

INSTITUTION BUILDING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IN J&K: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Institutions irrespective of their nature, size, ownership and control are facing intense competition and continuous challenges due to dynamic nature of world economy. The 21st century demands institutions to transform and act smartly and contribute towards nation development. Educational institutions in this context are far more crucial as their relevance and impact on society is more as compared to institutions of any other background. Higher educational institutions (HEI) are considered as an important pillar for economic progress and play a critical role in enhancing and sustaining growth in a country. But presently, HEIs are facing daunting task in ensuring their credibility and effectiveness as they are forced to strive hard in matching global academic standards. The success and failure of an educational institution lies in how they are able to develop their strengths and explore its opportunities at the face of their internal weaknesses and global threats. Higher educational institutions must focus on creating an institution of excellence which is possible only if they adopt and bring qualitative changes in their curriculum and therefore must re-define and re-design their existing policies and strategies. It calls for i) providing sound quality of teaching and research in the institutions ii) promoting healthy academic culture iii) developing academic-industry linkages iv) creating employment avenues for young students and scholars v) fostering academic autonomy and vi) ensuring fair performance appraisal system. Keeping the above in view, the present study is aimed to examine the perception of faculty members towards institution building practices prevailing in select higher educational institutions in J&K and to compare institution building practices across sample select institutions. Lastly, the study would suggest measures and would give policy implications for improving the institution building practices in select higher educational institutions.

Keywords: Institution, Institution building, institution building practices, excellence, higher education, higher educational institutions (HEI)

Introduction

Education is very vital in imparting knowledge, values and developing the mental faculties of individuals. It plays a pivotal role in developing the competencies and capabilities of human resource. Higher education is a very effective tool in creation of human capital which is at the core of economic progress. The complex nature of global economy and changes at world academic level have posed enormous pressure and challenge before higher educational institutions to develop and transform itself for becoming an institution of excellence. Bolden et al (2012) Jones et al (2012) and Skilbeck (2001) maintained that higher education continues to undergo significant change in response to factors such as government policy, continuing growth in demand for ever higher levels of educational attainment and credentials, rapid economic

development, pervasiveness and society wide impact of communication and information technologies, demands for increased access, internationalization and globalization. Universities worldwide have realized that to grow and sustain in this knowledge based society, they need to adopt strategies and policies which are futuristic and result oriented. The market orientation of education has forced to look up to university as a market of providing education, where students are treated as customer, where education is sensed as a product and where teachers as considered as providers of service. Institutions have resources (human, physical, technical and financial) at its disposal but the success of any institution which differentiates itself from its counterparts is largely depends upon in its competence and capability with which it identifies and nurtures its resources by making optimal utilization of the same. Institutions are instruments of a society through which it fulfills its needs and aspirations. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in this regard as their impact on society is more than that of institution of any other background. Esman (1967) believes that an institution is a change inducing and change protecting formal organization. Udai Pareek (1981) views institution building “as a process of establishing or transforming an organization into an integrated and organic part of the community in a way that will help the organization to play a proactive role in projecting new values and become an agent of change in the community”. Esman and Blaise (1966) stressed that “institutions are organizations which incorporate, foster and protect normative relationships and action patterns and perform functions and services that are valued in the environment”. Eaton (1968) opined that institution building is a “process of developing certain capabilities which makes the organization continue not only with its ongoing operations, but also innovate and continuously improve on its performance”. Universities in order to become as centre of knowledge hub and institutions of excellence need i) to create an environment of trust and culture at work places ii) to value performance and promote competition where every individual will strive hard in putting his/her best iii) to develop sound vision which takes into account the interests of various stakeholders iv) to identify, select and retain competent faculty members who would provide teaching that matches quality standards and which results in sound mental and physical development of students, v) to promote quality research which is acceptable and has sound policy implication for the society and other stakeholders, vi) to continuously appraise the performance of teaching staff on fair and impartial basis and communicate the same to the respective staff for their individual growth and development vii) to develop and work for sound and effective academic- industry linkages which would foster and explore opportunities and avenues for young students and scholars by meeting the expectations as put forth by market demands and industry requirements and viii) universities need to manage the resources available to them for excelling performance and for working towards its overall growth and development.

