

COLLABORATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SOME THOUGHT TO SHARE

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Abstract:

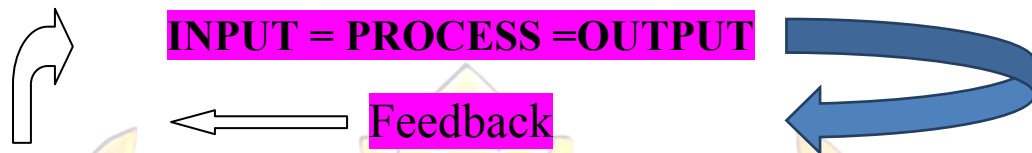
There is a saying that coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is a success. In this present era, more than ever, we need progress, success, and excellence in all spheres. In this regard, education is a process that helps us to achieve our Dream goals. Through this thematic paper, a humble attempt is made to explore and juxtapose the need and essence of collaboration and also explore why and how the collaborative approach is crucial in Higher education in various sectors. With the help of our personal experience and insights and also literature exploration we reached a point the collaboration is a must for inclusive growth in Higher Education institutions. Particularly Teaching-Learning resources, Research, and human and non-human collaboration among Higher Education Institutions are much needed and of utmost priority at this juncture.

Keywords: Collaboration, Higher Education, Thought, Cooperation, MoU

1. Introduction:

The 21st century is known as the age of collaboration and cooperation. Various thinkers have offered unique visionary ideas regarding collaboration. They emphasize various pathways or models regarding collaboration. In the present era of globalization when higher education is expanding and becoming more meaningful, it is increasingly evident that educationists are coming up with newer horizons of ideas. Holistically through MoUs, we can foster capacity building among the institutions and also, within the academia, we can change our hitherto concepts from traditional to dynamic futuristic ones. As we know each and every institution has a specific field, where it excels, and leads towards best practices and for that excellence the institution acquires esteem, name, and fame such as Nalanda University known for its contribution to the upliftment of the ancient Indian cultural ethos and heritage especially in Buddhist culture. So, in this sense, each and every higher educational institute has its own expertise and excellence in the particular field of study and domain of epistemological inquiry. Hence now institution-building approaches should be based on collaborative, cooperative approaches rather than competitive rivalry because collaborative approaches provide us with a unique strength to achieve our institutional goals collectively in many spheres such as Teaching, Research, Curriculum design and evaluating students' academic achievement. Now NEP2020

focuses on the OBE, Outcome Based Education. Of course, the institutional goals or objectives vary from institute to institute, and for the fulfillment of these institutional goals, institutes develop unique curricula; through that curriculum, we can achieve the set goals through the behavioral change of our students in respect of 3'Ds' -Cognitive, Affective, and Psycho-Motor. Therefore, we can say, unique institutional values can impact the behavioral outcome of the young generation. The measuring of institutional excellence depends on the educational outcomes or behavioral outcomes of the students.



Collaborative and cooperative approaches can help to enrich our inputs, processes, and consequently, the output aspects associated with the educational institutional mission, goals, objectives, teaching-learning methods, curriculum development, and evaluative approaches. Here we can say that collaboration has many dimensions, multiple perspectives as well as seraphim. So, before collaboration, we have to study any institute as a human being and try to find out the institutional **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats** (i.e. **SWOT**) in higher education and after that, we can proceed towards collaboration for '3E' i.e., the **exchange, enhancement, encouragement**. From the ongoing discussion, we can deduce that MoU is essential whether it is a research organization or a young seminary.

Why MoU: Here MoU and the term collaboration are used interchangeably. We have used the term collaboration as a means of mutual development. Why collaboration is brilliantly commented on by none other than George Bernard Shaw that

“If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.”

Herein lies the essence of collaboration and cooperation among our higher educational institutions. In our vision collaboration generates qualitative ideas in the quest for solutions to emerging challenges such as human resources as well as material resources in Higher Educational Institution.

2. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR MoU: '3C' METHOD



COMPARE=CONTEST=CONCLUSION

Here 'compare' means to compare ideas, values, skills, and attitudes related to institution building and argue peacefully with logic so that constructive ideas lead to produce insight to reconstruct things.

Collaborative approaches produce novel insight better suited to the situation. Sometimes demographical factors creep into the process of collaboration. So, whenever we want to collaborate at the same time, we have to understand the basic challenges and prospects of the collaboration to recognize the features of the ground reality, aspirations of the catchment population, their distinct culture, and thus the space it offers to improve the overall situation or constraints therein. Collaboration is important not just because it is a better way to learn but also because of its potential to learn to grow and thus to secure the best in all development contexts. Although easier said than done, the spirit of collaboration is beneficial for every institution or individual in the sense of constant learning through exchange or what Gadamer refers to as the "fusion of horizons". So, learning to collaborate is an integral part of equipping ourselves for effectiveness, problem-solving, innovation, and life-long learning in an ever-changing networked economy. Even by invoking the Bourdieuan concept of "cultural capital" we can argue that collaboration can throw open a new treasure-trove of transmission of cultural values and refinements which in turn can lead to a better understanding of each other's perspective in a global society and thereby it can pave the way for mutual recognition, trust and sort of inclusiveness.

