Role of Benchmarking in Best Practices for Higher Education Quality Enhancement

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Abstract - This paper highlights inception with immense importance of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) policy to promote the concept of best practices benchmarking. The Benchmarking is an increasingly popular tool applied in particular area of Higher education and is used extensively by both Developers and Providers. Best practices are those which adds the value to human life and support main cause of an institution. It helps in development of an institution as source/means to perform and undertook social responsibility.
Now a days, due to increasing competition, demands for accountability and higher volumes of available information are changing the methods of how institutions of higher education operate. For higher education to enact substantial and sustainable changes in efficiency and productivity a new way of thinking or paradigm that builds efficiency and a desire for continual learning must be integrated into institutional structures. Tools are also being developed that measure or benchmark the progress and success of these efforts. Among the improvement strategies and techniques, benchmarking has emerged as a useful, easily understood, and effective tool for staying competitive.

Key words: Benchmarking, Higher Education, Quality, Practices

I.   INTRODUCTION

For most institutions of higher education the desire to learn from each other and to share aspects of good practice is almost as old as the university itself. With the emphasis on collegiality and the recognition of the international role of the university such desires have traditionally manifested themselves in numerous ways: professional associations, both academic and non-academic, meeting to share common interests; numerous visits by delegations from one higher education system to examine practice in another; professional bodies working collaboratively with institutions in supporting academic provision and mediating standards; and where formal quality assessment or accreditation systems exist, their ultimate dependence upon the maintenance of the good will of universities often by providing their own staff to take part as assessors of other institutions. Thus improving performance by collaboration or comparison with other universities is nothing new in higher education. What is new, however, is the increasing interest in the formalization of such comparisons, and this short monograph reports on one recent innovation in this area: the development of benchmarking in higher education.

II.   BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking is the process of ongoing systematic means for counting and finding difficiate solution of an organization
a)   we are doing better than we have ever performed.
b)   there are many other institutions that are doing well and from whom we can learn?
c)   Are there any practices that will developed our performance?

Types of Benchmarking
A.   Internal benchmarking
B.   Functional benchmarking
C.   Competitive benchmarking
D.   Generic benchmarking
In addition to above types most commonly Best Practices Benchmarking is advocated for self-improvement.

The Benefits of Benchmarking
Benchmarking is a common practice and sensible exercise to establish baselines, define best practices, identify improvement opportunities and create a competitive environment within the organization. Integrating benchmarking into your organization will result in valuable data that encourages discussion and sparks new ideas and practices. At its best, it can be used as a tool to help institutions to evaluate and prioritize improvement opportunities.
Benchmarking can allow you to:
1.   Gain an independent perspective about how well you perform compared to other institutions;

2. Drill down into performance gaps to identify areas for improvement;
3. Develop a standardized set of processes and metrics;
4. Enable a mindset and culture of continuous improvement;
5. Set performance expectations;
6. Monitor company performance and manage change.

III. BEST PRACTICES IN BENCHMARKING

The best-in class achievement which becomes a recognized standard of excellence against which similar things are compared.' the Best Practices Benchmarking can be summarized as the development of an understanding of the fundamentals that lead to success, focus on continuous improvement efforts, and management of the overall change process to close the gap between an existing practice of the institution and that of the best-in-class institutions with reference to the most relevant key performance variables.

Here are six benchmarking best practices that can make your efforts more impactful:
1. Start early, If you want to be the best, its never too early to start benchmarking.
2. Have a timeline.
3. Choose an appropriate peer group.
4. Look outside your industry.
5. Stick to meaningful metrics.
6. Focus on improving operations.

Ten important Best Practices of Highly Effective Teachers are elaborated as follows:

Both teachers and students reap the rewards when the following 10 best practices are put into place.

1.   Provide frequent and timely feedback
Enough can't be said about the importance of sharing feedback with students during the learning process. Setting up checkpoints, offering a variety of formative assessments, and discussing learning in real time are all essential.

