

Role of IQAC in quality enhancement in higher education

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Abstract

The establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) by accredited institutions (after the first cycle) is a major step in pushing long-term quality standards. IQAC in any institution is a significant administrative body that is responsible for all quality matters. It is the prime responsibility of IQAC to initiate, plan and supervise various activities that are necessary to increase the quality of the education imparted in an institution or college.

The role of IQAC in maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation becomes crucial, and the present research is therefore undertaken on a smaller scale to determine the exact status and functioning of IQAC and its outcome.

The present research falls under the purview of quantitative research and hence quantitative methods, such as data collection, analysis, comparison, tabulation and illustration, are used. Among 55 randomly selected institutions/ colleges, I received replies from 29 colleges only, and the same data are taken for granted for analysis. This finding might be an indication of the attitude/lack of information/prejudice of many colleges against research in higher education in this territory.

Keywords: IQAC, higher education, programme

1. Introduction

The Indian higher education system is on the brink of great transformations to cope with global competence. This system is one of the third largest higher educational systems in the world, comprising 795 universities, 39,671 affiliated colleges, 1,015,696 teaching faculty and 23,764,960 students. The policy framing work continuously is in progress at the level of state and central government.

The overall quality of higher education is the main concern in policy framing and for that it has been made mandatory to obtain accreditation of higher education institutions (HEIs) by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) to improve quality. Many HEIs have been completed and are in process of the first cycle of accreditation in the state and country.

Maintaining quality is a matter of longterm initiative; to reach this long-term goal, NAAC has established detailed guidelines from time to time. The establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) by accredited institutions (after the first cycle) is a major step in pushing long-term quality standards. IQAC in any institution is a significant administrative body responsible for all quality matters. It is the prime responsibility of IQAC to initiate, plan and supervise various activities which are necessary to increase the quality of the education imparted in institutions and colleges.

It can promote and determine quality related activities and issues through various programmes and activities such as seminars, workshops, symposia, conferences, panel discussions, role playing exercises, (model) demonstrations, case studies, academic meetings and any such kind of event or programme for all the stakeholders of the institution. The role of IQAC in maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation becomes crucial, and hence the present research is undertaken, though on a smaller scale, to determine the exact status and functioning of IQAC and its outcome.

Higher education is generally understood to cover teaching, research and extension. If we critically analyze the different

concepts of higher education, we can list the various roles higher education plays in the society. Higher education is the source or feeder system in all walks of life and therefore supplies the much-needed human resources in management, planning, design, teaching and research.

Scientific and technological advancement and economic growth of a country are as dependent on the higher education system as they are on the working class. Development of indigenous technology and capabilities in agriculture, food security and other industrial areas are possible because of our worldclass higher education infrastructure. Higher education also provides opportunities for lifelong learning, allowing people to upgrade their knowledge and skills from time to time based on the societal needs.

Establishment of an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in each of the HEIs would help develop and raise their capabilities as institutions. The seven criteria are: curricular aspects; teaching, learning and evaluation; research, consultancy and extension; infrastructure and learning resources; student support and progression; organization and management; and healthy practices.

One of the major outcomes of the IQAC establishment would be the internalization and institutionalization of quality so that the institution strives to excel in serving its students and other stakeholders. The quest to become a quality institution is in itself a core value that HEIs have to imbibe and demonstrate in their functioning.

The continuous improvement process is future directed and believes in a 'transformation' model to a 'revolution' model. The process expects commitment from all involved parties and also recommends empowerment of the participants, which is possible through regular staff development activities. In India, NAAC proposes that every accredited institution should establish the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) to continuously improve quality as 'enhancement' and sustain the good work of the institution.

IQAC will facilitate the process of internalization of the quality and play a catalytic role in performance improvement of the institution. All the accredited institutions with IQAC are expected to submit annual quality assurance reports to NAAC as self-reviewed progress reports. IQAC will create internal awareness on quality issues and also establish credibility for the external quality evaluation.

Training and development on ‘quality’ as well as other functional competencies of academic and non-academic staff are crucial to continuous improvement and development of a ‘culture of quality’. Instruments for assessing quality culture are available that can be used to understand how quality is a part of our organizational culture.

A quality organization is one that has a ‘culture of quality’ meaning quality is its hallmark in whatever it does. This includes: its mission and goals that are focused towards the customers (students), its activities and processes are standardized (there are documented practices, which can reply to what, why and how), and it satisfies the needs of the stakeholders (society, employers) and goes beyond to create ‘customer delight’.

