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SWOT ANALYSIS IN THE RURAL DEGREE COLLEGES OF ASSAM- AN ASSESSMENT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool, useful for planning and decision-making within an institution, organization or business. It is quite helpful to analyse the performance and planning for further development and progress of the organization, and provide answers through SWOT (Strengths,

Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, to some very relevant questions for future development and difficulties faced by the educational institution. In view of that experience, one looks for opportunities provided by such an analysis. The very purpose of the paper is to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of rural degree colleges of Assam and to identify the various factors to enhance the proper utilization of opportunities. Further, the paper will cover recommendations to convert the weaknesses and threats into appropriate and relevant opportunities. With the objective of achieving quality and excellence in higher education system in Assam of India, this study will provide a basis to decision makers to explore opportunities and minimize the external threat as the



study is empirical in nature.

KEYWORDS :SWOT, Rural, College, Assam .

INTRODUCTION :

ISWOT is a simple, easy-to-understand technique. It is used in formulating strategies and policies for the purpose of quality administration by the administrators. SWOT is analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an educational process or activities of an educational

institution as a whole or of a state or a nation. It is an action research where in we would like to improve the service provision and practice of the higher education system rather than to produce knowledge. It reveals development opportunities as well as vulnerabilities to internal organizational and external environmental changes. In many cases, most of the professionals devote a lot of time to deliver high quality service but because of absence of useful project management methods among them, it increases the professional's work hours and reduces their job satisfaction. In this context, SWOT analysis may enjoy consistent popularity among the educational institutions. SWOT is designed for the preliminary stages of decision-making and as a precursor to strategic planning in various kinds of applications (Skeese, M.E., 2002). Threats are conditions outside the organization's direct control and endanger the integrity and profitability of the college or organization. (Hill C.W.L. and Jones, 2004). It is to mention that collegiate institutions can do lots of practices of SWOT analysis as UGC has been continuously emphasizing on up-gradation of quality education. In this regard, present scenario of collegiate education can be highlighted with the help of the following table.

Table No.1
Table-1 showing the Growth of Collegiate Education in India since Independence

| Year | Colleges | Enrolment(Million) |
|-----------|----------|--------------------|
| 1947-48 | 500 | 0.18 |
| 1950-51 | 578 | 0.28 |
| 1960-61 | 1819 | 0.60 |
| 1970-71 | 3278 | 2.0 |
| 1980-81 | 4738 | 2.8 |
| 1990-91 | 5748 | 4.4 |
| 2000-01 | 11,146 | 8.8 |
| 2007-08 | 18627 | 11.5 |
| 2010-11 | 33023 | 16.9 |
| 2012-2013 | 34908 | 22 |

(Data Source: AISHE Report Published on September, 2013, Provisional)

The table cited above gives a clear picture about the changing scenario of the country's higher education since the time of Independence. Describing the growth of higher educational institutions in India in past 60 years it can be said that in 1950, the total number of colleges were 695. In 2013, the numbers of colleges has grown 30 folds being 34,908.

Assam, the prominent state of North-eastern region is also marching ahead in establishing educational institutions for imparting degree level education which is reflected in the following table:

Table No.2
Table showing the expansion of higher education in Assam since 1947 to 2012

| YEAR | TOTAL HIGHER EDUCATION NSTITUATES | TOTAL ENROLMENT |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1947-48 | 16 | 5439 |
| 1950-51 | 19 | 7149 |
| 1960-61 | 35 | 25243 |
| 1970-71 | 99 | 58575 |
| 1980-81 | 139 | 1,11075 |
| 1990-91 | 186 | 2,09967 |
| 2005-2006 | 369 | 217652 |
| 2011-2012 | 464 | 5,03,416 |

