



QUALITY COUNTRON AND ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Control is a historic activity which takes place after the event has occurred and is carried out by a third party and not the producer. It involves checking and monitoring. Quality is designed into the process to attempted to the ensure that the product is produced to a pre-determined specification. It is the systematic review of educational programmer to ensure that acceptable standard of education; scholarships and infrastructure are being maintained. The output of a system is judged not only by the quantity of product but also by the quality of that product. This is also true for the system of higher education. . According to World Declaration of higher education relevance in higher education should be assessed in terms of the fit between what society expects of institution and what they do. There is an interlink age between quality and excellence. Excellence would be attained only through establishing quality education in vast majority of educational institutions of higher learning.

KEYWORDS: Quality, Higher Education, External Agency, Market Economy.

INTRODUCTION

The role of higher education in national development is well established as it is this level of education which provides top-level of manpower like engineers, doctors, managers, scientists, bureaucrats, technocrats & teachers etc. Who are responsible for accelerating the process of development further?

After independence, there has been significant growth in higher education in terms of quantity. From 30 universities 590 colleges in 1947-48, today we have around 435 universities and 20,700

colleges. During the last sixty years this system of higher education has made significant contribution to the society. It is on record that India has given to America 28% of IBM Technologies, 34% of Microsoft employees, 36% of NASA Scientists, and 38% of Doctors and much more (Dhar,2008)

In the face of the emerging economy based on Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG), the problem further become more serious. One can now have access to world class goods, services and facilities which were not reachable

earlier. In fact no discipline, trade or industry has escaped the impact of LPG. Higher education is no exception to it. It is now controlled by market.

QUALITY CONTROL

It is an after-the-event process which is concerned with the detection and elimination of the final products that are not of expected standard. Control is a historic activity which takes place after the event has occurred and is carried out by a third party and not the producer. It involves checking and monitoring. Testing & inspection are the most common methods of quality control, and are widely used in education to determine whether standards are being met. In higher education we have the following two modes to look into the quality control:

- National Education Testing (NET) is one of the ways to screen the product as being used by UGC for the selection of JRF's / Lecturer's eligibility.
- Agencies like National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) under the University Grants Commission and National Board of Accreditation under the All India Council for Technical Education. NAAC is involved in institutional evaluation and MBA evaluates Programmed for Professional courses.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is different from quality control. It is before and during the process. It is pro-active and anticipatory. Standards & procedures are clearly defined in advance and the workers are trained to be able to meet them. Quality is designed into the process to attempted to the ensure that the product is produced to a pre-determined specification. In a simple way, it is the systematic review of educational programmer to ensure that acceptable standard of education; scholarships and infrastructure are being maintained. Quality standards are maintained by following the procedures laid down in the quality assurance system (QAS). In higher education, it means to lie down the:

- ✧ Curriculum of high quality
- ✧ Faculty for quality teaching

- ✧ Laboratories, libraries and other facilities for quality research
- ✧ Administrative set up for quality support
- ✧ Managerial system for providing quality culture
- ✧ Physical infrastructure of high standard for effective functioning of Academic process.

For this purpose, universities and colleges are expected to set-up Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) for continuous quality assessment and academic audit.

QUALITY INDICATORS AN IMPROVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Before we start thinking about improving the quality of higher education, it becomes necessary to think about what constitutes quality in higher education? In other words what are the indicators of quality and how can quality be measured and improved? In the field of higher education, the indicators of quality may be understood in terms of input, output and process variables.

INPUT INDICATORS

The system of higher education can succeed in achieving its objective only to the extent certain inputs are provided to the system. They are related to the resources and factors employed to produce an institution's output. It is, therefore, necessary to take a review of the inputs required for the efficient working of the system of higher education for achieving the objectives. These inputs variables work as an important indicator of the quality of higher education. The inputs provided to the system are of five types:

- ✧ Intellectual resource
- ✧ Administrative support
- ✧ Academic infrastructure
- ✧ Physical facilities
- ✧ Financial resource

OUTPUT INDICATORS

The output of a system is judged not only by the quantity of product but also by the quality of that product. This is also true for the system of higher education. Further the quantity and quality

of a product need to be considered from two different aspects. First, the internal judgment of the output as assessed by the educational institution itself and second, the external judgment of the output as assessed by the society (i.e. market economy). First aspect is related to the internal efficiency or social relevance of the system. Thus we have four kinds of output indicators:

- ☆ Number of graduates and postgraduates passed out;
- ☆ Level of academic achievement (i.e., scores/ grades attained);
- ☆ The nature of skills and capabilities with which the graduates and
- ☆ Postgraduates or equipped;
- ☆ Research output in terms of number of research papers/ projects and
- ☆ PhD's produced and their impact on knowledge society;
- ☆ Extension service provided to the community;

ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY VIS-À-VIS ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

It is an accepted fact that for implementing programs of quality assurance is necessary to standards of an institution and that this has to be done against its mission, goals and objectives. In a way it is to test accountability of an institution.