2. Hypothesis

It is assumed that the IQAC established in the college/institution plays a crucial and significant role in maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation. It is also taken into consideration that without IQAC, it becomes extremely difficult to manage the quality system of teaching, learning and evaluation in a college/institution.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the exact role of IQAC in maintaining overall quality standards in a college/institution.
2. To examine the functioning of IQAC as an administrative quality monitoring body.

3. To analyze and work out various opinions of coordinators and non-members of IQAC regarding the role of IQAC in the development of a college/institution.
4. To find solutions to issues/problems if any are discovered in the working of IQAC.

4. Methodology

The present research falls under the purview of quantitative research and hence quantitative methods such as data collection, analysis, comparison, tabulation and illustration are used. The data are in the form of questionnaires and these have been sent to 55 different institutions/colleges which are accredited and/or are in the process of accreditation.

Through these questionnaires, the opinions of coordinators and non-members of IQAC are sorted and analyzed. Two questionnaires are used: one to be filled out by the coordinator of IQAC and one by (any) non-member teacher of IQAC. Each questionnaire is divided into two parts: A and B. In part A, there are 11 questions/points asked and in part B, 10 parameters are formed to seek opinions.

The first questionnaire is countered by the second questionnaire, in which same questions/points have been judged to compare and determine the veracity of answers to the first questionnaire. The questions in part A must be answered in Yes/No/Don't Know form and the points in part B have to be rated on a scale of A/B/C/D, explained, respectively, as Excellent, Good, Poor and Unsatisfactory.

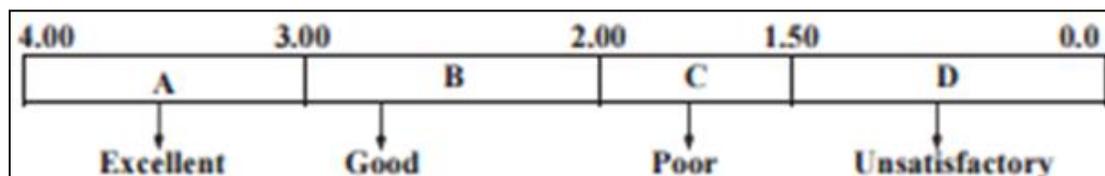
While framing the questionnaires, care is taken with all elements related to IQAC such that the objectives could be met and at the same time accountability is assured by countering them. The information is generated and given in the following tables:

Questionnaire I

Table 1: Part A,

Sr. no.	Problem/issue	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Do you think that Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is a significant body monitoring the process of teaching, learning and evaluation?	21	08	-
2	Does IQAC contribute to maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation?	25	04	-
3	Does IQAC encourage/promote co-curricular, extra-curricular and other types of activities as part of asserting quality in teaching, learning and evaluation? If yes, provide example(s).	22	07	-
4	Is IQAC a capable body to administer various academic/educational activities in the college/institution?	24	05	-
5	Is there proper coordination between IQAC and management, IQAC and teaching & non-teaching/support staff, IQAC and students, or coordination among all the stakeholders of the institution through IQAC?	19	10	-
6	Does IQAC need more autonomy, especially financial, for better performance?	25	04	-
7	Do IQAC and its coordinator work under pressure of principal and management, or both?	16	13	-
8	Does IQAC promote, stimulate and monitor the internal evaluation of the students, e.g., tests, tutorials, assignments, practicums, and projects?	20	09	-
9	Are you satisfied with working with IQAC as its coordinator?	26	03	-
10	Do you need more autonomy (e.g., academic, financial, and administrative) for the smooth and better functioning of IQAC?	22	07	-
11	Should IQAC be replaced by any other committee/body/agency or the like?	04	25	-

Table 2: Part B



Sr. no.	Parameters	A	B	C	D
1	IQAC as an administrative body	14	10	03	02
2	Contribution of IQAC in teaching, learning & evaluation	19	10	-	-
3	Organisation of co-curricular, extra-curricular and other types of activities through/by IQAC	15	11	03	-
4	Response to academic activities sponsored by IQAC from the rest of the teaching and non-teaching/support staff	22	03	04	-
5	Coordination among IQAC and various departments in the college/institution	15	12	02	-
6	Support for orientation, refresher and other short-term training courses for teaching and non-teaching staff by/through IQAC	20	05	04	-
7	Present working strategy of IQAC and its implementation	27	02	-	-
8	Outcome and overall result of the work of IQAC	26	03	-	-
9	Academic, financial, decision-making autonomy to/of IQAC	05	12	12	-
10	Overall satisfaction with the functioning of IQAC	25	02	02	-

