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Role of management representatives in academic and administrative audit

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ABSTRACT

The management which is primarily responsible for the proper governance and efficient leadership can ultimately bring quality enhancement in the field of Higher Education. Academic and Administrative Audit is one step further in this regard. Academic and Administrative Audit is not only going to make an internal and external assessment of the institution but also is bound to work over the weaknesses and limitations of the institution. The academic, administrative, curricular and extra-curricular activities carried out by the faculty need to be assessed by an internal committee as well as by the external academicians so as to provide valuable suggestions to boost the confidence of the faculty. The purpose of Academic and Administrative Audit is to evaluate the performance of the institutional departments, appreciate their achievements and give valuable suggestions for enhancing the quality of teaching, research, administration, extra-curricular activities, etc.

Keywords— *Academic audit, Administrative audit, Quality education, Management*

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing, sustaining and enhancing the quality culture is the responsibility of any institution. Quality Enhancement is an outcome of a voluntarily initiated process that is sustained over a long period of time. It is also a continuous process requiring careful planning, proper execution and timely evaluation. The concept of quality was first adopted in the manufacturing sector and was gradually shifted to the service sector and now from the service sector, it has been shifted to education, banking, insurance, IT, etc. Today people have become more quality conscious.

Quality Policy of an educational institution is to be prepared by all the stakeholders sitting together. It cannot come only from the management or the Principal since it is implemented by all the stakeholders. Quality is linked with the relevance and requirements of the students. For example, the students need to have good placements after completing their courses, hence the teaching-learning process, the evaluation process, the administrative process, services to the students such as a hostel, dining hall, canteen, health, cleanliness etc. need to be taken care of by the management. The statement defining these quality norms become the Quality Policy of an institution. The Quality Policy is the commitment on behalf of the management to its stakeholders.

In quality enhancement, certain benchmarks are identified, definite goals are set up and constant efforts are made to bring in positive and desirable results. But the million dollar question is who is responsible to initiate such a process? Who can be held responsible for quality enhancement? When one ponders over such questions and makes a minute observation, one comes to the conclusion that it is the management which is primarily responsible for the proper governance and efficient leadership that can ultimately lead to quality enhancement. Academic and Administrative Audit is one step further in this regard. Academic and Administrative Audit is not only going to make an internal and external assessment of the institution but also is bound to work over the weaknesses and limitations of the institution. The academic, administrative, curricular and extra-curricular activities carried out by the faculty needs to be assessed by the internal committee as well as by the external academicians so as to provide valuable suggestions to boost the confidence of the faculty. The purpose of Academic and Administrative Audit is to evaluate the performance of the institutional departments, appreciate their achievements and give valuable suggestions for enhancing the quality of teaching, research, administration, extra-curricular activities, etc.

There was a time once when the management was passive and cared only for the financial benefits. They were the power to wield authority over the employees and would never think over bringing quality in Higher Education. But with the introduction of institutions like NAAC, NBA, where the assessment is done by the peer team, every institute and the management has to bring a change in their approach. Now a day the quality of an institution is determined by the grade and CGPA scores. Finally, it is the

quality which is bound to enhance the reputation of any institutions and therefore many of the management have awakened from the savage torpor and are thinking about leadership and governance in their educational institutes. Hence, the role of management is of paramount importance to bring in a revolution in the sector of higher education as envisaged by the UGC and NAAC.

Today Higher Education Institutes are either governed by the government or private management. Every educational institute aims at fulfilling certain goals and these goals can be attained only if the governance is along the right lines. Good governance is based on democratic principles like equality, freedom, transparency, human dignity, etc. The good governance should include all the stake holders and the decision should be taken unilaterally by the management after discussions and deliberations with the students, faculty, alumni, parents, etc. The management should remember that all the plans executed in the institutions should be student-centric.

