

BEST PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

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Abstract

In this paper we have covered the best practices and innovative teaching methods which will be helpful to improve quality of student, faculty, institute, and infrastructure while raising the quality of education at undergraduate level. Quality of higher education requires a serious concern in today's challenging competitive world. Teachers have a particular responsibility to recognize and structure their lessons to reflect student differences. Quality education provides strength and encourages students to recognize themselves to compete with global challenges. In the interest of treating students equally, giving them equal chances for success, and equal access to the curriculum, teachers and administrators must recognize the uniqueness and individuality of their students. Quality of higher education at undergraduate level can be enhanced by strengthening four pillars of the University- Student, Teacher, Institute and Infrastructure.

Keywords: Best practices, higher education, quality.

Introduction

Along with the changes and new waves in all the sectors in today's world, there arises the need to bring such wave in the sector of Higher Education. But Higher education is a change-resistant sector, the reason being the change-resistant stakeholders. The prevailing scenario demands the competitiveness in every sector, and to be competitive, the higher education sector has to be innovative and evolutionary. It has to be updated along with the changing Science and Technology, Industry requirements and Globalization. In developing countries like India, Higher Education is facing challenges, because it is becoming increasingly global.

To bring the wave of change in the Higher Education sector, we need to employ certain Best Practices. According to research, best practice is the ability to:

- Demonstrate instructional balance in learning.
- Produce self-directed learners.
- Maintain effective classroom management.

The following best practices stand out in the higher education environment because they are easy to implement and are fully System-oriented.

Faculty-Centred Practices:

Knowledgeable and experienced faculty forms a major part of quality education. If faculty members are having strong weapons of knowledge and skills then it will directly contribute to the quality of education that then will have a great impact on students. Students' learning is directly related to how and what teachers teach. Following are the best practices that will help in enhancing the quality of the faculty:

1. **Research Promotion Cell:** Research programmes for the faculty shall be conducted through the Research and Consultancy Promotion Cell which can strengthen the research activities and interest for the research among the faculty members.
2. **Knowledge Forums:** Knowledge forums are the best places where the knowledge and experiences of the senior faculty members can be shared with the juniors members and new ideas of the young faculty members can be shared with the senior members.
3. **Faculty Development Programmes and Workshops:** Faculty members should take part in Faculty Development Programmes, Conferences, Seminars and Workshops
4. **Practical to Theory Approach:** Teachers should follow the Practical to Theory Approach of teaching wherein the application of a concept is taught first and then the conceptual part. This helps them make the classes more lively and make the students understand the practical aspects of the subject.

Student-Centred Practices:

Students are the best promoters of their institution in the society, but this can be achieved only through building a bond of trust between both. The following best practices stand out in the higher education environment and are fully student-centred:

1. Entry-Level Practices:

- a. **Orientation Programmes:** Colleges should conduct induction Programmes for the first year students so as to introduce them to the College Environment, Course, Faculty, availability of Classrooms, Office Administration, Lab and Library, and other Academic and Co-curricular activities. This helps them to become familiar to the College Environment. An orientation is an experience that helps students know what they most need to know before classes begin.
- b. **Registrations After Classes Begin:** The students who are admitted after the first meeting after the class may be decreasing their chances for success. Late registration correlates with lower grading. As the colleges do not want to block the door to late registrants, instead they can offer late-start classes or intensive experiences for refreshing academic skills.

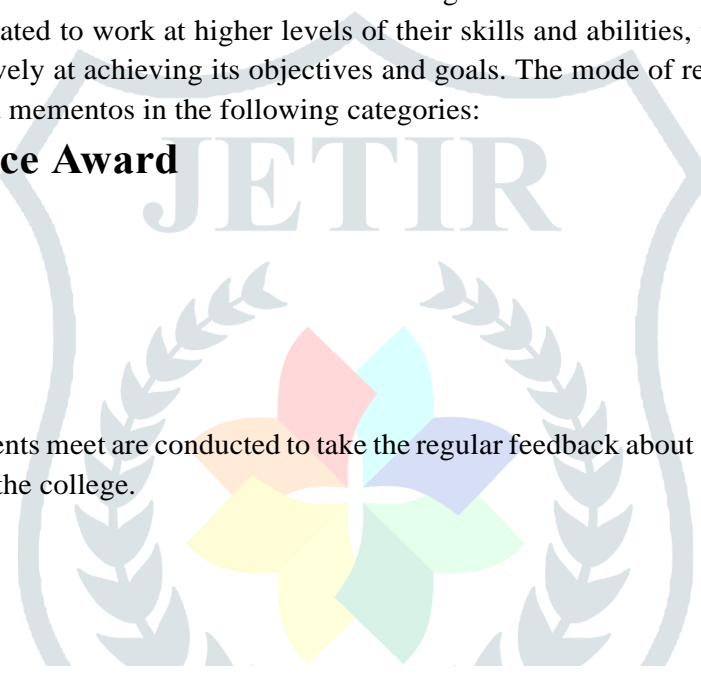
- c. **Student Retention:** First year students particularly need structure in their college lives. Once new students get even a week behind they will be risk of giving up or dropping out. To overcome this, implement a mandatory class policy for first year and other low level courses. Report students who miss more than two classes in succession to their parents.
- d. **Student Engagement:** Students should be made familiar with the syllabus, course material, internal and external examination pattern which may build a culture for effective learning in the course.
- e. **Active Participation in Co-curricular Activities:** Encourage the students to take part not only in the academic activities, but also in campus activities like cultural, sports, honours Programmes, a particular club or departmental activities which they find meaningful.
- f. **First Year Excellence:** Last but not the least, looking for the excellence from the first day is an essential best practice in higher education. The institution that achieves first year excellence place a high priority and institutional identity, flourishes in culture that encourages idea generation, pilot projects and experimentation. But it necessitates both creative acquisition and judicious use of financial resources.

