

ACHIEVING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION – TRENDS AND BENCHMARKING

ARUN SACHER & PREM KANTHI

Research Scholar, Mewar University, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT

What Defines Academic Excellence?

The changing nature of work, technology, and competition in the global market has made us work on the quality of Education System. Priorities and goals are to be set by educators at all levels of academia to close the gap.

One of the ways to fill the gap is to focus on quality assurance as the true measure of academic excellence. We are capable of delivering the quality academic environment to the students which they deserve, but somehow we are doing tremendous injustice to them by ignoring this aspect in our routine and tight schedule. Trends and Benchmarking play a role in the mark of a quality education and a true indication of academic excellence. There has been an increasing pressure from different levels (from industry, politicians and researchers all around) to raise academic standards.

KEYWORDS: Trends and Benchmarking, True Indication of Academic Excellence

INTRODUCTION

A rigorous and relevant education is a product of effective learning, which takes place when standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment interrelate and reinforce each other. The value of trends and benchmarking comes to rescue here. However, if curriculum, incorporating more rigorous and relevant instruction in classrooms is a realistic goal, will yield immediate results in students' enthusiasm to learn. When students are engaged in the learning process, real achievement takes place, and their chances to excel at what they do increase. Often, all that is required is a change of attitude and the willingness to restructure education so that it prepares students for life.

Studies have shown that students understand and retain knowledge best when they have applied it in a practical, relevant setting. A teacher who relies on lecturing does not provide students with optimal learning

STAGES OF QUALITY CULTURE



Figure 1

Stage 1: INTIAL KNOWHOW/AWARENESS

Stage 2: ASSURANCE

Stage 3: ENHANCEMENT/IMPROVEMENT



Figure 2

Here is a model of ‘TEACHING LERANING METHODOLOGY’ which is suggestive and are adopted in Institutes internationally

Trends and Benchmarking are Important to Review where we Stand and Help in Reviewing Our Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QAE)

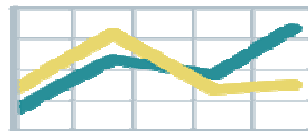


Figure 3

SIX CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE GIVEN IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT QAE IS EFFECTIVE AND WORTH THE TIME AND EFFORT.

- **At the Level of Faculties/Individuals/Prog. Leaders/ Every Individual, There Have to Be**
 - Trust in the benefit of the evaluation/audit/visit.
 - Willingness to expose one’s weaknesses and
 - Readiness to invest time and effort to improve one’ performance, where need for improvement is identified.
- **At the Level of Institutions**
 - Sufficient degree of autonomy
 - Leadership
 - Resources-Only very few ideas for improvement can be realized without extra resources/efforts.

ROLE OF QAE VS FACULTIES/EVERY INDIVIDUAL

- Supporting faculty/individuals developing and unfolding their potentials as a central agency.
- Developing continuous and mutual communication involving all faculty members with respect to common

understanding of processes and standards.

- Flexible process standardization.
- QAE cannot produce quality but it is the faculty, researchers, students and members who are the real players. QAE can sensitize them towards certain problems and raise the quality awareness.

BENEFITS OF STANDARDS

- **EASY TO MANAGE:** The activities/processes and outcomes are easily assessed against standards and can conform compliance to them.
- Standards permit comparability and assessment. Hence trends and benchmarking can easily be done due to the documentation requirements.
- Certain level of transparency is evidenced.
- Encourage the individuals to consider quality aspects in their processes through building awareness.
- Common platform: The institutions are integrated under a common platform.

FUNCTIONS OF THE STANDARD (WHY STD?)

- Standard act as a minimum threshold (entry to quality systems)
- It acts as a description of good practice.
- It provides a broad objective which is **SMART-OUTPUT AND PERFORMANCE ORIENTED**

CHALLENGES BEFORE QAE

- Connect education. Research, knowledge transfer and services to Quality Assurance in particular.
- More meaningful and distinct possibilities to benchmark and compare institutional performance (first internally then internationally) e.g. Result analysis, attendance analysis.
- Increase level of **TRUST & WILLINGNESS** of faculties/individuals to take the process of evaluation/audit/visits seriously.



Figure 4

CORRELATION BETWEEN ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS PERFORMANCE & BENCHMARKS

There has to be a correlation between past performance and benchmarks. For example if the pass percentage in the year 2007-2008 was 67%, the bench mark for the next year should be nearer to the figure and should not exceed beyond

limits. Otherwise the exercise would be not be worthwhile and will only to be shown in paper not in practice. Each one of us must have our own benchmarks based on the data/performance of previous year.

For an academic Institution, each faculty must analysis the following data for his/her own areas of teaching/research:

- Attendance
- Examination-Results, paper evaluation, and submission of our own assessment in time.
- Placements
- Research and extension
- Papers published in reputed Journals
- How the Projects and Research Work is shared among all stakeholders for the benefit of the society and further developments.

This will Bring Revolution towards Total Quality: Change in the mindset, Openness and transparency, Unity of action, Continuous capacity building.

CONCLUSIONS

In the race towards Quality in University education, the task of building the pillars of a quality education has to be taken up by every stakeholders of the University system.