Innovative Practices Initiated By Department Of Management Studies, Christ University, Bengaluru

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Abstract

This research paper summarises the educational research underpinning Department of Management Studies (DMS), Christ University (CU) framework for supporting academics to learn about creativity and innovation in teaching practices. It is for those who want to know more about adopting best practices in higher education in knowledge based economy. Becoming better teachers not only helps student learning but can enhance careers, develop a sense of community and provide personal satisfaction for academics. It serves the social and national cause.

Learning to teach well at university is complex. Academics differ in the skills and experience they bring to teaching, as they differ in the students and courses they teach. Despite these differences, there are commonalties to learning and improving teaching across disciplines. If India is planning to compete globally in ever changing competitive technology driven economies, what best practices can be underpinned is still a problem every education institution not able to solve. In this presentation an attempt has been made to familiarize the practices initiated by the department of management studies, Christ University, to march towards Global Universities by constantly identifying and fulfilling the needs of the their stakeholders. Though the innovations are familiar the practices followed by the department of management studies to impart quality education distinguishes that from other institutions in the country. The author with his experience in the department has made an effort to show to the stakeholders how department try to outperform other under graduate BBA institutions in the country.

Keywords Learning Organisation, stakeholder, core competency, sustainable development

Introduction

According to Kim and Zhu (2010), "The need for higher education has become crucial in the age of globalization, as knowledge-based workforces have become an essential ingredient to acquire and maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace." Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) has been rated number one course offered by Department of Management Studies (DMS), Christ University, Bengaluru, by India Today for three years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 continuously. This compels universities offering similar courses in the country to understand the qualities of an academic entrepreneur in the field of Higher Education in India. It also forces academicians to know how innovation and creativity can add value to student's profile. It empowers education institutions to be always in the list of Learning Organizations. Improving the learning experience will affect how students, employers and society view the experience, product and ultimately, the effectiveness of universities and higher education. Kim and Zhu (2010, p. 165) Today's technologies, serving as a conduit for higher education, can provide networks for the international integration of education and research and be facilitated to a very broad spectrum of learners world-wide with a reduced carbon footprint, at minimal cost and in direct response to the needs of higher education. Today's technologies that are vastly more reliable, versatile and cost effective have made a tremendous impact on our lives, both personally and professionally. Study abroad, international exchange programs, and a diverse faculty base can broaden awareness, but to effectively serve all students we must adapt the subject content and our methods of teaching to gather and exchange information across the international community. This study from Department of Management Studies, Christ University offers a multiple view for a stakeholder that facilitates both institutional and technological synergies for interaction across the clusters for challenging tomorrow.

Innovative practices initiated in Department of Management Studies

1. Interdisciplinary Approach through Team teaching and Co Teaching:

Engaging students and helping them to develop knowledge, insights, problem solving skills, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a passion for learning are common goals that educators bring to the classroom and interdisciplinary instruction and exploration promotes realization of these objectives. Repko (2009) asserts that interdisciplinary instruction fosters advances in cognitive ability and other educational researchers (Kavaloski 1979, Newell 1990, Field et al. 1994, Vess 2009) have identified a number of distinct educational benefits of interdisciplinary learning including gains in the ability to recognize bias, think critically, tolerate ambiguity, acknowledge and appreciate ethical concerns

In team teaching a group of teachers, working together, plan, conduct, and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of students. In practice, team teaching has many different formats but in general it is a means of organizing staff into groups to enhance teaching. To facilitate this process a common teaching space is desirable. However, to be effective team teaching requires much more than just a common meeting time and space. Effective team teaching takes time to develop to its fullest potential. Interdisciplinary instruction helps students develop their cognitive abilities - brain-based skills and mental processes that are needed to carry out tasks. Subjects in Department of Management Studies are shared by three or more faculty members in the department. Be it is Financial Management, Strategic management or languages offered in our department which we outsource from language departments. Team teaching is extensively used for the same. New faculty members were induced through team teaching process at least for one semester.

