CHAPTER 4

Ifs and Buts of Management Information System in the Universities
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Functional and operational efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation, worth its name, critically depend upon the quality of decisions made. A scientific and rational decision-making needs complete, timely and relevant information. This signifies the role of information system in organisations – big or small. The quality of information available to decision-makers depends directly upon the efficiency and effectiveness of information system. Which is why it is paramount necessity that continuous efforts should be made to transform and upgrade the system as per changing needs and scenario in the organisational context.

The plea for updated information system cannot and should not be misunderstood to dream of it as a panacea for all time to come. It is a hard fact that there cannot be any system without snags – more or less. The management information system in these universities cannot be and are not
an exception to these phenomena. It is more so because Indian Universities in general are characterised by their slow moving speed towards changes and improvement as compare to their counterpart of other countries.

Management information system in these universities as depicted in the previous chapter 3 has been found to be basically primitive and traditional. As such it is plagued with lot of “ifs” and “butts” which have been shown in the following table no. 4.1.

Table No. 4.1 Ifs and Buts of Management Information System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Manipur University</th>
<th>Gauhati University</th>
<th>Dibrugarh University</th>
<th>Central Agriculture University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blend of MIS</td>
<td>Highly centralised</td>
<td>Highly centralised</td>
<td>Highly centralised</td>
<td>Highly decentralised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy changes</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of top management</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical wing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of information</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet link</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilisation of information</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making style</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy of channels</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tome factor for approval</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic autonomy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency and effectiveness</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1 Structuring of Activities and Blend of MIS

It may be seen from the above table that management information system in Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University is highly centralised. But in Central Agriculture University, it is highly decentralised. A further look deep into the matter reveals centralisation in Admission, Examination, Planning and Budgeting in the universities. Of course in Central Agriculture University, Admission is a little more characterised. Fortunately activities such as Teaching, Research, and Curriculum design etc. are more or less decentralised in these universities (Table No. 3.1 of previous chapter).
4.2 MIS Policy, Policy Changes and Role of Top Management

There is management information system policy in these universities. But respondents are not aware of the details of the policy. This is not a healthy symptom. This state of affairs seems to be attributable to high centralization of Management Information System in the universities under study with the exception of Central Agriculture University (Table No. 3.3 of previous chapter). Inspite of this ailment, there is a reason to have a sense of relief. Table 3.4 in the previous chapter and table no. 4.1 clearly indicate that management information system policy is subjected to frequent changes in Manipur University and Gauhati University and moderate changes in Dibrugarh University and Central Agriculture University. This is done obviously to update the system as per need of the changing scenario. This is so inspite of the fact that role of top management in framing policy as revealed by data collected has been found to be dominant because of centralisation in all three universities except Central Agriculture University (Table No. 3.5 of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1).
4.3 Statistical Wing

It is disappointing to note that these universities do not have a separate statistical wing with the exception of Dibrugarh University (Table No. 3.7 of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1). The result is that getting information in Dibrugarh University is much easier, faster and more convenient whereas in other universities it is just opposite. The system of dissemination is subject to usual limitation in absence of separate statistical wing.

4.4 Dissemination of Information

It is heartening to know that all the four universities have a system of disseminating information to the points where it is needed as expressed by all the respondents in these universities (Table No. 3.8 of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1. Further probe into the matter reveal that information of academic, administration and disciplinary nature are transmitted more freely than the information related to financial and social issues (Table No. 3.9 of
previous chapter). This can be taken as good symptom. The most widely
used and favoured device of disseminating information in these universities
is written communication and, second device in order of importance is
telephone. Internet as a device is aid to attract wholesome attention of these
universities. Of course, it has been found more favour in Manipur
University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University (Table No 3.10 of
previous chapter).

Whatever system of dissemination of information these universities
have, they are not free from barriers on account of status, confidential,
situational and no wonder, sectarian considerations (Table No. 3.11 of
previous chapter). These barriers, as opined by respondents, can be removed
by more autonomy, increased participation, higher decentralisation and
better human relationships (Table No. 3.12 of previous chapter).

4.5 Utilisation of Information

The information received by different levels in these universities was
utilized properly as revealed by majority of respondents in all the four
universities (Table No. 3.13A of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1). But some respondents have a feeling that the information is subjected to either under utilization or non-utilization (Table No. 3.13B). The reasons, they identified are irrelevance, time limitation, obsolescence, deficient manpower, inadequate infrastructure, and negative attitude of seniors.

4.6 Decision Making Style, Hierarchy of Channels and Time Factor for Approval

Decision-making in these universities has been found to be dominantly autocratic with lengthy channels. Surprisingly, Central Agriculture University is characterized by democratic style of decision making with short channels (Table No. 3.15 and 3.16 of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1). So far as the time element is concerned, 6 (six) weeks or even more time is taken to get the final approval of the proposal in Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University. Situation in Central Agriculture University is different and better, where it takes maximum three weeks (Table 3.17 of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1).
4.7 Academic Autonomy

The academic autonomy in the universities under study was found to be high without any exception (Table No. 3.18 of previous chapter and Table No. 4.1). The fact is evident from the structuring of activities in the universities (Table no. 3.1 of the 3rd chapter). It is disquieting to note that academic autonomy has not fully served its purpose (Table No. 3.18, 3.19 and 3.20 of the third chapter). It is disgusting to note that academic calendar in Manipur University is unduly late. In Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University and Central Agriculture University picture is comparatively better. The reasons attributable to delay in academic calendar are environmental factors, student strike, teacher strike and personal problem in varying degrees in all the universities (table No. 3.21 of the third chapter)

4.8 Efficiency and Effectiveness

The study puts a serious question marked before the efficiency and effectiveness of management information system in vogue by the universities (Table No. 3.22 of the third chapter and Table No. 4.1). As
opined by majority of respondents in Manipur University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University with the exception of Central Agriculture University total centralisation, bureaucratic vision, communication gap and State Government interference are found to be the leading to a state of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. This calls for urgent steps by these universities to devise an improvement strategy to make the system work best.

Barriers ridden Management Information System has landed these universities to an improper communication scenario. The bad consequences as an impact of their deficient communication system are inefficiency and ineffectiveness, delay in implementation, conflict generation and ego clash (Table No. 3.14).