

Quality Assurance in Higher Education in India

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Abstract:

In the era of Globalization science and technology is playing pivot role in every sphere of life and various dimensions of higher education are no exceptions .The long-term consideration in the education sector requires a clear statement of the direction in which a society wishes to move. Higher education in India is at crossroads. Universities and colleges of higher education are currently the main providers of higher education, but there are many other organizations most notably colleges of further education, and also professional bodies, firms and private training organizations, which offer programme of education or training at levels equivalent of higher education. In this research paper several dimensions of quality assurance in higher education have been discussed. An overview of the educational scenario strongly suggests the adoption of a three dimensional strategy based on the thinking behind the general quality assurance ideas and their applicability to the fields of education, training & research.

Keywords: *Quality Assurance, Higher Education, MHRD, NAAC, AICTE*

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Introduction:-

The world has been changing very fast. The pace of liberalization, privatization and globalization is remarkable and has tremendously influenced various dimensions of management of higher education. The long-term consideration in the education sector requires a clear statement of the direction in which a society wishes to move. Higher education in India is at crossroads.

Though higher education can take justifiable pride in what it has achieved over the last three decades. It has expanded opportunities, changed and adopted as the needs of students and other clients have changed, maintained its international standing in research, introduced new approaches to learning and teaching and to quality assurance, and greatly improved its cost-effectiveness. But there are strains resulting from the pace of change, especially in the last few years, which must be addressed if higher education is to continue to be able to develop and serve the nation well.

The aim of higher education is to enable society through an understanding itself and its world: in short, to sustain a learning society. The four main purposes of higher education are¹:-

1. To inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels through out life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfillment.
2. To increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society.
3. To serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge based economy at local, regional and national levels.
4. To play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilized inclusive society.

Higher education has become central to the economic well being of nation and individuals. The qualities of mind that it develops will be qualities that society increasingly needs to function effectively. There are three over arching trends that effect the environment within which higher education systems operate²:-

1. Dramatic demographic changes are under way in the size habitat and composition of the world's population. Equally vast charges are altering relations among the world's peoples.

2. The world is at a watershed: it is entering an area of new technological, economic and political organization with globalisation as the transforming force. New technologies are changing social relations at the macro level between nations and institutions, as well as at the micro level between individuals and groups. But new technologies can also generate new inequalities.
3. Knowledge is being accumulated and converted into new application and new wealth at a faster rate than ever before. A country's ability to produce and disseminate knowledge is decisive for its development. But access to the new knowledge is unequal and the gaps between nation are widening.

There is a wide gap between social expectations from higher education and the resources provided by the central and the state government. There is a definite need to identify the strengths, weakness of our higher educational system and the opportunities and challenges facing the system, with the challenges of globalization and info-tech revolution, there is a definite need to improve the quality of higher education in India and make it accessible to every eligible and interested student. The globalized economy provides tremendous opportunity and challenges for our institution of higher education.

In higher education quality movement was initiated in the eighties of the last century, gained moment in during the nineties and today, with the internationalization of higher education, has become an integral components of all higher education systems. Quality is an elusive attribute, and attribute of values, which can not be easily measured or quantified. Green and Harvey (1993) have identified five different approaches to the viewing quality in the field of higher education. According to them quality may be viewed³:-

- a. In terms of exceptional (highest standards),
- b. in terms of consistency (without defects and getting right the first time),
- c. as fitness for purpose,
- d. as value or money, and
- e. as a trans formative (transformation of the participants).

Along with the concept of quality, education has adopted from industry a variety of terms like quality control, quality assessment, quality audit and quality assurance. Green and Harvey (1993) has defined quality assurance "as the mechanism and procedures designed to reassure the various 'stakeholders' in higher education that institutions accord a high priority to implementing policies designed to maintain

and enhance institutional effectiveness.”

