

QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of education is the preparation of a self reliant individual, capable of analytical and original thinking, a responsible member of his community and, in the present era, a global citizen.

The challenge today is to secure values without compromising on quality and regressing into unnecessary anachronism and parochial insularity. Higher Education should be able to increase the earning potential of the individual and analytical thinking and aptitude. This document focuses on recognising the important role of quality and relevant education as a key driver of economic growth and social advancement.

During this study, the exploratory approach was adopted and the conclusions are drawn from the practical experience to people in the field of quality assurance and enhancement as IQAC members and officials in leading Higher Educational Institutions.

This study aims at bringing together varied experience on the interpretation and implementation of quality standards in higher education and training institutions/ universities. At the same time, the study has the desire to serve as a guide for education or training establishments and inspire/help the Higher Education Institutions/Universities/Academic Staff, Students and other agencies related to Education to reflect upon ways that quality can be ensured while respecting their need for diversity and innovative practices in research and education.

KEYWORDS: Self Reliant Individual, Capable of Analytical and Original Thinking

INTRODUCTION

Quality is omnipresent and known to every one. It is not that the educationists, professors and the faculties are not aware of it, but they have different opinions and notions. This is the beauty of quality because of its approach and dependency on human beings and the diversity, interpretation differs at various levels and sectors. The definition of quality culture as stakeholder is dependent and product oriented which makes it difficult to manage and to predict future developments. Such a participative quality culture is never homogeneous and reflects the complexity of the interactions and interpretations of the Education Sector especially Higher Education. Higher Education is different because a lot of academic flexibility must be given to both the Faculty and the students in terms of curriculum, teaching-learning pedagogy, evaluation process, employability factors and the duration.

LITERATURE SURVEY

The quality Gurus Dr Joseph Juran, Philip Crosby, Armand V Feigendaum, Frederick Taylor and Dr Genichi Taguchi have made a significant impact on the world through their contributions to improving not only businesses, but all organizations including state and national governments, military organizations, educational institutions, healthcare

organizations and many other establishments and organizations. UGC and NAAC explored theories to bring Quality systems in Indian education system. However, the practical experience has been shared by very few of them, which has been done in this study.

- **Indian Context:** The Education System in India had been the oldest and the most efficient system in the world. Why then the rank of Indian Universities do not appear in the TOP LIST by the World Rankers. In the present scenario following are the main factors:
 - Lack of motivation, vision, monitoring and commitment to implement the policies with purpose and firmness.
 - Lack of political will in successive Government at the Centre and in the States.
 - The differential attitudes of the Educators, professors and faculties.
 - The perception of the public and attitude.
 - No Uniformity in the formulation and implementation of policies among different State Governments and Private Universities.
 - Those involved with the planning, resource allocation and actual operation of the Teaching-Learning/Research Process do not understand their task and have taken them causally. Therefore, no worthwhile results can accrue.
 - Incapability and hesitance of those who are at the helm of affairs pertaining to the Higher Education Sector and are taking decisions in forming policies and regulations.
 - Lack of high concentration of talent (faculty members and students).
 - Huge resources to offer a rich learning environment and to conduct advance research.

What is the Need of the Hour?

Today, the Universities cannot just sit on the issue, they have to be more practical and accept the fact that unless and until Higher Education Institutions are practical/flexible to the needs of the students/industry and society at large, they will not be able to achieve the level of quality that they aspire for. They have to adopt the system, which aligns them with their processes and approach based on quality management systems. They have to be customer oriented as gone are the days when whatever the academicians perceived and felt, the students/stakeholders accepted. With the two inventions, the scenario has changed:

- Introduction of information technology that has made the world small and accessible.
- ISO 9001:2008

The above two changes have made Higher Education think on tools for strategic & sustainable growth and win the race in the competition.

- **What HE should do:** The subject has been in focus for quiet some time and time has come to have an exclusive standard for Higher Education. There has been some move in this direction through Malcolm Balridge Award Criteria, NAAC, QS World Rankings and other accreditation agencies who have developed

tools to measure the performance of the Universities and benchmark them.

