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A study of benchmarking of higher secondary schools in Thanjavur district

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Abstract

On this backdrop the quality of education in this country has been analyzed and discussed elsewhere in different forums across the modern India. There are different monitoring agencies and different regulatory authorities in this country. There are different modes and different streams of education such as State Board, Matriculation, CBSE, ICSC, Navodaya, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Sainik schools, International school and Self supporting school.

The school which is a miniature of the society in itself is an instrument for betterment of all concerned. Its proper development is therefore the concern of all. A lot of human and material resources are poured into it by the society which wants to modify and modernize itself as per the needs and aspirations of its members.

Keywords: Bench marking, higher secondary schools, TQM

1. Introduction

The destiny of a nation is moulded within the four walls of its classrooms. Any society needs education to be a civilized one. The educational institutions are the makers of a civilized society. These institutions at various levels are nurturing the children to become civilized men in the future. From time immemorial education has been the most debated subject. The educational institutions all over the years have witnessed a sea-change.

The British rule has changed the dimension and the sphere of education in our country. On the path laid down by the British the independent India has evolved its own educational policies. Globalization has made it possible for foreign educational institutions to land in our country. The country is getting ready to invite foreign schools and universities to open their branches in this country in the ensuing years.

On this backdrop the quality of education in this country has been analyzed and discussed elsewhere in different forums across the modern India. There are different monitoring agencies and different regulatory authorities in this country. There are different modes and different streams of education such as State Board, Matriculation, CBSE, ICSC, Navodaya, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Sainik schools, International school and Self-backup school.

The school which is a miniature of the society in itself is an instrument for betterment of all concerned. Its proper development is therefore the concern of all. A lot of human and material resources are poured into it by the society which wants to modify and modernize itself as per the needs and aspirations of its members.

In the present day world every individual and organization strives to accomplish excellence in their sphere. Benchmarking is an attempt to adopt exemplary practices elsewhere to uplift the organization in question. The present research attempts to orient the higher secondary schools in Thanjavur district towards benchmarking and thereby creating a new impact.

2. Benchmarking

It is a higher level of quality achieved by an outstanding trendsetter which others may by and large try to accomplish. Benchmarking is a process of identifying, understanding and adopting exemplary practices elsewhere to enrich and execute the task in one's hands.

The American productivity and quality centre benchmarking model (www.apqc.org) breaks the benchmarking process into four main stages-viz,

1. Plan
2. Collect data

3. Analyze data
4. Adapt and improve

There are two mainly major categories of information that can be used for benchmarking.

One is financial information and another qualitative evaluation.

Success creates the illusion that everything is being done as well as possible. It can also lead to complacency about the businesses long-term prospects. Constantly evaluating one's institution against other successful institutions will provide a valuable reality check and will indicate areas where improvement can be made.

This is one of the most widely used techniques in TQM organizations and is essentially an exercise in comparative analysis. In the commercial sector it is examining a competitor's product to establish in what ways they are better, or worse, test the quality and examine customer satisfaction.

Benchmarking has already been taking place in education. It is one of the principal reasons for attending courses and conferences and reading the educational press. In essence it is about finding good ideas and ways to improve existing practices. However it may be more appropriate to adapt a more systematic and detailed approach. This process works best with a specialist team although it may well draw on the experience and expertise of a range of teams.

3. Educational Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a universal phenomenon. It is also applicable in providing total quality management in educational institutions. Every one of us is aware of the popular saying that "there is always room for betterment". Hence by applying the concepts of benchmarking attempts have been made to realize the long cherished dream of quality education.

A school is a mini society, planned organized and run by the wider society for its betterment in the long run. Education is the instrument by which the society dreams to transform itself as per its aspirations and needs.

The school management or the governing council is the directive, controlling and energizing body responsible for the day to day administrative affairs of the educational institution. It strives to eliminate the pitfalls in the system and realizing the vision and motto of the institution. The management is the utilizing force which initiates the process of inspiring all the stakeholders-the staff, the students, the parents and the society.

This process can be carried out on the basis of good practice in different schools.

However it is likely to be more effective within a school. What happens in other teams, departments and classrooms is likely to be a powerful source for improvement. Internal benchmarking has the additional advantage of helping and supporting review and development processes.

The present study endeavours the identification of unique academic and management practices adopted by the higher secondary schools in the Thanjavur district. Further the study is an attempt to rank the selected schools in the Thanjavur district.

4. Significance of the Study

In Tamil Nadu education is delivered at different levels-primary, secondary and higher secondary. Hundreds of

schools are functioning in the state with different forms and with different standards. There are schools which are offering higher secondary education alone. Contrary to this there are schools which are functioning upto fifth standard. There are government higher secondary schools and hundred percent self-financing schools. In these schools, different educational practices, different styles of management, different teaching methodologies and different qualities are in existence.