The general definition of co-teaching involves two equally-qualified individuals who may or may not have the same area of expertise jointly delivering instruction to a group of students. Co teaching if strategically designed it encourages teacher assistance, observational learning, and team teaching. Current Affairs (CA) and Co-curricular (CC) activities follow the same mode of imparting knowledge. It facilitates Significant Learning. Significant Learning (Fink, 2003) takes place when meaningful and lasting classroom experiences occur. According to Fink when teachers impart students with a range of skills, and insights about the educational process that students will see as meaningful and salient to them they promote student engagement in the learning process and greater learning occurs. Team teaching and co teaching is always challenging in higher education because of changing technology and impact of technology on student community, competition from best global Universities, changing pedagogic teaching methodologies, and quality of students in a given University.

2. Industry Academia Interface:

Academia-Industry Interface could be defined as interactive and collaborative arrangement between academic institutions and business corporations for the achievement of certain mutually inclusive goals and objectives. Bisoux (2003) has explored the relationship between academics and industry. He says that corporations are placing growing emphasis on finding the "right person". It forces the academia to think more carefully on whom they hire, and therefore the role of industry in the entire business school model becomes important. Today the industry is playing an increasingly important role in activities of academic institutions to incubate the talent they need so the colleges have to provide a unique platform for interaction between Industry-Academia, where in the actors of the interaction understand the latest trends of Industry-Academia interface keeping in view the perceived benefits and accordingly equip themselves with the skills required in a fast-changing global scenario.

Employers need capable and creative people who know how to solve problems and communicate effectively. Best Universities globally inherently foster the development of higher order critical thinking, problem solving, organization, innovation, and communication skills of their students especially management education. The nature of competency-based education requires that students demonstrate the ability to apply what they know and have learned. Skills demonstrated through these types of learning artifacts provide significant evidence that an employee or potential employee has the ability to contribute to corporate efforts to be successful through innovation and competitive advantage.

Well-aligned curriculum saves time, effort, and money for all involved. Money, effort, and time saving models are extremely attractive to employers who are allowing employees release time from their job responsibilities and are footing the bill for employee education.

Industry oriented curricula in higher education involves project-based learning. It is also shown that the effectiveness of the course can be improved by designing the curriculum using modified Bloom's taxonomy and using various online tools and technologies.

Every semester subjects will get a new shape by considering the changing requirements of corporate/industry. Board of Studies (BOS) consists of experts from academia, alumni and corporate. Through brainstorming session of BOS members modifications in curriculum design, teaching and learning process for coming years are facilitated. Specializations offered from the 5th semester in the areas of Finance, Human Resources Management and Marketing attracts the corporate for placements from the beginning of 3rd semester itself. Credit goes to curriculum design which is both industry oriented and demanded by some of the best International Universities. This is facilitated through Curriculum Development Cell (CDC) in the department. The role of CDC is to interact continuously with industry experts while designing the curriculum. It is mandatory in the department that every subject should be updated through industry interaction headed by CDC chairperson. Other modes of Interface include Guest Lectures by industry representatives, Joint seminars by academia and industry both for executives and students, Consulting on management and related issues by academia. Department have collaborations with Tata Consultancy Services, SAP Labs, Kanara Entrepreneurs Global, MCX (Multi Commodity Exchange) to offer certificate and PG diploma courses in the fields of retail analytics, information technology, family business, Commodity and Currency Derivative Markets etc.

3. Building core competency:

A core competency is a concept in management theory introduced by, C. K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel. It can be defined as "a harmonized combination of multiple resources and skills that distinguish a firm in the marketplace". Core competencies fulfill three criteria:

1. Provides potential access to a wide variety of markets.

2. Should make a significant contribution to the perceived customer benefits of the end product.

3. Difficult to imitate by competitors.

One straightforward reason is today's job-market, which in many fields is becoming ever increasingly competitive. To be successful in this tough environment, candidates for jobs have to bring along a "competitive edge" that distinguishes them from other candidates with similar qualifications and comparable evaluation results. And where do they find this competitive advantage? In bringing along additional knowledge and skills, added up by convincing personal traits and habits.

