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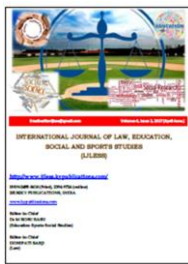
Research Article



A ROLE OF IQAC IN IMPROVING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION & RUSA

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ABSTRACT

Quality education encompasses the learner-teacher relationship, learning environment, curriculum and the infrastructural facilities provided by the higher educational institution (HEIs). 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. Quality assurance and enhancement is a continuous process, for which Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) may be constituted in every accredited college. The NAAC coordinator will act as the coordinator of IQAC necessarily, who should be a senior, non-transferable, full time teacher with more than five years of tenure. IQAC is the totality of systems, resources and information devoted to setting up, maintaining and improving the overall quality and standards of an institution. Assessment is a powerful instrument for quality improvement in higher education and the effect of such reform goes beyond the domain of assignment and examinations. Higher education imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the frontiers of knowledge of the students in different walks of life. Higher education is for knowing more and more. The need to expand the system of higher education, the impact of technology on the educational delivery, the increasing private participation in higher education and the impact of globalization (including liberal cross-border and transnational educational imperatives), have necessitated marked changes in the Indian higher education system.

Key Words: NAAC, IQAC, Quality Assurance, Higher Education, RUSA

Introduction

India has one of the largest and diverse education systems, in the world. Privatization, widespread expansion, increased autonomy and introduction of programs in new and emerging areas has improved access to higher education. At the same time it also led to widespread concern on the quality and relevance of the higher education. 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 (HEIs), aiming for continuous improvement.

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 National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) proposed that every accredited institution should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure. The IQAC may channelize and systematize the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence. The IQAC should become a driving force for ushering in quality by working out intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality.

Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC): Quality assurance and enhancement is a 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. In the present paper, we introduce the concept of academic calendar for the perfect coordination between the different committees of the IQAC for the effective working which may result in the transparent, managerial and efficient administration of the institution.

Formation of IQAC: IQAC should be formulated as per the guidelines of NAAC, with some necessary specific modifications as given. For the senior college attached to junior college, the Vice-principals from both wings may be included along with the Registrar, Office Superintendent as Administrative officers. Teacher representatives have to be selected from different faculties, considering their participation in teaching learning, evaluation, research and extension work. Proactive, highly qualified and quality conscious, enthusiastic members of governing council should be requested to contribute in IQAC. Local people may be selected from learned, qualified persons serving society via their own work may be selected. The NAAC coordinator will act as a coordinator of IQAC necessarily, who should be a senior, non-transferable, full time teacher with more than five years of tenure.

Functions of IQAC

- Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters for the various academic and administrative activities of the Colleges;
- Facilitating the creation of a learner-centric environment conducive for quality education and faculty maturation to adopt the required knowledge and technology for participatory teaching and learning process;

- Arrangement for feedback responses from students, parents and other stakeholders on quality related institutional processes;
- Dissemination of information on the various quality parameters of higher education;
- Organization of inter and intra institutional workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles;
- Documentation of the various programmes/activities of the College, leading to quality improvement;
- Acting as a nodal agency of the college for coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of good practices
- Development and maintenance of institutional database through MIS for the purpose of maintaining / enhancing the institutional quality;
- Development of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) of the College based on the quality parameters/assessment criteria developed by the relevant quality assurance body (like NAAC, NBA, AB) in the prescribed format;
- Bi-annual development of Quality Radars (QRs) and Ranking of Integral Unites of Colleges based on the AQAR;
- Interaction with SQACs in the pre and post accreditation quality assessment, sustenance and enhancement endeavours.

Role of IQAC in Ensuring Quality enhancement of Higher Education: 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 responsible 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. Thus, if quality is required to be assured we need a structured quality assurance mechanism that makes it possible to monitor, improve and evaluate quality. Therefore, each and every institution will have to build its own IQAC keeping certain objectives in mind namely monitoring, evaluation quality assurance for specific activities and instruments for quality assurance.

Benefits of IQAC

- a) Ensure heightened level of clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement;
- b) Ensure internalization of the quality culture;
- c) Ensure enhancement and integration among the various activities of the college and good practices;
- d) Provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning;
- e) Act as a dynamic system for quality changes in the colleges
- f) Build an organized methodology of documentation and internal communication

Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutes (HIEs):

Assessment is a powerful instrument for quality improvement in higher education and the effect of such reform goes beyond the domain of assignment and examinations. Quality in higher education can be defined as the standard of measuring the worth of something against a similar thing. Assessment is that tool which helps the instructor or teacher to know about the students' understanding of learning materials, skills in a particular area. By this knowledge the teacher is able to provide necessary guidance to the learner. Quality education through assessment means learner-centred approach. In the process of assessment learners are given more importance. And the teacher, innovative teaching methods, and the infrastructure facilities are also important quality education.

A level of higher education includes college and university teaching-learning towards attaining higher educational qualification. Higher education imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the frontiers of knowledge of the students in different walks of life. Higher education is for knowing more and more.

The need to expand the system of higher education, the impact of technology on the educational delivery, the increasing private participation in higher education and the impact of globalization (including liberal cross-border and transnational educational imperatives), have necessitated marked changes in the Indian higher education system.