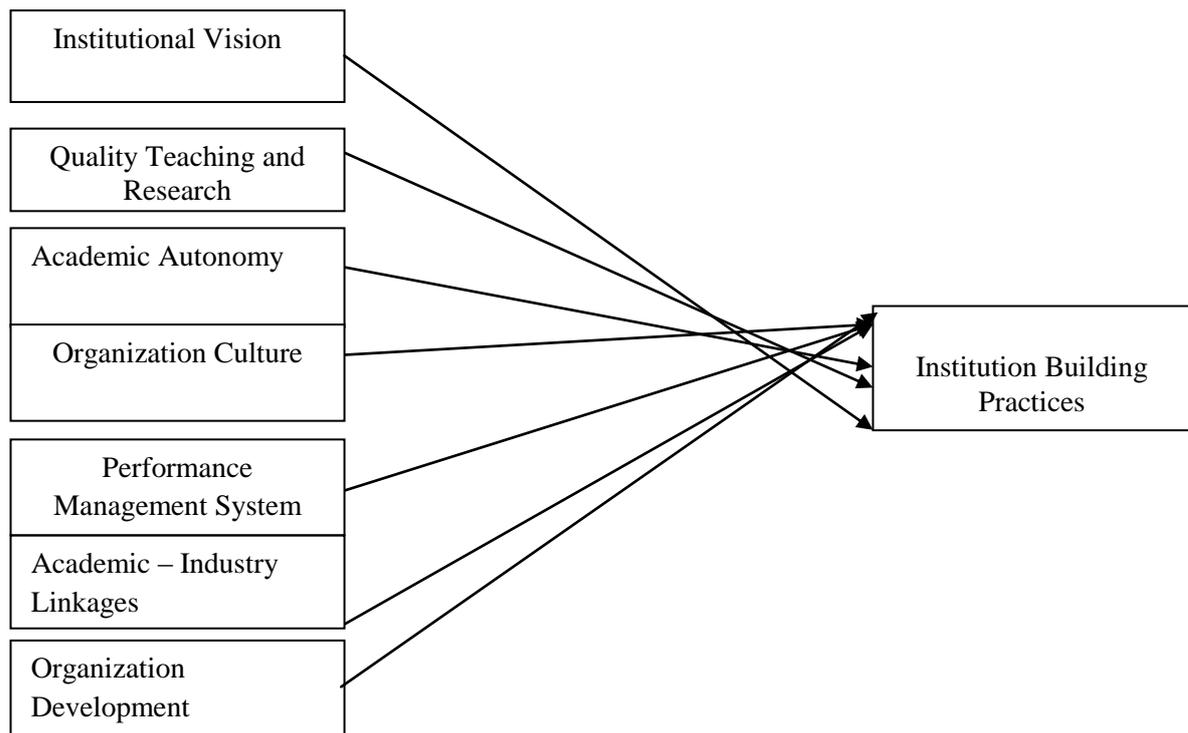


Fig 1: Theoretical framework of Institution building practices

Institution Building Practices

Institutional Vision

The long term development and survival of an institution is possible if it aligns its goals and objectives with its vision. Institution building process of university is incomplete if it doesn't comply with its stated objectives and mission. Mission and objectives lays down the foundation for an institution and leads towards its progress and development. The vision of an institution serves as a purpose among all the employees to put their best in realizing institutional goals by accepting it and sharing the same among all the members of the institution.

Quality of Teaching and Research

Quality of teaching is considered as an important pillar of institution building and in achieving academic excellence. The quality of teaching in an institution impacts the employability of students as it helps in developing their skills, abilities, knowledge and mental faculties. Moreover, the curriculum taught at university level should match industry expectations which would help in generating employment avenues. University needs to attract and retain talented faculty staff in shaping the behavior and potential of students.

The teaching in an institution should match academic quality standards as this has link towards gaining higher ranks among world academic institutions. Every rating agency and institution keeps quality of teaching as an important factor in determining the progress and performance of institution. Faculty development programe, research workshops and other orientation courses should be promoted for developing and shaping the skills and knowledge of teachers and this would also help in equipping them with latest advancement in their teaching and research areas.

