



A role of Iqac: Quality assurance, sustenance and enhancement in higher education

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Abstract

Education is the process of intellectual development of individuals. Higher education in any country requires two types of efficiency viz. internal efficiency and external efficiency. Quality is defined in terms of excellence, perfection, standards and competencies for work, consistency and relevance. Quality and excellence should be the vision of every higher education institution. Acquisition and enhancement of quality is the great challenge faced by almost all higher education institutions. IQAC is the totality of systems, resources and information devoted to setting up, maintaining and improving the overall quality and standards of an institution. Quality assurance and enhancement is the continuous process, for which Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) may be constituted in every accredited college. Brainstorming is one of the most fundamental processes of generating ideas and solutions for problem solving. Benchmarking in education is a relatively new concept and can bring huge benefits in terms of continuous improvement of quality. The IQAC has been constantly involved in the management and maintaining the quality of education. Thus, IQAC of is an importance and effective and efficient coordination and monitoring mechanism.

Keywords: NAAC, IQAC, quality education, quality assurance, higher education

Introduction

Education is the process of intellectual development of individuals. It develops the potential of individuals and transmits the culture of people to following generations. Education also contributes to the economic and political development of individuals and society at large. This could be achieved in best manner by developing efficient and equitable higher education system in the country. A nation advances in proportion to education and intelligence spread among masses. There could be varied perception of role played by higher education in a particular nation. The higher education as an important factor contributing for the socio-economic development of a nation while other could visualize higher education as an instrument for preparedness of people for making better choices and providing them with skills and attributes to lead better life and thus, contribute to the socio-economic development of country.

Higher education in any country requires two types of efficiency viz. internal efficiency and external efficiency. Internal efficiency refers to efficiency within the education system while external efficiency magnifies the relationship between education system and general economy. The internal efficiency can be brought at top level by monitoring and critical evaluation of teaching-learning process i.e. by up gradation of teaching, research, training and consultancy activities. External efficiency can be enhanced with the support of government and by providing conducive environment for education.

Quality as Defined by NAAC

Quality is defined in terms of excellence, perfection, standards and competencies for work, consistency and relevance. The

quality of this knowledge society depends upon the quality of education it fosters. It is this quality, which makes education socially and individually relevant, but if the quality of education is not assured then the education which is advocated as a solution to social problem, may itself become a problem. Quality products and quality service began with quality thinking.

Quality therefore defines the goals and purposes of education. Quality impacts the content of higher education, its processes, its output or product, as it seeks to develop human resources with required skills, excellent in performance and capable of delivering the goods as a unit of the work force. The quality of knowledge in a society depends upon the quality of education it provides. Quality makes the knowledge relevant in individual and social needs. Quality education thus is required today, to enable persons, societies and nations to acquire the skills and competencies required for living meaningfully in a competitive, global world.

The term quality could be defined in different ways i.e. subjective in nature and may take different magnitude and degree as per the subject. However, NAAC has set its own parameters and defined attributes to measure quality of higher education institutions. NAAC defines quality in ways of:

- Quest for excellence
- Understanding the concept
- Action Orientation
- Learner-centric approach
- Innovation for change
- Training to build competencies
- Year round activity

Quality of a programme can be examined by analyzing (i) quality of input (ii) quality of process and (iii) quality of output. The quality of higher education depends on (i) quality of content and technique of education (ii) The quality of teachers (iii) The quality of infrastructure and (iv) The quality of students.

“Aristotle” rightly observed that quality is a habit. The general approach is to look at quality as a strategy with no alternatives. Quality in many respects is an attitude of the mind which plays a critical role in quality assurance.

‘Quality Education’ has become a very important need as well as a matter of concern in the last one decade. The uneasiness prevails among the various stakeholders of education viz parents, employers, teachers, students, etc. Quality and excellence should be the vision of every higher education institution. Acquisition and enhancement of quality is the great challenge faced by almost all higher education institutions. Quality has become indispensable in the context of contemporary demands made on education on account of global competition.

The post-accreditation period is a shift from quality assurance towards quality enhancement. Every stakeholder of higher education – the management of institution, the teachers, the students and IQAC have a role and have to play it well in enhancing the quality of our accredited institution.

Knowledge is at the core of all developmental efforts in advancing economic and social wellbeing in an emerging nation like India. Education is the key to creating, adapting and spreading knowledge in all disciplines and subjects. Higher education is a powerful tool to build knowledge for an information based society. Universities thus in twenty first century have to serve a multiple role; produce new knowledge; acquire capability to decipher; adapt knowledge produced elsewhere; and create an intelligent human power; at all levels through challenging teaching and research activities which would balance both need (quality) and demand (quantity). Higher education is the backbone of any society.

Role of the IQAC

U.G.C 12th plan guideline focuses on access, equity, quality, promotion of talent, skill development and standalone schemes. NAAC has been instilling a momentum of quality consciousness among Higher Educational Institutions. Maintaining the momentum of quality consciousness is crucial in Higher Education Institution.

NAAC proposes that every accredited institution establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance measure. Since quality enhancement is a continuous process, the IQAC will become a part of an institution’s system and work towards realizing the goals of quality sustenance and enhancement.

