

Role of IQAC in the Promotion of Quality and Excellence in Teacher Education Institutions

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Abstract

India set up NAAC and IQAC as tools to assess and enhance quality in education, specially the higher education Internal Quality Assurance Cell is the first step towards academic excellence, act as a facilitative and participative organ of the higher education institutions, and a driving force for ushering in quality by working out intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality. The changing context in higher education is multi-folded. In order to respond better to the needs of the different groups within the society, higher education institutions must act as a platform for knowledge exchange which will result in continuous improvement in all the quality aspects for the sustenance in the long run. New challenges related to technologies that are improving ways in which knowledge can be produced, managed, disseminated, accessed and controlled also emerge continually. Hence, the need of the hour is to develop a progressive higher education system that is established on the foundation of excellence and only a sustainable and proactive Internal Quality Assurance Cell can meet the aspirations of progressive societies.

Keywords: National Assessment Accreditation Council, Sustainable , Excellence, Quality Assurance

Introduction

Quality has become a matter of major importance for higher education institutions. Quality is the means through which an institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty , that the standards of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced. India, setup NAAC and IQAC as tools to assess and enhance quality in education, specially the higher education.

Establishment of NAAC is was described as a vital step towards quality improvement of education in India. NAAC and the higher education in India: NAAC was established in 1994 as University Grants Commission's (UGC) autonomous institute (NAAC, 2020). NAAC was set up to monitor the performances of the higher educational institutions every five years keeping in view the external assessments and the internal valuations. NAAC comprises of General Council (GC) and Executive Committee (EC) functioning through various scholastic policy makers, senior academicians and bureaucrats from all across the higher education system of India. The president of GC is the chairperson of UGC, who selects a distinguished academician as the chairperson of EC.

NAAC assess higher educational institution's (HEI's) centred on academician's, intellectual's and official's experiences and international observes that are associated with it. The assessment

involves the introspection of facilities, infrastructure, and accomplishments of stake holders and fineness of teachers. Grading is issued basing on the achievements and prospects of the HEIs (Singh, 2018). NAAC establishment was to conduct accreditation and valuation on the HEIs and the programmes conducted by them, for which NAAC organises periodic assessments. While assessing and after every assessment, NAAC also revisits the assessment process and makes necessary changes to make them more accurate and suitable (Goel, 2018). It fine tunes all the assessment models and tools (Singh, 2018). It also, while assessing, lists out the trustworthy evaluators and advisors; and provides them with efficient training. NAAC monitors the scrutiny of evaluators and co-ordinates with them. To heighten the performance of HEIs, NAAC prepares accreditation policies and publicises the strategies and guidelines planned by it to advance the quality developing mechanism. It conducts workshops, conferences and seminars to deliberate the quality concerns in education.

It is mandatory for Higher Education Institutions to undergo the process of the assessment and accreditation. This is a world of globalization and liberalization creating influence upon the Indian Higher educations. Indian Higher Education Institutions have deep national and societal concerns. The Assessment and Accreditation process provides the quality focusing on the holistic institutional developments in terms of quality initiative, quality sustenance and quality enhancement. The Higher Educational Institutions focus on quality assurance, that is, internal and external assessment for continuous improvement. In this context, the Institution is considered as the whole. The Assessment and Accreditation process of NAAC involves both self-evaluation and external peer evaluation.

Self-evaluation encompasses objectivity, self-analysis, reflection and professionalism on the part of Higher Education Institutions. It is a process of self-study, which facilitates Higher Education Institutions to evaluate their own SWOT analysis i. e. strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats or challenges. There is always a room for improvement in every institution. Having had the self-evaluation process and the preparation of the Self-Study Report (SSR), an institution submits the same to NAAC for an external evaluation. All the stakeholders' including management, faculty members, administrative staff, students, parents, employers, community and alumni should participate in this process aiming at quality enhancement in Higher Education Institutions.

Thus, the development process of the institution and educational services are evaluated internally and externally. In other words, NAAC acts as a catalyst for the institutional self-study, self-improvement, innovation and best practices and assists to excel. The crux of the Assessment and Accreditation is the criteria-based assessment of NAAC. The seven criteria show the main functions and activities of an institution. It focuses on teaching-learning, research, community development and the holistic development of the students. Truly, seven criteria serve as the basis for assessment of HEIs. They are Curricular Aspects (CA), Teaching-Learning and Evaluation (TLE), Research, Consultancy and Extension (RCE), Infrastructure and Learning Resources (ILR), Student Support and Progression (SSP), Governance, Leadership and Management (GLM) and Innovations and Best Practices (IBP).

Every institution should make these Seven Criteria-wise committees and work accordingly. The Key Aspects for the seven criteria mirror the values of the Higher Education Institutions and the assessment is made upon the same. The questions on Key Aspects focus on the institutional provisions contributing to student learning and development.

