

Role of Change Management Practices in Higher Education Institutions in Kerala

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Abstract: Change is constant in the higher education sector, so in order to provide quality in higher education, institutions must continually adapt these changes. Effective change management practices will help to achieve desired outcomes and maintain competitiveness in the sector. This study tries to explore the role of change management practices in higher education institutions in Kerala, including various challenges and obstacles that institutions face when implementing change. The study focuses on best practices and strategies for managing change in higher education institutions. The study also focuses on various efforts needed for the effective change management practices for maintaining competitiveness in the Higher Education Sector.

Keywords: Change Management, Higher Education Institutions, Change Management Practices

Introduction

It is estimated that around 40% of the population of India, the most populous country in the world, is youth. The best education should be given to these youths to make them a good human resource for the development of the nation. Therefore, the higher education sector in India has gained great importance. The higher education sector in India is going through many changes. All these changes are evident in Kerala too. The higher education sector needs to maintain an international standard while competing globally. Employability skills of students need to rise to global standards. What is being studied here is how the higher education sector in Kerala assimilates the changes seen in the higher education sector at the international and national level. Turning our backs on change will lead to the collapse of the higher education sector and the decline in the employability of students. Only through good change management practices can these changes be easily assimilated and its benefits made available to the beneficiaries. Often when changes are introduced in the higher education sector, there is a possibility of massive protests. There are many political, academic and social factors behind such objections. To overcome these and experience the benefits of change, change management needs to be maintained at its best in organizations.

Statement Of The Problem

Higher education institutions are facing drastic changes in Kerala. Implementation of National Education policy (NEP), Four Year UG Programmes (FYUGP), Changes in Curriculum, changing government policies and high expectation level of stake holders are some of them. Since the advancement of social media and digital world, Now a days higher education opportunities are available globally and students can easily choose their best alternative courses and institutions in many countries. So higher education institutions in Kerala have to mould themselves as per international standards. Even though change is inevitable for higher education institutions to exist and remain competitive, implementing change overcoming various barriers is not an easy task. Resistance to change, inadequate planning, and absence of proper communication are few of them that cause delay the change efforts. Without effective change management practices, higher education institutions may struggle to successfully implement changes, resulting in wasted resources, reduced efficiency, and diminished outcomes.

Therefore, the problem that this essay aims to address is the importance of change management practices in higher education institutions in Kerala and the critical role they play in facilitating successful change.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To understand the relevance of change management practices in higher education institutions in Kerala
2. To identify different problems faced by higher education institutions when changes are implemented.
3. To evaluate various factors to be considered while implementing changes in higher education institutions in Kerala.

Scope Of The Study

The study “role of change management practices in higher education institutions” is focused on identifying various challenges faced by higher education institutions when implementing changes. Study also discusses the relevance of change management practices in achieving desired outcomes and maintaining competitiveness in higher education institutions in Kerala. The study's findings will be applicable to institutions seeking to improve their change management processes, particularly those facing similar challenges and barriers in implementing change. The study will not cover entire aspect of change management in higher education institutions in Kerala, but will provide a comprehensive look of key issues and strategies for addressing them.

Review Of Literature

For the developing nations, changes in the higher education are very crucial, since it decides the future of the nation. Academic leadership should carefully handle these changes for better result. For sustainable development, leadership should understand the need of change, mobilise the resources and handle resistances (Adewale, A. S., & Ghavifekr.S, 2025). Change management practices play a crucial role in the success of higher education institutions (HEIs) since they lead the rapidly growing landscape of education (Nworie & Olokundun, 2019; Yee, 2017). According to Sheehan Pundyke.O, (2020), Change management theories should be applied in higher education institutions for the successful implementation of changes. In a systematic review of change management practices in HEIs, Dasborough et al.,(2015) observes that Change leaders should understand that employees' perceptions of change are not homogeneous. They argue that employees don't perceive changes in the same manner but differently, and therefore, should be handled in different ways to reduce resistance.