Gone are the days when educational institutes were started as a matter of charity. Today when there is a cut-throat competition and rivalry around educational institutes need to have an extremely professional outlook as they receive finance through salary and non-salary grants, scholarships, free-ships, and fees paid from the students. As the institutes receive finance from different agencies, it needs to have social accountability. Hence, the management is not supposed to take decisions as per their whims and fancies, but their decisions should be based on sound and adequate reasoning. The management should not resort to secret policies and hide things from faculties and staff. They should be as transparent as possible.

The role of management in designing and implementing policy should never be ignored. They are the leaders who can enhance and sustain quality in Higher Education. Hence, formulations of action plans through appropriate and effective strategies can certainly attain the mission and vision of any institution. The management should welcome all kind of suggestions and feedbacks. There is every chance that they might be severely criticized on several accounts, but such criticisms only provide them with an opportunity to rethink about the strategies evolved. Good governance believes in decentralization of power. Academic and Non – Academic departments should be entitled freedom of expression. The senior teachers are supposed to take into account the potentials possessed by the new entrants so that they can train and prepare them for future needs. Young teachers should be entrusted with the responsibilities; with senior colleagues guiding and channelizing their energy toward quality sustenance. The management should motivate young teachers to undertake managerial skills, training and soft skills in view of upgrading their knowledge so as to benefit the students ultimately. Teachers should be encouraged to make maximum use of ICT so as to bring technological and digital advancement.

There are numerous factors to be considered while catering education. Professor V.S. Prasad, the former Director of NAAC in his book *Great Institutes of Higher Learning* rightly points out, “The institutions presented here have distinguished themselves as performing colleges for learner development; nation building through extension programmes for community development; the advancement of research; and promotion and collaboration with national and overseas agencies. They have been agents to reach a large body of youth in the country who are shaped in the most impressionable age to develop sensitivity to quality in intellectual attainment; to assume roles as responsible citizens and leaders to determine the destiny of the country; and acquire a cultural identity and values, which bridge tradition and modernity.”

Private managements should act as leaders to enhance the quality of higher education. They should be pioneers in bringing a sea change in the field of education. The mission and vision should be translated into reality through systematic planning, activities and programmes. Every institution should have an action plan to be implemented in a particular frame of time. The management should be inspiring leaders so that the stakeholders would emulate them. Their leadership should be academic, extra-curricular and should be ready to bear the social responsibilities.

If the educational institute wishes to march ahead, it should seek the cooperation of its stakeholders. When the management is an active body keeping in pace with the changes in the global scenario, the task of the Principal and the IQAC, the coordinator is bound to become easy. If the management is reluctant to changes, a lot of problems might crop up especially when the institution goes for NAAC accreditation or academic and administrative audit. In spite of the fact that the UGC has given 3 Lacs to setup the IQAC Cells to affiliated colleges across the country, the scenario is quite gloomy. Several colleges have not set up IQAC cells until now and the IQAC cells which have been set up don't appear to be functional. The management and the Principals ignore it considering it as any other cell setup in the college. This kind of attitude certainly weakens the purpose of IQAC with which it is formed.

Stella Antony in *Best Practices in Higher Education* clearly states the objective of forming IQAC Cells. He states “To make quality assurance mechanism an integral part of the education system and at the same time attain academic excellence, it is expected that the higher educational institutions establish IQAC.” Forming IQAC only for the sake of the name would never bring in academic excellence and deliver desired results.

The Principal and the management have apprehensions while delegating powers to IQAC Coordinator. They often think that they might lose powers if IQAC norms are followed and fear that the IQAC coordinator would become all-powerful, but the Principal should never forget the fact that he has nothing to lose as he himself is the chairperson of IQAC. The IQAC Coordinator is always in a precarious position as he is the most hated animal on the campus. The Principal often thinks that the IQAC coordinator is taking away his power; while the staff feels that they are being unnecessarily harassed and overburdened by the coordinator as he constantly demands statistical information and feedback from them. But, it is always in the interest of the institution to have a functional IQAC. Once IQAC becomes functional, it thinks of accreditation, reaccreditation, the academic and administrative audit of the institute. One should never forget that the quality of higher education is beyond the process of accreditation.