Criterion I - Curricular Aspects :

This aspect deals with curriculum development and implementation processes at large. A University designs the curriculum and the affiliated institutions of the University implement it accordingly. It acts as supplementation or enrichment of the curriculum already designed by the University. However, it is an additional knowledge designed, remade by an institution for the academic betterment and excellence of the students. There is flexibility in curricular design, which aligns with the institutional mission. The institution initiates courses of national and global concern fulfilling local needs. It includes issues of diversity, academic flexibility, and aspects on career orientation, multi-skill development and involvement of stakeholders in curriculum updation.

The Key Aspects of Curricular Aspects include Curriculum Planning and Implementation, Academic flexibility, Curriculum Enrichment, Feedback System. The hundred marks are allotted for the assessment of these key aspects under this Criterion.

Criterion II - Teaching-Learning and Evaluation :

Every institution serves students of different backgrounds and abilities through teaching-learning processes. Interactive instructional techniques are effectively used in such processes that engage students in higher order thinking and investigation through interviews, group discussions, debates, projects, presentations, experiments, practicum, internship and ICT resources. The focus is on the continuous professional development of the faculty. The most important concern of this criterion is to evaluate the performance of teachers and students constantly.

The Key Aspects of Teaching-Learning and Evaluation are Student Enrolment and Profile, Catering to Student Diversity, Teaching-Learning Process, Teacher Quality, Evaluation Process and Reforms, Student Performance and Learning Outcomes

Criterion III : Research, Consultancy and Extension

It is important to design the policies, practices and outcomes of the institution in this regard. It aims at promoting a research culture in the institution along with the facilities provided to the researchers. The institution makes constant efforts to enable faculty to undertake research projects useful to the society. The most important aspect of this criterion is to serve the community through extension being a social responsibility.

The Key Aspects of Research, Consultancy and Extension are Promotion of Research, Resource Mobilization for Research, Research Facilities, Research Publications and Awards, Consultancy, Extension Activities and Institutional Social Responsibility, Collaborations

Criterion IV : Infrastructure and Learning Resources

The focus is on the best use of the facilities available in an institution, which leads to maintain the quality of academic programmes on the campus. The students, teachers and staff can reap benefits from such facilities. These facilities need to be expanded for further development. The

key aspects are Physical Facilities, Library as a Learning Resource, IT Infrastructure and Maintenance of Campus Facilities.

Criterion V : Student Support and Progression

An institution should make sincere efforts to provide essential assistance to students. The learning atmosphere should be maintained for visible changes at the campus. Most importantly, the emphasis should be laid upon their holistic development and progression. In addition, student performance and alumni profiles are to be maintained properly and the attention needs to be given for the progression of students to Higher Education and fruitful employment. The key aspects are Student Mentoring and Support, Student Progression, Student Participation and Activities.

Criterion VI : Governance, Leadership and Management

This criterion makes the policies and practices for the institutional building. It focuses on planning human resources, recruitment, training, performance appraisal, financial management and leadership. The key aspects are Institutional Vision and Leadership, Strategy Development and Deployment, Faculty Empowerment Strategies, Financial Management and Resource Mobilization, Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS).

Criterion VII : Innovations and Best Practices

The principal focus is on the innovative efforts of an institution for its academic excellence and betterment. The innovative practice generates the interest of the student and the institution for internal quality assurance, inclusive practices and stakeholder relationships. The key aspects are Environment Consciousness, Innovations and Best Practices.

NAAC, Bangalore proposed that an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) should be established in every accredited institution as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure. Its prime concern is to maintain quality up-gradation of institutions of Higher Education.

Internal Quality Assurance Cell

The establishment of IQAC by every accredited institution as a post-accreditation measure is the first step towards internalization and institutionalization. The IQAC is supposed to look at the improvement of the quality of the college/institute 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.

IQAC: Goals

- The primary aim of the IQAC is to develop system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution.
- IQAC is to keep the institution abreast of and abuzz with quality sustenance activities on a pertinent issues.
- IQAC is to generate good practices, ideas, planning, implementing and measuring the outcome of academic and administrative performance of the institution.

Composition of IQAC

In the context of the pivotal role to be played by IQAC, NAAC has given very appropriate and clear guidelines so far as the composition of IQAC in an institution is concerned. As per these guidelines, the IQAC may be constituted in every institution of higher education under the chairmanship of head of the institution with heads of important academic and administrative units and a few teachers and a few distinguished educationist/representatives of local committee.

Functions of IQAC:

Some of the functions of IQAC expected as follows:

- a) Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters for various academic and administrative activities of the institution;
- b) Facilitating the creation of a learner-centric environment conducive to quality education and faculty maturation to adopt the required knowledge and technology for participatory teaching and learning process;
- c) Arrangement for feedback response from students, parents and other stakeholders on quality-related institutional processes;
- d) Dissemination of information on various quality parameters of higher education;
- e) Organization of inter and intra institutional workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles;
- f) Documentation of the various programmes/activities leading to quality improvement;
- g) Acting as a nodal agency of the Institution for coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of best practices;
- h) Development and maintenance of institutional database through MIS for the purpose of maintaining /enhancing the institutional quality;
- i) Development of Quality Culture in the institution;
- j) Preparation of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) as per guidelines and parameters of NAAC, to be submitted to NAAC.

