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ROLE OF IQAC IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The University Grant Commission (UGC) established National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The key agenda NAAC as included in its abbreviation i.e to assess and accredit the institutions of higher education. The prime aim of NAAC has been to aid HEIs in improving the quality of higher education. Quality in higher education during these days has become a matter of utmost importance and concern. NAAC proposed that every accredited institution should have Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure. IQAC in the institute or college is significant administrative body which is responsible for all quality matters. The establishment IQAC has proven significant in creating a positive change in the overall performance of HEIs. IQAC has become an efficient instrument to ensure and to create a quality culture at the institutional level. Since quality enhancement is a continuous process IQAC helps institution to achieve academic excellence. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the functions and role of IQAC in HEIs in terms of quality assurance and quality enhancement.

Key words: NAAC, IQAC, Quality, HEIs, Function, Role

Introduction

Since independence there has been remarkable expansion in the number of HEIs in India. The traditional courses (in the faculty of Arts, Commerce and Science) offered with little efforts to better the qualitative part. As the globalisation began to blow its trumpet in education sector too during nineties, the governments of India seriously consider bringing metamorphosis in its conventional higher education system. Accordingly, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous institution of UGC come into existence at Bangalore on September, 1994. The task of evaluation, assessment and accreditation of colleges and universities is being done by NAAC. NAAC proposed every Higher Education Institute to establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) after completion of first cycle of accreditation of several colleges and universities in order to monitor the sustenance and enhance the quality of education

Quality is backbone of any education system be it primary, secondary of higher education. As it is said by Foster that “quality is never an accident”, quality requires persistent pursuance, high intention, sincere efforts, planning and sincere execution. The quality of any nation gets reflected

in its citizen and the quality of citizens in turn depends on education system of the nation. The education system of the nation is eventually determined on the quality of teachers. The quality in higher education is the most essential aspect as India advancing towards becoming an educational hub. Therefore maintaining the momentum of quality realization is of vital importance. IQAC is in fact regarded as body that ensures to retain the impetus created by the accreditation at the institutional level. The very establishment of IQAC has been the step towards internalization and institutionalization of quality culture.

Formation of IQAC

IQAC formation has to be done after the guidelines laid down by NAAC with some essential amendments. The vice principals from both wings (where senior college is attached to junior college), Registrar, office superintendent are to be included as administrative officers in IQAC. The teacher representatives from different faculties are to be selected after the consideration of their participation in evaluation, teaching learning process, research and extension work etc. The positive, quality conscious, highly qualified and enthusiastic members of governing council should be requested to offer their contribution. Similarly, the local people from learned, qualified, social workers of repute may be selected in IQAC of the institution. The NAAC co-coordinator will act as co-coordinator of IQAC. The IQAC coordinator should be full time teacher having experience of more than five years and whose position should be non-transferable.

The objective/aim of IQAC

The aim of IQAC should be

- To develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution.
- To promote measures for institutional functioning towards quality enhancement through internalization of quality culture and institutionalization of best practices

Strategies

IQAC shall evolve mechanisms and procedures for

- a) Ensuring timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks;
- b) The relevance and quality of academic and research programmes;
- c) Equitable access to and affordability of academic programmes for various sections of society;
- d) Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning;
- e) The credibility of evaluation procedures;

- f) Ensuring the adequacy, maintenance and proper allocation of support structure and services;
- g) Sharing of research findings and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

Functions Expected of the IQAC

- 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.

(Revised Guidelines of NAAC, 2013, p.3-4)

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 institution and institutionalize 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 HEIs;
- f) Build an organized methodology of documentation and internal communication.

Role of IQAC Coordinator

The role of IQAC coordinator is crucial. For, he/she has to ensure the effective functioning and participation of all members. He /she has a major role in implementing the above mentioned functions.

