, and where necessary, subjected to appropriate penalty."

Institutions

"Without under-emphasising the importance of democratic and participatory functioning of educational institutions and university departments, persons having

administrative responsibility will be given necessary authority for them to be able to discharge their responsibilities. Where appropriate and possible, administrative heads who have proved incapable of shouldering their responsibilities will be replaced by more worthy persons.

Central and State organisations - such as UGC, AICTE, NIEPA, NCERT, State University Grants Commissions, SCERTs, etc. - will set criteria for assessment of performance of educational institutions. These criteria will include:

- number of days of instruction in a year,
- number of days of forced closure,
- regularity in conduct of examinations,
- regularity regarding declaration of results,
- regularity of academic sessions,
- quantity and quality of research,
- number of teachers, with reference to number of days, who absented themselves.

These institutional evaluations will be brought out in the form of an appropriate annual report of the institution."

The Policy, Programmes and Strategies for Implementation

"The National Policy on Education visualises that higher education should become dynamic as never before. The main features of the programmes and strategies to impart the necessary dynamism to the higher education system will consist of the following:

- i) Consolidation and Expansion of Institutions
- ii) Development of Autonomous Colleges and Departments
- iii) Redesigning Courses
- iv) Training of Teachers
- v) Strengthening Research
- vi) Improvements in Efficiency
- vii) Creation of structures for coordination at State and National levels.

Teachers' Training

"The present system does not accord teachers a proper economic and social status, opportunities for professional and career development, initiative for innovation and creative work, proper orientation in concept, techniques and value system to fulfil their role and responsibilities. Motivation of teachers is important for implementation of the policy.

In order to achieve this, it is proposed:

- (a) to organise specially designed orientation programmes in teaching methodologies, pedagogy, educational psychology, etc., for all new entrants at the level of lecturers.
- (b) to organise refresher courses for serving teachers to cover every teacher at least once in five years.
- (c) to organise orientation programmes by using the internal resources of universities and by bringing a number of colleges together.
- (d) to encourage teachers to participate in seminars, symposia, etc."

Thus the intentions expressed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development indicate that there is an effort to move towards decentralisation, encouragement of autonomy and involvement of some of the client groups to improve the education systems. However, the Indian experience in the last few years has indicated that there is big gap between policies and plans and their implementation. The major hurdle faced is lack of appropriate structures, systems and processes for effective implementation. This itself is a major challenge for higher education.

In managing higher education particularly in large countries it is important to pay attention to the implementation issues. One of the major problems of implementation is the desire of the

government to bring excellence and efficiency in all the institutions at the same time. In order to do this the overenthusiastic government or ministry may think that formulation of rules, procedures and systems is the best way to bring change. In the process even the few who would like to innovate get discouraged. Therefore, an important strategy may be to start with a few institutions and have a spread effect over a period of time. As the political system does not have the patience and willingness to promote such long term changes and they want immediate results, excellence becomes difficult to get.

Professionalisation of Management and Administration of Higher Education

In the context of the above discussion in my view there is a great need for professionalising management of higher education. By professionalisation I mean developing professional competencies in those who administer or manage higher education. Today most of them (Principals, Directors, Vice-chancellors, Heads of Departments etc.) have no preparation to perform administrative roles. The training facilities are meagre and the knowledge base is also smaller. We have rather few success experiences of effective management of educational institutions. Not much effort has been made in the past to learn from these experiences and develop a body of knowledge relating to educational management and administration.

In most countries administrative positions are being held by people who are specialists in their fields with no administrative

experience or those who have only administrative experience in sectors other than education with little or no familiarity with education or the unique problems of education. Although the former category of administrators are more in number than the latter category both have competency gaps in providing leadership. Educational institutions require leader-managers for transforming them and for achieving excellence and not mere administrators who can maintain status-quo or make marginal improvements. Specialists may have problems of not understanding the complexity of administrative issues, systems, procedures, organizational dynamics and so on. Professional administrators have problems due to lack of appreciation of the education systems and their requirements.