Strategies

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 programmes.
- Equitable access to and affordability of academic programmes for various sections of society.
- Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning.
- The credibility of evaluation procedures.
- Ensuring the adequacy, maintenance and proper allocation of support structure and services.
- Sharing of research findings and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

Benefits: Change for the better

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.
- To the enhancement and integration among the various activities of the institution and institutionalize many good practices.
- To provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning.
- To act as a change agent in the institution.
- To better internal communication.

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 pursuit becomes a natural phenomenon rather than an enforced work culture.

Role of IQAC in Ensuring Quality Higher Education: Challenges

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management offers a vehicle for educational institutions to manage themselves effectively in a time of rapid change. Total quality management in higher education means improving quality of courses, input, instructional processes, resources, management process and structures as well as student support services, output and linkages with the world of work and other organisations. The following approaches for total quality management are suggested : Identifying customer needs, Specifying quality needs, identifying gaps in the existing systems, planning for improvement, implementation of improvement plans, monitoring and evaluation and modification of plans.

Quality assurance mechanism

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. Autonomy is to be granted to selected institutions of higher learning by considering their standard in the past to enable them the academic freedom to mobilize their resources for qualitative improvement and academic transformation. Regular monitoring is to be made mandatory.

Intervention strength

The IQAC has the potential to work out 'intervention strategies' to remove deficiencies and enhance quality. Though it will be facilitative and participative, decision taking and goal setting

system evolved, its intervention strength is not exploited or even used by the institutions only because it may supersede the interest of Management and the Principal. IQAC can become catalyst for change when all members play a proactive role and IQAC has intervention strength to remove the flaws and stem inaction.

Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters

IQAC in consultation with all the members and stakeholders plan and implement various quality related initiative of the institution. But half hearted attempt at bringing quality; inability to take implement unanimously agreed decisions results in disenchantment amongst the members. Parameters have to be formulated all the aspects of quality; Total quality Management has to be incorporated and practised by all i.e. Management, Principal, Teachers, Students, Administrative Staff and stakeholders.

Training, Orientation and Participation of members

The IQAC must ensure that there are regular meetings to formulate and implement quality initiatives. Workshops, seminars, Guest talks, Faculty development programmes must be organised to orientate new members and existing team of teachers, non teaching staff, members of management on quality benchmarking in private colleges. The team of IQAC must constantly work on quality benchmarking and excellence.

Streamlining of Academic and IQAC responsibilities

IQAC cannot function properly until IQAC coordinator and teachers are able to streamline their academic and IQAC responsibilities. There has to be a balance in Academic and IQAC responsibilities as it should not create undue burden on the coordinator and the teacher members. Reduced teaching work, stipulated hours for IQAC responsibilities such as, meetings and documentation work has to be incorporated for efficient functioning of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell.

Thrust on Research, training and Innovation

IQAC apart from developing a composite quality culture in the institution, must lay major emphasis on the capacity building of the faculty and students in research work. IQAC must ensure that teachers regularly encourage to participate in the national, international seminars, workshops, conference. In house training of the faculty and interactional sessions with the students must provide ample opportunities for innovative idea generation, sharing in the form of projects, skill development courses, use of facilitative technology and entrepreneurship development. New findings and innovative technology in education are the result of encouraging research initiatives. Research related laboratory equipments, books and journals should be provided to the students and faculty for qualitative research initiatives.

Teachers' Role

Teachers hold key position in any type of education. In higher education in India, leadership is a critical issue. Quality councils under Internal Quality Assurance No plan to raise educational standards can achieve success if teachers are neglected. Low salaries, poor working conditions, lack of motivation for hard work make honest work fragile and weak. For implementing Total Quality Management Cell must work to address teachers concerns.

Sharing of best practices and Community Participation

IQAC must learn and share best practices from various institutions. Creating linkages, offering consultancy services and training to the schools, colleges and community can augment brand building of the institution. No doubt, skill development is very important for success of students in the job market, but skills are of less value in the absence of appropriate value system. Therefore, inculcating of core universal values like positive attitude, truth, righteousness, appreciation, adjustment, commitment, sincerity, sacrifice, dedication, and the like among our students is of prime importance.

Conclusion

Thus, the role of IQAC in higher education is distinct and important as it works towards improving and maintaining the quality of higher education. Unless teachers, principals, students and stakeholders have a strong enthusiasm for developing themselves into centre of excellence, everything would be in vain. A joint and sustained effort is highly called for. Quality assurance and accreditation is a tool with great potential, and appropriate use of it would make 'quality' a value in educational institutions for uplifting the standards of higher education. A sustainable development of Internal Quality Assurance Cell in higher Education Institutions help us in bringing and sustaining quality in Higher Education Institutions.

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