Academic - Industry Linkages

The academic- industry partnership is a win – win collaboration where both benefit from one another. The linkages between the two helps universities to share their research expertise and academic know-how with industry experts and similarly industry acquires and hires individuals, graduates, and researches for enhancing their innovation capabilities. Institution building process calls for developing strong ties between academic institutions and industry. The competitive nature of knowledge economy have posed serious concerns before academic institution to continuously innovate and excel, which is possible if there exists a collaboration between the two.

Performance Management System

Performance appraisal system is considered as an important tool in enhancing the motivation and morale of individuals. Universities need to put sound mechanism for evaluating the performance of individuals. Fair and transparent appraisal system would result in increasing the performance and satisfaction level of individuals working in an institution. Appraisal process must be continuous and there should be communication of feedback to the individuals about their performance.

Academic Autonomy

Academic autonomy encompasses decision making, power, and responsibility in executing the plans within the ambit of university rules and regulations. The success of institutions lie in the extent to which they are been entrusted to take decisions, execute plans, and exhibit power within the framework of university mechanism. The departments need to be given more powers in realizing their departmental goals and objectives. There should be no bottlenecks from the internal as well as external environment of institution in executing and implementing the strategies and plans.

Organizational Culture

Institutional Culture plays a critical role in determining how individuals work and perform at work places. Culture helps in developing an atmosphere of trust and openness and engulfs collaboration, pro-activity, confrontation and experimentation among all the members of an institution. Universities need to develop sound academic culture where every faculty members reposes faith in the system and performs as per his/her potential in realizing his individual as well as his/her institutional goals.

Organization Development

Organizational development is a long term- planned process of developing competencies and capabilities of individuals and making organization adaptive to face challenges. Institutions building process encompasses organizational development which is considered as a cornerstone for institution's growth and development. Organizational development is the process of helping organizations improve through change in policies, power, leadership, control or job redesign. University and higher academic institutions need to ponder upon developing institutions internal structure in terms of its policies, processes, systems, mechanisms, and structures which would help in creating institution of excellence.

Research Objectives

On the basis of review of literature, the following objectives have been laid down for the present study:

- 1) to study the perception of teaching staff towards institution building practices prevailing in sample select universities,
- 2) to examine and compare the existing status of sample select universities towards institution building practices and
- 3) to assess and compare the perception of male and female teaching staff towards institution building practices
- 4) to draw conclusions and provide suggestions and measures for policy implications and in enhancing institution building practices in sample study universities.

Hypotheses of the study

1. The perception of teaching staff towards institution building practices differs from one institution to another.

Research Methodology

The present study is empirical in nature. The population of the study consists of teaching staff of four select universities of J&K. The sample respondents comprise professors, associate professors and assistant professors of select universities. The sample universities for the present study include 1) University of Jammu 2) University of Kashmir 3) Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU) 4) Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU). In the present study a questionnaire was used to collect data. The selection of universities was based on purposive- cum convenience sampling. The criteria for selecting these universities were based upon age of these institutions, i.e these institutions are having more than 10 years of existence. Moreover, University of Kashmir and University of Jammu are one the oldest universities of the state while as Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University and Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University are just in their beginning stage. The number of respondents targeted in the present study was 152 and 132 respondents returned the questionnaire, with a response rate of 86.84 %. Moreover 20 questionnaire returned were found outliers and not suitable for final analysis purpose. The reliability coefficient of the research instrument variables varied from 0.75 to 0.87. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A contains information of respondents and section B comprised of items on institution building practices. The data whatsoever collected were analyzed using SPSS 20.0.Version.

Descriptive statistics such as mean score, % mean score, Std. deviation, frequency were used to study the employee's perception with respect to institution building practices and also to explain the profile of respondents of present study.

