Promoting quality culture in HEIs

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ABSTRACT

Developing, sustaining and enhancing quality culture is the responsibility of any institution. NAAC is an External Quality Agency while IQAC is an Internal Quality Agency. Both need to be balanced. Besides seven criteria, NAAC lays emphasis upon core values, assessment indicators for accreditation. The purpose of this exploration is to analyze the assessment indicators for quality culture in the context of Higher Education. Quality is not accidental, but it is the outcome of continuous and strenuous efforts for excellence. Quality cannot be taught. It has to be ingrained just as a sponge soaks the water. Developing, promoting and sustaining the quality culture is the responsibility of an institution. Higher Education is an instrument for the change and development. Higher Education can provide highly skilled manpower, it can contribute to the accentuation of class differences in society. It can also contribute to the quality of life by developing virtues, aptitudes and attitudes of human society. We, who are in charge of the institutions have to create an atmosphere where the potential of every individual can be put to use to its best level. That is the role and the challenge before the teacher. We must remember "time and tide wait for none" Hence, there is no time for us to lose. It is not difficult for us to see what goals today are worthy of striving. What is needed is not only choice but also faith, not only selection but also devotion, not only well-reasoned discrimination but also dedication.

Keywords— Higher education, Accountability, Quality, Benchmarks

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing, sustaining and enhancing quality culture is the responsibility of any institution. NAAC is an External Quality Agency while IQAC is an Internal Quality Agency. Both need to be balanced. Besides seven criteria, NAAC lays emphasis upon core values, assessment indicators for accreditation. The purpose of this exploration is to analyze the assessment indicators for quality culture in the context of Higher Education.

Quality is not accidental, but it is the outcome of continuous and strenuous efforts for excellence. Quality cannot be taught. It has to be ingrained just as a sponge soaks the water. Developing, promoting and sustaining the quality culture is the responsibility of an institution. Higher Education is an instrument for the change and development. Higher Education can provide highly skilled manpower, it can contribute to the accentuation of class differences in society. It can also contribute to the quality of life by developing virtues, aptitudes and attitudes of human society.

NAAC has made it mandatory to every accredited institution to establish IQAC as a quality sustenance measure. UGC too has recognized the worth of IQAC and has provided financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 3 lacs (seed money) to make it viable. The primary aim of IQAC is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic, administrative and financial performance of institution besides the implementation of good practices to develop quality culture.

What are the Quality Assessment Indicators of NAAC?
We need to overview them: (1) Curricular Aspect (2) Teaching, Learning and Evaluation (3) Research consultancy and Extension (4) Infrastructure and Learning Resources (5) Student Support and Progression (6) Governance and Leadership (7) Innovative Actions and Best Practices. Let us deal with them one by one

1.1 Curricular Aspects (Marks 50)
The curriculum is designed with the institutional goals and objectives that are regional and national. Curriculum design should be suitable for meeting the overall development of the students. Employability should be a major concern in curriculum design.

Faculty should take initiative in the curriculum development process. The institution should offer a number of programmes like certificate courses, diplomas and Degree programmes adapted to meet the needs of the students and the society. The students

should have an option to take additional /supplementary courses along with their curriculum, courses such as Vocational (Motor Mechanic, Carpentry), Personality Development courses could also be offered.

Feedback on curriculum should be taken from students' alumni, parents and employees. The curriculum should be updated as per the advanced knowledge and the needs of the society and industry.
Faculty should revise the curriculum by studying the feedback.

1.2 Teaching – Learning and Evaluation (Marks 450)
There should be wide publicity and transparency in the admission process. Admission Process should take into account the Reservation Policies adopted by the Central and State Govt. from time to time. The institution should ensure due representation from different strata, gender and locale.

The students learning level should be assessed soon after admission. There should be appropriate strategies for advanced learners and slow learners. Tutorial classes should be conducted for slow learners. Experimental Learning methodologies should be used to promote learning.

For example (1) Problem Solving Methodology (2) Computer Aided Information Retrieve (3) Library Resources can be effectively used (4) Teaching-Learning Experiences can be used effectively. The wide range of techniques, materials and experiences can be utilized to create interest among the students.

From this standpoint, quality- teachers, percentage of teachers with PhD qualification, percentage of teaching positions filled against the sanctioned posts, adherence to UGC/State Govt. /University Norms are important.

Evaluation Process and Reforms concern with the provision for continuous evaluation and for monitoring students progress. Reforms in examination procedures are evident. Examination Process should be transparent and reliable. Students grievances regarding evaluation should be addressed. Best Practices in the admission process should be employed.

1.3 Research / Consultancy and Extension (Marks 25)
To promote Research faculties should undertake minor/major research projects. If possible, the institute should also have a research centre which would provide research facilities like lab equipment, library books, research journals and magazines. The initiative should be taken to encourage and promote the research culture. Teachers should be motivated to participate in seminars, conferences and workshops.