Similarly, a case study by McRoy, I., and Gibbs, P. (2009) identified that the Leadership plays vital role in the change. Contextualised leadership is more appropriate to handle changes in the proper way. Leadership also plays a crucial role in implementing change management practices in HEIs. A study by Shrivastava, A. (2020) found that Indian institutions for higher education are facing criticism that they are not capable of providing employability to their students. In order to overcome these criticisms institutions must change the teaching methodologies and curriculum framework. Pressure created by globalisation can be addressed through flexible pedagogy and personalising the methods.

Structural changes in higher education may lead to emotional responses of employees. These emotional responses may be different to different class of employees according to their age group, service, gender, and designation (Dasborough, Lamb, & Suseno, 2015).

Overview of change management practices and their relevance to Higher Education Institutions

Change Management (CM) emphasizes the need for the Change Management Plans and strategies to be formulated within the context of overall organizational strategies and objectives and to be responsive to the changing nature of the organization's external environment (Armstrong, M.2009). According to Jones, R. & George, J. (2009), Organizational change is the movement of an organization away from its present state towards some desired future state to help increase efficiency and effectiveness. The organization must therefore adapt to the changing environment by controlling all the change activities and make them a routine and predictable. Change management practices involve a systematic approach to managing and implementing change within an organization, with the goal of achieving desired outcomes and minimizing negative impacts. In the context of higher education institutions, change management practices are essential to adapt the changes and gaining the competitive advantages that to fulfil their missions and serve the society.

An effective change management practice includes involvement of stake holders, effective planning, proper communication, and follow up to ensure successful implementation and sustainability of change initiatives. They also involve identifying the opportunities in change, potential challenges and barriers to change and developing strategies to address them. Change management practices are relevant to higher education institutions because they can help institutions to:

1. **Adapt to changing student demographics and needs:** In the modern world the needs of students are always changing. Demographic pattern of the students have also been changed. A university or higher education institution may have students from all over the world. So their expectations are different. Institution should be able to meet the needs of students. Programmes, curriculum, and methods should be in accordance with the demand of global students' community. Effective change management practices help institutions to implement new programs, policies, and practices that meet the evolving needs of their students.
2. **Respond to changes in funding and resources:** Different government and non- government funding agencies may have criteria to finance for the higher education institutions. So the higher education institutions are liable to maintain the standards preferred by these agencies. Change management practices help institutions to make necessary changes which time demands and to adapt necessary changes by identifying new revenue streams, optimizing resource allocation, and implementing cost-saving measures.
3. **Keep up with technological advancements:** Current scenario demands the higher education institutions to remain advanced technologically. As mentioned earlier, students may be from different part of the world. So to remain competitive they should provide online platform for learning, digital library facility, massive open online courses etc. It will help to enhance the quality of education. Change management practices can help institutions to be more advanced and enhance the quality of education.
4. **To provide employability:** One of the important objectives of higher education is to provide employability to the students. Programmes should be designed in accordance with the demand of industry. Changing environment should be considered while developing curriculum. Education system should be capable of meeting the current and future demands of the industry. Change management practices help the timely revision and updating of curriculum and programmes.
5. **Enhance institutional efficiency and effectiveness:** Change management practices can help institutions to maintain overall effectiveness and efficiency of the institution. Various operations in the institutions like completing syllabus, conducting exams, announcing results, providing certificates and graduation ceremony, addressing the grievances of stake holders should be properly handled. Change management practices provide a sound system of operation.

Common challenges and barriers that Higher Education Institutions face when implementing change

Implementing change in higher education institutions can be a complex and challenging process. Here are some common challenges and barriers that institutions may face:

