

Value Framework for Assessment of Higher Education Institutions



राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद

विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग का स्वायत्त संस्थान

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

An Autonomous Institution of the University Grants Commission

NAAC

Vision

To make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives.

Mission

- ❖ *To arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects;*
- ❖ *To stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions;*
- ❖ *To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education;*
- ❖ *To undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes, and*
- ❖ *To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.*

Value Framework

To promote the following core values among the HEIs of the country :

- ❖ *Contributing to National Development*
- ❖ *Fostering Global Competencies among Students*
- ❖ *Inculcating a Value System in Students*
- ❖ *Promoting the Use of Technology*
- ❖ *Quest for Excellence*

Value Framework for Assessment of Higher Education Institutions

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1. Introduction

Education is a social process. The form and content of education of any age and society is a product of society-education dialectics. The transformation in the education system of India from the ancient *gurukula* system to today's virtual learning system is a reflection of the changing social context. The new social realities, particularly the interplay between democratization of education, emergence of knowledge society and globalization, greatly influence the educational processes in all societies. In this context, the quality of education assumes added importance and becomes the primary concern of all the stakeholders in education. These statements may appear like description of very obvious things. But this apparent obviousness is also equally contentious, more so in the case of higher education. We cannot presume that we all know what we mean by quality higher education. The discussion on quality has generated philosophical debates on many issues of quality, including the meaning of quality. Also, there are several operational controversies and different perceptions about the process of quality assurance and the responsibilities for quality.

In the academic world, we observe many apprehensions about the concepts and processes of quality assurance. The academics are generally uncomfortable with the managerial perspectives and the market language of quality. The pedagogues of education are skeptical

about the measurability of the intrinsic excellence of educational operations. The external quality assurance mechanisms are perceived as a threat to the autonomy of educational institutions. Some even consider quality as just hype and a part of the strategies of developed countries to hegemonise the education systems of developing countries. Indeed, the debate on quality sometimes resembles the story of the description of an elephant by five blind men. In such a scenario, there is a need to develop a value framework for assessment of institutions of higher education.

2. Value Framework

Assessment is an evaluation of the performance of the institution. A value framework is a set of principles or standards, based on which the assessment is done. The framework of assessment is expected to serve the divergent requirements of stakeholders in education. It should also help policy makers make meaningful judgements about public institutions. Institutions should be able to use it as a compass for their journey. The public may look to it for assurance of the social relevance of institutional activities. Students may look at it for assured learning experience and learning outcomes relevant to their needs. The development of a multifunctional quality framework to meet the divergent needs of stakeholders in education is, no doubt, a challenging task.

The traditional framework for quality assurance focuses more on inputs and processes and less on outcomes. There is an increasing realization of the necessity to focus more on outcomes of higher education. In the context of developing countries where the transformative role of education is emphasized, quality as “fitness of purpose” assumes equal importance with quality as “fitness for purpose”. Quality as fitness of purpose defines the quality of goals and quality as fitness for purpose defines the quality of processes. These two dimensions of assessment framework need integration. Efficient processes, unmindful of purpose, would have no relevance, just as noble goals without rigorous processes to achieve them, would be of no effect. Elucidating what it takes for an individual to achieve success, David Taylor identifies four stages: 1. know where you want to go; 2. know where you are now; 3. know what you have to do, to get where you want to go, and 4. do it. These stages of success are equally relevant in the case of higher education institutions.

We have traveled a long distance from John Henry Newman’s idea of university as “a place of teaching universal knowledge” to university as a place that provides education for “making a living”. The complexity of Indian context is such that it has led to unprecedented divergence in institutional forms and institutional goals. Today, public institutions, private institutions, value-driven institutions and purely profit-oriented enterprises, all are coexisting in the Indian education sector, pulling the system in different directions. In this context, there is a need for developing broad parameters of goals or values of higher education in consonance with the broadly accepted national development goals.

3. The NAAC advocacy for value framework

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council has identified five core values for institutions of higher education, as goals of their activities. These are:

A. Firstly, contribution to national development

This re-emphasis on education’s contribution to development is necessary in the context of the continuing debate on whether education constitutes a public good or a private good; a merit good or a non-merit good. The Education Commission of 1966, popularly known as ‘Kothari Commission’, titled its report as “Education and National Development”. Its opening sentence states: “The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms.” This year also marks the beginning of United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Sustainable development, i.e., development of the present generation without sacrificing the interests of future generations, should be one of the primary goals of all educational institutions. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is strongly advocating the active participation of all Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions, too, in the realization of UN Millennium Development Goals.

