

IQAC : CONCEPT, ROLE, FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract :

The purpose of the paper is to touch upon the basic principal and importance of role functions of NAAC internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in Higher Education. A Secondary survey, of higher educational institutes (HEI) offering general courses was also taken up in India to find out their role in providing students support for progression and enhancement of employability. It was observed that tertiary level students in general exhibited very low self belief on their capabilities and cognitive abilities which according to the present study was the roof to poor employability. Student's dependence on both teacher centric instructions based teaching learning and tutoring based preparation for summative assessment was observed as the possible explanation behind the lacunae. The solution was therefore explored in how the students learn and how much they apply themselves in varied situations of 'new tasks.'

Key Words : Quality assurance, data collection, fixing, responsibility, best practices, higher education.

Introduction :

For decades, lack of employment opportunities and underemployment of education masses have been important issues in India labor market. But employment data as obtained from 61st round of National sample survey (NSS) reveal that although jobs are growing at a faster rate than the population, unemployment is also growing. Almost 44 percent of India's labor force in 1999-2000 was illiterate and 33 percent had schooling up to secondary education level. Even at school level, vocational training has lost much of its focus. Consequently, those educational but without professional skills constitute 69 percent of the total unemployed. Out of all university graduates only a meager 13 percent are employable. It is therefore necessary to inquire into the concern of employability with objective of considering it to be an alternative employment strategy.

Well up to the 1980s higher educational institutes (HEIs) offering general courses were observed to vie for renown-measured in terms of number of students graduating from these institutes and their respective achievement. But in recent years, HEIs are getting assessed and accredited by national Assessment and Accreditation council (NAAC) in terms of institutional attainment of making quality to be the defining element of their functioning and operation with a vision to make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and substance initiatives.

Methodology :

The objective is to identify the determinants of employability in the temporal context of the 21st century and the spatial perspective of India and then to conduct a student's survey to assess the employability to the tertiary level students in terms of the requirement of today's workplace and to find out whatever the IQAC of NAAC from HEIs are capable to function as work situation demands.

The study was conducted amongst 10 workplace in the Assam different categories of profession. The methodology included interview method as well as questionnaire method.

The Role of Higher Education Institutes (HEI) :

The role of HEIs requires introspection. Generally an institute of higher education is looked upon as a centre of learning with the primary objectives of teaching-learning. The function of empowering a student for workplace was assumed to be attained automatically through the conventional practices of teaching-learning and evaluation. The graduate's employability was largely taken for granted by higher education institutions. It students graduating from HEIs are observed to be non-employable (lacking necessary empowering as necessary in workplace) then the presupposition that enlightenment ensures empowerment in put to question and doubt. Quite pertinently the framework for assessment of college by NAAC includes several probes which seeks to examine how far the HEIs provide support to the students in their run for employability. In this context it won't be impertinent to discuss the reports of the NAAC peer Team (about the accredited HEIs) which provided a substantial data base on different parameters of quality is HEIs all over India. The present paper has randomly selected peer Team Report of 100 accredited colleges across all states with the objective of finding out how HEIs in India address the concern of employability. The facts and figures obtained from any random selection of already accredited colleges from all over the country are presented in following Table-1

Table-1
Role of Higher Educational institutes (offering general courses) in students progression

Indicators	%
Students taking admission who does not appear in final exam.	24%
Students passing the final exam. Ass a ratio of students appearing in final exam.	82%
HEIs which maintain progression data of pass out students	11%
HEIs having career counseling cell or placement cell	87%
HEIs where teachers take part in employment counseling of students	04%
HEIs providing opportunities to students to build ICT skill	16%
HEIs providing helping students to build employability skills skill	05%
HEIs having vibrant alumni cell effectively helping in progression	28%
HEIs where teaching method is pre dominantly lecture based	85%

Source : [www. Naccindia.org/accreditedall.asp](http://www.Naccindia.org/accreditedall.asp)-The figure are obtained from peer team report of already accredited institutions (randomly selected 100 colleges.)

Internal Quality Assurance Cell in Higher Education :

In order to pursue quality up gradation in HEIs, NAAC has disseminated the concept of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance measure. Since quality enhancement in a continuous process IQAC is desired to become a part of institutional system developing conscious, consistent and catalytic improvement in the institution's performances. NAAC's effort is momentous that provides a timely direction to sustain the

euphoria generated during the process of accreditation of HEIs. The effects of WTO and globalization have created an environment that converts education as a commercial product, which can face steep competition and quality bench mark. In order to survive and progress in such situation NAAC has shouldered responsibility to usher quality development within the framework of HEIs. In NAAC's formulation of IQAC structure the institutional head remains the chairperson of IQAC so that financial and administrative responsibilities may be smoothly carried on and implementation of undertaken projects and plans may find little resistance. The insight is healthy but it can also be viewed that the practice may result in creating another hierarchical structure of mere record keeping and report writing agent. In spite of this apprehension due to concentration of authority NAAC's perception is loftier, idealistic and normative which could be more practical and real if there is a fixation of responsibility and financial support for working of IQAC.