"We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn." Peter Drucker. Starting from the course plan preparation to class room delivery faculty will add value by imbibing the culture of continuous learning. Challenging student community and academic community becomes the core competence of department in general and in CU as whole. Continuous research and publication at global front by the department faculties and students of the department makes the teaching focused and vibrant in class room execution.

Soft skills are shaping human beings' personality. Any educator's dream is that graduates, especially from tertiary education institutions, should not only be experts in a certain field but matured personalities with a well balanced, rounded off education. However, this characteristic is reflected in soft skills, not in hard skills.

Live projects are introduced in the curriculum every semester to bridge the skill gap that exists in the industry. Projects are addressed in all the areas starting form societal skills to modern entrepreneurial skills. These skills are critically evaluated by internal experts and students are prepared not only join the best corporate but to facilitate their family business or to have their own start up companies. Interestingly less than 30 per cent of final year BBA students take up placements, rest focus more on entrepreneurship as their destiny. Research paper presentation and publication in international referred journals jointly by faculty members and students have given scope for student centered learning, which is a new mantra today for students' holistic development. Serving to society in the form of outreach programmes to villages, child sponsorship, community development, is part of student contribution to society.

4. Continuous Learning through Continuous Internal Assessment (CIA) and Skill Development:

According to the psychologist Daniel Goleman, soft skills contribute to a person's ability to manage him or herself and relate to other people – skills which matter twice as much as IQ or technical skills in job success. Based on the research, seven soft skills have been identified and chosen to be implemented. They are:

i. Communicative skills   ii. Thinking and problem solving skills   iii. Teamwork dynamics
iv Life-long learning and information management   v. Entrepreneurship skills
vi. Ethics and professionalism   vii. Leadership skills

Continuous Learning in DMS means continuous internal assessments, management fests, cultural fests, international internship, current affairs, and co curricular activities and so on. Creativity and Innovation in conducting and evaluating the student community makes stakeholders to look Christ University as temple of Attitude, Skill and Knowledge. The components of CIA take the form of review of articles, simulation exercises, case analysis, role play, internship to cote few. It helps students mind sharp and skill fresh. It facilitates competency level of students. It gives variety of options for students to explore their career opportunities. Advantage of this type of learning is in the process of evaluating CIAs even the faculty members learn. It becomes a win-win strategy for student individual growth and faculty development. Strengthening courses through innovative CIAs calls for further research globally. Finance Club, Marketing Club, Human Resource Club, Entrepreneurship Development Cell, and Theatre Team, are some of the department vibrant groups who constantly do need assessment and fulfil the same for the students. Research is one area where both students are faculty members try to outperform the contemporary areas of management.

5. Mentoring and Peer Mentoring:

A situation in which a more experienced member of an organization maintains a relationship with a less experienced, often new member to the organization and provides information, support, and guidance so as to

enhance the less experienced member's chances of success in the organization and beyond. (Campbell, T,, & Campbell, D., 1997, p. 727)

Across research studies, common characteristics of mentoring emerge (Eby, Rhodes and Allen 2007). They include: A learning partnership between a more experienced and a less experienced individual (Garvey and Alred 2003); a process involving emotional (friendship, acceptance, support) and instrumental (information, coaching, advocacy, sponsorship) functions (Jacobi 1991; Kram 1985); and a relationship that becomes more impactful over time (Grossman and Rhodes 2002). Others discuss nurturing the mentee's social and psychological development, serving as a role model, and providing support for goal setting and future planning (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Roberts 2000; Miller 2002).