The World Bank document, “Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education (2002)”, rightly emphasizes that the tertiary education has many purposes beyond acquisition of concrete skills in preparation for the world of work. The report further argues: “It also involves developing a person’s ability to reason systematically about critical questions and issues, to place facts in a broader context, to consider the moral implications of actions and choices, to communicate knowledge and

questions effectively, and to nurture habits that promote lifelong-learning behaviours outside the formal academic setting. The skills of formulation, synthesis, analysis, and argumentation can be developed in a wide variety of curricula and a mixture of pedagogical approaches”. The argument reminds us of the need to take a balanced view of the contribution of educational programmes in all areas of knowledge including languages, humanities and social sciences.

We may identify specific parameters for assessment of the contribution of educational institutions towards development, such as: (a) more access with equity; (b) identification of research priorities and programmes based on a comprehensive view of tertiary education contributing not only to human capital development, but also to humanistic and social capital development; and (c) community engagement.

B. Secondly, fostering global competencies among students

In India, we have a paradoxical situation of limited opportunities for higher education and a large pool of unemployable educated. This is partly a result of the failure of our education system to develop the competencies required for the world of work. It is but natural to expect a set of usable competencies as outcome of any good education system. It needs to be recognized that in the context of an increasingly more networked world, education is considered as a global public good. The UNESCO document, “Thematic Debate: The Requirements of the World of Work” identifies a number of competencies expected from university graduates. The major among them may be summarized as below:

- ❖ be flexible;
- ❖ be able and willing to contribute to innovation and be creative;
- ❖ be able to cope with uncertainties;
- ❖ be interested in and prepared for life-long learning;
- ❖ be inclined to acquire social sensitivity and communication skills;
- ❖ be able to work in teams;
- ❖ be willing to take on responsibilities;
- ❖ become entrepreneurial;

- ❖ be prepared for internalization of the labour market realities through an understanding of various cultures and
- ❖ be versatile in generic skills which cut across different disciplines, and be literate in areas of knowledge which form the basis for various professional skills, for example, in new technologies.

These competencies broadly relate to “liberation of mind” and “empowerment of hands”. They can be the specific parameters to judge the outcomes of educational programmes and activities of the institutions of higher education. In brief, the institutions should mainly focus on development of (a) generic skills; (b) application skills; and (c) soft skills or life skills.

C. Thirdly, inculcating a value system in students

Education as a socialization process of acquiring necessary values for living is well recognized and emphasized. It is also increasingly realized that the present education system is largely oblivious of its role as a value-building institution. Tertiary education is expected to contribute to promotion of civic behaviour, nation building and social cohesion through transmission of democratic values and cultural norms. But, unfortunately, we observe a disturbing trend of low commitment to democratic and secular values among the many educated. Pavan K Verma, a perceptive observer of the middle class in post-independent India, laments that they are interested more in themselves and have not contributed much to the creation of an egalitarian society in India. In the same vein, another observer points out that the best products of our IITs and IIMs have “over-developed minds and underdeveloped hearts”. These observations are quoted here not to condemn the significant positive contributions of products of our elite educational institutions, but to re-emphasize the importance of education as a value-building activity.

The specific assessment parameters of quality in the context of this core value may include examination of (a) value integration in academic programmes; (b) value integration in the institutional management practices; and (c) value inculcation among students through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

D. Fourthly, promoting the use of technology

The potential of technology for extension of educational opportunities is well recognized. The open universities and many conventional universities and colleges are making significant efforts to use technology for educational purposes. But, sometimes, market players in ICT send out wrong signals of technology-use in education, as a commercial activity overshadowing the quality-value dimension of the process. There is an important need to realize the potential of information and communication technologies in bringing about value addition to quality education. The specific parameters for assessment of the contribution of technology to quality education may include the use of technology: (a) for increased access; (b) for continuing education; (c) for enrichment of classroom teaching; (d) for better services to students; and (e) for more effective educational management of institutions.

