6.2.1: Perspective Strategy, Plan and Deployment

The Planning Board (PB) of the university is responsible for the approval of perspective/ strategic plans of the university and its monitoring and implementation in accordance with the Vision and Mission of the University. The short term and long-term strategic plans define specific objectives, deliverables, financial, infrastructural and human resource requirements for various School of studies, Divisions, Regional Centers, Sections and Cells at the head quarter, Regional centers and the learner support centers along with development of new Programs, revision of old Programs / Courses, enhancing access and equity, enhancement of infrastructure and facilities including ICTs, increase in workforce, expansion of learner support network, increasing the reach, etc.

The practices followed by the University for development, deployment, monitoring and assessment of its strategic plans are:

1. Methodology Adopted for Developing Strategic Plan:

Long term plans (3-5 years) are formulated with inputs from Schools of studies and Divisions responsible for development, delivery and implementation of academic programs and projects and activities pertaining to teaching-learning. Medium term plans (1 year) and Short term plans (6 months) strategic plan documents specifying monthly / quarterly/annual targets and achievements to be completed by the Schools of studies /Divisions/Centers/ Cells / Units and Regional centers are prepared and sent for review, perusal and approval from the Planning Board of the university.

All perspective plans and proposals are prepared and developed in aligned with the University's Vision, Mission, goals, optimization of resources, appropriateness, value addition, etc. and approved by the relevant statutory bodies before being implemented to ensure that the plans are prepared in consistent with the optimization of physical, financial and man power resources available in the university.

2. Mechanism for the Deployment of the Strategic Plan:

The strategic plans and proposals approved by the statutory bodies are communicated to respective Schools/Divisions/Centers/Units for implementation. Action taken reports are sought by the statutory bodies to keep a close watch on the process of deployment.

The strategic plans for Academic Programs deployed by the Schools of Studies consists of number of distinct phases which needs approval from various statutory bodies before being implemented like: (i) Program Proposal Form, (ii) Program Development Form, (iii) Program Launch Form, (iv) Program Revision Form, (v) Program Proposal Report and (vi) Program Mapping Form. The planned programs, proposals and activities of the School of studies / Divisions / Centers / Units are deployed with appropriate timelines.

3. Monitoring and Assessment of the Deliverables:

The short-term and mid-term plans are monitored on quarterly basis reviewing the physical and financial target and its achievements as well as outcome and output achieved in the program / project. University authorities monitor and assess the progress of the deliverables in all activities.

The progress of development is collated with inputs from School of studies and implementing Divisions and the progress is monitored against given criteria. The targets assigned to Regional Centers and learner support centers and their performance are monitored on a regular basis by the Students Services Division (SSD) at Headquarters and reports are generated on regular basis and submitted to vice chancellor.

Strategies to Achieve the Mission:

YCMOU has both short-term as well as long-term strategies to achieve its mission and realize its vision. The elements of the action plan to achieve the objectives are:

1. **Total Quality Assurance:**

    YCMOU being ODL institutions, committed to quality and excellence in all its activities like teaching, research, training and extension. The norms for program evaluation, performance indicators for operation of systems, mechanisms to add robust and dynamic system in assessment and evaluation have been established. The University shall:

    - Initiate the process of academic audit and engage in a serious exercise to revise its course materials, both print and audio-visual, by incorporating information on the latest developments in all areas of study;
    - Designate the better-performing disciplines, schools, centres and institutes as centers of excellence;
    - Develop an evolving mechanism for continuing professional development for the teaching and support staff;
    - Take education to the unreached sections of population and enable them to participate in their self-development and National development.
    - Promote use of ICT in all operations and spirit of excellence in student support services.

    It is well recognized that open and distance learning is the most viable option to make education accessible to last mile learners in India. However, it must offer quality education if it is to compete and collaborate with the conventional system. The University envisages a proactive role for itself by sharing professional capabilities and resources, to maintain standards of Distance Education.

2. **Increasing Enrollment**

    To make massive contribution to increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education, the University has drawn up an innovative strategy, by offering greater flexibility and openness in terms of:

    - Modular structure of courses on offer, so that learners can opt for a select and relevant course(s) which suit their requirements;
    - Multiple entry and multiple exit points embedded with vertical mobility in the program;
    - Offering short-term courses for updating and upgrading knowledge and skills for the employed professionals, educators, technologists, administrators and others to meet the massive demand for trained workforce, in collaboration with respective National Councils and Regulatory authorities;
    - Offering cross subsidy in tuition fees by providing differential fee structure to facilitate entry of the socially 'have-nots', people in relevant, and professional programs;
    - Taking education to low-literacy districts and communities in rural and remote areas and offering programs to Special Groups such as Women, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, Transgender Persons, PwDs, Jail In a mates and other minorities;

3. Strengthening the Faculty

To provide sustainable access to quality education, an academic institution must have an internationally recognized faculty. In this context, YCMOU takes care to recruit qualified, competent and experienced faculty and pay due attention to the professional growth of the faculty by:

- Attracting the best talent to enhance productivity, improve quality of courses and provide effective services to learners;
- Retaining best talent from among the retired senior faculty members on contract position and inviting visiting faculty in unconventional interdisciplinary areas at the senior level. This allows the university to augment its faculty resource base and enhance interaction with other universities and institutions;
- Training the faculty in interactive multimedia and online teaching and learning especially under unusual situation like COVID situation.