In Department of Management Studies, Academic Coordinators facilitate students as mentors and support faculty members through peer mentoring. Every Academic coordinator will have on an average 70 mentees every academic year spread across all three years of BBA and minimum 3 faculty member to mentor every semester, which is very challenging role for academic coordinators. In reality to become an academic coordinator is a privilege and honor which calls for balancing interpersonal, personal and societal skills in the department. Because such benefits can arise from mentoring programs, it is important that such programs are done well. While mentoring can have a significant impact on the student/mentee, when the student serves as mentor, there are also a number of positive outcomes on the student mentors' development. Peer mentoring is a mutual way of learning and allowing both participants to develop transferable skills that will help them during their time at university and beyond.

Mentoring must be seen as both a formal and an informal activity within the department, and one which encompasses guidance on teaching, research and service in the academy in addition to external measures of success such as in which journals one publishes.

6. International approach:

Global education and international education are important because the day-to-day lives of average citizens around the world are influenced by burgeoning international connections. The goods we buy, the work we do, the cross-cultural links we have in our own communities and outside of them, and increased worldwide communication capabilities all contribute to an imperative that responsible citizens understand global and international issues.

In studying the traditions, history, and current challenges of other cultures, the perspective consciousness of our students must be raised and ethnocentric barriers must be addressed. The social studies curriculum should provide a forum for discussion of issues of inequity and unfairness, racism, and power in and among societies.

Multiculturalism is a component of interdisciplinary curricula, but it must be distinguished from global and international education. Multicultural issues focus on accepting people from many cultural backgrounds within a political entity, whereas global and international education moves far outside of one 'sown country. Studying the common threads and themes of daily live in other countries helps students see the human condition, clarifying their understanding that across the globe, people share common concerns, but find solutions in different ways.

The Internet is one tool among a wide array of technological resources that is revolutionizing the access to up-to-date information that social studies teachers can utilize in teaching a global perspective.

Internationalizing course would require students to develop new global competencies. These include mastering the ability to navigate and adapt intercultural attitudes and sensitivities, manage conflict, and relate current affairs and evolving international trends and strategies. Intercultural competency has become an extremely important skill as a result of the cultural diversity manifested in the marketplace. (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 337) Developing intercultural competence is also stressed by Paige and Goode (2009) who explain that those who receive such training have more expertise and confidence dealing with cultural issues than those who do not (pp. 333-349). Internationally collaborative learning has been in practice at many universities for decades. According to Faculties the interaction provided great benefits to their students. Teachers unanimously agreed that interaction enabled everyone to discover something significant through the process; it motivated students, re-energized class discussions and opened new dimensions of awareness and knowledge, and ultimately improved the student learning experience. Department of Management Studies offers an opportunity for their students through international internship, twinning programmes with Griffith University, Swansea University, Western Michigan University, Liverpool Hope University, and Sheffield Hallam University to make students globally competitive. BBA Second year students will identify companies globally and have summer internship

for 45 days with the support of faculty guide. This has ended up with positive results like students getting final job offer, discover new area for their higher education, focused research, publication and so on.

7. Multidisciplinary approach:

A multidisciplinary approach involves drawing appropriately from multiple <u>disciplines</u> to redefine problems outside of normal boundaries and reach solutions based on a new understanding of <u>complex</u> situations. One of the biggest barriers to achieving true interdisciplinary study in education environments is the necessity for collaboration of educators. This can be difficult to achieve, but not impossible. Interdisciplinary teaching and learning is maximised when professionals from different disciplines work together to serve a common purpose and to help students make the connections between different disciplines or subject areas. Such interaction is in support of the constructivist paradigm which allows for new knowledge construction and a deeper understanding of ideas than disciplinary study.