Data Analysis and Findings

Table 1: Perception of teaching staff towards institution building practices (N=132)

| Dimension | Mean Score | Std. Deviation | % Mean Score |
|---|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| Institutional Vision | 3.45 | 0.81 | 61.25 |
| Quality Teaching | 3.59 | 0.74 | 62.25 |
| Quality Research | 3.50 | 0.79 | 62.50 |
| Academic Autonomy | 3.42 | 0.75 | 60.50 |
| Organization Development | 3.56 | 0.83 | 64.00 |
| Academic-Industry Linkages | 3.47 | 0.78 | 61.75 |
| Institutional Culture | 3.53 | 0.87 | 63.25 |
| Performance Management System | 3.40 | 0.84 | 60.00 |
| Overall Institution Building Practices | 3.49 | 0.80 | 62.25 |

Note: Higher the % of mean score, higher is the level of satisfaction.

(Table 1) shows the perception of teaching staff with respect to institution building practices sample select universities. It was found that overall perception of teaching staff towards institution building practices was found favorable with overall mean score and % mean score of (3.49 and 62.25% respectively). Moreover, (table 1) revealed that the highest perception among dimensions of institution building was found in quality teaching with mean score of (3.59) and % mean score of (62.25 %) it was followed by organization development with mean score of (3.56) and % mean score of (64.00 %), institutional culture (3.53, 63.25%), quality research (3.50, 62.50%) and the least satisfaction was found towards performance management system with mean score of (3.40) and % mean score of (60.00%).

Table 2: Perception of male and female teaching staff towards institution building practices

| Construct | Mean Score** | | Total Mean Score | Z Value* |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| | Male Academic Staff (N=78) | Female Academic Staff (N=54) | | |
| Institutional Vision | 3.53 | 3.37 | 3.45 | .046 |
| Quality Research | 3.44 | 3.56 | 3.50 | .036 |
| Quality Teaching | 3.54 | 3.64 | 3.59 | .029 |
| Academic-Industry Linkages | 3.40 | 3.54 | 3.47 | .041 |
| Organization development | 3.59 | 3.53 | 3.56 | .022 |
| Academic Autonomy | 3.47 | 3.37 | 3.42 | .026 |
| Institutional Culture | 3.49 | 3.57 | 3.53 | .024 |
| Performance Management System | 3.36 | 3.44 | 3.40 | .023 |
| Overall Perception towards Institution building practices | 3.47 | 3.51 | 3.49 | .025 |

*p <.05;

Note: Note: Higher the % of mean score, higher is the level of satisfaction.

The (table 2) depicts the comparison between male and female teaching staff's perception towards institution building practices. It has been reported from (table 2) that female academic staff (mean score = 3.51) shows slightly higher satisfaction towards institution building practices as compared to male teaching staff (mean score= 3.47). With respect to constructs of institution building, male teaching staff showed higher satisfaction towards institutional vision (mean score 3.53), organization development (3.59), and academic autonomy (3.47) as compared to female teaching staff. It has also been reported from (table 2) that female teaching staff showed higher satisfaction towards quality teaching (mean score= 3.64), quality research (3.56), academic-industry linkages (3.54), institutional culture (3.57), and performance management system (3.44) as compared to male teaching staff.

However, the results of z test, administered to ascertain whether the difference in the mean scores reported by the male and female teaching staff with respect to institution building practices, is statistically significant or merely an outcome of chance factor, indicated that the difference in the mean scores is statistically significant (z value=0.25; $p > .05$), indicating that there is a difference in the perception levels of male and female teaching staff with respect to institution building practices (Table 1).

Table 3: University wise comparison of teaching staff's perception towards Institution building practices (N=132)

| Name of the University | Mean Score | Percentage Score | ANOVA | Sig.** |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| University of Kashmir (KU) | 3.61 | 65.25 | 1.562 | .036 |
| University of Jammu (JU) | 3.58 | 64.50 | | |
| Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) | 3.43 | 60.75 | | |
| Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGBSU) | 3.34 | 58.50 | | |
| Total | 3.49 | | | |

** $p < .05$.

Note: Note: Higher the % of mean score, higher is the level of satisfaction.