The accountability of university can be discussed with respect to the following matters:

- ⇒ Academic matters;
- ⇒ Administrative matters;
- ⇒ Financial matters.

However, there has been a debate on the manner in which the assessment of quality vis-a-vis accountability is to be conducted—through internal mechanism (self-assessment) or by external agency (Power, 2012)

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT (self-assessment)

Many academics, placing stress on academic freedom and autonomy of institutions, believe that assessment of quality should be done through self-evaluation. It is necessary to assess the programs

of all the organs and work of all the individuals of the university. Internal assessment may be on the following lines.

- ⇒ Self-appraisal of teachers
- ⇒ Self-appraisal of departments
- ⇒ Internal review of the work of Heads of Department and Deans of Schools
- ⇒ Internal review of the work of top-level administrators like Registers, Controllers of Examination, Finance Officers and Vice chancellors.
- ⇒ Internal review of the work of Librarians, Directors of Academic Staff College, college Development Council and Physical Education.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT (Accreditation)

External assessment is a mechanism of quality control in the functioning of higher education. The focus is more on the culture of compliance rather than one of continuous quality enhancement.

Quality assessment through external agency is now a standard practice in practically all developed and many developing countries and most of them have established accreditation agencies for this purpose. These agencies carry out the assessment of institutions periodically through well laid down and formalized procedures. This generally involves an inspection of infrastructure, facilities and programs of the institutions by an external team that essentially validates a self-study report submitted by the institution.

In India, we have National Assessment and Accreditation Council which are entrusted with the task of performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation of colleges and universities in the country. It has laid down the following parameters for assessment:

- ▲ Curricular aspects;
- ▲ Teaching, learning & evaluation;
- ▲ Research, consultancy & extension, infrastructure and learning Resources;
- ▲ Student support & progression
- ▲ Organization & management
- ▲ Healthy practices / best practices

The assessment of NAAC helps the system in the following ways:

- ★ Helps the institution to know its strengths & weaknesses and thereby improve its performance;
- ★ Provide the society with reliable information on the quality of Education offered by the institution;
- ★ Provides the funding agency with objective & systematic database
For performance funding.

There is no doubt that this kind of assessment may have long term effect in enhancing the quality of higher education in the country.

RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Among the various crises faced by Indian higher education Relevance is the most crucial issue one. According to World Declaration of higher education relevance in higher education should be assessed in terms of the fit between what society expects of institution and what they do. Relevance always is a subject of local requirement; knowledge required by Human resource varies from locality to locality and discipline to discipline.

In a developing country like ours, unemployable graduates pose a great problem than unemployment itself. Some of the primary skills expected from educated workforce are:

- ♣ Ability to function in proportion to the education & training Acquired;
- ♣ Ability to come up to one's full potential;
 - ◆ Ability to manage different tasks at a time;
 - ◆ Ability to work under pressure
 - ◆ Skills of communication
- ♣ Time management
- ♣ Commitment to the completion of task
- ♣ Creativity & Innovativeness.
- ♣ Entrepreneurship

These skills are the parameters by which the quality & relevance of higher education is assessed. They are said to be the generic graduate skills or life skills needed for living in a competitive globalized world. Today we have another problem.

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of higher education over the years has resulted in the dilution of quality and standard, which in turn has affected the quality of man power produced. There is, therefore, a need to develop a quality culture in our institution of higher education. This will require the quality of mental infrastructure more than that of the physical infrastructure because quality depends upon our vision, sincerity of purpose, and conviction to do duty (Dhar, 2013). There is an interlink age between quality and excellence. Excellence would be attained only through establishing quality education in vast majority of educational institutions of higher learning. For promoting excellence we are expected to provide adequate academic and physical infrastructure in colleges and universities (Thorat, 2012). Today's competitive environment demands better quality of education. Only those institutions which can impart education on a continuous basis shall be in a position to compete in the global market. Improving the quality of higher education has, therefore, become a primary concern of the countries world over.

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