Depending upon the educational ambience, the quality of students and their competency are formed. Special practices in teaching and in management are adopted by different higher secondary schools of Tamil Nadu. In the corporate world benchmark concept has been applied to identify the outstanding practices to improve the performance of the organization.

This present study is an attempt to identify and understand the outstanding practices relating to educational standard and financial control elsewhere in the higher secondary schools of Tamil Nadu in general and to improve the functioning of higher secondary schools in Thanjavur District, in particular. In brief the application of benchmark concept in the educational arena particularly in higher secondary education is the prime objective of the present study.

5. Statement of the Problem

At the all India level the state of Tamil Nadu is a pioneer in the field of education. To enhance teaching and service delivery, learning process of students and to improve the efficiency of the management of the schools, the Government of Tamil Nadu has appointed various committees and introduced novel system of education and brought about transparent teachers appointment system. Over the years in the past the quality of education has improved significantly. But the difference in the forms of organization of these schools has made the school education highly volatile.

There are a good number of factors inherent in the culture of learning, teaching and service delivery. Generally schools are aiming at enhancing student academic achievement, personality development and inculcation of citizenship values. To attain these objectives the schools must possess several benchmarking qualities. To identify the unique qualities of the higher secondary schools in the study area and to ranking them the study is made. The ranking of the schools based on their features in consonance with the accreditation of the colleges and universities at the national level by the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC), this study has been under taken with the following objectives.

6. Objectives of the Study

This study has been made with the following broad objectives:

1. To know the profile of the higher secondary schools in Thanjavur district.
2. To study the working of the higher secondary schools in the study area.
3. To apply the benchmarking concept in the sample schools.
4. To evaluate the performance of the schools during the study period.

7. Scope of the Study

The study pertains to higher secondary schools in Thanjavur district and the study covers a period of three years that is from the academic year 2011-12 to 2013-14.

The study has approached the higher secondary schools from three angles. That is learning practices, teaching methods and management practices and accordingly the relevant data were collected from the sample schools.

8. Methodology

The study under taken has been explorative in nature and hence survey method of study was found suitable and it is adhered.

9. Sampling Method

9.1 Area of the study

The area of the present study is confined to the Thanjavur district which consists of eight taluks.

10. Population of the Study

The study is pertinent to higher secondary schools in Thanjavur district only. In the study area there are 192 total number of higher secondary schools. Out of which there are 87 government higher secondary schools, 37 aided higher secondary schools and 52 matriculation higher secondary schools, 4 adi-draavidar welfare higher secondary schools, 2 Municipality higher secondary schools, also there are 10 self-financing higher secondary schools

11. Sampling

In the area of the study that is in Thanjavur district, there are Government and private sector schools functioning both in the urban and rural area. From these schools samples are selected considering the profile of these schools. In each segment of the higher secondary schools that is government, aided and matriculation higher secondary schools, 15 schools were selected purposively. Hence purposive sampling method was adopted and the sample size of the study is 45. A pilot study was conducted and on the basis of the pilot study, the interview schedule designed.

12. Data Collection

The data required for the study has been both primary and secondary. The primary data were collected through administering the pre-designed interview schedule. The required information was elicited from the secretary and correspondent of the private schools and Headmasters of both the private and Government higher secondary schools. The teaching method and information relating to extra and co-curricular activities were obtained from the concerned subject teachers of various disciplines.

13. Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected were processed after the completion of the schedule. Thereafter the data were properly tabulated. For the analysis of the table's appropriate mathematical tools such as co-efficient and rank-correlation, "t" test, "F" test, Chi-square tests and apart from these mathematical tools, percentages were also used wherever required. For the analysis and interpretation of the tables, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used.

14. Formulation of Hypothesis

The present study is mostly empirical and the purpose of the

study is to identify the factors which are unique and based on this an attempt is made to benchmark the sample units of this study. To achieve this objective hypothesis were framed. For testing hypothesis "t" test, "F" test and Chi-square tests have been used in the study.

15. Original Contribution

Benchmarking is a standard of quality which can be used by the other organizations to achieve as a goal. It is nothing but adopting the outstanding practices to improve the level of performance of the organizations. It includes identification of the unique practices of an organization in the industry and comparing with that of the practices prevailing in the own organization. The benchmarking concept has been widely used in the corporate world. As a part and parcel of total quality management the concept is used in the present study to identify the unique practices adopted by the higher secondary schools in the study area and also the study portrays the teaching methods and management process of sample schools. In this sense the study is novel one and contributes toward uplifting the level of education not only in the study area but in the whole of the country and it may open new vistas for the further research.

16. Conclusion

The study was launched with the main objective of finding out the exemplary practices of the higher secondary schools in the Thanjavur district. To achieve this objective the functioning of the schools were classified as learning process, teaching methods and management process. By eliciting the information from the sample schools and processing them, it was found that in the arena of teaching methods and teaching process, the aided schools are performing well. Contrary to this the matriculation schools have produced the best results. But the Government schools have ranked the final spot in all the three area of the study.

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