If the management is willing to bring in quality enhancement, it should ensure that the best faculty members are appointed in the institution. There should be transparency in the conduct of the interviews, and only meritorious candidates should be awarded the deserving positions. If a mismatch enters the field of education, there is every chance that he/she might mar the career of 30-35 batches of young promising students. Today, corruption has become the order of the day. Donations are sought from the rich candidates and are appointed which makes the mockery of the whole education system. People are bound to lose faith in the very system; hence care should be taken to appoint faculty members only on the basis of merit.

Good management always have vigilance over their educational institutions. They should supervise and take stock of all the activities run in the institution. They should ensure that the classes are regularly taken, exams dully conducted and answer books duly assessed and should seek feedback from the students. They also should see that the teachers should attend seminars, conferences, refresher courses, etc. to update their knowledge. They should provide facilities to their teachers to make them involved in research activities. The management also should construct a good infrastructure comprising of adequate library, proper ventilated classrooms, gymnasium, auditorium, canteen, play ground, cooperative stores, etc. to provide maximum facilities to the students and the staff. It should also conduct regular soft skills programmes to train the students and should arrange group discussions and mock interviews so as to make students compete with the outside world. The management should make need - analysis and prepare students for the future. Every institution should implement best practices and set up their own benchmarks. The management should work to develop the moral, spiritual and intellectual side of every student so that he or she becomes a useful member of the society.

The Chairman of the management committee is to be in touch with the staff and the faculty. He should meet at least twice a year and discuss matters pertaining to future plans, problems, in carrying out the management's policies in academic and administrative matters. The management should be accessible to the faculty and the staff any time without difficulty so that communication between them is smooth. The Chairman of the managing committee should meet the Principal as often as possible. A suitable monthly reporting regarding academic and financial matters should be developed.

Last but not the least important point is that every management should prepare a strategic plan for the development of the institution over the next ten years. It will mainly focus on the introduction of new courses which will be aligned with the prospective needs of the changing economy of the society. The annual plan should be integrated with the prospective plan. The Principal and the management will have to monitor all these activities to bring in quality enhancement in the field of education.

2. CASE STUDY

It would not be out of context to quote some examples of the colleges and educational societies that are striving to march ahead in the field of higher education. Good management is introducing good governance to get the desired results. One such example which I have come across is that of Shivaji Education Society, Amravati. This is the largest educational society in Vidharbha which has several schools and around 25 senior colleges. After the NAAC visited their colleges for the first time they witnessed 2 colleges getting A Grade, 9 colleges getting B Grade whereas 10 colleges had got C grade. In 2011, the society decided to form SAAC (Shivaji Assessment and Accreditation Committee) consisting of the President, Adv. Arun B. Shelke, Director of higher education section of society, two Executive members and two experts to look into the matter. They decided to nominate Dr. V. S. Jamode, former Pro-Vice Chancellor of SGB, and Amravati University as the Director of Higher Education, Shivaji Education Society who soon sprung into action to bring in several reforms in the field of education by introducing academic and administrative audit. He prepared a strategic plan wherein the committee would visit each college for the mock NAAC at least six months prior to the actual visit of the Peer team. The job of this committee was to interact with the Principal, Teaching and Non-Teaching faculty, survey all the departments and study the preparations made for the visit of NAAC Peer team. At the end of the visit, they would hold a meeting wherein the merits and lacunas of the institute were discussed. The limitations and shortcomings were highlighted. Consequently, all the stakeholders endeavoured to remove these shortcomings during the next four to five months.

This innovative practice initiated by Shivaji Education Society, Amravati under the leadership of President, Adv. Arun B. Shelke has yielded remarkable results. In the next reaccreditation, five of the colleges got a grade, thirteen colleges got B Grade and only three colleges received C grade. There was a considerable increase even in the GGPA score. Thus the endeavor on the part of the management and institution has certainly resulted in quality enhancement of their institutions. The model adopted by Shivaji Education Society can be emulated by other colleges and societies to bring in a revolution in the field of education.

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