The IQAC is supposed to look at the improvement of the quality of the colleges in the coming years and accordingly get prepared for the next assessment. Since quality enhancement is a continuous process, the IQAC will become a part of the institutions and work towards the goals of quality enhancement and ensuring quality education. The well-defined parameters and guidelines provided by NAAC would facilitate the institutions in the creation and operation of the IQAC. The prime task of the IQAC is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic improvement in the performance of institutions. During

the post accreditation period, it will channelize all efforts and measures of the institution towards promoting its holistic academic excellence. The work of IQAC is the first step towards internalization and institutionalization of quality enhancement initiatives. Its success depends upon the sense of belongingness and participation it can inculcate in all the constituents of the institution. IQAC is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement activities of the college. Recognizing the importance of such institutional Quality System the U.G.C has taken decision to provide financial assistance to colleges. IQAC can play very crucial role in quality enhancement of accredited institution. Some of the functions expected of the IQAC are:

1. Development and application of quality parameters in various activities of the institution.
2. Dissemination of Information on quality aspects.
3. Organization of workshops, seminars and promotion of quality circles
4. Recording and monitoring quality measures of the institution.
5. Acting as an agency of the institution for quality related activities.
6. Preparation of the Annual Quality Assurance Report and such other reports as may be decided from time to time

Thus, IQAC has to play very crucial role in the quality enhancement of accredited institution. The IQAC has to ensure that whatever is done in the institution for “education” is done efficiently and effectively with high standards.

The task of IQAC in higher education is –

- Setting up of documentation process in motion.
- Awareness creation.
- Generation of confidence.
- Evolving of formats for information and data.
- Stipulation of schedule for the work.
- Drafting of quality status report.

Quality assurance, Quality sustenance and Quality enhancement

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is expected to activate the system and raise the institutional capabilities to higher levels so that the institution makes continuous improvement in Quality. A functional Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and institutional website are the Minimum Institutional Requirements (MIR) to volunteer for reaccreditation. The specific focus of the Re-accreditation framework will be on the impact of first accreditation, especially on.

- The compliance of the suggestions and recommendations made in the Peer
- Team Report of the institutions during the first assessment and accreditation
- Quality sustenance and quality enhancement efforts of the institution during the post-accreditation tenure
- Evidence of contributing to the core values.

Quality Sustenance

During the first assessment for accreditation, the NAAC’s process may have triggered quality initiatives in many aspects, set in

motion some innovative practices, served as a catalyst for institutional self-improvement, the participation of the stake holders may have led to new initiatives. The uses of technology in the learning process as well as for administration are a few such initiatives. These changes have a direct bearing on the quality of education and reaccreditation will consider how these initiatives have been sustained during the accredited period.

Quality Enhancement

It is proper and educationally sound to expect re-accreditation to bring to light how institutions have progressed over a period of five years with the accredited status. The re-accreditation would give due credit to the quality initiatives promoted by the first assessment and the consequent quality enhancement that has taken place. Quality is primarily the responsibility of higher education itself, although the government has a special responsibility regarding quality assurance in many countries it is the institution that is responsibility for providing and ensuring quality. IQAC is the totality of systems, resources and information devoted to setting up, maintaining and improving the overall quality and standards of an institution.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance and enhancement is the continuous process, for which Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) may be constituted in every accredited college. The functions of IQAC and the efficiency of college administration being interrelated, depend on the degree of decentralization of power and authority with high-leveled specialization through division of work via the participatory and proactive involvement of every member in the institution. Quality Assurance is a conscious and planned process, and therefore, we should have some tools and mechanisms to ensure quality. Ishikawa (1982) [7] has identified a set of seven tools that can be used by teams and individuals to

Qualitative Journey in Higher Education

Table 1

Pre-Accreditation	Accreditation	Post-Accreditation
Deciding to go in for A & A	Letter of Intent to NAAC	Establishment of IQAC
Preparing and motivating the stakeholders of the institution for A and A	Receipt of Manual and other Material from NAAC	Identifying the priority areas of operation
Developing Vision and Mission of the institution	Preparation of Self Study Report by the institution	Formulation of Plans and Strategies
Identifying the areas of action and operation	Submission to NAAC	Journey towards Sustenance and Enhancement of Quality
	Peer Team visit for Assessment	Quality Enhancement initiatives are operationalised for
	Grade of Accreditation awarded by NAAC	Total Quality Management

Conclusion

The role of IQAC for the quality enhancement in higher education is distinct and important as it works towards improving and maintaining the quality. Quality and excellence are results of team work led by the leaders like principal and coordinator of IQAC. The IQAC has been constantly involved in the management and maintaining the quality of education. Thus, IQAC of is an importance and effective and efficient coordination and monitoring mechanism. Quality is a product of intensive investment of capital, talented and hard work. There is no short – cat way to achieve quality. As rightly said by someone-quality is not a chance, but a choice, quality is not an accident, but a design, quality is not a destination, but a continuous journey. This way

interpret available data to derive maximum information. These seven tools are: process flowchart, graphs, Pareto analysis, fishbone diagram, scatter diagram, check sheets and control charts. There are five popular models of quality assurance: Baldrige criteria, ISO 9000-2000, Capability Maturity Model, Six Sigma and Total Quality Management (TQM).

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one of the most fundamental processes of generating ideas and solutions for problem solving. During the brainstorming session, the following rules may be followed (Sallis, 1996; Bell *et al*, 1994) [5,6]:

- Be clear about the topic of brainstorming
- Wild ideas are welcome
- Do not criticize people’s ideas
- Build on ideas
- Allow everyone to express their ideas
- Record all ideas in a visible manner

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is defined as “a continuous systematic process for evaluating the products, services and work processes of organizations that are recognized as representing the best practices for the purpose of organizational improvements” (Spendolini, 1992) [4]. Benchmarking in education is a relatively new concept and can bring huge benefits in terms of continuous improvement of quality.

The benchmarking can be set, by considering three fundamental performance issues articulated by the following questions:

1. Are we performing better than we have ever performed?
2. Are there any other organisations that are performing well and from whom we can learn?
3. Are there any practices that will improve our performance?

brainstorming and benchmarking mechanisms are used properly to collect information and ideas from bottom to top level and set in motion the action plan keeping an eye on the benchmarks. Such tools enable the IQAC for the Quality sustenance and enhancement as well.

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