In this background an attempt has been undertaken to carry out a study on the analysis of strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges of the rural degree colleges of Assam.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Considering the existing situations in the colleges of Assam, the problem has been stated as “SWOT analysis in the Rural Degree Colleges of Assam-An Assessment Study”.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Assam has one of the most widespread networks of higher educational institutions in the north-eastern region of India. The Government of Assam introduced number of education polices to create a center of attention for aspiring students all across the north eastern region. But in real situations, these are not implemented. SWOT analysis is an effective way to find out strengths and threats as well as weakness and opportunities of higher educational institutions which will help in developing congenial atmosphere and a good academic climate in the institutions. After an extensive literature search, not a single study or publication of SWOT analysis was found from any of the degree colleges of Assam. But it is an important area of study for the very purpose of quality enhancement in collegiate level education. In order to fill this existing research gap and for the sake of quality products in the society, it needs serious attention from the researchers, academicians, educational administrators and policy-makers. Not only that, this study will help the rural educational institutions in Situational analysis of Educational status and identification of each of responsible factors to enhance the proper utilization of resources.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of rural degree colleges.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is delimited to fifteen NAAC accredited rural degree colleges affiliated to Gauhati University of Assam.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

T. L. Adepoju and O. A. Famade (2010) in their research paper “The application of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for managing vocational and technical education (VTE) programmes for improved efficiency in Nigeria” highlighted on the current status of vocational and technical education programmes (VTE) in Nigeria and the major innovations of the Nigerian Government in the recent times in the sector vis-à-vis, the demands of the modern world for vocational and technological development. It therefore, proposes a paradigm shift in the operation of VTE programmes in institutions of learning in Nigeria for improved efficiency through the application of The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis which has been an effective and useful tool for decision making in several organizations in recent times.

Mahajan, A. and Sharma, D. (2012) carried out a study on “A Technical SWOT Analysis of ICT Facilities: Jammu University, Jammu, India” with the objective of achieving quality and excellence in higher education system in Jammu and Kashmir region. This study provides a basis to decision makers to exploit opportunities and minimize the external threats. Guided by the initiatives of National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT) and National Knowledge Network (NKN) for SWOT analysis, findings of this paper reveal, relative consistency of their categories of universities, with the

earlier study. A few opportunities, with focus on problem solving orientation in higher education, have been made to strengthen the leadership of universities in the field of ICT.

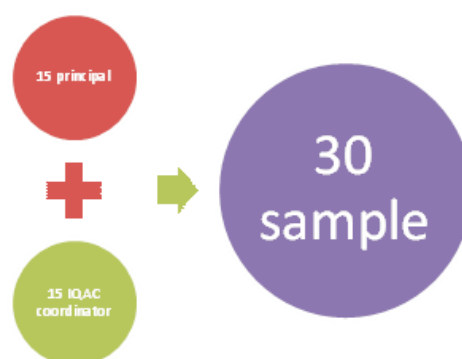
Ayub, A., Razzaq, A., Aslam, M. & Iftekar H. (2013) focused on Conceptual Framework on Evaluating SWOT Analysis as the Mediator in Strategic Marketing Planning through Marketing Intelligence. The purpose of paper was to investigate the importance of marketing intelligence on strategic marketing planning using SWOT analysis for evaluation. Moreover, the paper aims to examine the critical issues of SWOT analysis and seeks a systematic way to head them.

Sathidevi, V.K. and Dr. Sivadas, M.G (2013) conducted study on “SWOT Analysis of Medical Education and training in Government Medical College, Kerala, India” with the objective of identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Government Medical College, Thrissur, Kerala and to identify factors to enhance the proper utilization of opportunities.

Kayande, P. and Barhate, M. (2014) in their paper “Higher Education in India : A SWOT Analysis” discussed the historical comparison of India and rest of the world on economic and educational platforms. It also explores new requirements by following deep SWOT Analysis of present Higher Education as practiced in India in the present world economic scenario. Further, the paper recommended suggestions to convert the weaknesses so as to upgrade them to matching requirements acceptable to the world academicians and prospective pupils and also to review and analyze the existing threats and growing needs so as to convert threats into appropriate and relevant opportunities

METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

- Descriptive survey method has been applied in the present study
- Population of The Study- The population of the study comprises to all the 254 colleges affiliated to Gauhati University of Assam.
- Sample- The sample selected for the study is 15 rural based degree colleges taken from different regions of the state. Total 15 Principals and 15 I.Q.A.C. coordinators of the sample institutions, total 30 were selected as the sample of the study. The population from which sample institutions have been drawn is a homogeneous group by geographical location. All the colleges are NAAC accredited. The sample can be presented with the help of the following smart-art:



- Sampling Plan- The respondents were selected by Purposive sampling procedure.
- Tool Used and Description of the Tools- One Interview schedule was prepared by the investigator and it was applied for asking questions to the respondents. The schedule was general in nature pertaining to demographic details of the college, duration of holding the chair of principal and IQAC coordinator and questions were asked on strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the colleges.