Role of IQAC in Ensuring Quality enhancement of Higher Education

The primary responsibility of higher education is the quality. Undoubtedly the government has this exclusive responsibility viz quality assurance in majority of the nations, it is the very institute itself is responsible for providing and guarantying quality. IQAC at HEIs is mechanism of resources and information devoted to retaining and advancing the quality as well as standards of HEIs. Hence if the quality is sought after, there is need to have structured and organized quality assurance machinery to monitor and evaluate quality. IQAC performs the various tasks in HEIs. It sets up documentation in motion. It brings awareness among faculties and generate confidence. It evolves formats for the information and data of the institutions and designs stipulated schedule for the work as well as drafts the quality status report.

Areas for Qualitative Improvement

It is desirable that the HEIs should pay attention to the following aspects in order to improve performance in regard to criteria identified by NAAC.

First and foremost, for the quality enhancement of education the HEIs must establish dynamic IQAC comprising dynamic academicians. The members should be committed, well-versed in handling the human as well as physical resources in the institution. There should have effective and healthy communication among the principal, management and the rest of the staff members. IQAC should study the NAAC methodology of accreditation and set its target, annual as well as for five years and monitor activities in the institute till the forthcoming accreditation.

IQAC of an institute should encourage the faculty members to take initiative in designing/ revising curriculum of the university. There should be participation of teachers in the activities of Board of Studies, concrete say in revision of syllabi along with record thereof.

It should encourage various departments in the college/ institute to start need based certification and diploma courses. It will be beneficial in filling up the gaps in the university curricula and developing employment potential as well as personality of students. In the same way IQAC should strengthen UGC sponsored add on courses such as Remedial Coaching, NET / SET coaching for the students. There should be career counselling cell. These cells motivate student to cater their diverse needs. The teachers running these cells should have positive, dynamic approach and missionary zeal. IQAC shall also involve other stake-holders like alumni and parent teacher association members, management, and industrial officials.

Importantly, the admission process of the college should be such that the student should feel-at-home. The college should have student enrolment profile developed annually. “The profile report should indicate the socio economic and geographic status of the students enrolled for its various academic, professional, certification, add on and other courses”(Hereker). IQAC should devise the departments to identify and shortlist the scholar students in various subjects and streams to shape their career through providing them with required resources as books, counselling, special coaching, and training etc.

IQAC should facilitate the student as well as faculty members the use of ICT and modern methods of teaching. It should develop e-learning resources and organize orientation, workshops for upgrading their technological skills. It should encourage teachers to prepare their presentations and notes and display them on college websites.

IQAC should design its own continuous internal evaluation system at the college level. It should consist of test, unit tests, individual and group assignments, PPT competitions, online tests etc and as the quality is decisive factor in the qualitative improvement in the education system the IQAC should ensure that the teachers from the various departments are deputed for research fellowships, orientations/refresher courses, seminars and conferences, and alike programmes and should encourage the departments to organise seminar, conferences and workshops etc. in the institution.

The IQAC should not only promote the research activities, providing departmental targets regarding major and minor research projects, research papers and publications to be done every year it should also have periodic follow up of the progress of the same.

The principal and IQAC should design short term and long term plan for development of infrastructure in consultation with college management. They should prepare a mechanism to realize those plans through assistance of UGC, government and other agencies and it should also exploit own financial resource.

There should be a strong and efficient feedback system. The constructive feedbacks from all stakeholders aids in increasing efficiency. The corrective measures are to be adopted soon after the feedback in order to improve efficiency of particular segment. The IQAC must cultivate the practice of maintaining appropriate records of every activity as expected by NAAC for assessment and accreditation.

Conclusion

There is a good prospect for Higher Education in India since world's largest population of young people is in the age group of 15 to 24 years (18% of all Indians). The role of IQAC for the quality enhancement in higher education is crucial and instrumental in about some positive change in the administration of the college/institute. IQAC functions for enhancement and retaining the quality. The duo, quality and excellence result out of team work and commitment. The leaders i.e. the principals and coordinators of IQAC should work on the guidelines of NAAC for proper realization of the role of IQAC and its accountability. Quality assurance is essential for improving institutional efficiency and also increasing public accountability.

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