

Quality Enhancement in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT: No higher education institution worth its name, size and legacy can achieve and nurture its vision of creating and sustaining excellence in teaching and learning without value oriented, committed and skilled human resources at its disposal. The paper discusses the poor outcomes in the higher education as practices and policies were not reformed to counter challenges and leverage new opportunities. Managing and motivating human resources effectively is leadership challenge and key to quality outcomes. The paper opines that the onus lies on leadership for creating and leveraging a kind of robust eco system of teaching, learning and evaluation where discovering and sharing new knowledge becomes a norm. This study highlights that it is incumbent upon higher education institutions to evaluate processes, practices and outcomes regularly so that quality is sustained and leveraged for making students capable, confident and creative. The study recommends that institutions should conduct academic and administrative audit with active involvement of all stakeholders to improve upon the traditional practices for better outcomes. Academic and administrative audit of higher education institutions shall provide impetus for sustaining quality circles by leveraging the strengths and overcoming the weaknesses.

KEYWORDS: Teaching, Institutions, Academic, Robust, Sustaining

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the professions which requires continuous professional development for effective outcome but unfortunately and ignorantly in higher education arena, it is falsely presumed that knowledge acquired at a point of time stand relevant for all times to come and that is why outcomes are disappointing and disastrous for individuals and society at large. The purpose of higher education worldwide has always been to equip students with knowledge and skills to understand the socio economic problems and apply knowledge for harmonious utilization of resources for peace, prosperity and inclusive growth. The quality is concerned with the inculcating such skills and values amongst student so as to make them capable and creative thinker and they are confident enough for recognising problems and searching solutions. There exists a close relation between quality outcomes at school education and higher education centres, but it has never been recognised. The quality delivered at higher education is reflected in better and desired outcome at secondary and primary level. The higher education in India could not fulfil its mission of providing value oriented skilled workforce to work at secondary and primary level as reflected in abysmal poor learning outcomes. There is an urgent need for quality enhancement initiatives that are firmly embedded into processes. The quality of teaching and learning at primary and secondary level lays the foundation for higher education. The core values and skills acquired at these levels develop strong aptitude among students and that makes learning at higher education purposeful, interesting and fruitful. Those who learn at higher education are expected to deliver basic ideas and concepts crystal clear to young minds so that learning is interesting, participative and make students creative thinkers and this exhorts students towards higher learning. It is because of poor outcome at lower level that majority of those who come at the thresh hold of higher education neither know the purpose nor have the aptitude to learn and gradually they feel that education is dull and burdensome. Academic and Administrative Audit should be done in higher education institutions for evaluating past processes of quality assurance and its success depends upon collective holistic efforts and higher education leadership has a decisive role. In the light of the above scenario of higher education the paper discusses following issues.

1. To highlight the role of higher education leadership in quality enhancement
2. To explain the need and role of academic and administrative audit of higher education institutions

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II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Middlewood and Lumpy (1999) in their book "Human resource managers in schools and colleges" opined that the success of educational organisation depends on the quality performance and commitment of employees who work there. Higher education in India is in the need of visionary leadership at every level; leaders, who are committed to the vision and its realization, creative, communicative, empower and involve people and in this way generate commitments of others. We need to investigate the role of academic leadership in total quality management (TQM) in higher education institution (Osseo-Asare et al,2007). To attain and sustain quality both Internal Quality Assurance Cell and Academic and Administrative Audit (AAAC) have to be complimentary to each other (Planning and Development Report, Pondicherry University). As observed in Sweden, the focus is not on "quality. 'But on quality work" how an institution satisfies itself that its chosen academic standards are being achieved. (Ostling 1997) The democratisation of the Indian universities, enabling more social classes to gain access to higher learning has not always been a smooth process and its consequence at least in the short run has not always been beneficial (Betille.A ,2005). Academic audit from the perspective of current analysis of public sector reforms represent a working of model of external accounting designed to active institution reform- which in turn influence the quality of teachers and student learning in higher education(David Dil,2002). Quality must be the responsibility of teaching staff and peer pressure provides the best way to police the performance of individual performance (Massy, 1997) There is a growing realization that the focus of academic audit on improvement and institutional quality assurance processes may be a more appropriate means of accountability given the evolution of colleges and universities throughout the world into self-regulatory" learning organisation" (David,D,1999). For institutions to survive in this age, leadership is essential to create vision communicate policy and deploy strategy (Davies et al,2004) The key leadership role is to communicate the purpose and meaning of quality to all. Top leadership is the key to any quality programme and driving force behind success and failure (Michael et al, 1997).Academic audit is a collective effort for getting the quality processes evaluated by external experts for quality assurance. Unless leadership is utilized throughout the organisation, a college or university has little chance of a successful transformation (Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2004).

III. HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA – A DISMAL OUTCOME

Majority of those who learn at the higher education institutions have zero premium because either they are under skilled or have obsolete skills which is no longer useful in globally networked environment. For a very long time quality of teaching and learning in higher education has been overlooked and undervalued. In an alarming indictment of the quality of training given to the prospective school teachers, over 99% percent failed to clear the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (2012).The minimum marks required to pass the TET examination is 60 percent. The news paints a sorry picture for those who are optimistic about quality education to students as less than 2 percent candidates could clear Central Teacher Eligibility Test in February 2014. Trends of results show that candidates have performed poorly in children's development and pedagogy India ranked 73 out of 74 in 2009 in a simple test of reading, science and arithmetic called PISA (Programme for international student assessment) and after that India never participated in the PISA need rethinking. The well regarded NGO Partham, in its 2018 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER). Concluded that 56% of class 8th students cannot basic maths and 27% read. The 2014 Annual survey Of Education Report (ASER) found that that nearly half of class 2 level and in rural schools the number of students in class 2nd who could not even recognise letters of alphabets increased from 13,4% in 2010 to 32.5% in 2014. It is a reflection on those who have been trained at high reduction centres for four years (3 YEAR Graduation + 1 YEAR Bed) and majority of them do post-graduation for quick promotion. The HTET (HARYANA) 2014 result showed that only 1.22% candidates qualified level in Level 1TGT exam and 2'29 % candidates qualified for Level III PGT Exam. At 23.6% our gross enrolment ratio in higher education is one of the lowest in the world. India Skill Report 2021 shows that 47.22 percentage of Art graduate. 40.30 Of Commerce graduates and 30.34percentage of Science graduate are employable. None of India universities is in top hundred QS world university ranking and only three universities are in top two hundred universities. None of the Indian University could make it to the list top 100 most prestigious global university (Times Higher Education). While the IITs with an annual enrolment of 10000-15000 focus only the brightest of the bright, not a single great worldwide patent has emerged or have they produced a single noble laureate. Among BRICKS & Emerging Economies Ranking 2015, only one Indian university-Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, was placed at 25th out of top 100 universities whereas china has 3 universities.

IV. ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

.Academic leaderships in Higher Education in India need to rethink, redefine and recalibrate on new programs, polices and practices for quality outcomes in the higher education. This require a change in cultural and the challenge is to manage change effectively with active collaboration of all stakeholders. The onus lies on leadership to communicate, convince and coax, stakeholders to participate and collaborate in the change process. Annual academic and administrative audit of higher education

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institutions is key responsibility of leadership. The report card so prepared shall be a cumulative summary of past achievements and highlighting and alerting on suboptimal processes and practices.

V. ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUDIT- A TOOL TO ATTAIN AND SUSTAIN QUALITY

Academic and administrative audit is an urgent need to attain and enhance quality. It will start the development of quality assurance systems with due emphasis on improving teaching and student learning. A quality audit will evaluate whether the institution has at its disposal a committed and capable academics for whom every student is a learning experience and institution has ability to use its resources effectively and efficiently. During these times when the higher education is undergoing transformational change due to introduction of new education policy 20220 and both challenges and expectations are very high, there is need to evaluate traditional policies and practices for introducing changes, and for that annual academic and administrative audit shall go a long way in attaining and sustaining quality and holistic higher education.

VI. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A key to success of any program and practice is the active participation of stakeholders. The purpose, need, scope and expected gain from the audit should be clear as this will spur them to participate in the audit process with full vim and vigour. The degree of involvement depends on clear and transparent communication regarding evidence of its impact on systems of higher education. Any miscommunication or ineffective communication will be counterproductive and may create fear among stakeholders. There may be individuals and departments' which may not be willing to participate due to misplaced fear which can be overcome through effective communication regarding benefits of academic audit. The stories of excellence of great institutions and great personalities will boost their morale.

VII. NATURE AND SCOPE OF AUDIT

The audit should be both: Internal and external. Internal audit team of five members comprising senior faculty members along with retired faculty and bright alumni evaluates institution on various dimension and the report so prepared set the groundwork for undergoing external audit. External audit team of four members comprises one senior faculty member to facilitate, university professors and ex principal of eminent higher education institutions. The audit evaluates processes, practices and outcomes both in academic and administrative set up for attaining and sustaining quality circles over the period of time in the institution. The audit may be for one day or two day depending on the number of programs running, students enrolled and faculty strength in the institutions. To make the audit effective it is prudential that audit should be on holidays in the institution.

VIII. AUDIT PROCESS

The institution should prepares a comprehensive report of the institution in three parts : Profile of the college, Quantitative summary of processes ,practices and infrastructure, Departmental profile highlighting the credential and efforts of faculty and outcomes reflected in progressing and placements rate during the past academic year. The report is shared with all the members of the external audit team. Schedule of activities during the audit days is prepared in advance for making the audit effective. During the audit the head of the institution, departmental heads, conveners of respective for and societies give presentation The team also visits the campus and evaluates the availability, adequacy and effectiveness of academic, administrative and sports infrastructure and further mechanisms for involving and providing opportunities to the students for extracurricular activities. On the basis of findings numerical values are assigned to various parameters and cumulative score is calculated to decide the grade in percentage. The report submitted by the team highlights positive observations, negative observations and the suggestions for improvements.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

To create and sustain quality in higher education leadership role is crucial. Without better leadership we cannot imagine a great institution; an institution where acquiring, sharing and utilizing knowledge is in built in culture and top leadership acts as chief facilitator. For assuring quality and excellence in higher education, every institution of higher education should monitor its performance both absolutely and relatively by establishing and effectively running Internal Quality Assurance Cell and conducting annual academic and administrative audit by external agencies.

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