3. **HOW MoU:** In this section, we shall draw attention to the methodological strategies for collaboration, that is to say, those means whereby we can build an effective equation of collaboration:
 1. At the outset we have to find out the vision mission and objectives of collaboration. These objectives can be categorized into two taxonomical groups i.e., specific or particular objectives based on the institutional goals, and another is general goals based on the border vision, mission, and welfare of society at large.
 2. After fixing the aims of collaboration we have to proceed to find out the methods for collaboration. The collaboration must be based on scientific and systematic inquiry which leads towards mutual interest based on pragmatic worldview and win-win consideration.
 3. We need to focus on the leadership style because charismatic leaders can take populist stance. In the academic interest, however, we need judicious decisions with the right effort, hence the methods could be heuristic. So, it is possible to build a successful collaborative approach that helps to attain not only the institutional goals but further which can help to achieve the SDG goals or the much-coveted 2030 Agenda at large. We have to understand that the university has a great responsibility towards the fulfilment of the dreams of SDG goals. Hence the activities of universities must be



wider and more dynamic. It is supposed to unleash a knowledge vibration and euphoria among young minds and that spirit will automatically spill over into a wave within society to foster innovation, inclusiveness and empowerment.

4. Conditions for effective collaboration: The habit of working together to accomplish a task, or to achieve a certain goal should be nurtured. Small steps are crucial for sowing the seeds of collaboration. We humans, like many other animals, are social beings. We are more successful if we can make use of our intelligence to work with others to achieve more. To be able to work collaboratively is a skill that we all need to appreciate.
5. Motivation for cooperation and teamwork as well as community-centric responsibility are the main drivers of smooth and meaningful collaboration.
6. Assumptions about collaborative strategy are also important to sustain this active constructive process and value-addition process. Collaboration is one kind of learning to grow collectively.
7. Collaborations must focus on the intellectual capacity of resource persons. For example, it is those of us who can solve problems while working with others. A successful scientist must be able to cooperate with other scientists, technicians, and students. An executive cooperates with other executives, salespersons, suppliers, and superiors. (*Dunne and Bennett, 1990*)
8. Collaborative approaches foster the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas and evaluation of others' ideas.
9. A collaborative atmosphere or matrix provides us with tremendous learning scope to improve upon the existing situation with best practices to help promote excellence, confidence, and camaraderie.
10. The major aims of any institution are how to assist pupils in acquiring more critical self-understanding, curiosity, and skills. How to make learning more interesting for the pupils? How to motivate the pupils? How to challenge the pupils so that they can perform better? One way to accomplish all these is through collaborative approaches and cooperative ways.
11. Through the holistic collaboration strategy, we can promote pupils' learning and their academic achievement to enhance the level of their satisfaction with their learning experience.

12. Elements of collaboration:

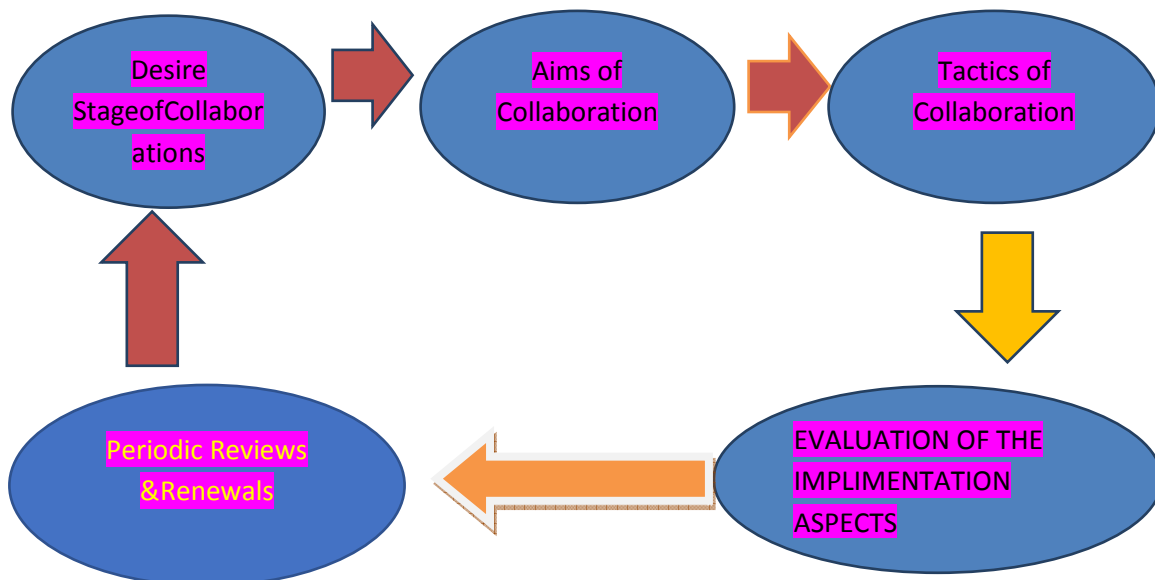
- a. Collaboration establishes channels for open communication where participants need to be encouraged to take opportunities for the renewal of the systems.
- b. Engaging all institutional leaders and others where they should provide feedback and engage in self-reflection.
- c. There should be an identification of feasible aspects of collaboration that can serve as the feedback loop as it will help better to understand cause and effect more perspicuously.
- d. Collaboration is an umbrella term; it has many roles and responsibilities.

