

Applicability of benchmarking in professional institute - a lead to survival

S. N. Pyne □

Taking the students, parents, employers and society as the main customers of a professional institute the author indicates the benchmarking issues and indices that can be applied to a professional institute.

With technological development in particular in the IT sector and evolution of advanced professional techniques to cater present management needs, existing professions as well as professional institutes and higher educational institutes are facing severe competition. Education is no longer Social Service but it now falls under service Industry. To survive in this fierce competition, each profession vis-a-vis professional institute is to follow the present practice of a robust quality management system where Benchmarking plays a vital role.

The round table on Internationalisation of higher education (2002) recommends an open door policy for education academic restructure, cafeteria type of approach (choice of subjects and courses by the customer) and internationalisation of curriculum. New and new type of profession will invade India to replace existing profession.

Thus, the survival of profession vis-a-vis the institute is required to be customer focus oriented and Benchmarking is a tool to achieve customer satisfaction.

Bench Marking

Benchmarking is the continuous, systematic process of measuring one's output and/or work processes against the toughest competitors or those recognised best in industry (Service).

However, Benchmarking should not be treated as just comparison. It is necessary to have a point of reference to know how well one is doing. Comparing the results with a competitor helps the management to set a goal that is both desirable and achievable but provides no clue on how the goals are to be achieved. It is comparison of work progress that tells us how the competitor follows a process which produces outstanding results and this is the essence of Benchmarking.

Benchmarking ATE of 3 (Three) Types :

Internal Benchmarking, Competitive Benchmarking and Functional Benchmarking. Whereas. Internal Benchmarking is exhorting to use the best processes within the organisation. Competitive Benchmarking is to analyse and follow the competitors processes resulting to his achieving outstanding performance. While doing so. the institute may look for the best beyond the type of service it is engaged in. For example, for response to students, members the Institute may chose a Benchmark in Hotel Industry where effective and quick response to the customer is a key to success. Hence, Functional Benchmarking is not restricted only within the type of service industry but moves beyond own type of activities.

Implementation

It is earlier mentioned that professional institute or higher academic institutes now form a segment of service industry. Consequently the basic principles to run an Organisation are, to be followed. Basic princi-

ples are Customer Focus - Leadership - Involvement of concerned people - Process Approach- System Approach - Continual Improvement - Factual Approach to decision making and mutually beneficial supplier relationship.

In each process, it is necessary to fix a Benchmark which may be of a competitor or of other industry. But to do so, one is to ascertain who are the customers in Educational Institute or professional Institute. The customers are: Students, Parents, Society, Employers. Alumni, as well as internal customers like faculty and employees etc. The Benchmarking may be : (INDICATIVE AND NOT EXHAUSTIVE).

For Students - Percentage of success in examination.

- Period by which one become successful.
- Absorption rate in industry or self employment.
- Hierarchy at which the successful students are absorbed by employers etc.

For Members - Absorption rate in employment/self employment after passing examination.

Reciprocal recognitions of Foreign Institutes for opportunities abroad./ Building image to ensure dependance of Government (Central and States) on the profession for engaging alumnis in enhancing revenue earning and checking leakage of revenue. Effectiveness of interaction with cham-

bers of commerce, industry resulting in growth of scope of the profession.

Involvement of successful alumnis to create more opportunities for members etc.

For Parents - Tuition fees and the rate of return after absorption etc.

For Employers - Curriculum meeting the requirements of industry.
- Contribution of alumnis of the institute to the growth of the Company.

- Usefulness of the profession in specialised needs of the management etc.

For Society - Research work by the institute in setting direction to improve economy.

- Assistance to the state to bring control on leakage of revenue and reduction of waste/ wasteful practices etc.

In each sector, the leadership is to be innovative to fix up Benchmarks e.g. "Absorption rate of successful examinees is equal to that of MBA" or examination success rate is equal to that of CIMA or other educational institutes etc.

By just comparing the output one does not justify Benchmarking. It is the existing processes and systems which are required to be analysed for continual improvement only when the Benchmarking process will be successful and this will imply introduction of a good Quality Management System based on aforesaid 8

principles. The System is required to be also supplemented by TQM concept i.e. Customer focus, people focus and process focus.

Conclusion

It will be the responsibility of the leaders - Council Members or Board of Directors of Educational Institute to be innovative enough to fix up Benchmarks based on personal experience or shared views of others. The leaders are also to introduce a documented Quality Management System with the scope of monitoring and measuring the processes and products to achieve continual improvement through Benchmarking. However, in one thrust no one can reach the top it is a continual process but delay to adopt a scientific process will definitely endanger the survival of the profession inspite of protection from statutes.

Customers' satisfaction is final word for survival. Sooner the customer's requirements in each segment are identified and actions taken to augment customers satisfaction, better is the chance of meeting the goals of any professional institute.

It will be the ultimate responsibilities of leaders to guide the destiny of any profession and leaders will be recognised out of six 'E's.

- 1) Encouraging breaking away from business as usual
- 2) Envisioning the future
- 3) Enlisting the support of others
- 4) Empowering people
- 5) Exemplifying by personal action
- 6) Encouraging the action of others that support the movement forward.

□