INTRODUCTION

India is known as one of the largest education systems in the world. Introduction of various programs in new and emerging areas have improved access to higher education. This led to widespread concern on the quality and relevance of the higher education and need for the establishment of an independent National accreditation agency. So, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 as an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) . The aim of NAAC as is in making quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In the recent time the numbers of institutions are engaged in providing higher education in India and the numbers of students are enrolled for the same. In the 21st century the quality in education in comparison to the quantity has become the defining element. Quality and excellence should be the vision of every higher education institution. The primary task of the IQAC is to develop a system for conscious and consistent improvement in the overall performance of institutions. The establishment of the IQAC is the first step towards internalization and institutionalization of quality enhancement initiatives. The success of IQAC depends upon the sense of participation in all the constituents of the institution. The, IQAC has the potential to become a vehicle for ushering in quality enhancement by working out planned strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality. The present paper gives a brief review of the role of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in improving quality education in higher education institutions.

ABSTRACT

Contributing to national development has always been an implicit goal of Indian higher education institutions. For human resource development and capacity building of individuals, the role of higher education institutions is very significant. The internalization and institutionalization of quality enhancement initiatives in higher education institutions have become just as concerned. To achieve various goals for improving quality education in higher education institutions, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) , Bangalore proposes to establish Internal Quality Assurance Cell(IQAC) as a tool for quality sustenance measure. The various ways through which higher education institutions can contribute to the national development includes: social justice, equity and access to quality education. It is therefore necessary to develop various tools for improving quality education in higher education institutions. Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is one of such tools which can become a part the higher education institutional system to realize the goals of quality enhancement and sustenance. The main aim of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is to develop a system for consistent improvement of academic and administrative performance of educational institutions. Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) can promote measures for institutional functioning towards quality enhancement. The paper gives a brief review of the role of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in improving quality education in higher education institutions.

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the quality academic and research programmers for sharing of research findings and networking with other institutions in India and abroad. The IQAC can also ensure the adequacy, maintenance and proper allocation of support structure and services. Equitable access to and affordability of academic programs for various sections of society and optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning are other effective strategies to be adopted by the IQAC.

Continuous improvement, self evaluation and external peer evaluation are inevitable for quality assurance. An institution which recognizes its strength, limitations, potentials and weaknesses is likely to be more effective to achieve its educational mission. The IQAC ensures the improvement of quality in the higher education institutions. The parameters and guidelines framed by NAAC can facilitate the institutions in the creation and operation of the IQAC.

Functions and Benefits of IQAC

The IQAC can act as a dynamic system for quality changes in HEIs. It can build an organized methodology of documentation, internal communication and ensure clarity in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement. The main benefit of IQAC is to ensure enhancement and coordination among various activities of the institution and institutionalize all good practices. It is expected that the IQAC can work for the development and application of quality benchmarks in higher education institutions. It can help to adopt the required knowledge and technology for participatory teaching and learning process. The other main functions of IQAC includes: dissemination of information on various quality parameters to all stakeholders, periodical conduct of Academic and Administrative Audit and its follow-up and preparation and submission of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) as per guidelines of NAAC. For coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of best practices, the IQAC can act as a nodal agency of the institution. The IQAC can help the institution for organization of inter and intra institutional workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles.

IQAC Composition and its Operational Features

Under the Chairmanship of the Head of the institution the IQAC may be formed in every institution. Besides head of institution, the heads of important academic and administrative units, few teachers distinguished educationists, representatives of local management and stakeholders may become the part of IQAC. It is advisable to choose persons from various backgrounds who are known for their integrity and excellence in teaching and they should be aware of the ground realities of the institutional environment.

The composition of the IQAC may be as follows

1. Chairperson: Head of the Institution
2. Teachers to represent all level (Three to eight)
3. One member from the Management
4. Few Senior administrative officers
5. One nominee each from local society, Students and Alumni
6. One nominee each from Employers /Industrialists/Stakeholders
7. One of the senior teachers as the coordinator/Director of the IQAC

Depending on the size and complexity of the institution, the representation of teachers in IQAC formation may vary. The guidelines given above are indicative only and help the institutions for quality sustenance activities. The nominated members shall remains in IQAC for a period of two years and they should meet at least once in every quarter. The quorum for the meeting shall be two-third of the total number of members. The action taken reports of IQAC are to be documented with official signatures and maintained electronically in a retrievable format. In order to bring new thoughts and activities in the institution it is good to change the co-coordinator of IQAC after two to three year. Senior administrators, persons in charge of institutional services such as library, computer center, estate, student welfare, administration, academic tasks, examination and planning and development are most appropriate to be part of IQAC. A person who is aware of the institution’s objectives, limitations and strengths and is committed to its improvement may be the management representative. The local society representatives should be of high social standing and should have made significant contributions to society. In order to ensure the effective functioning of all the members the role of the coordinator is very crucial. The coordinator of the IQAC may be a senior/competent person with experience and exposure in quality aspects. The coordinator may have sound knowledge about the computer, data management and its various functions such as usage for effective communication. Further, devotion and commitment to improvement rather than mere institutional control is the basis for devising procedures and instruments for assuring quality. It is the duty of IQAC to ensure that whatever is done in the institution is done efficiently and effectively with high standards. For this the IQAC will have to first establish procedures and modalities to collect data and information on various aspects of institutional functioning. The IQAC may derive major support from the already existing units and mechanisms that contribute to the functions listed above. The Institutions have to submit the annual quality assurance report (AQAR) after one year from date of accreditation every year. A functional Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and timely submission of annual quality assurance reports (AQARs) are the minimum institutional requirements to volunteer for second, third or subsequent cycle’s accreditation. The annual quality assurance report (AQAR) may be the part of the annual report of the institution. Recently NAAC has launched revised accreditation framework in cognizance with the new methodology. The tools and parameters designed in the new AQAR format are in such a way that the preparation of AQAR would facilitate the HEI’s for upcoming cycles of accreditation.

CONCLUSION

The role of IQAC for the quality enhancement in higher education institutions is distinct and very important, because it works to improve and maintain the quality. The success of IQAC depends upon the sense of belongingness and participation it can inculcate in all the constituents of the institution. When the head of institution and coordinator of IQAC lead from the front, it results in quality and excellence. The work of the IQAC is the first step towards internalization and institutionalization of quality enhancement initiatives. The
IQAC has been constantly involved in the management and monitoring the quality of education. Thus efficient coordination and effective monitoring mechanism of IQAC can enhance quality in higher education institutions.

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