Questionnaire II

Table 3: Part A

Sr. no.	Problem/issue	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Do you think that Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is a significant body monitoring the process of teaching, learning and evaluation?	20	05	04
2	Does IQAC contribute to maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation?	22	05	02
3	Does IQAC encourage/promote co-curricular, extra-curricular and other types of activities as a part of asserting quality in teaching, learning and evaluation? If yes, provide example(s).	19	10	-
4	Is IQAC a capable body to administer various academic/educational activities in the college/institution?	22	07	-
5	Is there proper coordination between IQAC and management, IQAC and teaching & non-teaching/support staff, IQAC and students, or coordination among all the stakeholders of the institution through IQAC?	12	13	04
6	Does IQAC need more autonomy, especially financial, for better performance?	23	06	-
7	Do IQAC and its coordinator work under pressure of principal and management, or both?	21	08	-
8	Does IQAC promote, stimulate and monitor the internal evaluation of the students, e.g., tests, tutorials, assignments, practicums, and projects?	14	15	-
9	Are you satisfied with working with IQAC and its coordinator?	19	10	-
10	Does the IQAC coordinator need more autonomy (e.g., academic, financial, and administrative) for the smooth and better functioning of IQAC?	27	02	-
11	Should IQAC be replaced by any other committee/body/agency, or the like?	09	18	02

Table 4: Part B

Sr. no.	Parameters	A	B	C	D
1	IQAC as an administrative body	18	08	03	-
2	Contribution of IQAC in teaching, learning & evaluation	19	06	04	-
3	Organisation of co-curricular, extra-curricular and other types of activities through/by IQAC	22	05	-	02
4	Response to academic activities sponsored by IQAC from the rest of the teaching and non-teaching/support staff	15	07	07	-
5	Coordination among IQAC and various departments in the college/institution	18	10	-	01
6	Support for orientation, refresher and other short-term training courses for teaching and non-teaching staff by/through IQAC	15	04	02	08
7	Present working strategy of IQAC and its implementation	17	04	04	04
8	Outcome and overall result of the work of IQAC	20	05	04	-
9	Academic, financial, decision-making autonomy to/of IQAC	10	08	07	04
10	Overall satisfaction with the functioning of IQAC	12	13	02	02

5. Explanation

The above tables show the quantity of reply to each question/point. Among 55 randomly selected institutions/colleges, I received replies from 29 colleges only, and the same data are taken for granted for analysis. This might be an indication of the attitude/lack of information/prejudice of many colleges against research in higher education in this territory (SRTM University, Nanded/Marathwada). The research received very interesting responses through the questionnaires.

In Questionnaire I: Part A, Table 1, almost all questions have been answered by “yes” except the last one, but the reply is positive, i.e., IQAC should not be replaced by any other agency. Twenty-one IQAC coordinators consider that it is a significant body, whereas 8 think it is not so. It contributes to maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation (25/04). The fifth question, i.e., coordination among stakeholders, was answered “yes” by 19 and “no” by 10.

The seventh question is also divided into 16 and 13, respectively. In Part B, Table 2, the IQAC is considered as “excellent” administrative body by 14, “good” by 10, “poor” by 3 and “unsatisfactory” by 2. There is poor and good academic, financial and decision-making autonomy given to IQAC.

In Questionnaire II, Part A, Table 3, the fifth question of coordination is answered by “yes” by 12 and “no” by 13 and “don't know” by 4. This is a particular reply given by a non-member of IQAC, again answers to the eighth question have been put as 14 and 15, respectively. In Part B, Table 4, the fourth question was answered with “excellent” by 15, “good” by 7 and “poor” by 7. There is some concern with the ninth point, i.e., autonomy to IQAC, and the scale is 10, 8, 7 and 4, respectively. With this analysis, some of the solid results as follows:

6. Results

Both assumptions considered prove positive.

1. The IQAC is a significant administrative body in any educational institution.
2. It contributes to maintaining quality standards in teaching, learning and evaluation.
3. It promotes co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in the college.
4. It is a capable body to administer various academic/educational activities.
5. There is coordination among the stakeholders of the institution, but this still needed more attention and concern to increase such coordination.
6. The IQAC and its coordinator require more autonomy (e.g., academic, financial, and administrative) for better performance.
7. In some institutions/colleges, the IQAC and its coordinator work under pressure of principal and management.
8. The IQAC tries to include everyone in its activities, but sometimes some individuals are excluded from its programmes.
9. The IQAC should not be replaced by any other body/committee/agency, or the like.
10. The IQAC has a greater role and responsibility in maintaining quality standards in the whole process of teaching, learning and evaluation.

7. References

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