



## ROLE OF LIBRARY IN ENHANCEMENT AND SUSTENANCE OF QUALITY AMONG STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

In the present scenario practices are the best indicators of the services provided by the librarians to stakeholders of the institutions. Best practices will increase the effectiveness in providing information to the users and quality among the services provided. Quality is meeting and exceeding the customer or stakeholder's need or expectation. Higher Educational Institutes always have an important role to play in socio-economic development of a society, as they are the centers for knowledge generation and diffusion. An institute cannot successfully operate without making a constant continuous improvement on the performance of its products. Therefore, it is highly imperative that an appropriate, innovative strategy is to be adopted in quality enhancement and substance to fulfill the aspirations of different stakeholders of higher educational institutes. In knowledge society, Library has an important role to play in deciding the quality of education. Library is supposed to provide required rich inputs in the form of national and international quality books, journals and research literature to the student to get quality reflection. The system of library must have an open access for the student's with e-journal, internet facility. Computerized library is also an indication of quality education.

**Key words:** NAAC, IQAC, ICT, Quality Enhancement Strategies, Best practices, Virtual libraries, Assessment and Accreditation

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### INTRODUCTION

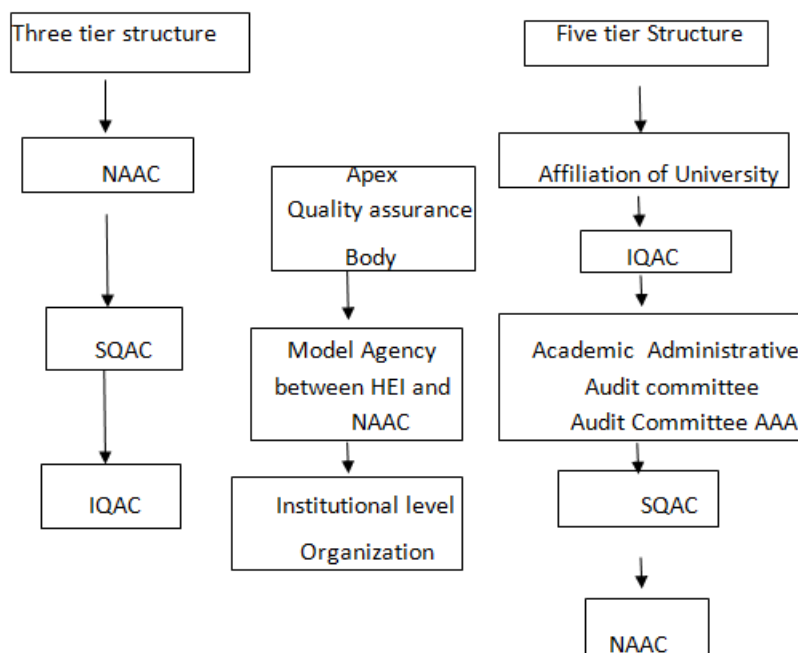
Libraries and information centers play an essential role in meeting society's information needs. Information Technology (IT) in libraries is having a remarkable impact worldwide. Information Technology has brought about varieties of form of libraries and mode of disseminating information. There are now available such libraries as Automated Library, Polymedia Libraries, Electronic Libraries, Virtual Libraries and Digital Libraries. Each of these forms of IT induced Library System has its own specific features, requirements, service mode, and associated problems. IT has offered Library and Information centers more efficient ways of acquiring, organizing, storing and disseminating information. New Information Technologies are becoming an integral component of and have the potential of changing the status quo of libraries and librarianship. Electronic and computers technology have come in to remove most of the limitations of access and use of information resources and services. Instead of "written world", we now have "electronic world" existing as bits and bytes of computer memory.

Ramesh (2006) observes that new IT is changing the face of libraries because of the advent of the Internet. Virtual libraries can be a threat to the existence of the traditional libraries. He further identified such media as Multimedia services like E-mail, Voice mail, Discussion group, Bulletin board, Chat sessions, online reference and Web pages.

## Concept of Quality:

Quality is system improvement. It is not a one shot affair. It is an unending journey. Internal Quality Assurance Cell introduced by the NAAC is the powerful instrument to enhance the quality in the educational institutions. The structure of the NAAC is given below:

### Quality- Enhancement Efforts



## Quality Enhancement Strategies:

Strategies for the quality enhancement in the educational institutions are as follows:

- Ensuring timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks
- The relevance and quality of academic and research programmes
- The credibility of evaluation procedures
- Ensuring the adequacy, maintenance and functioning of the support structure and services
- Research sharing and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

Through the following activities the institutes can achieve the quality enhancement:

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

The benefits involved in the introduction of Internal Quality Assurance Cell are heightened level of clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement, facilitate internalization of the quality culture for quality and Excellence in Higher Education, enhancement and integration among the various

activities of the institution and institutionalize many good practices. The Cell also provides a sound basis for decision making to improve institutional functioning and act as an agent in the institution.