It is accepted that for implementing programmes of quality assurance it is necessary to first assess the functioning, performance and current standard for an institution and that this has to be done against its mission, goals and objectives. It is heartening to note the growing concern of the University Grants Commission and Govt. of India for building quality assurance in higher education. In 1994 two important quality monitoring agencies were established. These are the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) under the University Grant Commission, and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) under the All India Council for Technical Education. The responsibility for promotion and coordination of the Open University and distance education system, and for determination of its standards, has been assigned to Distance Education Council of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (DEC-IGNOU). The responsibility of maintaining standards in different professional programmes rests with different statutory councils that have been established through acts of Parliament. These include the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Bar Council of India (BCI), Medical Council of India (MCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), Indian Nursing Council (INC), Dentists Council of India (DCI), Central Council for Homeopathy (CCH), Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM), Veterinary Council of India (VCI) and Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI).

The responsibility of assuring quality is basically that of the University Grants Commission. In order to bring about a qualitative improvement in teaching at the under graduate level the UGC introduced in 1974-75 the College Science Improvement Programme (COSIP) and the College Humanities and Social Science Improvement Programme (COHISIP). Under the scheme for autonomous college, the colleges that have a reputation for academic excellence, have been granted freedom to develop their courses and syllabi and evolve methods of evaluation and conduct of examination. In order to promote excellence in research the UGC has introduced a Special Assistance Programme (SAP) under which selected departments in the faculties of Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Engineering and technology are given financial support at three levels, namely in the form of Departmental Research Support (DRS) or by up gradation to Departments of Special Assistance (DSA) or centers of advanced studies (CAS). Some other schemes and programmes of quality improvement launched by UGC are-faculty improvement programme (FIP), University Leadership Programme (ULP), National E-educational Testing (NET), Academic Staff College (ASC) and Doctoral and Post Doctoral Research fellowships.

Quality is a multi dimensional concept and to enhance the quality in higher education there is a need to develop human relations between teachers and students.

For this some qualities are needed in teachers as co-operative attitude, democratic attitude, political, neutrality, religious tolerance, judicious use of praise and blame, character and personality, love for students, respect for the individuality of each students, mastery of the subject matter and emotional stability.⁴ Students participation and progression is also very important in the assessment of quality of education imparted in any academic institution. The quality and range of student participation services differ from institution to institution. Student support services may be broadly classified as information services, registration and records services, tutorial and remedial services, counseling services, library services, value additional service, Career Guidance service, Placement services, Feed Back services, Alumni Services, Community services, Student Welfare service etc.⁵

The emphasis on higher education in India can be understood by the number of universities currently present in India and the quality of education they provide. As of February 2017, there are 789 universities, 37,204 colleges and 11,443 stand-alone institutions in India as per the latest statistics from the UGC website. Their numbers would only have increased now. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is responsible for supervising the functioning of all the universities in India through its Chief Regulatory Body- University Grants Commission (UGC). The other government organisations whose contribution for the upliftment of Indian Educational Scenario is worth mentioning are All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).⁶ The government policy to encourage self financing courses/ colleges is a threat to maintain quality in these institutions as these institutions are taking high fees from students and paying very less to the teachers. In the context of lack of infrastructure and student support system, these colleges are unable to provide quality education.

From time to time government of India and State Governments constitute committees to re-assess policy and regulations to cope up with changing scenario and maintain quality in Higher Education. Modi Government emphasized on skill development programme so that education is provided along with employment opportunities and quality enhancement in Higher Education. Recently Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has proposed new body Higher Education Empowerment Regulator Agency (HEERA), which will replace UGC and AICTE. If implemented as per the proposal, with an aim of removing over lapse in Jurisdiction, HEERA is also proposed to curb irrelevant regulatory provisions.

Thus we can say that in form of new schemes, programmes & quality assessment instruments quality improvement & assurance work have been done in

higher education in India. Today there are more than 789 universities and approximately 37,204 affiliated colleges in the country. According to a recent world bank study, India is the worlds second largest education system after China.Higher Education can be a powerful engine for building a stronger society,ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.It can serve the community by contributing knowledge and advanced skills as well as basic competencies and research through its so called third mission. Being Indian citizen its our duty to maintain quality in higher education through quality education, quality training and quality research.

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