

Conference sub-theme:

3. Impact of QA and the effects of external and internal QA: regional perspectives to a shared issue

The topic covered in the paper:

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)
External Quality Assurance (EQA)
Impact of IQA on EQA
Adaptations of changes in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
Lessons Learnt from other EQA agencies.

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Audio visual requirements:

LCD projector and projection facilities

**Impact
of
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) on External Quality Assurance (EQA) :
An Indian Experience**

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Abstract

The process of Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) done by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the External Quality Assurance (EQA) Agency not only helps Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to sustain quality measures undertaken but also facilitates in quality improvement activities. One of the major contributions by NAAC for quality sustenance and quality enhancement activities in Universities and Colleges in India is the process of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA). This paper clearly articulates the impact of internal quality assurance on the external quality assurance. The emphasis is on the annual quality reports, for subsequent cycle of assessment and accreditation. The guideline which states the creation of the cell, its establishment and its operational functions has been successful in many dimensions of higher educational institutions performances. Internal and external quality assurance has been looked into as a nation building exercise, since the major stakeholder, the students will be getting quality educational services.

Introduction

The impact of the External Quality Assurance (EQA) Agency has been clearly evident as a positive trend towards quality literacy, quality sustenance and quality enhancement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The underlying point towards learning is not unidirectional. The changes in higher education institutions across the globe, especially in India and the asia-pacific region has given multi-level directions to the external quality assurance agencies also. Over 18 years of its existence, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the external quality assurance agency in India not only helps institutions to sustain quality measures undertaken but also facilitates in quality sustenance activities. One of the major contributions by National Assessment and Accreditation Council for quality sustenance and quality enhancement activities of external quality assurance is the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) mechanisms propagated for administering in the Universities and Colleges in India.

With the process being voluntary, NAAC has accredited over 5000 higher education institutions. Though the task ahead around 500 degree awarding University level institutions and may be around 25000 colleges, many of them may not be eligible, since there is minimum period for volunteering for the process of assessment and accreditation.

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Initial Phase

Right from its inception of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the external quality assurance agency in India on 16th September 1994 onwards, the philosophy of change which is intrinsic more than extrinsic has been publicised throughout by way of internal quality assurance guidelines for diverse kind of Universities and Colleges. Initial years of external quality assurance, a lot of time, perhaps the foundation of quality assurance by internalisation of quality in higher education institutions has created a good base for Quality Assurance (QA) to the stakeholders.

One could clearly see the vocabulary used in the Universities and Colleges over the last eighteen years in Indian Higher Education sector. Not even a day pass by without mentioning, assessment and accreditation processes by internal quality assurance in Universities and Colleges in India.

If one could see the success story of National Assessment and Accreditation Council in India and could associate an acronym, it could be clearly seen as an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in accredited Universities and Colleges. As stated earlier, in the initial stages of external quality assurance, National Assessment and Accreditation Council was propagating the establishment of the internal quality assurance cell in all Universities and Colleges, perhaps till the year 2004. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council did not stop there, but extended beyond, by giving them guidelines for operating its functions without affecting its regular, statutory committees and bodies. Infact, clear distinction has been made for the roles and responsibilities of internal quality assurance.

Post Accreditation Initiative

While from 2004 onwards, without stopping the philosophy of internal quality assurance cell, change was brought in by the external quality assurance in India, by strongly recommending all Universities and Colleges, who have underwent the process of assessment and accreditation to create the internal quality assurance cell. For this purpose again, a fine-tuned guidelines has been published. Not only creation, this guideline gives steps for creating the committee and the cell, but also operational functions for post-accreditation. This was a landmark after a decade of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council establishment. As a post accreditation quality initiatives for all higher education institutions in India, most of the Universities and Colleges, who have already established internal quality assurance to go in for the process of external quality assurance process, rejuvenated this cell and its academic, administrative and financial activities for preparing Self-Study Report (SSR) for Second Cycle of Assessment and Accreditation / Reaccreditation Report (RAR).

Annual Quality Reports

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council also through many feedback, surveys and learnings from other external quality assurance agencies across the globe felt the need for this. This has started bearing fruits, as one could see now. The corollary of this, is the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) which all Universities and Colleges who have underwent the process of First Cycle of Assessment and Accreditation are submitting to National Assessment and Accreditation Council. More and more Universities and Colleges are

regularly sending their annual quality assurance reports. The use of online facility for sending annual quality assurance report has been recently put in place. This has initiated many activities within the academia. The greatest learning for National Assessment and Accreditation Council is the quality continuum in higher education institutions in India. The quality of higher education in Universities and Colleges, by way of documentation and systems were put in place.

Impact

As National Assessment and Accreditation Council is continuously relooking, re-engineering the process to fine tune according to the changes in higher education across the globe, the trendsetting of the internal quality assurance processes in each accredited University and College, has been once again emphasised for higher education institutions who wants to volunteer for external quality assurance process. To re-emphasis, from 1st April 2007 onwards, greater awareness has been given to all higher education institutions who wish to volunteer for the process of assessment and accreditation by the council has to have internal quality assurance process to be in place. This has been disseminated through various means, one possible way it was done through is in the process of Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IEQA).

Now, the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India has come out with the guidelines for the internal quality assurance mechanisms. It also gives procedures for its functions. Not only the federal government, made the guidelines but by policy it also supports financially Universities and Colleges for this activity. This has been seen as part of nation building exercise. So, that student community will have access not only to information on quality but also has a right for quality education. Henceforth, the internal quality assurance process which is a prelude for external quality process will be part of quality sustenance and quality enhancement.

The positive support by way of resources including financial support to the Universities and Colleges by the federal government and provincial governments in India has helped NAAC to carve a niche by itself.

Conclusion

Basically IQA complements EQA and which inturn helps Universities and Colleges to attain excellence. One limitation of quality per se or quality assurance is the process of measurement. The model of assessment and accreditation followed by the external quality assurance agency in India is an integrated model based on inputs, processes, output and outcome. One could look at the NAAC processes of assessment and accreditation as a shift from static minimum standards to a continuous process of improvement. After completing three cycles of accreditation, in another couple of years, NAAC has to take up Universities and Colleges for 4th Cycle of assessment and accreditation. Many questions have been raised internally as well as from different beneficiaries. As NAAC is evolving and growing, a simple mathematical equation of accreditation equals assessment and reformation, one possible answer one could think of.