Department has introduced optional electives for first year BBA students where in students have given an opportunity to explore in the areas of media studies, law, hospitality, information technology, psychology, sociology, and so on. Students are given a choice to choose any one subject in odd semester among seven options. Similarly seven new options for the even semester were offered to facilitate and strengthen student knowledge horizon. By the end of first year BBA, students have leaned two multidisciplinary subjects of their interests. Important benefits to students are real world learning, not isolated educational experiences. Students are highly motivated as they have a vested interest in pursuing topics that are interesting to them. As a result, the content is often rooted in life experiences, giving an authentic purpose for the learning and connecting it to a real world context. Consequently, the learning becomes meaningful, purposeful and deeper resulting in learning experiences that stay with the student for a lifetime. Provides more ways for students to learn and demonstrate their skills and understandings. Encourages students to become personally invested in their work (since they are given the privilege and responsibility of making choices about what and how they learn and demonstrate their learning). Critical thinking skills are used and developed as students look across disciplinary boundaries to consider other viewpoints and also begin to compare and contrast concepts across subject areas.

8. Technological approach:

The technological developments force educators to rethink not only how learning might be approached but, as a result of these very developments, how new learning outcomes will be both possible and necessary. Global communications within learning communities will create opportunities for cross-cultural knowledge development. The challenge is to turn e-information into human knowledge. This is not a technological problem but a social challenge that requires an educational solution. The value of e- Learning is not in its faster access to information, but in its capacity to facilitate communication and thinking and thereby construct meaning and knowledge.

According to Kim and Zhu (2010), "The need for higher education has become crucial in the age of globalization, as knowledge-based workforces have become an essential ingredient to acquire and maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace." Kim and Zhu (2010, p. 165) Today's technologies, serving as a conduit for higher education, can provide networks for the international integration of education and research and be facilitated to a very broad spectrum of learners world-wide with a reduced carbon footprint, at minimal cost and in direct response to the needs of higher education.

Educational technology is the effective use of technological tools in learning. As a concept, it concerns an array of tools, such as media, machines and networking hardware, as well as considering underlying theoretical perspectives for their effective application.

The new global knowledge economy is based on the creation, dissemination and exploitation of data, information and knowledge. This is one of the dominant features of the twenty-first century. The extended use of the potential offered by information and communication technologies (ICT) has enabled changes in the way people live, work, interact and acquire knowledge. Successful education and training in our knowledge society depend on the confident, competent and innovative use of ICT.

Educational technology includes numerous types of media that deliver text, audio, images, animation, and streaming video, and includes technology applications and processes such as audio or video tape, satellite TV, CD-ROM, and computer-based learning, as well as local intranet/extranet and <u>web</u>-based learning.

Department provide course plans and course schedules prior to the commencement of the academic session through online. Department formally encourages blended learning by using e-learning resources. Most of the students teaching, learning and evaluation happen through online in the form of literature review, power point presentations, video making, chart preparation, case analysis and so on. Students will complete minimum one online course offered online from the best universities globally before they complete their under graduation.

Conclusion

An innovative practice in higher education is not panacea. It cannot replace traditional methods of teaching, learning and evaluation. For these reasons I argue that innovative methods shall be applied and introduced in collaboration with the traditional ones. Universities must forge a variety of ways to gather and exchange global information. Ultimately, changing the learning experience will change the effectiveness of higher education. Universities should provide mentors with ongoing support in arranging structured and engaging activities with their mentees. A structured process for mentoring increases the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. It will evolve as ongoing creative exploration that integrates resources and adaptive methodologies through cutting-edge technologies. Educators have a special responsibility regarding soft skills, because during students' School and University time they have major impact on the development of their students' soft skills. Besides raising awareness regarding the importance of soft skills and encouraging students to improve their skills, lecturers should actively practice soft skills with their students. A very effective and efficient way of doing this is to include soft skills training into the teaching of hard skills. Sustainable development is what Department of Management Studies (DMS) Department is planning to achieve by being innovative always to fulfill the current and future needs of their stakeholders. Interestingly stakeholders of DMS are global. This inspires the faculty members in the department to draw the framework to work towards becoming a global university in the near future.

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