Today the Universities will have to:

- Nurture the skills like problem solving, creativity and critical thinking which leads to skill based knowledge.
- Imbibe values and attributes like Truth, Idealism, Tradition, Culture, Innovation, etc.
- Create Learning Environment, which enables the students to learn according to their needs and levels.
- Have the ability to process the information into data, data into analysis and analysis to objectives.
- Conduct continuous and rigorous monitoring and gap analysis of each and every process.
- Flexibility that enables the academicians to make decisions and manage resources without being encumbered by bureaucracy.
- **Areas of Focus:** In order to meet the above objectives and requirement of the external as well as the internal environment, the focus of the Higher Educational University Management should be on the following strategies:
 - **Conducive Learning Environment:** The University must endeavor to offer every individual with quality access to sufficient classrooms, drinking water, playground, faculty, learning resources, latest technology, timely information related to all process to all stakeholders, transparent and reliable systems.
 - Evolving the need based curriculum which covers why, what and how we teach for which inputs are taken from various sources like Industry and Academia Experts, Technological changes, students, global integration, National needs, community demands and social media.
 - **Industry interaction:** Industries must contribute substantially towards higher education by partnering with University for training the students and faculty, collaborating for projects and involvement in curriculum development.
 - **Innovative Research:** The factors like impact factor. Peer review, evaluated for quality of academic research and liberty in inter and intra exchange of ideas among various domains of education.
 - **Quality Approach:** Revolution towards Total Quality by changing the mindset, openness and transparency, unity of action and continuous capacity building.
 - Defining Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) which are measurable and the students are evaluated based on the SLOs defined and mapped with Program Objectives.
- **Internationalisation:** How to implement the above strategies is the million dollar question. And Universities has to strive for it and achieve them. That will happen only when the Higher Educational Universities change their mandate towards internationalization. The universities must follow the path of secularization (of what is taught and how it is taught), demarcation of access and resulting expansion and internationalization of students, faculty, staff, curriculum, campus, infrastructure, benchmarking and competition. In fact, all our processes and system should be designed to cater the three elements i.e. internationalization, national and local.

Today the student's perception and profile is changing. Where previously education and employment came together in the ideal of the career, today, it is becoming a common practice to think of multiple careers and skill development courses, leading to demand for lifelong learning opportunities and research abilities. The knowledge intensity, avenues and sources have increased dramatically from one generation to the next.

- **Quality Excellence:** Subsequently, what should be done to bring Quality excellence in Higher Education. Lots of theories, standards, regulatory bodies guidelines exist that can be adopted to achieve the desired level of acceptance with respect to Quality by the Higher Education Sector. The approach to quality must be enhancement led, the basis of which is sound quality assurance process. Informatively the quality assurance process provide robust assurance that standards are being met. Now, what standards does the University adopt depends on the vision and mission of the University and the focus on the improving part of quality. Hence, the University must make a decision to adopt the standard and make it as a powerful tool to bring in Quality Excellence.
- **Key Areas of Concern:** Whatever standard, the University may choose to implement and sustain, the emphasis must be given to the following major processes/areas:-
 - Bringing in Quality Students.
 - Reliable and Transparent system in all Macro Processes: like Admission, Learning-Teaching, Examination and Evaluation and Placement.
 - Regular Reviews, Monitoring, Checks, Controls and Data Analysis leading to Quality Enhancement (Improvements).
 - Conducting regular evaluations, assessments and benchmarking exercises.
 - Quality of Academic Research.
- **Bringing in Quality Students:** The first and for most requirement to sustain and enhance quality is to keep a control on intake quality of students. Today, while concentrating on numbers we have some where missed the bus and in order to increase the students, the Universities have targeted to increase the intake. With the Universities mushrooming, the intake of students gives a huge boost to the income. Hence the quality has been compromised.

Also, keeping in view our National mandate to spread education to all masses, the selection process for admission to Higher education is very mandate and sometimes eye wash and definitely lower than the global requirements. For example, During the interview and written tests the questions asked are related to their previous study/ subjects which have no concern with Business Administration and most of times, it is an eye wash. The students are admitted based on the approach and influence he/she has got.

The table below shows the level of intake requirement advertised by various higher Education Institutions:

Table 1: Level of Intake for PG/Management Programmes

Institute Name	Course	Entrance Exam	Location	Eligibility Criteria
Amrita School of Business	MBA	CAT/XAT/GRE/GMAT, MAT, CMA T	Coimbatore	Minimum 50% marks in secondary/higher secondary/ Graduation
Bharathidasan Institute of Management	MBA	CAT	Trichy	Minimum 50% marks in Graduation
Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani	MBA	CAT, GMAT	Pilani	Any Integrated first degree of BITS or B.E./B.Tech in Engineering disciplines from other recognized universities with a minimum of 60% aggregate marks..
GITAM University – Hyderabad Business School	MBA (Dual Specialization)	CAT/ MAT/ GMAT/ XAT/ ATMA/ HBSAT	Vishakhapatnam	Minimum 50% marks in Graduation
National Institute of Technology Trichy	MBA	CAT	Pune	Minimum 50% of aggregate marks (45% for Domicile of Maharashtra and also for the Reserved Categories)
NMIMS School of Business Management	Management Program for Executives	Personal Interview	Ahmedabad	Minimum 50% marks in Graduation
Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University	MBA	Own Exam	Mysore	Minimum 50 % marks in Graduation
Siva Sivani Institute of Management	PGDM & Other programs	CAT/XAT/CMAT /GMAT	Secunderabad	A graduate/final year graduation student can apply, there is no min percentage required
University Business School (UBS), Panjab University, Chandigarh	MBA, MBA (IB) & MBA (HR)	CAT	Chandigarh	Minimum 50 % marks in Graduation
Xavier Institute of Social Service, Ranchi	PGDM	XAT / CAT/ CMAT	Bhubaneswar	Minimum 50% marks in Graduation

