

Localized Educational Quality Control: Institutional Research at the Chungbuk National University

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Abstract: Institutional Research has been increasing its importance as the decrease of funding sources for higher education and the development of information technology. Colleges and universities in South Korea have recognized the importance of establishing the office of institutional research to provide institutional data to the governmental agency, increase institutional effectiveness, and secure institutional accountability to the public. The paper describes main functions of institutional research and focuses on practices of institutional research at a national university in South Korea. In specific, some of the good practices of Institutional Research at the Chungbuk National University are introduced with some suggestions for further development.

Keywords: Institutional Research, Institutional Efficiency, Higher Education Institutions, Accreditation of Higher Education

More than half a century ago, educational institutions have started the function of institutional research. The definition of institutional research has evolved with the expansion of the function. In general, institutional research (IR) means all difference kinds of research conducted within an in institution of higher education to generate information useful for institutional planning, policy formation and decision making (Saupe, 1990).

One of the two major academic association leading the discipline of higher education, the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), attempted and summarized the functions of IR with input from AIR members. The first function of IR is to identify information needs. It includes anticipating data needs by following up the institutional, state, national, and international conversations around higher education (“Duties and Functions of Institutional Research,” 2018). The second functional area is to collect, analyze, interpret, and report data and information, which reflects the technical tasks employed by institutional research. Planning and evaluating is another important function of IR and the function means the collaboration with other units within an institution. The fourth role of IR is to serve as stewards of data and information, within which IR professionals play a role of ensuring an institution-

wide data strategy. The last function is to educate information producers, users, and consumers.

In South Korea, with the challenge that higher education agencies are facing and with the advancement of information technology, IR has surfaced as an alternative to assure the accountability of colleges and universities. One of the leading institutions of IR is the Chungbuk National University (CBNU). Since 2014, CBNU has started to build the function of IR at the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). This presentation covers some of the exemplary activities going on at a national university in South Korea.

The first part of the presentation covers what is institutional research and how it can contribute to increasing the efficiency of higher education institutions. As it is enforced for higher education institutions to report institutional data to federal government, colleges and universities in South Korea have to provide operational and performance data to government by using the portal website system named ‘Alimi.’ In addition to providing institutional data to the governmental agency, OIRA functions as the source of information for decision making at CBNU. It integrates different data sources to form a consolidated data warehouse named as ‘Information System for Innovative Education (ISIE).’

Drawing on the integrated information system, OIRA tries to establish a total quality management system in a way in which it secures accountability to the education constituents and the public. In specific, it operates an institutional level accreditation system; it had developed an accreditation model to monitor the quality of academic programs provided at the institution and more than half of the departments at CBNU except participating in international accreditation programs have joined the program. In addition to the efforts of increasing the quality of academic programs at CBNU, OIRA performs different analyses to evaluate various programs provided to students.

Recently, universities in South Korea taking a good care of developing an effective practice for the development of students. Aligned with the efforts, different evaluation programs at the national level turn to the quality of programs contributing to the development of students in an efficient way. It is crucial for higher education institutions to establish IR function to evaluate which programs are most significantly influencing to the growth of university students. By providing the evaluate results to the university leadership, a higher education institution can create an effective feedback system that can continuously promote the quality of it.

Next, the presentation introduces some of the studies done at OIRA with the goal of improving institutional effectiveness at CBNU such as monitoring the productiveness of faculty measured by the total number of articles published, tracking the trend of dropping out of the institution, and analyzing the course evaluation by students. The results of the analyses have been helpful sources of information for the development of institutional level policy.

The presentation wraps up with discussing how the settlement of IR function at a national university contributed to increasing institutional efficiency and what has been left for further development of IR to improve the quality of institutional quality and, in the long run, institutional accountability.

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