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IQAC is a Tool for Quality of Higher Education

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Abstract:

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. In recent time the numbers of institutions are engaged in providing higher education in India and numbers of students are enrolled for the same but now the 'quality in education' in comparison to the 'quantity' has become the defining element in the 21st century. 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 quality of higher education is everybody's concern today. Various studies and commission reports at official level has recognized the same and given recommendations for its improvement. Government and other constitutional agencies are taking necessary measures. But these alone, will not serve the purpose unless institutions and faculty take proactive initiatives and measures. Every stakeholder of higher education has to play a significant role in this quality sustenance and enhancement process. Role of IQAC, teachers, students, etc is important one.

Keywords: Students, management, Government, Teachers, Quality, Education,

Introduction:

The Indian higher education system has undergone rapid expansion. In less than 20 years, the country has created additional capacity for a mammoth 40 million students.

While the scale of this expansion is remarkable in itself, what sets it apart from earlier decades of equally aggressive expansion is a deliberate strategy and an organized design. India's higher education system has finally broken free of decades of colonial overhang. In recent years, the country has undertaken massive structural and systemic changes that have started to yield encouraging results. About 15 years ago, India consciously moved to a differentiated academic system with a three-tiered structure comprising highly selective elite research universities at the top, comprehensive universities and specialized institutions in the middle, and an array of highly-accessible and high-quality colleges at the bottom. While the first tier caters exclusively to furthering India's intellectual capital, the other two focus on delivering economic and social value respectively.

Top-tier research universities are centers of excellence for the creation of new knowledge, set up with the vision to emerge as national and international leaders in research output and intellectual property. They enroll a selective set of talented, research-oriented students to be taught by stellar faculty. Faculty and students at the university attract handsome research grants and exhibit the greatest international diversity. Going beyond traditional scientific and applied research, these universities have phenomenally broadened the scope of India's research capabilities to new interdisciplinary areas of scholarship that present the greatest opportunity for the creation of new knowledge and hold most relevance for India in the new world.

What is Quality?

It may be 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.

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.

Role of the IQAC

The University Grants Commission (UGC), established in November 1956 as a statutory body of the Government of India through an Act of Parliament, has the unique distinction of being the only grant giving agency in the country which has been vested with two responsibilities that of providing funds and that of coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in institutions of higher education. To monitor standards of the higher educational institutions the UGC has established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) as an autonomous body, under section 12(ccc) of its Act in September 1994. NAAC has been instilling a momentum of quality consciousness amongst Higher Educational Institutions, aiming for continuous improvement. However, lasting improvements in standards cannot come about only by accreditation from outside, once in five years. An internal mechanism for sustenance, assurance and enhancement of the quality culture of education imparted by them, therefore, become essential. Many HEIs already have established the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity. Recognizing the importance of such institutional internal quality system the UGC has taken a policy decision to direct all colleges to establish IQAC for which it has decided to provide seed financial assistance. 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 prime task of the IQAC is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic improvement in the performance of institutions. 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.

Guidelines to Establish Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) in Colleges.

Maintaining the momentum of quality consciousness is crucial in Colleges. Internal Quality Assurance Cell, in fact, is conceived as a mechanism to build and ensure a quality culture at the institutional level. Every College should have an internal quality

assurance system, with appropriate structure and processes, and with enough flexibility to meet the diverse needs of the stakeholders. The internal quality assurance mechanism of the institution may be called “Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)”. The IQAC is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) activities of the colleges. The IQAC may channelize and systematize the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence. It should not be yet another hierarchical structure or record-keeping exercise in the institution; it would be a facilitative and participative organ of the institution. The IQAC should become a driving force for ushering in quality by working out intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality.

The IQAC Structure

The IQAC shall be constituted under the chairmanship of Principal. He / She may be assisted by a Coordinator who shall be a senior faculty member. This position may be held as an additional charge by the faculty member concerned, or a new position of a full-time Director/Coordinator may be created and a person is selected and appointed or a senior faculty member is posted by redeployment

Composition of the IQAC

The IQAC shall have the following composition:

- a) Principal - Chairperson
 - b) Five senior teachers and one senior administrative official - Member
 - c) Two external experts on Quality Management/ Industry/Local Community - Member
 - d) Director / Coordinator – Member Secretary
- The members at b) and c) of the above shall be nominated by the Principal of the College in consultation with the academic body of the College (Academic Committee of a College). The membership of such nominated members shall be for a period of two years. The IQAC should meet at least once in a quarter. The quorum for the meeting shall be two-third of the total number of members. The agenda, minutes and Action Taken Reports are to be documented with official signatures and maintained electronically in a retrievable format

Objectives:

The broadly defined objectives of IQAC include (but are not limited to):

- To develop a system for conscious, consistent, and catalytic action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution.
- To create a good quality culture
- To channelize the efforts and measures of the institution towards academic excellence
- To become a potential vehicle for ushering in quality by working out intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality.