•Statistical techniques- In the present study, data have been recorded and analyzed with the help of tables in descriptive way.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The SWOT Analysis of the sampled Institutions was done on the basis of the responses provided by the principals and I.Q.A.C. coordinators. The qualitatively analyzed data is summarized in table 3 as Strengths and Weaknesses and in table 4 as Opportunities and Threats. All the findings presented here were common responses or informations expressed by all the sample respondents.

TABLE NO. 3

| STRENGTH | WEAKNESS |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homely environment for students, teachers, non-teaching staff • strongly student centered and student focused environment • Active support services like NCC, NSS, Health care unit, Bharat Scout and Guide, Red Ribbon club and department forum etc • transparent admission system • Cooperative parent guardian environment • Healthy academic environment • Good teacher-student relation • well connected with and very well supported by its retired faculty • Excellent demographic profile and Diverse faculty in terms of ethnicity and gender • Faculty members are supportive of each other • A strong ambience of mutual cooperation and teamwork, along with collective leadership. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure is inadequate, colleges need constructing additional buildings • Inadequate number of Teaching & Non-Teaching Staff • Lack of appreciation/recognition of faculty work • poor sanitation • Web sites are out of date and not responsive to user needs • No policy for enrolment control • Faculty load inequities and responsibilities across programs • Local students are their target customer. • Poor communication • Lack of competitiveness among the members • Lack of Teaching learning materials supported by ICT material • Lack of sports facilities. • Inadequate library system |

TABLE NO.4

| THREATS/CHALLENGES | OPPORTUNITIES |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration of students to urban areas colleges • Low Quality Inputs • Volatile political environment • Insurgency • Natural calamities such as floods • Threat from Implementing the sudden Govt. Policies • Political pressures related to accountability, accessibility and Appointment • Introduction of Morning shift, Evening shift classes as additional load • Uncontrolled Increase in number of students' enrolment • Foreign university entering into Indian education system is considered as big threat • Choice Based Credit System at undergraduate level with high enrolment provision. • Higher Secondary Classes and examinations • Online examination procedure of university for affiliated colleges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital library • Summer classes offer at the graduate level • Up gradation of internet Bandwidth at regular intervals • School/ Village adoption as Best Practice • E- learning and virtual class rooms • Placement opportunity arranging campus in the College • Institutional Bus service • Opening P.G. classes • Close contact with alumni • College- industry interaction • Collaboration with foreign universities • Resource sharing among the colleges and Universities • offering online programs • More encouragement through funding and compulsion can enhance qualitative research work. • Self-reliant and enterprising youth who can be harnessed to play an active role in nation building. • Open up North-East centre for Language Studies and Study centre for tribal studies harnessing on the diverse cultures and languages of the students community. |

FACTORS OF ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES

Following factors are identified as important for improving /enhancing opportunities in rural degree colleges of Assam-

- (i) Provision should be taken for creating the state of art infrastructure, books availability, online journals, technological advancements and above all time with teachers to get acquainted with the knowledge source.
- (ii) Emphasis on utilizing more Quality Time
- (iii) Multidisciplinary approach in research should be encouraged
- (iv) Seek and take advantage of external resources - grants & funding – for development of Institution
- (v) Provision of Teacher & Student feedbacks for Quality Assurance
- (vi) Recognize & Reward staff & students for their achievements
- (vii) Faculty Development Programs & Capacity Building for all categories of staff.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

At the time of framing curriculum, this study will help the curriculum designer in looking to the weakness and challenges/threats of the rural colleges. It will also be helpful at the policy-making level of education in adopting different planning, strategies of education for rural colleges.

CONCLUSION

Findings of the present study can provide lots of inputs for reimagining, restructuring and re-planning Indian Higher education system in near future for real benefit of the society. As SWOT analysis reflects an institution's existing position and viewpoint, it can be used to justify a previously decided course of action and as a means to open up new possibilities. It is important to note that sometimes threats can also be viewed as opportunities, depending on the people or groups involved. There is a saying, "A pessimist is a person who sees a calamity in an opportunity, and an optimist is one who sees an opportunity in a calamity." In this regard major responsibility depends upon the practitioners of SWOT analysis.

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