

SOCIETAL EXPECTATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are vested with the responsibility of grooming a generation of youth through providing quality education and skills, matching the requirements of a harmonious, self-reliant and developed society, and values inclined to serve with selfless devotion in whatever capacity they assume and wherever they work. The society at large looks upto the institutions to address their needs through enhancing educational opportunity, maintaining quality, increasing employability, solving community-based problems, creating a pool of human resources, promoting inter-institutional collaborations and maintaining harmony with outer environment. In order to achieve this, institution formulate action plans for all the operational processes such as admission, teaching, placement, personality development, support services, social responsibility etc. through strategic planning. The perspective plan of the institution clearly spells out its accountability. Leadership is groomed both at student level and teacher level in academics, career, programme organization, sports and games and cultural activities through setting standards, measuring performance, ensuring discipline, character formation and personality building. Quality assurance mechanisms involve the stake holders namely parents, students, institutions, industry and community to ensure satisfaction and compliance. Through objective criteria such as results and placement, outreach activities, events and programmes, feedback etc. the institution monitors to maintain accountability. This paper discusses the societal expectation and institutional accountability through a case study of Srinivas Institute of Management Studies (SIMS).

Keywords: Accountability in Higher education, Quality assurance mechanisms, Perspective plans, Quality policy

Introduction:

Higher education institutions are vested with the responsibility of grooming a generation of youth through providing quality education and skills, matching the requirements of a harmonious, self-reliant and developed society, and values inclined to serve with selfless devotion in whatever capacity they assume and wherever they work. It aims at becoming centre of excellence to offer academically empowered and ready for the job professionals in diverse fields – science, technology, arts and humanities – and contribute to nation building. Therefore, it is essential that the institutions should imbibe core values such as teamwork, responsibility, social service, character, ethics, courage to innovate, techno-savvy and scientific temper (P. S. Aithal et. al. 2015^a). This is translated into action and communicated in manifold ways so that all stake holders derive maximum gain and the institution becomes accountable to the society. For instance, students receive quality education in disciplined environment. Teachers keep themselves busy, motivated and academically oriented. The staff feel proud to work in a harmonious work place and lead a satisfied living. The parents of students are confident that their children are in safe hands and they build a career. The neighbouring community is happy with an institution for higher studies in their locality. they are also beneficiaries of social service activities of the institution. The university is satisfied with a well functioning institution affiliated to it. The management is happy with the impact it creates in the society towards higher education and the opportunity provided to the youngsters to groom their career of choice. Other institutions find their staff and their students in healthy competition. the government is satisfied that the institute is sharing its goal of developing the youth to contribute to the nation.

Institutional Policy:

The institutional policy aims to transform the students into useful, employable and productive citizens through providing quality education and skills through a variety of courses to suites the need and interest of the students and provide quick employment. Qualified, trained and experienced faculty provide education, conduct examination, evaluate and assess the potential of the students and encourages them for their continued growth. Over and above this, many certification programs are offered to the students to further bridge the gap between curriculum and industry.

In order to identify, attract, motivate and maintain a team of quality professionals who would play a key role in building high caliber students. In order to attain this, the institution ensures that its personnel are appropriately identified, compensated, and retained. The faculty members are oriented with necessary responsibility and accountability to carry out their task successfully. The faculties are also trained to enhance the teaching ability evaluated through appraisal and feedback from the students. The supporting staff of the institution are focused on the strengthening their services and greater satisfaction to the teaching faculty and the students. In

order to attain this they are trained in use of computers, effective office management skills, the same will be evaluated through regular interaction with the staff and taking self-appraisal reports and feedback.

The institution for its own is committed to maintain high standards in imparting education contributing to principles of secularism, diversity, inclusion and integration. The institution maintains a rich mix of faculty and students of all religious, linguistic and cultural group. Students of all parts of the country are enrolled and the courses offered provide a wide range of career options. While at the same time teaching and learning form the main thrust of the institution, all round development of the students is given due importance through promoting, co-curricular, extracurricular, social service and research programs.

Addressing Societal Needs:

In a society where education becomes the prime contributor for social mobility, expanding opportunities matter considerably in providing choices to fulfill career needs. Quality and diversity should complement each other to match the expectations of fast growing needs. Table 1 indicates the institutions distinctive characteristics in terms of needs addressed.