The NAAC stresses making quality assurance, an integral part of the functioning of higher education institution. NAAC has taken cognizance of the sweeping changes and the consequent shifts in values in the contemporary society. In this context it has formulated the five core values to which all higher educational institutions“ should relate-

a) Contribution to National Development: Contributing to National Development has always been an implicit goal of Indian HEIs. The HEIs have a significant role in human resource development and capacity building of individuals, to cater to the needs of the economy, society and the country as a whole, thereby contributing to the development of the Nation. Serving the cause of social justice, ensuring equity, and increasing access to higher education are a few ways by which HEIs can contribute to the National Development.

b) Fostering Global Competencies among Students: With liberalization and globalization of economic activities, the need to develop skilled human resources of a high caliber is imperative. Therefore, the accreditation process of NAAC needs to examine the role of HEIs in preparing the students to achieve core competencies, to face the global requirements successfully. This requires that the HEIs be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial in their approach, to ensure skill development amongst the students.

c) Inculcation of a Value System in Students: Skill development is crucial to the success of students in the job market, skills are of less value in the absence of appropriate value systems. The seeds of values sown in the early stages of education, mostly aimed at cooperation and mutual understanding, have to be reiterated and re-emphasized at the higher educational institutions, through appropriate learning experiences and opportunities.

d) Promoting the Use of Technology: The advantages of using modern tools and technological innovations in the day-to-day-life are well recognized. The corresponding changes in the use of new technologies, for teaching-learning and governance of HEIs, leaves much to be desired. Technological advancement and innovations in educational transactions have to be undertaken by all HEIs, to make a visible impact on academic development as well as administration. The campus community must be adequately prepared to make use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) optimally. Effective use of ICT in HEIs will be able to provide ICT literacy to the campus community, for resource sharing and networking, as well as adopting ICT-enabled administrative processes.

e) Quest for Excellence: To contribute to nation-building and skills development of students, institutions should demonstrate a drive to develop themselves into Centres of Excellence. Excellence in all that they do will contribute to the overall development of the system of higher education of the country as a whole. This ‘Quest for Excellence’ could start with the assessment or even earlier, by the establishment of the Steering Committee for the preparation of the Self Study Report (SSR) of an institution.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyaan (RUSA): Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyaan (RUSA), emphasizes to promote reforms in the State Higher Education System by creating and facilitating an institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level. It will help to promote autonomy in state universities and include governance in the institutions. One of the goals of RUSA is to ensure academic examination reforms in the higher education institutions and enable conversion of some of the universities into research universities at par with the best in the world. The project, launched recently on 8th June 2013, was implemented by HRD Ministry as a centrally sponsored scheme with matching contribution from the State Government and Union Territories. It is proposed to set eligibility criteria for states to achieve a high and sustained impact of the project through monitoring and evaluation.

The main component of the programme is to set up new universities and upgrade existing autonomous colleges to universities. The other attempt will be to convert colleges to cluster universities and set up new model colleges. The strategy will also include converting existing degree colleges to model colleges. After assessment of the requirements for these reforms and the limitations of UGC, the government has evolved the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), a Centrally sponsored scheme for higher education, in a mission-mode to focus on state higher educational institutions.

These include a proposal to limit the number of colleges to be affiliated to any university to 100; encourage large autonomous colleges to develop into universities; create college cluster universities by clustering a minimum of 50 colleges in a city or district; and allowing Central and state universities to have 5-10 constituents, autonomous colleges, to be mentored by the parent university as "model colleges". These schemes are being funded with proportionate participations of state governments.

RUSA is an excellent opportunity to the state universities to upgrade educational and research ambience of infrastructure, knowledge resources and skill development expertise to produce international quality manpower. It should also be underscored that the upgraded colleges and universities would be mentored for high-quality research outputs with fund-associated expertise through RUSA. Considering that teachers are the backbone of educational reforms, any genuine service-related/administrative concerns highlighted by teacher bodies have to be parallel remedied by governments.

RUSA aims to provide equal development to all higher institutions and rectify weaknesses in the higher education system.

The major objectives are to:

- Improve the overall quality of existing state institutions by ensuring that all institutions conform to prescribed norms and standards and adopt accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitating institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure academic and examination reforms in the higher educational institutions.
- Enable conversion of some of the universities into research universities at par with the best in the world.
- Create opportunities for states to undertake reforms in the affiliation system in order to ensure that the reforms and resource requirements of affiliated colleges are adequately met.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.

- Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
- Expand the institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establishing new institutions, in order to achieve enrolment targets.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by facilitating access to high quality institutions in urban and semi-urban areas, creating opportunities for students from rural areas to get access to better quality institutions and setting up institutions in un-served and underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes; promote inclusion of women, minorities, and differently abled persons.

The key objectives of RUSA are to improve access, equity and quality in higher education through planned development of higher education at the state level. Such planning will create by creating new academic institutions, and expand the existing institutions, that are self-reliant in terms of quality education, professionally managed, and characterized by greater inclination towards research and provide students with education that is relevant to them as well the nation as a whole.

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. 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.

Higher education is the backbone of any society. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources in a country. Higher education, as we see today, is a complex system facilitating teaching, research, extension and international cooperation and understanding. The core values of NAAC for higher education system in India envisage: national development, fostering global competitiveness, including ethical values, promote use of technology and create an atmosphere and quest for excellence.

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