Research Endeavour can be facilitated by collaborating with the research organizations/industry. Faculty should have recognized research guides and there should be ongoing research. For example, Home Science Department can have collaboration with MGIRI or can have a collaboration with Oxford or Cambridge University. There should be research committees to direct and promote research among the students and teachers.

Research facilities are to be enhanced through research projects. A significant number of articles are to be published in reputed or refereed journals or books, cognizable publication, citation index, impact factor in research is worth appreciation.

The institute should also provide expertise available for consultancy services to industries, Govt. and non-government organizations. Finance can be generated through consultancy services.

Extension services focus on the participation of students and faculty in extension programmes like NSS, NCC, Open university programmes.

Awards and recognitions received for Extension activities reveal social acceptance of extension services. Participation with industry, community and NGO's for extension activities are to be promoted. Extension activities can have a great impact on society.

We can have collaboration with the institutes at local, state, national and international level. In a similar way, we can collaborate with Industry or Research centres. Such collaborations in the case of Research and extension can be of great help and hence, such institutional practices are to be encouraged.

1.4 Infrastructure and Learning Resources (Marks 50)
From the perspective of Infrastructure and Learning Resources, the institution should provide necessary facilities for classrooms (Furniture's and fixtures), laboratories, sports facilities for students.

The institute should have necessary Lab. Equipment, and a good library. It should provide the necessary facilities for general computer education to the students. Infrastructure should be utilized to the maximum. Additional facilities for sports and extra-curricular activities like (gym, swimming pool, auditorium should be provided)

The institution should have a budget for maintaining the infrastructure, utilizing library and information facilities to adequate.

Library as a learning source concerns with a number of titles, books, journals (national + regional + international) and other library recourses such as CD's DVD's, audio cassettes etc. Library resources are augmented every year with the newer edition and

titles. Effective and user-friendly library operation (such as the issue of library tickets, issue of books, getting the necessary references) are to be practised.

Reading room facility for the students and the faculty, Internet facilities for Information Retrieval are to be made available to the teachers and students. Library Advisory committee and its effective functioning are to be monitored. Inflibnet / Delnet facilities are to be made available. Computerization of library and networking with other laboratories is to be encouraged. The institution should have a website faculty which is to be updated regularly.

Other facilities include staffrooms, common room for girls, restroom, toilet for men and for girls, health centres, facilities (Telephone/STD/ISD) electricity and lightning, transport, approach roads, garden. Institutes should have aesthetic and academic ambience.

1.5 Student Support and Progression (100 Marks)
Students support monitor students' progress. We should make efforts to reduce the drop rate. Percentage Progression to higher studies from UG to PG and PG to Research is calculated. Average institutional academic performance in relation to the university average is taken into cognizance. The progression of employment ensures institutional information access and dissemination.

Adequate Students Welfare measures such as scholarships, free ships, insurance, adequate counselling services, and etc, are to be implanted. We should provide optimum health-services and make the campus safe for the students with adequate security. The institute should organize students' cultural activities to nourish their artistic potentials.

Access should be given to Recreational / Leisure activities for students such as (1) Sports and games facility for students-Indoor and outdoor games are to be made available. Student participation in sports events, state level, national level sports is to be promoted. We must remember that the best practices in student's progression, student supports, students activities, or any other quality initiative should be adopted as institution practices. Such practices should nourish, develop and sustain the potential stakeholders.

1.6 Governance and Leadership (Marks 150)
Institutional vision and Leadership should be in tune with the objectives of higher education.

Effective leadership is necessary to govern a college and at present.. When we speak of government it is the infrastructure, resources, faculty (Teaching and Non-Teaching) and the Principal who is the part of good governance who are responsible in providing an adequate system to nourish.

Structural organization follow norms and make informal arrangements and constitute committees. They point at decentralization and participation on the part of management. We also have advisory committees like Grievance Cell, Election Committee, Cell for Prevention of Sexual harassment, etc.

Perspective plan, systematic strategies, action plan schedules are necessary for future development. An institutional approach to decision making, planning the manpower, initiative to fill up the vacancies and compliance to the Govt. of India and State Govt. policies on recruitment are to be taken care of self-appraisal forms of teaching and non-teaching, their confidential report, their performance appraisal should be done on regular basis. Such efforts shall certainly improve the over-all organization effectiveness and bring in professional development.

There should be both finance and academic budget and should have an external-internal audit.

1.7 Innovative Actions and Best Practices (Marks 50)
Innovative Practices from NAAC Perspective gives more importance to Environmental consciousness and subsequently a green audit of its campus. They also lay stress on the fact that the institute should take steps to make the campus eco-friendly. This quality assessment indicators emphasize the two best practices to develop the institution to contribute to the quality improvement. The best practices developed may be unique. Besides these seven criteria, NAAC focuses on core values such as knowledge and its application and the virtues that are to be ingrained by the stakeholders.

