IQAC: A TOOL FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The University Grant Commission (UGC) established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 at Bangalore. The prime agenda of NAAC is to Assess and Accredit institutions of higher learning with an objective of helping them to work continuously to improve the quality of education. Part A of guidelines of XI Plan of University Grants Commission directs all the Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) to have an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC). The motive behind setting up of IQAC is to maintain the momentum of quality consciousness which is crucial in HEI's. IQAC is a mechanism to build and ensure a quality culture at the institutional level, and is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) activities of the HEI's. The paper gives a brief overview of role of IQAC as a tool for quality enhancement in higher education institutions in India.

Keywords: *NAAC, IQAC, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), UGC*

"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort" - John Ruskin

Introduction

The University Grants Commission (UGC) established in November, 1956 as a statutory body of the Government of India through an Act of Parliament, has the unique distinction of being the only grant giving agency in the country which has been vested with two responsibilities that of providing funds and that of coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in institutions of higher education. To monitor standards of the higher educational institutions the UGC has established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) as an autonomous body, under section 12(ccc) of its Act in September, 1994. NAAC has been instilling a momentum of quality consciousness amongst Higher Educational Institutions, aiming for continuous improvement. However, lasting improvements in standards cannot come about only by accreditation from outside, once in five years. An internal mechanism for sustenance, assurance and enhancement of the quality culture of education imparted by them, therefore, become essential. Many Higher Education Institutions(HEIs) already have established the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity. Recognizing the importance of such institutional internal quality system the UGC has taken a policy decision to direct all colleges/Universities to establish IQAC for which it has decided to provide seed financial assistance.

Objectives: The present paper aims at presenting an overview of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) with special emphasis on the basic objectives, strategies, functions, benefits and other activities organized by IQAC etc. in the various higher education institutions.

Methodology: The data and information are collected from various secondary sources like published journals, research articles and official websites for the present study.

Background of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)

Part A of guidelines of XI Plan of University Grants Commission directs all the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to have an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC). The motive behind setting up of IQAC is to maintain the momentum of quality consciousness which is crucial in HEIs. IQAC is a mechanism to build and ensure a quality culture at the institutional level, and is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) activities of the HEIs. Complying with the aim of UGC, IQAC has been constituted in the University to review the performance for the entire gamut of academic programmes encompassing the faculty, research scholars and students.

Formation of IQAC

IQAC should be formulated as per the guidelines ofNAAC, with some necessary specific modifications as given. For the senior college attached to junior college the vice- principals from both may be included along with the registrar, office superintendent as administrative officers. Teacher representatives to be selected from different faculties, considering their participation in teaching learning, evaluation, research and extension work. Proactive, highly qualified conscious, enthusiastic members of governing council should be requested to contribute in IQAC. Local people may be selected from learned qualified persons serving society via their own work may be selected. The NAAC coordinator will act as a coordinator of IQAC necessarily, which should be a senior, non-transferable, full time teacher with more than five years of tenure.

Objectives/Aims of IQAC

- To develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution.
- To promote measures for institutional functioning towards quality enhancement through internalization of quality culture and institutionalization of best practices.

IQAC Strategies

- Ensuring timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks;
- Relevant and quality academic/ research programmes.
- Equitable access to and affordability of academic programmes for various sections of society;
- Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching and learning;
- The credibility of assessment and evaluation process;
- Ensuring the adequacy, maintenance and proper allocation of support structure and services;
- Sharing of research findings and networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

Functions of IQAC

- Development and application of quality benchmarks;
- Parameters for various academic and administrative activities of the institution;
- Facilitating the creation of a learner-centric environment conducive to quality education and faculty maturation to adopt the required knowledge and technology for participatory teaching and learning process;
- Collection and analysis of feedback from all stakeholders on quality-related institutional processes;
- Dissemination of information on various quality parameters to all stakeholders;
- Organization of inter and intra institutional workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles;
- Documentation of the various programmes/activities leading to quality improvement;

- Acting as a nodal agency of the Institution for coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of best practices;
- Development and maintenance of institutional database through MIS for the purpose of maintaining /enhancing the institutional quality;
- Periodical conduct of Academic and Administrative Audit and its follow-up
- Preparation and submission of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) as per guidelines and parameters of NAAC.

Benefits of IQAC
- Ensure clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement;
- Ensure internalization of the quality culture;
- Ensure enhancement and coordination among various activities of the institution and institutionalize all good practices.
- Provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning;
- Act as a dynamic system for quality changes in HEIs;
- Build an organized methodology of documentation and internal communication.

