CHAPTER 5

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INTRODUCTION

Information is the most vital need of an organisation, be it of any type with any purpose. It won’t be an exaggeration to assert that information makes the organisation think, plan and act judiciously and rationally. Lack of necessary information may render organisational thinking, planning and action ineffective, may be futile. So, it is of paramount importance that an organisation must have foolproof method of inflow and outflow of information.

This will be possible by taking the varying organisational needs into fullest consideration. Here the changing nature of informational needs can’t be ignored. As such a systematized system of information has to be evolved to meet the changing requirements of the organisation. The system should be equipped with in-built mechanism to cater the changing informational needs.
in the organisation. A good system of information must, therefore, be characterised with the features of regular and free inflow and outflow of information with the merit of continuous updating.

The university as a social system is and has to be an open system. It is through inflow and outflow of information from and to various subsystems that university decides the course of its activities. Its success is judged in terms of what type of human resource transformation with what level of knowledge and skill it has done. Obviously, the need of full and updated information for a university is of pivotal significance. Continuous updating of information to feel the pulse of societal needs and to gauge the feedback as to its services and functions is a must for any University worth its name.

Like other organisations, university too performs through and with information. Quality of its service depends mainly upon the quality of information it has. “Just in time and just in dose” information should be and is the guiding criteria in this regard. For planning its activities the university has to have an exact feel of the various sub-systems of the society it seeks to serve. In order to grow and to develop with distinction it has to come out
with strategic competitive design and skill. This entails information about past performance, present activities, future prepositions and various internal and external dimensions. Further, continuous monitoring of the services rendered to the society is must for the University. This enables it to nip the evils in the bud with prompt and immediate remedial measures. Needles to say that this shall not be possible in absence of effective information system.

In order to excel in the field of its activities, a university has to have pro-active strategy in its vision for today and tomorrow. This, again, makes the need of updated information imperative. That is how the university may qualify to be a trend and pace setter.

To think of an organisation without any management information system is totally unrealistic. Wherever there is an organisation, it needs information and as such it has a system of information. Question, therefore, is not if it has any management information system or not? The real issue is what type of management information system it has. How far the management information system in use is instrumental in ensuring its effective and efficient performance. Quality of management information
system, these universities have, is crucial not only to them alone but to its periphery too in a more critical way. The reason is that the growth and development of the contiguous area depends to a great extent on the quality of service provided by nuclei like Universities. Therefore, it will not be improper to assert that it is also an important social obligation for university to have management information system in tune with the wheels of time. The present study has attempted to look deep into the management information system in the universities under study.

A peek into management information system in the universities under study reveals that they have their own management information system but of yesteryears with a bias towards centralization except in Central Agriculture University. Policy changes in management information system with varying degree of frequency are the characterizing features noted during the course of study. These changes are initiated and shaped dominantly by top-level management in Manipur University, Gauhati University, and Dibrugarh University. In Central Agriculture University, it is not like so.
Dibrugarh University is the only university with an exclusive statistical wing as a part of management information system. Dissemination of information through management information system in all the universities under study is high. Three of the above universities with the exception of Central Agriculture University are having Internet link. Utilization of information is high in all the universities except Dibrugarh University where it is moderate.

Decision-making style in Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University has been found to be autocratic whereas in Central Agriculture University it is democratic. As such, hierarchy of channels and time element in approval of proposals in the three universities i.e. Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University is high. In case of Central Agriculture University these are comparatively lower.

The level of academic autonomy in all the four universities has been found to be high. Yet the efficiency and effectiveness of Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University with the exception of Central Agriculture University are noticed to be low.
The above is clearly indicative of some drawbacks and deficiency of the system. The loopholes and drawbacks that have been identified with the help of this study are summarized as below:

(i) Excessive centralization in Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University except Central Agriculture University.

(ii) Dominant role by top level management in these three universities except Central Agriculture University.

(iii) Traditional source of internal and external information collection in all the universities under study.

(iv) Selective dissemination of information through traditional means and crippled with pseudo barriers in these universities.

These drawbacks put together have resulted in the following undesirable consequences.
(i) Poor awareness of the employees as to the details of management information system, creating an information gap.

(ii) Non-availability of right information to the right person at the right moment due to selective and traditional dissemination of information.

(iii) Late travel of information as such far less than optimal utilization of information.

(iv) Delay in meeting schedules testified by the fact that these universities have more or less failed to maintain their academic calendar.

(v) Ultimate result is low efficiency and effectiveness of the universities i.e. Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University except Central Agriculture University

5.2 Management Information System Design

University as an open system must have highest degree of sensitivity to the environment. This alone will qualify it to cope with the fast changing societal needs. An open and equally sensitive management information
system is a vital prerequisite for meeting this end. It is sad to notice that management information system in use in these universities does not qualify on this count. An attempt was made to elicit suggestion from the respondents regarding the improvement of management information system in these universities. Greater autonomy and decentralization, better communication, improved humans relation, judicious conflict management, participative decision making, flat organization structure and motivational strategy emerged as prominent suggestion from the respondents to improve management information system (Table No. 3.24 of the third chapter).

Keeping in view, the ifs and buts of management information system in these universities following remedial strategy is suggested.

(i)  The first and most important thing that needs to be done is creation of statistical department with the task of data collection, processing, and dissemination most promptly and efficiently.
(ii) Modernization of information retrieval and dissemination is the second important step that should be taken. This will help serve the purpose of setting up a separate statistical wing.

(iii) Flattening of organizational structure will be another step in the direction of making management information system efficient and effective. A flat organization generates a climate of participative and committed behaviour free from the abuses of bureaucracy and feudalism. This will usher in an era of democratic functioning and freedom from hierarchical rigidities.

(iv) Intimate and cardial interpersonal relationship between academic and non-academic wing of employees in the universities will also go a long way in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of management information system. Hence, doing away with water tight stratification of employees into these two categories, as it invariably exist in the universities, is yet another important step to be taken to cure the universities from the ailment of deficient management information system.
(v) Lastly, centralized decentralization should form the basis of restructuring the university organization. It should provide a centralized organization task structure as well as decentralized departmental structure. It means there will be specialized plans and budgets within which greater sanctioning authority and autonomy will be given to the departments which in their decision making should involve the participation of all departmental members.

Organizational redesign as suggested above should make clear distinction between strategic level, tactical level and operational level. Accordingly, the need of information of each level should be rigidly assessed. The flow of information should be tuned as per need of these levels. Obviously, this should form the basic consideration in devising management information system for these universities consisting of information system at departmental level, tactical level and strategic level.