Managing educational institutions requires some unique competencies. These include:

- a) An understanding of the nature of education and education systems and the tangible and non-tangible, visible and less-visible goals of education.
- b) An appreciation for students, respect for faculty, administrative staff and client groups and an ability to facilitate mutual support among these constituents and build excellence with their help.
- c) An ability to insulate or protect the institution from external interferences that may affect its quality and performance (eg. from those who provide financial support including the government, vested interests from students, faculty, staff, management board etc.)
- d) An ability to create an open and motivating culture where the faculty initiative and creativity is encouraged and nurtured.
- e) Ability to carry the competent group of specialist faculty and use their potential for achieving institutional objectives.

- f) An ability to generate resources from a variety of sources and to make the facilities available for the faculty to do good work.
- g) An ability to inspire faculty with vision for the future of the institution.
- h) An ability to create a learning environment in the institution.
- i) Courage to institute self-renewal mechanisms and to revitalise the institution.
- j) An ability to invest in developing faculty and other staff.

These are all referred to as institution building skills. In order to develop these competencies the training of educational administrators and managers should include the following inputs, in addition to the traditional management/administration inputs.

1. Goals and purposes of higher education.
2. Defining the mission and vision for the institution.
3. Structuring of educational institutions with particular emphasis on educational institutions as largely hierarchy free and flat structures and the complexities in managing these structures. Developing an enabling culture among faculty.
4. Methods of building a learning culture, creativity and innovation, dynamism, competence and self-regulation among faculty.
5. Mechanisms of evaluating faculty.
6. Faculty development strategies.
7. Finances and other resources for education and mobilising educational resources.
8. Institutional autonomy, faculty freedom and leader as a protector of autonomy for facilitating excellence.
9. Process mechanisms and systems mechanisms for creating accountability.
10. Organizational diagnosis and organizational development. OD as a tool for self-renewal of educational institutions. Self-renewal techniques.

11. Role of institutional head. Leadership role and leadership styles of the institutional head and their impact on faculty.
12. Dealing with poor performance of faculty as well as students.
13. managing the Board of Management and other governance systems of the institution. Defining the role of various agencies and agents that constitute the governance system of the institute.
14. Managing and mobilising the external environment including alumni, client groups, donors, community etc.
15. Managing support facilities like the library, computer centre, administration, hostels etc.
16. Process evaluation of educational programmes and institutions.

Most of these skills/ competencies need to be developed on the job through action and periodic review and reflection of actions. However, a good knowledge base could be given in the form of short-term training programmes.

Training in educational management may take the form of initial classroom training followed by periodic short-duration programme to strengthen select competencies. Correspondence courses and distance training has serious limitations in training educational managers.

Effective professionalisation of management can go a long way in improving the efficiency and bringing about excellence in education systems. For this purpose specialised institutions of educational planning and management need to be set up in each country or for smaller countries in their respective regions. These institutes of educational planning and management should

have as their mission "professionalising educational planning and management" through research, training, education, publications and consulting programmes. Special attention should be paid to ensure effective management of these institutions themselves. The advantages of professionalisation should be reflected in the way these very institutions are managed. They should set examples for others by their own excellence, efficiency and leadership. They should have multi-disciplinary faculty, flat structures, built in self-renewal mechanisms and a culture that encourages participation, openness, flexibility, innovativeness, collaboration and professional way of doing things. UNESCO has already sown the seeds three decades ago by starting in some regions institutes of educational planning and management. On the basis of current needs and recent advantages in management technology the already existing institutions should be strengthened and made more dynamic centres of excellence. Their activity mix, organizational structure and internal processes may need renewal. An illustration in this direction is provided through a recent review done for the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration in India which was earlier known as the Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.

Role of International Cooperation

There is a need to develop a body of knowledge to professionalise management of higher education. International cooperation can go a long way in facilitating this. The following steps are being suggested for ensuring the same:

1. Preparation of case studies of excellently managed institutions in higher education. The case studies should highlight the competencies of the administrators in effectively managing these institutions and lead to the development of a knowledge base.
2. Research studies comparing excellently managed systems of higher education and those that are poorly managed and developing hypothesis and generalisations.
3. Case studies of effective turn-around of educational institutions and drawing lessons.
4. Studies of institution-builders and leaders in education.
5. Studies of institutions that have used modern management technology for promoting efficiency in managing education.
6. Exchange of research information, case studies, training designs and such other materials between different countries.
7. Periodic conferences, seminars and publications to share the knowledge generated is an important step to be taken. A Professional Society of Educational Planning and Management may be started in each country with affiliation to an international society supported by UNESCO.