Table 4 presents a comparison between teaching staff of the four universities towards existing institution building practices prevailing in their respective institutions. From a comparative view point, university of Kashmir has reported the most favorable perception regarding the existing institution building practices with (mean score 3.61), it was followed by university of Jammu, and SMVDU with mean score of 3.58 and 3.43 respectively, the least favorable perception with institution building practices was found in BGBSU with mean score of 3.34 (table 4).

However, the results of ANNOVA test, administered to ascertain whether the difference in the mean scores reported by sample institutions with respect to institution building practices, is statistically significant or merely an outcome of chance factor, indicated that the difference in the mean scores is statistically significant (F value=0.36; sig= .036), indicating that there is a difference in the perception levels of sample institutions with respect to institution building practices (Table 4).

Table 4: Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=132)

| Factor | Frequency | %Age | Mean Score | % Mean Score |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | | | | |
| <i>Male</i> | 78 | 59.00 | 3.47 | 61.75 |
| <i>Female</i> | 54 | 41.00 | 3.51 | 62.75 |
| <i>Designation</i> | | | | |
| <i>Professors</i> | 42 | 31.81 | 3.58 | 64.50 |
| <i>Associate Professors</i> | 26 | 19.69 | 3.50 | 62.50 |
| <i>Assistant Professors</i> | 64 | 48.50 | 3.39 | 59.75 |
| | | | | |

| <i>Age</i> | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|-------|------|-------|
| <i>Upto 35 Years</i> | 26 | 19.70 | 3.36 | 59.00 |
| <i>35 Years above to 50 Years</i> | 48 | 36.36 | 3.52 | 63.00 |
| <i>50 Years and Above</i> | 58 | 43.94 | 3.59 | 64.75 |

In the table no.4, the demographic profile of respondents is given. The number of male staff taken in the present study was 78 which comprised (59.00%) of sample respondents while the female staff taken for the present study was 54 representing 41% of respondents. Similarly on the basis of designation, professors comprised of 31.81% of sample, associate professors (19.69 %) and assistant professors represented (48.50 %) of sample. With respect to age of respondents, those who were having age upto 35 years comprised of 26 teaching staff constituting (19.70%) of sample respondents while as those having age between 35 years and above upto 50 years comprised of 48 respondents with (36.36%) of total sample and those who were above the age of 50 years were 58 comprising of 43.94% of sample.

Suggestions and Policy Implications

Academic institutions are considered significant in the transformation of knowledge and in the development of human capital. Higher education is becoming a major driving force of economic competitiveness in the present era of knowledge-driven global economy and is critical to India's aspirations of emerging as a major player in the global competitiveness. Higher education institutions have to transform themselves with the changing needs of world academic scenario in order to become a successful partner in global economy. Academic leaders are prime movers of the academic institutions and architects of social change. The major challenges and issues of quality teaching, quality research, institutional culture, and academic –industry linkages, confronting academic leaders and higher educational institutions must be addressed effectively which would then ultimately lead to institutional development. Leaders in higher education must continuously innovate to ensure development, growth and learning that results in value creation for the individual and society. Academic leaders need to ponder about how to develop an institution that achieves excellence and they have to re-look at their role and act innovatively in building next generation.

The selection of quality faculties and retaining them for institutional change and development process must be acted upon with utmost care. Institutional leaders have to play a dual role of nurturing the talent and abilities of youth in order to face academic and market challenges and also inspiring them to develop as

leaders of 21st generation. The future institutions should shift their strategy from re-active approach to pro-active approach. The changing role of academic leaders largely depends on how they articulate vision statements, i.e where they want institutions to be in future. There is no challenge for 'leader' but it is a challenge for 'development'. The 21st century institutions are tremendously concentrating on development; development of the people and development of the organization they belong. Though the academic institutions are becoming business organization, the roles and responsibilities of academic leaders are still growing. The higher education policy makers have to realize the impact and act accordingly. A competitive spirit must be inculcated among the leaders of higher education and effective leadership programs must be considered at all levels of higher educational institutions. As the world looks east for global leadership in economic growth, our academic leaders and policy makers need to step up for institutional development and must act in creating healthy academic culture that excels not only in performance but also meets global academic standards.

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