



“Strategic Advantage in Indian Higher Education”

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ABSTRACT

Education in India have been on top priority starting from the age of gurukulas to the universities. A lot of changes have taken place in Indian higher education system throughout the years. Today Indian education has entered into an era where higher education have become a huge market place for the students. It has now become necessary for the academic institutions to understand the role of strategic advantage in education. This paper elaborates the role of strategic advantage in Indian higher education and throws the light on the dimensions of strategic advantage that an academic institution must consider to get competitive edge.

KEYWORDS : Strategic Advantage, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a crucial role in the nation building in all countries of the world. In developing countries the role of higher education becomes more important as the success of development depends upon the quality education and skills of individuals who are appointed in key positions in the government and private organizations. Higher educational institutions in India are contributing at their best to generate skilled manpower which in turn is contributing towards the growth and development of the nation. On the basis of management Indian higher educational institutes can be classified as either Government Institutions which are managed by government or Private/Self Financed Institutions which are managed by private bodies. In India the requirement of skilled manpower is so large that only government institutions can not satisfy the same and so with the time, government has started encouraging the private bodies to come up and contribute in generating the skilled manpower for the country.

STATE OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The system of higher education in India is third largest in the world having 799 universities including 259 private universities and 39,071 degree colleges including both government and private institutions[1]. Out of these some institutions including AIIMS, IITs, NITs etc. are categorized as the institutes of national importance. Besides these government institutions many private institutions or groups like BITS, Amity, Jaypee, NIIT, Shiv Nadar etc. are also providing quality higher education to the students. Indian higher education system is continuously striving for providing quality education which can be noticed from the facts that the apex body governing these institutions and organizations – University Grants Commission has been in the process of continuously reviewing and improving the same. But with the time many institutions specially private have evolved in huge numbers and now in the current scenario the manpower generated by private institutions is a major fraction of the manpower required by the whole country. And so the academic leaders managing these private institutions have a great responsibility on their shoulders. Although there are many challenges faced by the management of higher educational institutions the one major challenge for them is to get strategic advantage over other private as well as government institutions as a huge number of institutions are now existing in every vicinity of the country. The next section of the paper provides an introduction of strategic advantage.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

Strategic advantage is the term that has been traditionally used in the business industry which means to get competitive edge in the market. As many business organizations exist in a particular area and they all want to attract consumers so that they can make more profit. Consumers also analyze the different options available in the market and tend to choose one which is going to provide better product or service than others. Strategic advantage is the long term competitive advantage over the other organizations working in the same area as the aim is to capture the market for the

log term. Now the business industry has realized that getting strategic advantage is most fundamental for the success of any business organization.

ROLE OF STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE IN INDIAN EDUCATION

Today in India there are many institutions of higher education and universities which has come up recently in all areas including management, engineering and technology, arts, humanities, mass communication, law, medical etc. and due to this for an higher educational institute there is a challenge to get good students for taking admission. This is even more challenging for the new private institutions which are in the process of building their reputation. When students plans to get admission in higher educational institute they generally perform a market survey to select the best institute in which they can possibly get the admission. This market survey is based on many factors including infrastructure, faculty, placements, tuition fee and many more. The students generally choose the one which has competitive edge over the others. Here the role of strategic advantage comes into the picture. Indian higher education can be considered as a market, the institutes and universities can be treated as business organizations and students can be termed as consumers seeking to select any one business organization. For many institutions in India including both government and private it has been really hard to get the students admitted. With the time the conditions are going even worse specially for the private institutions, as many of them are not even able to get their seats filled. With so many vacant seats it is very difficult for them to survive as these are self financed institutions and they do not get any grant from government. So it has now become fundamentally important for such institutes and universities to get strategic advantage over the others. There are many areas in which an institute of higher education can get competitive edge and the same has been discussed in the next section.

HOW TO GET STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

An institute or university must identify the potential areas in which competitive edge can be maintained. Generally infrastructure, faculty, placements, accreditation & rankings, research and innovation etc. provide competitive advantage to an academic institution.

1. Infrastructure- Infrastructure and facilities provided by an institute to its students is the basic parameter to get the strategic advantage as the same intend to attract the students and their parents. In today's age, the infrastructure of an academic institution should not only have basic facilities like classrooms, laboratories, common areas, sports facilities etc. but also consists of ICT based classrooms, and laboratories, smart classrooms, dedicated project labs, multipurpose rooms, specialized training laboratories/centres and adequate research facilities. It is also important to specify that in India now students prefer fully air conditioned campus as in last two decades there has been a notable rise in the average temperature.



Figure 1. Dimensions of Strategic Advantage in an Institute of Higher Education

2. Faculty- Faculty of any institute or university is considered to be the backbone without which the academic institutions will not be able to achieve their aims and objectives. The institutions must focus to employ well qualified and experienced faculty with outstanding teaching and research aptitude. The faculty should be innovative so that the same can support student's innovative ideas and projects.

3. Placements- The most important factor for an academic institution in getting the strategic advantage is the placement of students. The students taking admission in higher educational institute are highly concerned with the placements of the passed out

students and therefore these academic institutes should have excellent placement team with unmatched industry linkages so that maximum students can get on campus placements. And also the students from all courses should be evenly placed in the suitable organizations.

4. Scholarships – Scholarships provided by institute largely attract students having good academic record which is vital for any academic institute. Today in India not only government but also private academic institutes are offering scholarships to their students which target two aims by one arrow. One is attracting new students second is motivating existing students to come up with their full potential.

5. Flexibility in Learning – Traditional Indian higher education system is considered to be rigid in the sense that it does not provide flexibility in learning to the students. But now new system have been evolved which provides adequate flexibility in learning. Flexible credit based system is now being followed by many universities and institutes in India. An institute which provide academic flexibility to its students as per their interest is going to have competitive advantage over the others.

6. Accreditation & Ranking – Accreditations received by an educational institute from various bodies like NAAC, IET, NBA, ABET etc. provide additional value and recognition in terms of quality of the educational processes and achievements. In the same way ranking given to an institute in various surveys conducted by different reputed agencies enhance the reputation of the institution. An academic institute of higher education must get accreditations by renowned bodies and rankings by world class agencies so that they can get competitive advantage over the other institutes.

7. Research & Innovation – An institute or university must promote research and innovation by developing a culture among faculty and students to carry out original research and innovative projects or activities. The management must support the same by providing adequate research facilities and grants so that the faculty and students are motivated. But in India it has been observed that even today a very less number of educational institutes are striving for carrying out the research and so the academic institutions which will shore up research and innovation will have strategic advantage in the Indian educational market.

CONCLUSION

Getting strategic advantage has now become important for the higher educational institutions. In this paper first the meaning of strategic advantage has been explained then the role of strategic advantage in Indian higher education has been discussed. Finally this paper has briefly explained each and every dimension of strategic advantage which is critical to every academic institution. This article has a great significance to the academicians and researchers who are working in the area of higher education in Indian context.

REFERENCES

- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_education_in_India