### **Composition of the IQAC:**

The IQAC may be constituted in every institution under the chairmanship of head of the institution with heads of important academic and administrative units, a few teachers and a few distinguished educationists / representatives of local committee. The composition of the IQAC may be as follows:

1. Chairperson: Head of the institution
2. A few administrative officers
3. Three to eight teachers
4. One or two members from the management
5. One/Two nominees from local society
6. One of the teachers as the coordinator of the IQAC

### **Quality Assurance and Academic Libraries**

Quality products and services delivery are essential in the competitive capitalistic economy. Manufacturers and service providers are deeply involved in producing quality products and services in order to control their share of the market. The demand for quality by consumers led to the establishment of standard organizations, locally and internationally.

### **New Methodology of NAAC:**

The NAAC has adopted a new methodology of Assessment and Accreditation from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2012 for the reaccreditation of HEIs during the third cycle. It will continue to focus on the institutional developments during the third cycle with reference to Quality initiatives, Quality sustenance and Quality enhancement.

### **Core Values:**

The accreditation framework of NAAC shall continue to be based on the following five core values. They are contributing to national development, fostering global competencies among students, inculcating a value system in students, promoting the use of technology and quest for excellence.

The criteria for the quality assurance includes curricula aspects, teaching-learning and evaluation, research, consultancy and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and progression

Academic libraries provide information sources and services that support the programmes of their institutions. Odusanya and Osinulu (2004) state that, "they are expressly charged with the responsibility of meeting the information needs of scholars and students in the pursuit of their academic endeavours." Implementing quality insurance requires a meeting point between the standards for academic libraries and what is available. There are minimum standards for academic libraries as prescribed by the American Library Association, (ALA).

### **Quality Assurance Issues in Academic Libraries**

A set of acceptable standards serve as guides in evaluating the quality of services. The factors considered in evaluation are: collections, human resources, library buildings, equipment and facilities, funding, and automation. These issues are discussed below:

#### **Collections**

Collections are the bedrock of library services. Collections represent the strength of services. Collections of academic libraries implementing quality assurance should be large, comprehensive, current, and of good quality. The collections should support the curricula of the parent institutions and meet the needs of their clientele. The collections should conform to the standards set out by regulating bodies locally and internationally.

ALA (2006) judges the quality of an academic library's collections on usability, comprehensiveness, diversity, and size, stipulating that, "the library should provide varied, authoritative, and up-to-date resources that support its mission and the needs of undergraduates, post graduates and faculty staff."



## **Funding**

Funding is the provision of money on a regular basis for functions, services, overhead, and is a critical factor in the management of academic libraries. Surdarshan (1993) argues for stable and adequate funding for academic libraries through adequate budgetary provisions and other levies.

## **Automation**

Information acquisition, storage, handling, and dissemination have been tremendously and positively affected by computer technology. All routine activities involved in collection development, readers services (circulation and reference services), serials management, and technical services are being accomplished by computer and related technology. Computer and IT application have remarkable benefits to academic libraries. Such benefits include provision of fast, effective, and efficient services; possibility of new services and functions; ease of generation of vital statistical records; cost reduction; possibility of networking and greater cooperation among libraries; improved services through access to resources of other libraries.

Quality assurance means that automation project objectives must be clearly stated and properly planned to guarantee success and sustainability. Factors such as electronic resource acquisition, equipment and infrastructure, funding and staffing are crucial factors in measuring standards in automated libraries. Electronic resources should be a diverse part of the library collection, and meet the curricular needs of their institutions. Mechanisms to ensure steady subscriptions and regular updates must be instituted. The success of an automated library hinges on harnessing automation as a means of providing effective service. To achieve this, there must be adequate equipment and infrastructure. Automation requires a building that is adequate to house equipment and the personnel. Adequate infrastructure includes a steady supply of electricity, efficient telecommunication system, maintenance of hardware and software, etc. Equipment and infrastructure needs of academic libraries should be guided by these questions to assure quality.

## **Staffing**

The relevance of personnel to the achievement of goals and objectives of academic libraries cannot be over emphasized. Staff are the activators of functions and services. Amusa and Odunewu (2006) describe how library staff uses their expertise in evaluating and anticipating users' needs through selection and acquisition of relevant information sources; delivering information to the users through document delivery services, current awareness services; and provision of reading faculties; and collaboration with facilities to develop new services. Vyas and Singh (2003) describe library staff as the ultimate knowledge workers. They recommend that library staff recognize what they have to offer and then ensure that management recognizes it. They must be strategic partners.