Table 1 : Institutional characteristics and needs addressed

S. No.	Institutions Distinctive Characteristics	Needs Addressed
1	Enhancing educational opportunities	Creating equality of opportunity to all aspirants to prepare their future through education and to build a generation to serve with selfless devotion in whatever capacity they assume and wherever they work.
2	Offering diverse courses	Education that suits the interest and talent of the students for contributing professionals in all walks of life which will reflect human dignity, mutual respect and induce healthy competition.
3	Maintaining quality	To obtaining world class education in an atmosphere of freedom and secularism so that the institution becomes centre of excellence.
4	Increasing employability	Academically empowered and ready for the job professionals in diverse fields resulting in a self reliance society leading to enriching rewards.

5	Solving community based problems	To foster spirit of research among the young professionals so as to solve community problems for the all-round development of the nation and community at large.
6	Creating pool of human resources	To maintain productively engaged youth trained in science, technology, humanities and management which will contribute nation building.
7	Promoting inter institutional collaborations	Obtaining quality education with societal ethos, contributing dynamic equilibrium between various institutions and expansion across all realms of knowledge.
8	Maintaining harmony with environment	To encourage sustainable accomplishment for a harmonious self reliant society, maintaining dynamic equilibrium between economic, socio-cultural and ecological environment.

Action Plan and Operational Process:

The operational processes have to be met through target based action plan. The action plan becomes important in devising institutions strategic plans and the strategic plans give a way to specific strategies for varied requirements, time and context. The inter relationship between the operational process, action plan and institutional strategic plan is provided in table 2.

Table 2 : Action plans for institutional strategic plans

S. No.	Operational Processes	Action plan	Institutional strategic plan
1	Admission	Ensuring full admission	Maintaining equality of opportunity through religious and linguistic groups
2	Education - teaching & curriculum	Ensuring Quality education	Effective teaching-learning processes, adding to innovations and best

			practices
3	Placement	Ensuring job opportunity for everybody	Introducing Skill building and certification programmes
4	Personality Development	Providing co-curricular and extra-curricular activities	Value addition
5	Administration of services	Effective support services	Adoption of time saving and error free newer technology in office automation
6	Social responsibility	Involving students in social activities	Operationalization of institutes own service based NGO-SIRRA

Academic Leadership:

In an educational institution academic leadership plays a significant role in leading it forward (Gregory F. Lorenz, 2014). The academic leadership is exercised by the faculty in the following ways.

1. Setting Standards

The faculty are allowed to establish the desired levels of knowledge and prepare the students accordingly.

- (a) Teaching : Faculty uses varied and appropriate methods as per the choice of the situation
- (b) Assessment : Faculty conducts periodic assessment through internal examinations, assignments, presentations and seminars.
- (d) Attendance : Faculty maintains the attendance of each students on regular basis and ensure that the students maintains minimum required level of attendance through reducing absence, late comings and drop-outs.
- (e) Inspiring through providing himself as an example: Faculty strives to maintain a high profile so as to become role models for the students.

2. Measuring performance :

- (a) Periodic examinations : The performance of the students is evaluated through periodic internal examinations.
- (b) Involving in activities : Students are involved in all activities which promote their growth and development.
- (c) Feedback based improvement : Students are given feedback on their performance and motivated to improve.

3. Enforcing discipline :

- (a) Preparing guidelines : The faculty prepare guidelines on the dos and don'ts inside and outside the class rooms following the regulations provided in the college colander.
- (b) Enforcing control : Late coming, disobedience, bad habits etc. are discouraged.
- (c) Monitoring : The faculty actively participate in the disciplinary committee as well as providing counseling services.

4. Imbibing values :

The values of the institution as reflected in the vision and mission of the institution are translated into action through imbibing values among the students.

5. Character formation :

The faculty works closely with the students to influence their character formation such as gender sensitivity, religious tolerance, linguistic and geographical integration and moral integrity.

6. Personality building :

Skill development programmes are offered in addition to regular classes which would build their capacity for communication, language comprehension, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, dignity, and appeal.

Perspective Plan:

The perspective plan of Srinivas Institute of Management Studies presents a clear, compelling path to a future of greater institutional distinction. The plan begins with statements of institutional mission, vision, and core values, followed by an articulation of key strategic issues (A. Srinivas Rao, et. al. 2015).