1. **Resistance to change:** Resistance may come from different corners when a change is implemented. Different stake holders may resist due to different causes. Basically most of the people don't like change if they are in comfort zone. Higher education institutions may face resistance from stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students. Lack of proper knowledge, uncertainty about future, job security, absence of proper communication system, and absence of good change agents are some reasons for resistance.
2. **Limited resources:** In order to bring changes, utilisation of more resources is needed. Higher education institutions often have limited resources, including funding, staff, and time. To get additional resources for bringing change is an obstacle in the case of higher education institutions in Kerala.
3. **Lack of proper communication:** For a better change in the institution, proper direction and clarity should be provided. Without a proper communication system the objectives, necessity of changes and expected outcomes.
4. **Institutional culture:** Success of change management in any organisation depends on the work culture of the organisation. Work culture includes the relationship between employees and management, quality of the work force, informal relationship among employees, coordination of different departments etc. If a positive institutional culture exists, the resistance will be less and change will be easier. The culture of an institution can also be a barrier to change.
5. **Lack of technological skill:** Absence of technological skill of employees is another obstacle for implementing change. Most of the changes will be led by technological advancement. So to follow the changes in proper way good technological awareness should be provided.
6. **Lack of vibrant leadership:** Change initiatives should be properly guided and supported by vibrant leadership to avail expected outcomes. To prepare the human resource for change, role of change agents is very critical. Trust in the leadership makes change very easy. Good leadership is the back bone of change management since they can convince the work force about the necessity of change.

Through a systematic approach we can overcome these challenges and obstacles. Effective change management practices involve careful planning, stakeholder involvement, communication, and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and sustainability of change initiatives.

Efforts to be taken for effective Change Management Practices in achieving desired outcomes and maintaining competitiveness in the Higher Education sector

In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, institutions must be able to adapt to new technologies, emerging trends, and evolving student needs. Here are some efforts to be taken for effective change management practices:

1. **Maximizing resources:** Pooling maximum resources from different sources is a major step to be taken for effective change management in higher education institutions in Kerala. It will help to implement changes in an effective way and ensure optimum utilisation of resources.
2. **Improving stakeholder engagement:** Stake holders involvement has a crucial role in the implementation of change. We should ensure the participation of all stake holders such as students, faculty, other staff, government etc in the implementation of change. It will help to reduce their resistance.
3. **Involvement of change agents:** Change agents lead the changes. They play key role to make others ready for change. Ensure the involvement of change agents is very much important. Role of change agent should be clearly defined.
4. **Proper communication of change:** Leaders should ensure that the objectives, necessity, and expected outcomes are clearly communicated for making the change effective.
5. **Proper training:** Proper training will reduce the anxiety and provides good confidence. It will help to reduce resistance and gives good results in change, so leaders should ensure that proper training has been given before implementing changes.

6. **Motivation:** In the implementation of change high level motivation is necessary to give confidence to the work force. Anxiety, fear, confusion, lack of vision, lack of proper guidance etc will cause to poor morale of employees. With proper motivation we can overcome these problems.
7. **Systematic planning:** Change should be properly planned. Objectives of the change should be clearly defined. What type of change and the steps of implementing change should be decided in the planning stage.

Findings

1. Effective change management practices need a collaborative approach of different stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. This will help to create an environment for the changes and promotes a culture of openness and transparency.
2. Communication plays a critical role in the change management in higher education institutions. The reasons for the change, the benefits, and the timeline for implementation etc should be communicated properly, as well as to provide opportunities for feedback and input from stakeholders.
3. Change management practices must be tailored to the specific needs and context of the higher education institution. This requires a thorough understanding of the institution's culture, goals, and existing processes.
4. Resistance to change must be seriously addressed through effective change management practices. This may involve identifying and addressing concerns of different stake holders, providing training and support, and motivating the parties involved in the change.
5. Monitoring and evaluation of change is important in effective change management in higher education institutions. This will help to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved.
6. The effectiveness of leadership is another major factor which decides the Success of change management practices in higher education institutions. Trust in the leadership helps to reduce the resistance from various stake holders.

Conclusion

Change management practices play a critical role in higher education institutions for the successful implementation of changes, minimizing disruption, managing resistance, and improving efficiency. Effective change management requires a collaborative approach which includes the involvement of stakeholders, clear communication, proper monitoring and evaluation. By addressing common challenges and barriers in a proper way, higher education institutions can achieve their desired outcomes and maintain their competitiveness in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment. Ultimately, the success of change management practices in higher education institutions depends on supportive leadership, hom can motivate the human resource to build confidence and prepare them for change. Readiness for change shows commitment to continuous improvement, and a willingness to learn from experience. With effective change management practices in place, higher education institutions can continue to evolve and adapt, ensuring that they remain effective and relevant in their mission of educating students.

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