2. TWELFTH PLAN
Twelfth Plan in higher education imposes great responsibility upon teachers to execute academic reforms. The Twelfth plan has initiated PUSA in 2013 (Rashtriya Ucchatar Shikshan Abhiyan) as a centrally sponsored scheme to support state universities and colleges. It has a central plan allocation of Rs. 25,000/- cores during the 12th plan. The role of UGC will be confined to engage its bureaucracy for funding and it will be stripped of the important role of maintenance of standards. So, there is an implicit assumption that UGC has failed to maintain standards in higher education.

2.1 Academic Reforms Agenda in the 12th plan
12th plan declares its intention to develop a central institution as quality institutions as role models to be followed by the state universities. Now there is a strategic shift in funding. There is going to be a state-specific plan and allocation of money to the states through a centrally sponsored scheme based on a certain commitment to contribute by the state.

The 12th plan strategy includes a range of reforms mainly through the granting of autonomy. Strengthening of accreditation system is said to be an important instrument to promote quality. Deepening Academic Reforms include the introduction of choice based

credit system, semester system, continuous and comprehensive evaluation in (CCE), regular revision of curriculum, to update it to relevant future needs. To help institutions to reform their courses, subject-specific model curricula (Packaged lectures) would be created by the instructors with the requisite expertise.

An important goal of these reforms is said to create an active learning environment in colleges and universities. Smarter use of technology, initiatives to promote internationalization, the fostering of social responsibility in higher education, promotion of sports and wellness, increasing inter-institutional collaboration and coordination are some of the important measures, suggested to improve the quality. During the Twelfth plan, promotion of four-year undergraduate programme is also suggested. It talks of providing a holistic education at the undergraduate level ensuring students opportunities for intellectual exploration, hand-on-research, job-killing, experimental learning, creative thinking, leadership, ethics education, community services, etc.

In 12th plan, an innovative way to empower faculty through International Faculty Development Programme is suggested. Doctoral students now would be able to study at international institutes. They would be funded by UGC on a written commitment that they will be joining the Faculty Pool in India on completion of their studies.

The twelfth plan touches an important aspect of faculty motivation. It touches on actively engaged in the teaching-learning process. Absence of basic amenities is one of the most demotivating factors for a large section of faculty. The strategy for motivating faculty would focus on developing a healthy work environment. It also says that the new faculty may be kept under probation for a period of five years and confirmation could then be done on the basis of rigorous performance evaluation including peer-review and student feedback.

Recognizing the central role of teachers in improving academic quality as 'National Mission on Teachers and Teaching' would be launched in the 12th plan. There is also a suggestion for launching massive online courses so that the Indian students are a part of a global learning system that too at a low cost. A careful reading of the above reform agenda in 12th plan suggests a long list of initiatives which is more in the nature of intentions.

The ultimate aim of NAAC is not merely to keep up our standards, not merely to give useful and right education to students but also to achieve standards of such excellence that we become the leaders of the world.

What is today more crucial and important for human existence? or New Scientific venture? New equipment? New Technology or man behind like equipment?

It is here that values come in the eternal values that distinguish man from other creatures. We must have in mind-right values. Ex : (1) Traffic signal (2) Throwing away of garbage on roads.

What makes a good teacher – Just as the same as you expect a from a physician. One SKILL and the other 'CONCERN' We must always remember that our job is to motivate students.

Remember the basic truth of life 'No steam or gas drives anything until it is pressed or compressed. No activity over grows until it is focused until it is dedicated, until it is disciplined.

We should remember that the task of the teacher is the noblest. The teacher works on 'Immortal minds'. If we work upon the immortal minds and instil into them, the just principles, we are then engraving upon the tablets which no time will efface but will brighten and brighten the eternity.

In a convocation address of Allahabad University, Pandit Nehru said that the Institutes stand for the "Onward March of Human Race Towards Higher Objectives". Each institution must put to itself this question and should test its performance honestly and fairly. Whether is it doing its best to fulfil the higher objectives or not? UGC has been striving to develop Higher Education.

Remember, the work of a nation never ends. Men may come and men may go, generation may pass, but the life of the nation goes on. A nation that stands together and gets "educated" in the real sense will never lose the sight of goals. In spite of temporary setbacks, it will keep marching forward to PROGRESS.

In this following regard, I would like to refer to Sanskrit sloka. Which means:
− There is no syllable which is not a mantra:
− Nor there is a root which does not have medicinal properties;
− Similarly, there is no person who is unfit
− What is rare is the individuals who can organize this i.e. bring out the potentials', so the people in the field should strive hard to get success.

We, who are in charge of the institutions have to create an atmosphere where the potential of every individual can be put to use to its best level. That is the role and the challenge before the teacher. We must remember "time and tide wait for none" Hence, there is no time for us to lose. It is not difficult for us to see what goals today are worthy of striving. What is needed is not only choice but also faith, not only selection but also devotion, not only well-reasoned discrimination but also dedication.

3. REFERENCES

[1] NAAC manual for assessment and accreditation of colleges. Available at www.naac.gov.in