(1) Perspective for Students :

The various aspects considered perspective for students in the plan are as follows:

- To develop an admission process which would attract the best students in large numbers with a variety of background such as gender, linguistic, religious, cultural, socio-economic and nationality.
- To impart quality education to the students enrolled through effective teaching/training methods suited to the needs of the students and maintain a team of highly motivated and competent teachers.
- To transform the students in to better performers so as to achieve the best out of each student, that will make them quality professionals to handle multi-faceted jobs.

(2) Perspective for Faculty :

The various aspects considered perspective for faculty in the plan are as follows:

- To identify and attract talented professionals who would take challenges and provide leadership to equip an emerging generation with clear sense of direction.
- To provide appropriate orientation to the existing and newly absorbed faculty, so as to enable them handle difficult situation in the easiest way and be devoted in the task of imparting education to the students.
- To transform the faculty in to highly productive, efficient and effective in executing the responsibilities of their job with fullest satisfaction to them as well as to the students, parents and stake holders.

(3) Perspective for Courses :

The various aspects considered perspective for courses in the plan are as follows:

- Vertical and horizontal expansion of courses in all realms of knowledge pertaining to the areas of interest of the institution, the students and the community at large.
- To maintain high standards in the subjects offered through various courses, which would be in the best interest of the institution, students and stake holders.
- By way of enriching the courses and adding new and relevant courses, it is expected that more students will be attracted, quality professionals will be created, greater recognition and reputation for the institution is obtained and the community will be satisfied.

(4) Perspective for Infrastructure Development :

The various aspects considered perspective for infrastructure development in the plan are as follows:

- To create better and appropriate infrastructure suited to the anticipated situation, emerging out of the increased intake and expansion of courses.
- To make the best use of the infrastructure created through optimum utilization, continuous maintenance, and sustainable efficiency.
- To accommodate the multiplying needs resulting from expansion, diversification, and anticipated improvements.

(5) Perspective for Employers :

The various aspects considered perspective for infrastructure development in the plan are as follows :

- Creating enhanced opportunity, improving employer interest, catering to the diverse needs of the industry so as to achieve harmony between institution and job market.
- Ensuring a regular supply of talented and trained professionals who would provide leadership and handle challenging assignments emerging out of developing needs and changing technology.
- Collect regular feedback from the employers and utilize to dovetail the curriculum, supplement knowledge gaps through skill building and valuation.

Quality Policy:

Quality is as important as any product or service (Harvey L. and Green D., 1993). Quality is an intangible entity, at the same time integral to all practices. It comes through prolonged pursuit towards perfection. In an institution of higher education, the important functions which require quality are teaching and services. Therefore, the institution should have a quality policy which pervades throughout the hierarchy of the organization. The plan of implementation of the quality policy at different levels is indicated in the following tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 : Plan of implementation of quality teaching

S. No.	Level	Quality Policy	Plan of Implementation
1	Management	Maintain high standards in imparting education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiating actions relevant to policy. 2. Providing congenial environment. 3. Reward competitively. 4. Ensure minimum attrition.
2	Institutional Head	Motivate and monitor a team of competent faculty.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (a) Framing rules & regulations (b) Identifying and hiring faculty (c) Induction (d) Performance management 2. Evolve a salary structure suited to the industry 3. (a) Generate higher job satisfaction through incentives. 4. (a) Team building, (b) Faculty Development programs (c) Participatory Decision making (d) Transparency in Administration (e) Collective responsibility
3	Faculty	Absorb the spirit of institutional values and maintain efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain uninterrupted work schedules. 2. Impart quality education. 3. Try out various techniques in pedagogy. 4. Conduct of examinations & fair

			assessment. 5. Maintain satisfactory student interest.
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Table 4 : Plan of implementation of quality services

S. No.	Level	Quality Services	Plan of Implementation
1	Management	Provision of infrastructure and facilities suitable for effective services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide appropriate building, equipments, etc. 2. To encourage utilization of the facilities to optimum levels. 3. Cater to further requirements as per needs.
2	Institutional Head	Ensure availability maintenance of improved infrastructure and services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare inventory of infrastructure requirement. 2. Ensure availability of the required resources. 3. Utilization of resources optimally. 4. Evolve better man management practices. 5. Introduce both conventional and innovative tools for operationalizing services. 6. Training & Development. 7. Ensure support services.