Composition of the IQAC
IQAC may be constituted in every institution under the Chairmanship of the Head of the institution with heads of important academic and administrative units and a few teachers and a few distinguished educationists and representatives of local management and stakeholders.
The composition of the IQAC may be as follows:
- Chairperson: Head of the Institution
- Teachers to represent all level (Three to eight)
- One member from the Management
- Few Senior administrative officers
- One nominee each from local society, Students and Alumni
- One nominee each from Employers /Industrialists/Stakeholders
- One of the senior teachers as the coordinator/Director of the IQAC

The composition of the IQAC will depend on the size and complexity of the institution, accordingly the representation of teachers may vary. It helps the institutions in planning and monitoring. IQAC also gives stakeholders or beneficiaries a cross-sectional participation in the institution's quality enhancement activities. The guidelines given here are only indicative and will help the institutions for quality sustenance activities. The membership of such nominated members shall be for a period of two years. The IQAC should meet at least once in every quarter. The quorum for the meeting shall be two-third of the total number of members. The agenda, minutes and Action Taken Reports are to be documented with official signatures and maintained electronically in a retrievable format. It is necessary for the members of the IQAC to shoulder the responsibilities of generating and promoting awareness in the institution and to devote time for working out the procedural details.

The Role of the IQAC Coordinator
The role of the coordinator of the IQAC is crucial in ensuring the effective functioning of all the members. The coordinator of the IQAC may be a senior/competent person with experience and exposure in quality aspects. She/he may be a full-time functionary or, to start with, she/he may be a senior academic /administrator entrusted with the IQAC as an additional responsibility. Secretarial assistance may be facilitated by the administration. It is essential that the coordinator may have sound knowledge about the computer, data management and its various functions such as usage for effective communication

Operational Features of the IQAC

Quality assurance is a by-product of ongoing efforts to define the objectives of an institution, to have a work plan to achieve them and to specify the checks and balances to evaluate the degree to which each of the tasks is fulfilled. Hence devotion and commitment to improvement rather than mere institutional control is the basis for devising procedures and instruments for assuring quality. The right balance between the health and growth of an institution needs to be struck. The IQAC has to ensure that whatever is done in the institution for "education" is done efficiently and effectively with high standards. In order to do this, the IQAC will have to first establish procedures and modalities to collect data and information on various aspects of institutional functioning. The coordinator of the IQAC and the secretary has a major role in implementing these functions. The IQAC may derive major support from the already existing units and mechanisms that contribute to the functions listed above. The operational features and functions discussed so far are broad based to facilitate institutions towards academic excellence and institutions may adapt them to their specific needs

The Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) of the IQAC

All the accredited institutions which have established the IQAC will submit a self-reviewed progress report annually to the NAAC, detailing the tangible results achieved in key areas which are specifically identified by the IQAC in the beginning of the academic year by devising a perspective plan. The AQAR is the outcome of the perspective plan of the IQAC.

Role of IQAC in Ensuring Quality Enhancement of Higher Education

Quality is primary the responsibility of higher education itself, although the government has special responsibility regarding quality assurance in many countries it is the institution that is responsibility for providing are ensuring quality. IQAC is the totally of system recourses and information devoted to setting up, maintain and improving the overall quality and standards of an institution. Thus, if quality is required to be assured we need a structured quality assurance mechanism that makes it possible to monitor, improve and evaluate quality. Therefore, each and every institution will have to build its own IQAC keeping certain objectives in mind namely monitoring, evolution quality assurance for specific activities and instruments for quality assurance.

Conclusion

NAAC is triggering a 'Quality Culture' among the various constituents of the Higher Education Institutes as well as enhancing the awareness of Institutional Quality Assurance with all stakeholders. The role of IQAC for the quality enhancement in higher education is distinct and important as it works towards improving and maintaining the quality. The work of the IQAC is the first step towards internalization and institutionalization of quality enhancement initiative. Its success depends upon the sense of belongingness and participation it can inculcate in all the constituents of the institution. Quality and excellence are result of team work leaded by the leaders like principal and coordinator of the IQAC. However, the leaders should work on the guideline of IQAC with proper realization of the democratic role of IQAC and accountability of their own role. The IQAC has been constantly involved in the management and maintaining the quality of education. Thus, IQAC of is an important and effective and efficient coordination and monitoring mechanism and enhance quality like the 'Quality Circles' in industries.

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