E. Fifthly, quest for excellence

Quality, from a functional perspective, is viewed as a means for achieving something. This is also considered as a managerial view of quality or a market view of quality. Alternatively, quality may be viewed from an intrinsic perspective, which regards it as a value in itself. This is how genuine academics consider quality in education, and thus this may be considered as the academic view of quality. This view helps in the internalization of the processes of quality in institutions of higher education. Quality, viewed as a market strategy may have alternatives, but, viewed as an academic value has no alternatives. In this sense, quality is a continuous search for excellence. One paradox of Indian higher education is the co-existence of a few institutions of high quality, with a large number of institutions of average and poor quality. This hierarchy of quality further reinforces the inequitable social structures. The focus of search for excellence should be on improving the quality of the large number of average and below-average institutions. Equitable quality is the goal of search for excellence. It would be apt to recall here the Article 51A of the Indian constitution which mentions 'to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement' as one of the fundamental duties of a citizen. The specific parameters for assessing the quest for excellence of institutions may include: (a) development of benchmarks of excellence; (b) use of best practices; and (c) measures for institutionalization of continuous improvement systems.

4. Concluding observations

The five values or parameters of assessment of higher education institutions, i.e., (1) Contribution to National Development, (2) Fostering Global Competencies among Students, (3) Inculcating a Value System in Students, (4) Promoting the Use of Technology and (5) Quest for Excellence, it is hoped, will help us to develop a critical understanding of the contributions of institutions of higher education to society and individuals. The framework, in spite of its generality, provides a broad vision of higher education in developing countries, particularly in the context of an increasing tendency towards marketisation of higher education. To understand the complex realities of India, some ambiguity in the analytical framework is perhaps unavoidable. There is some truth in the old Tibetan saying that “if you are too clear, you could miss the point entirely”.

I have tried to describe the framework of quality assessment of higher education institutions as a goal-oriented concern. The primary concern of Indian higher education has been: “how to provide equitable quality education to large numbers at affordable costs?”. I hope that the framework described above will trigger further debate and discussion on the purposes and quality of higher education and facilitate progress in the direction of desired goals.

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Value Framework for Assessment of Higher Education Institutions *

Values/Goals	Suggested Parameters/Activities
1. Contribution to National Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ More access with equity⇒ Developmental thrust in identification of research areas and academic programmes⇒ Community engagement
2. Fostering Global Competencies among Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Development of generic skills⇒ Development of application skills⇒ Development of life skills
3. Inculcating Value System in Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Value integration in academic programmes⇒ Value integration in management practices⇒ Value inculcation through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
4. Promoting the Use of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ For enrichment of learning⇒ For increasing the access-online programmes⇒ For system management
5. Quest for Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Development of benchmarks of excellence⇒ Best Practices application⇒ Institutionalization of continuous improvement systems

* The list is only illustrative. Institutions may identify many other parameters/activities depending on their context.

NAAC

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CELL (IQAC)



The National Assessment and Accreditation Council advocates the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) by all the accredited institutions as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity.

Objective

The primary aim of the IQAC is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution.

Functions

Some of the functions expected of the IQAC are:

- Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters for the various academic and administrative activities of the institution
- Dissemination of information on the various quality parameters of higher education
- Organisation of workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles
- Documentation of the various programmes / activities leading to quality improvement
- Preparation of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) to be submitted to NAAC based on the quality parameters.

Strategies

IQAC shall evolve mechanisms and procedures for:

- Ensuring timely, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks
- Optimization and integration of modern methods of teaching, learning and evaluation
- Ensuring the adequacy, maintenance and functioning of the support structure.

Benefits

IQAC will facilitate / contribute:

- To a heightened level of clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement and facilitate internalization of the quality culture
- To the enhancement and integration among the various activities of the institution and institutionalize many good practices
- To provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning
- To act as a change agent in the institution
- To better internal communication.

To apply for Re-Accreditation, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should have a functional IQAC and a website for communication connectivity. It is expected that the HEIs should establish the IQAC to make the quality as integral part of the system towards academic excellence. NAAC has brought out Guidelines for Creation of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in Accredited Institutions.



For more details:-
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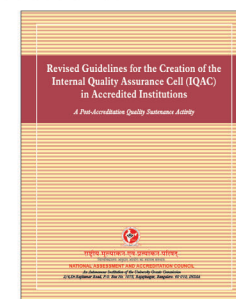
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