3	Faculty	To integrate individual interest and institutional interest in offering services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adherence to regulations and fulfillment of requirement. 2. Developing a suitable pedagogy. 3. Utilization of library as a Knowledge resource. 4. Self-development through continuing education. 5. Provide support services to maintain core services.
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The institutional policy with regard to quality assurance reflected in the quality policy of Srinivas Institute of Management Studies is comprehensive, continually enhanced, global quality professional education through an established quality management system complimented by the synergistic interaction of the stakeholders concerned. This is communicated to all persons at all levels so that this policy becomes working reality within the organization. The Institute is committed in the provision of quality teaching and learning process. Apart from that, it focuses on Personality Development of students through certificate programmes for skill development, Training programmes, and other co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that expand their horizon of knowledge, development of mind for their overall development. The Institute ensures all the measures in upbringing discipline and good character-building in the students. This also strengthens mental maturity of the students and focus on holistic development. A variety of innovations and best practices have been developed to supplement the quality of teaching and services (P. S. Aithal, et. al. 2015^b)

Quality Assurance Mechanisms:

The following quality assurance mechanisms have been institutionalized.

(1) *Teacher's Quality* : To enhance the quality of teaching, Faculty Development Programmes are introduced as a regular feature. Collaborative programmes with other institutions are organized to enhance teacher's quality. The faculty members are encouraged to acquire additional qualifications, research degrees and impart certification programmes to foster their skills.

(2) *Delivery of the Curriculum* : In order to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum, the faculty members prepare the work dairy, lesson plan and course material for the subjects thought by them.

(3) *Strengthening of Research Activities* : In order to strengthen research activities, the IQAC has recommended the formation of Research centres in priority areas under different faculties. The faculty members are encouraged to write articles for publication in journals and to present papers in National and International Conferences. Some of the programmes have opened up the possibility for preparing and publishing research papers both in conceptual and empirical areas. The scope of such conference which has been widened to include all disciplines offered by the college.

(4) *Personality Development Programmes* : Student Development Programmes are important to equip the students to meet the challenges in their career. Value Addition programmes like Certificate Courses are offered to the students to bridge the gap between the university syllabus and industry requirements. Regular industrial visits and industry-academia interactions are organised so as to get the practical exposure about the functioning of the organisation.

(5) *Orientation Programmes*: Apart from career building, institute conducts programmes to develop right orientation and positive attitude.

(6) *Additional Academic Support in order to ensure Holistic Development*: Teaching management principles through examples from the great epics like Ramayana, Mahabharatha, Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, Upanishads etc., spiritual lectures under Vivekananda study centre and programmes organized during Swami Vivekananda Jayanthi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Jayanthi, Onam, Independence day, Karnataka Rajyotsava etc foster holistic development.

(7) *Mental Maturity and Skill Development Courses* : Corporate Yoga and mind control programmes are offered to the students to enhance the power of concentration, overcome stress, maintain good physical and mental health and to ensure mental maturity.

(8) *Placement* :The Institute undertakes a broad range of vocational education, entrepreneurial training and employability skills to facilitate faster placement and better adjustment in the work situations.

(9) *Preparedness for challenges* : The students are encouraged to define their own training and development needs and based on the needs of students & the corporate, the Institute imparts employability skills. As the business world is filled with challenges and risks, the purpose of education is to prepare the students to face these challenges and take up the risk with courage.

Conclusion:

An analysis of institutional accountability mechanisms (Manual for self-study report of Affiliated colleges, 2013) established in Srinivas Institute of Management Studies reveal that it is worth emulating by other institutions of higher learning. Institutional policy is oriented towards addressing social needs and institute's distinctive characteristics reflect enhancing educational opportunity, offering diverse courses, maintaining quality, increasing employability, solving community based problems, creating pool of human resources and maintaining harmony with environment. Action plans reflect the operational processes and institutional strategic plan. Academic leadership satisfies all round development of the students. The perspective plan of the institution addresses all core areas namely students, faculty, courses, infrastructure and employers. The quality assurance processes have been institutionalized. The institution monitors to maintain accountability through objective criteria such as results, placement, impact of outreach activities, number of events and programmes organized, student feedback and employer feedback.

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