Reliable and Transparent system in all Macro Processes: like Admission, Learning-Teaching, Examination and Evaluation and Placement

With the technology booming, automation of institutional processes right from Macro processes like Admissions, Learning-Teaching, Examination, Placements etc and breaking them into Micro processes, mapping their inputs and processing them to give the desired outputs have become measurable and can easily be made available to variable stakeholders.

The MIS of each process must be recorded and reports generated online as per the needs of the concerned stakeholder and constituent of the institutional processes. The performance indicators of each process must be measured and trends established to arrive at benchmark.

The information required at each level should be available at the click of the button. The monthly dash board with summarized report at various levels of organizational structure and auto generation of mail to the stakeholder s

Regular Reviews, Monitoring, Checks, Controls and Data Analysis leading to Quality Enhancement (Improvements)

Quality Reviews, Checks, Controls, Assessment & Audit procedures, etc must be periodically done by the Institutions/University both external and internal driven using different mechanisms. Given the importance of quality assurance on higher education, different methods are used to assess the Quality of education. Internal vs. External driven audits must be done at three different levels; IQAC (Institute level), Quality Department (University Level) and External (Third party & Government Bodies) level. The successfulness of the above depends on the way in which the quality assessment findings are disseminated, the potential value of these different audits in enhancing the quality of higher education and identifies the actions which could be taken by institutions and university. This process results in setting institutional standards and indicators for strategic and sustainable growth and evolving a quality culture in any higher education Institute.

The IQAC i.e. the Internal Quality Assurance Cell must meet at regular intervals to discuss various issues both Academic and Administration, the record of the minutes of the meeting must be maintained at each level.

The educational organization should conduct internal audits according to an audit program to assess the performance of the educational processes. Audit should verify the use of established methods for educational processes. The educational organization should measure and monitor the performance and the effectiveness of the processes used to manage and deliver the educational service. Measurement of key and supporting educational processes should be carried out at appropriate stages during the realization of the processes. The educational organization should establish and use methods for monitoring and measuring the educational service at planned intervals during its realization as well as the final outcomes, to verify that they meet established design requirements as well as statutory, regulatory and accreditation requirements as applicable.

Conducting Regular Evaluations, Assessments and Benchmarking Exercises

Periodic evaluations should be conducted at all processes and stages, so that gaps are identified. These gaps must be closed by taking appropriate Corrective and preventive actions by the process owners at stipulated time frame.

All the processes must have measurable parameters that can be controlled and used as a tool to measure. Critical points based on the significance must be reviewed by the Top Management for performance and trend analysis whereas others are left to HOIs/HODs/Professors/Faculties.

Assessment and Benchmarking the best in the respective fields must be adopted to improve the systems continually.

Quality of Academic Research: The Universities must grow from traditional academic structure i.e. Teaching-Learning mode to flexible research Oriented and creative concept. The Research based Universities function on the key value of service to Society. It is the combination of meritocratic faculty and students who are committed to their values and profession and present high level of performance.

A Research University must confirm to the highest world standards based on a exceptional set of ideas and principles. These Universities are international institutions with an openness to faculty and student flow to create and disseminate Borderless knowledge where the language of Science &Technology is of central importance.

The quality in Higher Education will no doubt will be brought through Research based Universities because Research is Central to any Knowledge and Technology driven – demanding and developing society/ economy/ country. Research based Universities are the key to a World Class Higher Education System, their future is bright and the fact is that modern socities cannot do without them.

With the fast growing and ever innovative technology, it is apparent that contemporary University will be fundamentally transformed by distance/online education and technology. Thos who agree with this change including mass enrollments, increasing vocationalisation, privatization and the on going financial crisis have a point. The period today is a period of both crisis and transformation for the Higher Education globally and the change is inevitable.

However, the sector of Higher Education that is unlikely to be dramatically altered are the Universities based on Research. These Universities have the power of tradition and they are quite good at what they accomplish. They will be the future of Higher Education as well as developing and emerging economies Worldwide. Thus, the coming up of Research Universities is rapidly expanding and the recognition of the importance of research Universities is Universal for the benefit of Science & Technology and Global Knowledge Economy.

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