The roles of IQAC are to study and detect the trouble shooting area where remedial measures could be worked out. The potentiality and resources of the institution can be best utilized for the benefit of stakeholders. The major role of IQAC in this context is to develop pragmatic and attainable quality bench mark for each of the academic and administrative activities. Bench marking implies 'fixing standard for all activities, that whatever is done in the institution, 'for education', is done efficiently and effectively with action', is done efficiently and effectively with high standard' (IQAC : Aug.2005)p, 4-IQAC shall arrange workshops, seminars, demonstration, case presentation, group/panel discussions at the institutional, university, state or national level. At institutional level programmes are relatively less time taking and expensive. Students, teachers and other stakeholders can participate in such programmes and advance suggestions and opinions. On the basis of such data collection IQAC shall select areas of concentration and devise strategies for quality development. Above all NAAC is the nodal facilitator for working mechanism of IQAC which is correlated with another condition the development of institutional website. V.S. Prasad has repeatedly insisted at different for a that accredited institutions need maintain two conditions : a working IQAC and a website for reaccreditations. The message is clear that a data base for sharing information and ideas with other institutions, borrowing bench marking best practices besides studying one's own institutional feedback will help IQAC in better analysis and perception of quality development. In this backdrop the roles of IQAC and diagnostic, prescriptive and executive : to study the problem, to develop remedial measure and to implement the same. This holistic approach requires confidence and co-operation of all stakeholders, each of them needs be taken into confidence that quality assurance is mandatory for survival.

The prime concern of IQAC, in this context is internalization of quality performance. By internalization, automatic operation of strategies augmenting quality in constituent units of the institution is meant. What starts as a conscious, deliberate individual effort turns out a habit formation and automatic with the whole structure of the institution like external examination programmes that for on without individual effort. Institutionalization suggests that a particular quality service bears the distinguishing mark of the institution like trade mark of a commercial product. This distinct mark of the institution indicates bench marking best practices. Both the characters of quality assurance start from selected areas and gradually cover the whole structure of academic and administrative activities. The ideal strategies towards the functions of IQAC are devise of mechanism for timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks; creating environment and attitude for research activities; marking all academic programmes cost effective; introduction of up to date teaching methodology, transparent examination and evaluation procedures and providing maximum student support services. In NAAC's publication of IQAC material we notice formation,

objectives, strategies, roles and functions of the cell the clearly⁷ pronounced while NAAC maintains that the guidelines are only provisional, the institution may revise, add or amend the same depending on its size, complexity or contextual need without forgetting that quality assurance is not compromised.

Conclusion :

Quality may mean differently to different interpreters but NAAC's insistence on quality is explained by Professor Asha Kanwar, the President and CEO, COL (Commonwealth of Learning) as 'fitness for purpose at minimum cost to society'. He maintains, 'the noble and ambitious our purpose the greater is the challenge of quality that set for ourselves. NAAC-COL workshop on material development for quality assurance in higher education he spoke of quality assurance and regulation must emanate from govt. that must take a firm grip on this area and put it in place' (NAAC News, April-2006) P4. NAAC has initiated discussion with state govts to devise mechanism of QA, in the state level. In this context I shall refer to two vital suggestions taken in the action plan of Maharashtra, in NAAC report of IQAC.

- i) IQAC shall be empowered to guide the college in implementing quality enhancement initiatives and in policy decisions.
- ii) IQAC should have adequate resources both human and financial to enable it to organize and implement the process of quality improvement.

NAAC is propagating the idea of IQAC vigorously through publications, seminars, workshops, etc. but no initiative from the end of govt. has yet come regarding operation of IQAC. In the present state of post accredited situation in colleges of Assam IQAC is functioning as a record keeping and report writing agent. The principal and GB remain busy in financial transaction and audit and works other than quality assurance. Students participation is practically nil while other stakeholders have little idea about quality measures. Significantly in the transitional phase from deficit system of GIA to provincialization, formulation of policies is in a fluid state. In such a situation IQACs are in a blind spot, unable to see in which direction they need to move, lacking in proper orientation and direction. Lack of adequate authority and resources confound the confusion requiring appropriate redressal.

Suggestions :

- i) IQAC at college level requires authority and fixation of responsibility.
- ii) Govt. intervention in QA is mandatory with provision of resources.
- iii) In the present transitional phase of provincialised colleges proper expertise and training to coordinators of IQAC are necessary.
- iv) Student's participation should be arranged within the structure of IQAC.

Reference :

- i) Guidelines for creation of IQAC in Accredited Institution: A Post Accreditation Quality Sustenance Activity, NAAC, Aug-2016.
- ii) NAAC New, April-2016.
- iii) Best Practice Series: 1 NAAC, April-2016.
- iv) CQIP for Accredited Institutions, NAAC, 24, Aug-2016 at Dibrugarh University.