2.   Value parental/familial involvement
Students have an entire life outside of school and hopefully a solid support system. Bridging a connection between these two worlds helps everyone stay informed and makes it easier for parents to reinforce and support what's happening in the classroom.

3.   Sidestep the comfort zone
Innovations and new strategies are occurring all the time. This doesn't mean that every bandwagon should be boarded, but in trying something new and unfamiliar, teachers can find additional ways to impact students, and students can see an exemplar of risk taking.

4.   Offer second chances/clean slates
Rather than focusing on what can't be changed from the past, let the focus be on making the best future. Some students will push limits, but when they are in your presence, they should be getting the best and most positive version of you.

5.   Be resourceful
Whether this means thinking outside of the box for procuring supplies or adding a little DIY spin to what seemed to be an unattainable resource, teachers can always seem to find a way to get it done.

6.   Make learning active
Students are going to find more impactful takeaways from doing rather than simply listening or viewing. Offer opportunities for students to be actively engaged in their learning journeys.

7.   Be an advocate
This is twofold. Teachers need to advocate for themselves and for their students. This can involve advocating for supplies, services, training, etc.

8.   Pursue lifelong learning
Staying up-to-date on movements and developments in the field allows teachers to help students prepare for an ever-changing world. Pursuing personal passions outside of education also benefits learners because teachers can reflect on what it is like to be in the shoes of their students.

9.   Encourage discussion
Through discussion, students are exposed to a variety of opinions and ideas that may or may not be similar to their own. Classrooms offer a perfect forum for teaching students to respect others and learn to share information, agree, and disagree in a productive and nonthreatening fashion.

10. Keep a positive outlook
Don't get caught up with the naysayers. When (not if) this negative attitude trickles over to the students, it can have detrimental effects on the learning environment as a whole. Be mindful and always remember that a adding a positive spin to necessary or mundane tasks goes a long way.

Teachers are some of the most passionate and committed professionals out there. Part of this passion and commitment is a drive to provide every student with meaningful and impactful learning experiences. By taking the time to reflect on how these 10 best practices fit into their current pedagogy, teachers are putting themselves one step closer to achieving this goal.

IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

The data of the best practices undertaken by colleges are obtained from authentic websites of concerned colleges. Almost colleges displayed this data on their websites, except a few. Best practices are perceived to have specific characteristics. These are important predictors of their success. For example, a practice requires widespread acceptance by groups, social systems and also by individuals. Only then can it become successful to be put into practice by the organization and will, in the long run, be adopted by other institutions. In order to analyse these specific traits and implications, the following four themes require an in-depth discussion:
1. identification of best practices
2. sustainability of best practices
3. dissemination of best practices
4. adaptation of best practices

V. IDENTIFICATION OF BEST PRACTICES

The input factors, the process factors and output factors should be taken into account in identifying the criteria of best practices. The criteria of economy, efficiency and effectiveness may also be used in identifying them. Another way of identifying the best practices is the inductive approach. The practitioners may be asked to describe Best Practices Benchmarking in Higher Education for Quality Enhancement their best practices and the criteria they have applied in their identification, justifying their choices logically. From this, one can discuss the benchmarks of the best practices as perceived by them. The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (NQAAHE) suggested some guidelines for the identification and application of good practices. The best practices should be dynamic and revisited periodically; recognize diversity and cultural and historical contexts; not lead to dominance of one specific view or approach; and promote quality of performance.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Colleges who undertook best practices have positive impact on their assessment and accreditation process for earning them the expected grade or score. It has created the conducive atmosphere among stakeholders and society around them.

In the light of the discussion of the best practices presented above, it is hoped that the deliberations of the conference at both the plenary and the workshops, presented in this report with case illustrations, would help identify benchmarks and also concrete instances of proven quality-facilitative outcomes. The practices themselves may be of little use if they are not validated according to parameters which emerge from the discussion.

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