2. Middle and Exit Level Practices:

- a. **Add-on Course Facilities:** The college should conduct Job-oriented Programmes, Free Coaching for PG Entrance, NET, SLET, and other competitive and professional courses for the final year students.
- b. **Remedial Classes for Slow Learners:** Since every student is unique and are of different learning and thinking capabilities, teachers should engage remedial classes for the slow learners and bring them in pace with every others.
- c. **Skill Development Programmes for Marginalized and Rural Students:** Various Programmes to develop communication skills, soft skills, social skills, job skills and etiquettes for the rural and marginalized students is to be undertaken by the colleges.
- d. **Entrepreneurship Development Cell:** Colleges should establish an Entrepreneurship Development Cell in the Campus so as to inculcate the entrepreneurial skills among the students. They can arrange for the Marketing Event for the products prepared by the students. This Cell can contribute to the Government of India initiatives like **Make in India, Start-up India and Skill India**.
- e. **Earn while You Learn:** This programme encourages the students to support themselves while learning by engaging in the part-time employments.
- f. **Industry-Readiness and Employability:** Colleges should arrange for the certification programmes customized to suit the needs of the industry. For this purpose, they must organize the special lectures from the industry professionals on the requirements of the corporate and training Programmes from industry trainers on corporate etiquettes.
- g. **Classroom Participation:** Teachers should encourage the students to take active part in Peer-to-peer Learning (learning with the counterparts), Group and Team Projects, and Divide and Learn (divide the main concept in to smaller topics and learn each topic in depth, and then return to the main concept), which leads to a variety of positive outcomes. These may include improved academic achievement in terms of Percentage and Self-reported Learning.
- h. **Simulated Examinations:** Teachers should conduct Mock Tests and Mock Viva exactly similar to the University examinations, so as to give the experience of simulation.

1 Other Best Practices:

- **Faculty and Student Participation:** Faculty and students participate with each other in various ways. The Faculty will have the opportunity to exchange ideas and observations with the students. The Students will have the opportunity to learn concepts and ideas presented in an entirely new and different manner.
 - The Programme will create a greater bond among the concerned Institutions and will be powerful recruitment and retention tool.
 - **Library-oriented Practices:** Library plays a vital role in fostering the conceptual knowledge of the students. The effectiveness of a library lies the way it puts forth its services to the students and teachers. The present information and communication technology made a tremendous impact on the library operations.
 - Library automation is the application of computers and utilization of computer-based product and services in the performance of different library operations.
 - Libraries can recognize the students for the Best Reader Award to encourage the reading habits of the students.
 - Book exhibitions can be organized on important occasions.
 - Library as a knowledge centre may organize programmes on information handling in the present digital era, knowledge networking, role of librarians in the electronic era, public relation, time management, knowledge-based system. This helps to keep abreast the users about the latest developments and trends in library principles and practices.
 - The libraries should have a collection of national and international
- **Faculty and Student Recognition:** The objective behind this practice is to appreciate the work done by teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students of the institute and encourage them to excel in their areas of expertise. When staff and students are motivated to work at higher levels of their skills and abilities, the institute as a whole runs more efficiently and effectively at achieving its objectives and goals. The mode of reward can be in terms of the appreciation certificates and mementos in the following categories:
 - **Teaching Excellence Award**
 - **Best Class**
 - **Best Department**
 - **Best HOD**
 - **Best Outgoing Student**
 - **Topper of the Class**
 - **Parent-Teacher Meet:** Parents meet are conducted to take the regular feedback about the progress of their ward and overall development of the college.



Conclusion

To keep in pace with the changing demands of the globalized economies like India, the higher education sector, which contributes to the growth and development of an economy, should inculcate the innovative and the best practices over the period of time. Stagnant and rigid systems never allow a new wave to enter itself and thereby make the system stale. But higher education being an essential component of the developed economies, should always be dynamic and flexible. The above suggested best practices in higher education at Under-graduate level are believed to bring a breeze of innovation and redefinition to the higher education system in India.

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