===

Expediting the Quest for Quality:
The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde

Co-ordinator, IQAC,

Shri Shivaji College, Parbhani

Abstract:

Academic Audit is an important tool to control and maintain standards in academic sector. It has been found highly relevant by the experts across the world. Academic audit helps institutions to introspect and improve their quality. The present paper intends to probe into the possible role of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in Academic Audit as a measure to expedite its quest for quality.

Key words: Academic Audit, Quality, Higher Education, IQAC

Introduction:

In the globalized context quest for quality has become a natural requirement. Higher education, being the agent of social and personal dynamism cannot escape out of it. It has been a prime aim of leading educational institutions across the globe to go for continuous and constant exercise of self-evaluation and up-gradation. This process is referred as academic audit. It may be both internal as well as external. It is an important tool to control and maintain standards in academic sector. It has been found highly relevant by the experts all over the world. Academic audit helps institutions to introspect and improve their quality.

===

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde
Expediting the Quest for Quality: The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit
Vol III Issue 3 March 2016
www.thesaarc.com

40

===

What is Academic Audit?

Academic Audit is a tool for examining and enhancing the quality of academic aspects of Higher Education Institutions. Usually it is systematic and scientific process. It lays emphasis on the designing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the quality of services provided by the academic institutions. It aims at reviewing the performance of the academic inputs with respect to quality assurance.

Types of Academic Audit:

Depending on the auditing agency there may be two types of audits: internal and external. Internal audit is an in house operation for self-introspection. External audit has more reliability and is conducted for wider recognition. Commenting on the distinction between the internal and external audit Simon Horsman compares Academic Audit with Financial Audit in these words, " In the financial domain, associated with increasing scale and cost of external audit and with moves towards reliance on strong process of internal control, the internal audit function has become increasingly important. This is also the case in HE, where the UK QAA has indicated that it is prepared to use a lighter touch with external scrutiny when internal quality assurance processes are demonstrated to be robust and effective."

Indian Higher Education Scenario:

Presently Indian higher education system is in transition phase. Expressing his deep concern for Indian higher education system Prof. P. N. Gautam states that, "Higher Education in India is afflicted with many problems and weaknesses and naturally is not in a position to face the challenges it is surrounded with these days. Making Higher Education efficient and effective needs a many pronged strategy with a great political will and administrative skill." At this juncture, it is essential to see the

===

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde
Expediting the Quest for Quality: The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit
Vol III Issue 3 March 2016
www.thesaarc.com

41

initiatives taken up for quality assessment and enhancement in Indian higher education sector.

History of Quality Assessment Initiatives in India:

In India, higher education is a constitutional responsibility of the Government of India. Academic audit was only in practice for technical education. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) initiated it through National Board of Accreditation. Later in 1990s it was introduced in the field of general higher education. University Grants Commission (UGC) under its autonomous body called National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is assigned the task of conducting academic audit of general educational institutions in India. Initially, it was voluntary for institutions to go for accreditation. But since 2015 Government of India has made it mandatory. Since both NBA and NAAC are regulated by government agencies like AICTE and UGC respectively Prof. Ashok Chandra, former special secretary, MHRD and Advisor (Technical), Government of India finds that "accreditation in India as a 'policing' function to shield students, the public and employers from inappropriate institutions."

NAAC & IQAC:

NAAC has developed a systematic process of external academic audit for institutes of higher education in India. It is based on mutual involvement of NAAC as well as the institution which goes for audit. The process involves self-study by the institution and external peer team visit by NAAC. The utmost care is taken for maintaining transparency in the process of assessment. NAAC has suggested institutions to establish Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as the internal agency for quality assurance. The task of self-introspection and preparing self-study

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde
Expediting the Quest for Quality: The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit
Vol III Issue 3 March 2016
www.thesaarc.com

42

==

report is assigned to this agency. Hence, IQAC in every institution needs to play the role of internal academic auditing agency.

Role of IQAC in Academic Audit:

IQAC in higher educational institutions is expected to channelize all its stakeholders to expedite its quest for quality. Therefore the role of IQAC in the process of self-assessment i. e. one type of academic audit is vital. It is illustrated with the following sub-points:

Quality Processes:

The IQAC can expedite its quest for quality by running various quality processes like-

   i.   Reviewing systems

  ii.   Record keeping

 iii.   Practicing equal opportunities

 iv.   Enhancing the quality of various operational committees

Teaching and Assessment:

IQAC can enhance quality through enhancing teaching and assessment by applying the following measures.

   i.   Supporting students in the learning process

  ii.   Providing quality learning environment

 iii.   Maintaining quality of learning outcomes

 iv.   Enhancing student projects

  v.   Implying activity based learning in small groups

Valuing Students:

Every educational institution is responsible for student development. Hence, IQAC should value its students. This can be done through-

   i.   Arranging for Introductions initiative for new students

==

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde
Expediting the Quest for Quality: The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit
Vol III Issue 3 March 2016
www.thesaarc.com

43

ii. Providing Student Handbooks

iii. Making Mature Students Feel welcome at the campus

iv. By making relevant provisions for part-time and overseas students

Valuing Staff:

Staff of an educational institution is considered as its second asset after student being the first. So it is a natural responsibility of IQAC to be committed for staff development. Some of the ways it may follow are-

i. Staff Induction Programs

ii. Enhancing the quality of trainings Imparted

iii. Use of appraisal System to enhance quality

iv. Managing Stress

v. Maintaining high morale

vi. Coping with turbulent times in their personal as well as professional life.

Mechanism for Feedback & Evaluation:

IQAC should develop a system of collecting inputs from all its stakeholders. Feedback is the best mechanism for this activity. For seeking feedback IQAC may take up following actions.

i. Designing structured feedback questionnaire

ii. Designing open feedback questionnaire

iii. Feedback from interviews with students

iv. Establishing a culture of student feedback

Conclusion:

Higher education with all of its aspects has become an important concern for everyone who is working with human resource development. To recruit proper man power with an emphasis on appropriate HR development organizations are looking for students of reputed institutions. In this scenario institutions are obliged to

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde
Expediting the Quest for Quality: The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit
Vol III Issue 3 March 2016
www.thesaarc.com

44

maintain high academic standards. As a consequence, academic audit becomes a regular activity. In addition to it, government has made it mandatory. All that becomes a must in the field of higher education in India is the vital role of IQAC for expediting its quest for quality.

References:

Chandra, A. (2005). Towards an indian Accreditation System. In A. Craft, *Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (p. 250). London: Routledge.

Gautam, P. N. (2005). Human Resource Development and Higher Education in India. In P. N. Goel, *Human Resource Development and Higher Education in 21st Century* (p. 416). New Delhi: D D Publication.

Horsman, S. (2000). Quality Audit in Higher Education: Lessons from Financial Audit. In A. H. Brown, *Internal Audit in Higher Education* (p. 224). London: Routledge.

Dr. Rohidas Nitonde
Expediting the Quest for Quality: The Role of IQAC in Academic Audit
Vol III Issue 3 March 2016
www.thesaarc.com

45