Strategies:

In order to ensure quality sustenance and enhancement, IQAC shall evolve mechanisms and procedures for:

- Ensuring timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks.
- The relevance and quality of academic and research programs.
- Equitable access to and affordability of academic programs to suit to various sections of the society.
- Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning.
- The credibility of evaluation procedures.
- Ensuring the adequacy and functioning of the support structure and services.
- Research sharing and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

Functions:

The primary functions of the IQAC include (but are not limited to):

- Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters for the various academic and administrative activities of the institution.
- Dissemination of information on the various quality parameters of higher education.
- Organization of workshops, seminars on quality-related themes and promotion of quality circles.
- Documentation of the various programs/activities leading to quality improvement.

- Acting as a nodal agency of the institution for quality-related activities.
- Preparation of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) to be submitted to NAAC based on the quality parameters.

Benefits:

IQAC will facilitate/contribute:

- To a heightened level of clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement and facilitate internalization of the quality culture.
- 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.
- To provide a sound basis for decision making to improve institutional functioning.
- To act as an improvement agent in the institution.
- To improve internal communication.

Role of the teachers

Among the other stakeholders within the system, teachers have a very important role to play in sustaining and enhancing in quality of higher education. It is the competence and commitment of teachers which are the hallmarks of quality education. Of the four critical internal factors of quality i.e.- student, staff, infrastructure and governance, it is the quality of staff that basically determines the quality of educational process. They should actively participate and present their views in faculty development programmes. Research activity should be undertaken. They should also organise state, national and international level seminar for teachers, invite resource persons from different places, indulge in brain storming and thus expose their minds to newer ideas. They should keep themselves update through latest trends of education. It can be done through journals like University News, NAAC News, etc.. Quality enhancement can be done by publication of articles and books in some recognised journals or books having national or international recognition. Teachers should also make the use of ICT resources in order to bring innovation in teaching – learning process. “A teacher can’t teach unless he is teaching himself. A lamp can not burn another lamp unless it continuous itself to

burn.” (Tagore) Teachers have to shoulder the responsibilities of enhancing quality in the institution.

Role of the students

Every student of higher education has a role to play in quality enhancement. Students have unique role to play in ensuring the quality of higher education, Firstly, students should realize that quality education is their right and that it is the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) to provide quality education to learners. Secondly, students should be equally aware that they have significant learning responsibilities to enable institutions by accepting their responsibilities. Unless students demand quality education and demonstrate their commitment to quality education, HEIs will have very little motivation for quality enhancement.

The NAAC has taken an initiative in this direction by developing a sample student charter for all HEIs. The NAAC advocates the public display of the student charter in every institution as an act of promotion of student participation in quality assurance. Students should have a clear knowledge of the programmes, rules and regulations of the institution. They should understand the teaching learning strategies and evaluation systems of institution. They should also give feedback whether they are satisfied or not with these teaching methods and evaluation system. Talk and Chalk are very old methods. Yet they do have their own merits. In order to sustain and enhance quality of accredited institution, their result-oriented participation is must in other activities like culture programmes, N.S.S., N.C.C. sports etc. Following the rules and regulations of the institutions, they should make optimum use of the learning resources and support services available in the institution and should try their best to sustain and to enhance the quality of NAAC accredited institution. They should give feedback for system improvement and live worthy alumni of the institution

Role of the Management / Government

The Management of the institution(Government) is one of the important stakeholders of education. The management should provide well equipped infrastructural facilities as well as financial support. Moreover, Library is the core of any educational institution. There must be computerisation of library. There should be separate corner for display of useful information such as articles, advertisement, posters, etc. There should be

display of new arrivals of books, journals, magazines, etc. in the library. Internet access should be made available both for staff, non-teaching staff and students.

Conclusion

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.

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