- e. It is a key to establishing a professional environment and respecting the different cultures of different organizations.

4. Challenges of Institutional Collaboration:

At times collaborations can be a frequent source of friction requiring timely intervention. This can be due to many reasons such as lack of sharing of credit and responsibility after joining of more than two institutions for a common purpose. Sometimes, collaborations do not get momentum due to unwillingness to work together. Sometimes collaborations are spoiled due to misunderstanding among the participating institutes on account of disagreement as well as divergent mentality among the leaders and also due to discontent with a slow collaborator. Self-understanding and a strong sense of mutual faith are the core elements of collaborative exercises.

5. Collaborative Model:



Stage: 1. **Desire for Collaboration among the Institutes.** It is the embryonic stage of collaboration. In this stage interested institutes decide to go for collaboration. The sources of collaboration may be classified into three interrelated components—society, individual and institutional demography factor as well as historical background of the institution.

Stage: 2. **Purpose of collaboration:** In this stage of collaboration willing institutes need to come up with formulation of aims and vision of collaboration. Basically, the purpose of collaboration depends upon the institutional philosophy, societal demand, technological change and changing demands of the society and individual.

3. **Organizing the collaborative methods:** Methodical procedure or techniques of collaboration is the key to start the process. More pragmatic, more dynamic and more scientific collaboration is likely to be more effective and prolific. The success of collaboration depends on its methodological approach. At this stage such collaborative technique is sought to be adopted that mediates interests to sustain the collaboration.

Stage:4. **Implementation:** This is the main challenging task to implement the collaborative approach which requires us to understand interdisciplinary nature of global studies and at the same time it is equally important to appreciate contemporary cosmopolitan nature of global order. Only then it would be easier for the institutional authority to convert the theoretical ideas into practice because such collaboration could be in the form of public private partnerships. Mutual understanding and trust are the most vital in this stage. For the smooth implementation institutional authorities may follow Stake's perspective. Basically, Stake's applies this implementation for assessing the curriculum but here we can think of converting theoretical plan into practical skills based on 4'C i.e., *Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication*.



a. ANTECEDENTS: It is the frame that helps the planner to understand the sum total condition since the past. It gives us a useful inkling of whether the collaboration approach is possible or not.

b. TRANSACTIONS: It is an interaction between various aspects involving the gamut of the entire collaborative process. The transaction is among authorities and also between teacher and teacher, teachers and students, students and resources person and interaction between material resources and human resources among the institutions. We may define it as the transactions aspect or process aspect because in this stage overall interaction and linkage are established.

c. OUTCOMES: It is a product based on the process. Basically, outcomes or products depends on the officious transnational process. Therefore, we can say that the fruitful collaboration among the institutions depends upon overall constructive engagement, agreement & involvement.

Stage:5. **Evaluation of MoU:** Simply evaluation denotes the value judgment on the basis of qualitative and quantitative parameters. Also, modern-era evaluation is more dynamic and more comprehensive & more objective. In this 21st century, both types of evaluative processes are important. Through the product and process evaluation techniques, we can assess the MoU among the institutions i.e., whether the goals are achieved or not or whether the vision of MoU has been fulfilled or not.

6. Concluding observation:

In the ancient era, ideas ruled or regulated the world but now information and communication technology and data science rule the world. The 21st century is the era of Artificial Intelligence and robotic technology, through which we can achieve our goals

easily. At the present juncture of time, our life begins with technology and ends with technology. Technology empowers us with the survival strategies through which we nurture all our life skills.

Now we live in the global village of LPG (liberalization, privatization, and globalization). In this era, we are strongly interconnected and interdependent. So, in this challenging situation, MoU or collaboration is essential for all in respect of individual or institutional level. Through MoU or collaboration not only do we exchange manpower but we also exchange our ideas and qualitative, qualitative components that are essential for the fulfillment of the dream of a successful institute. For building an effective and efficient collaboration, we must think over the resource management technique i.e., material resources (Institutional Infrastructure) and non-material resources (Human Resources). Here our main focus should be to transform the system without taking it as a fixed one. Hence what we may need is active initiative to reconfigure things with the help of dialogue and dynamic collaboration. Collaboration is an umbrella term. The essence and importance of collaboration, as nicely captured by an African proverb: ***'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'*** Thus, collaboration is an utmost aspect of the higher education institutions at both level national and global.

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