Quality services need quality staff. Those staff should possess the following skills (Birdsall 2001):

- Strong technical and technological pace that include knowledge of the appropriate selection and application of technology to solve information problems, database design, and the principle of organization of information;
- Understanding of the characteristics of information transfer, including users' information seeking behavior, and information generation activities within the various disciplines;
- Skills in identifying and analyzing the information needs of various constituencies served and how the information need would be met through the complex information agencies;
- Understanding of the generation, production and distribution of information and of the changing paradigm as shift occur from print-based information production to other modes of production and distribution
- Communication theory and its application to information repackaging

ALA (2006) does not have specific recommendations on staff quality, but suggests an appropriate quantity of knowledgeable staff to provide for information needs of all categories of users of academic libraries, saying that, "all staff serving undergraduate students should have knowledge and ability to ensure effective



management and use of the resources; possession of adequate subject background in order to meet the teaching and learning needs of users; and possession of excellent communication skills.”

## **Library Facilities**

Library buildings provide a platform for conducting the services of the library. Specifically, library buildings provide reading space, collections, equipment, offices and workrooms. Library buildings are significant to the success of the library organization, and certain factors are crucial. These are location, space, expandability, illumination, and aesthetic qualities. An academic library building must be centrally located to provide easy access users. The space should adequate for collections, seating, and offices. The design must consider aesthetics, and should be flexible in order to accommodate an extension of the building in the near or distant future. The building must be well-lit and ventilated

Equipment and facilities in the library building are equally important to provision of quality service. In the words of Rajaram (2003), "adequacy or inadequacy of infrastructural facilities in the library is directly related to users satisfaction or dissatisfaction though this is dependent on financial resources of a library." Academic libraries should have enough seating facilities, shelving, and display cabinets, as well as adequate OPAC units, and bibliographic processing tools. Availability of equipment is not enough; it must be functional and efficiently maintained. The equipment must also conform to national and international standards.

## **Quality Assurance and IT Roles in Academic Libraries**

Effective services are factors of established standards of performance. Quality services are made possible in academic libraries when quality is assured and IT is applied to the functions and services. Academic libraries support their institutions when staff and students can take full advantage of information resources. Specific roles of quality assurance in automated academic libraries are:

- Ensure that academic libraries and automated services are seen as an important element of the staff and student learning experience.
- Quality standards are maintained and improved. Information Technology has brought enormous advantage to academic libraries, and has helped in providing solution to the problem of paucity of resources through databases, online information services and resource sharing.
- High quality information for user learning. This will be assured through planned and structured acquisition of printed information sources and those in electronic format.
- Collaboration between academic staff and the library on automation is essential to gain the support of staff for the success of the project.
- Encourage academic library stakeholders to focus on quality processes and mechanisms.
- Provide a consistent approach to quality. This involves periodic assessment of the contact to which standards are being adhered to in the library in the areas of collection, personnel, library building, equipment, and facilities, funding, and automation.

## **Implementation of Quality Assurance and IT in Academic Libraries**

Implementations of quality assurance in academic libraries start with formulation and inauguration of Quality Assurance Policy (QAP), and planning for sustainable implementation of the policy. The policy should state the aim, objectives, and the purpose of quality assurance in the libraries. The policy must be clear and explicit, and copies made available to all members of staff. The next stage in implementing quality assurance is the institution of the Procedure of Working Quality Assurance (PWQA). PWQA involves setting up a broad base committee to develop and manage Quality Assurance in academic libraries. The committee will develop quality standards for each Division, Section or Unit of the libraries. These standards requirements will then be developed into working manual i.e. Quality Assurance manual for personnel. This manual should be thoroughly explained and discussed with the personnel involved to enable them be aware of the processes involved in Quality Assurance. Furthermore, the committee will attend to these specific functions. Prepare and institute quality control system like personnel assessment procedures, and measurement job performance, qualitative funding, and prudent management of funds. Make provision for training and re-training of personnel to

develop their skills and knowledge needed to function effectively and efficiently. This can be through preparation and distribution of libraries' self study report and quality reports. Effective public relation is a means through which academic libraries can attract good funding for themselves for their institutions, groups and individuals. Quality Assurance ideas and news can also be disseminated to other libraries related institution through public relations.

## CONCLUSION

Application and maintenance of quality assurance in academic libraries will improve the quality of teaching, learning, and research in tertiary institutions and in turn raise the standard of education in these institutions. Quality assurance ensures that standards are built into the functions and services of academic libraries. Sustainability of quality assurance will provide parameters for measuring academic library performance.

The NAAC has adopted a new methodology of Assessment and Accreditation from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2012 for the reaccreditation of HEIs during the third cycle. Affiliated colleges aspiring for higher graduation through genuine qualitative improvement of the educational services rendered to the students should take timely measures. Application of IT to library services requires planning and commitment, with a broad-based committee of librarians, computer scientists, communication experts, technicians, financial experts, university administrators, and representatives of other stakeholders. Members of this committee should have knowledge of IT and its application to libraries. They must be passionate about the project and its success. Employment of quality personnel in the right quantity to install, run, and maintains the equipment is necessary. They should be self-motivated, resourceful, and ready to accept challenges appropriate schedule for the personnel.

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