4. Widening areas of studies:

To sustain growth and development, the University responds to new change and provide relevant, need based and contemporary programs at all times. The paradigm shifted from teacher as a decision maker to the learners as a decision maker in deciding what program to be offered. Therefore, there is a need to widen the basket of courses in diverse areas of courses with contemporary relevance. The University proposes to undertake new initiatives such as:

- Addition of disciplines in existing Schools of Studies like special education, IPR. MOOCs, OER, e-learning, informatics etc;
- Promoting courses in niche-market, skill-oriented courses and life supporting courses dictated by the needs of the society;
- Providing greater flexibility in courses with inbuilt provision of lateral entry and exit points in degree programs, including partial or full credit transfers;
- Offering online education with interactive multimedia support and specific programs for in-service professionals to update and upgrade their knowledge and skills.

5. Research and Scholarship:

The ODL system in India has a history of less than 40 years and therefore, there is a great scope for doing research in ODL System. YCMOU takes keen interest to promote research and scholarship in the area of open learning and online education by:

- Offering research degree programs in selected Schools of Studies like Education and Humanities and Social Sciences, which is expected to generate dynamic and enabling environment in the University for conducting research;
- Providing facilities for independent discipline based and systemic research and identifying specific areas for institutional research, encouraging inter-disciplinary research teams, and devising mechanisms;
- Encouraging discipline specific systemic research to enhance quality of instructional delivery and learning for students.

6. Reaching the Unreached

The University has been mandated to reach out to the marginalized sections of our society. The efforts so far have been mainly confined to the professional development of the employed population. There is a need to initiate special measures to attract learners from the disadvantaged groups. The major steps envisaged to achieve this are:

- Enhancing access by spreading the network of Learner support centers from the district level to the block level and town level;
- Networking of NGO's and private institutions using ICT in a proactive way in difficult terrain and inaccessible regions;
- Strengthening the University's presence in the tribal districts of Palghar, Nandurbar, Bhandara, Gondia and Gadchiroli and coastal districts of Palghar, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra;
- Conducting special drives using innovative technologies to enroll marginalized groups (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, PwDs, Women and Transgender learners) in the niche-market programs;
- Entering collaborations with other universities and NGOs to increase the outreach of its programs;
- Instituting special scholarships, stipends and fee waiver schemes with Government and other funding agencies to enable disadvantaged groups of population to pursue YCMOU programs.

7. Effective Student - Support Services:

Effective student-support services are an important pre-requisite for:

- Reducing learner drop-out rate increasing completion rate;
- Providing quality education with credibility in world of work;
- Providing effective learner support services effective;
- Equipping all Regional Centers and Learner support centers with adequate ICT equipment and other infrastructure to connect them with the headquarters for prompt data transmission, sharing and retrieval;
- Provide an opportunity for greater interaction with learners and to reduce response time in admission, distribution of material and declaration of results;
- Regularly monitor the quality of support services and forge seamless communication between the university and regional centers increase use of technology mediated counseling and induction programs;
- Evolve a more efficient database management system to provide Online admission and Re-Registration;
- Strengthen linkages with public and private institutions and NGOs engaged in education and training.

8. Strengthening Extension Education:

To strengthen extension education, it is important to relate it to teaching, learning and development. As a part of its strategy, the University would like to:

- Encourage capacity building in agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, natural-resource management, health, human rights, literacy, life coping skills, legal literacy, vocational skills, entrepreneurship, computer literacy, design, media studies, etc
- Providing technology mediated training to practicing farmers, rural youth and extension functionaries in the developmental departments like agriculture and rural development.
- YCMOU has independent unit of Farm Science Center (KrishiVigyan Kendra) dedicated for training of farmers and rural youth for self-employment through hands on demonstration and training.

9. Digitalization of Education:

The needs and aspiration of each learner are diverse and different and therefore no single technology can be used on all occasions and for all purposes. The choice of technology should take into account availability, accessibility and acceptability. Priorities in the use of technologies for distance education have to be different in different contexts.

Online education has already started influencing education and is destined to impact it in a big way in the future. YCMOU web-based methods are supplementing the teaching and learning processes of vocational and professional and other academic programs. The support activities in other programs are also strengthened through centralized expert counseling based on interactive networks.

The University periodically upgrades its online resources. These include:

- Networking with Regional Centers and Learner support centers for quick data transmission, retrieval and flow of other information;
- Ready access to online resources for students, walk-in admission, on-line assignment generation; centralized computerized admission and instant confirmation; computerized and networked databases.
- Digitalizing full-text materials and utilization of the full potential of the Internet by facilitating access to vast learning resources for empowering distance learners.

YCMOU would like to explore the possibilities of incorporating MOOCs and OERs developed by external institutions. The focus will also be on providing online facilities for app based Learner support such as Mobile App for Student Services. The effort is on to make all services for the Distance Learners online from student registration to convocation.

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