

Quality Culture in Teacher Education

K.K. SHARMA*
SAROJ SOBTI**

Abstract

The management and sustenance of quality in Higher Education is a great challenge for the policy planners and managers in the changing scenario. Management of the functioning of an educational institution that is utilization of resources- men, material, machine, money, time and space, innovative practices and intuitive future plan lead to the enhancement of quality. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) came into existence as deliberate government intervention to help institutions to integrate quality initiatives for attaining national goals of equity, excellence and efficiency. The central focus of this article is to discuss about the various healthy or innovative practices for the enhancement of quality environment suggested by this Council. It also put forth some suggestions to improve the current scenario of Indian Educational Institutions.

Introduction

Quality has become the watchword of current educational scenario not only in India but also at a global level. If we are to survive in this competitive, market-oriented and technology-driven world where boundaries of countries are fastly disappearing, then there is no existence without quality. In the last decade the rising consciousness and demand for quality assurance, sustenance and its management have become essential ingredients of competitive society. It is an

accepted fact that the higher education provides the means for upward economic growth and social mobility. It helps to provide leadership in all the sectors of development in a country. The management and sustenance of quality in higher education is a great challenge for the policy planners and managers in the changing scenario.

Quality in education is interlinked with autonomy and accountability. Quality of higher education and research can be assured if colleges/universities

* Former *Pro Vice-Chancellor*, NEHU, Shillong

** *Lecturer*, Ganesh Dass DAV College of Education for Women, Karnal, Haryana

are granted complete autonomy in structuring academic programmes, evaluation, administration and financial management. Autonomy can be made effective when it is linked with accountability on the part of functionaries in an educational institution. The management practice with highly competent persons is equally demanding in an institution of higher learning.

Innovations and creativity are the hallmarks of a progressive and dynamic educational institution. Management of the functioning of an educational institution that is utilisation of resources- men, material, machine, money, time and space, innovative practices and intuitive future plan lead to the enhancement of quality. In addition to these components, the application of technologies (information and communication) further enhances the quality of instruction, research, training and extension.

What is Quality?

Quality is a complex term. It is expressed in terms of fitness for purpose, excellence, perfection, standards, value for money, consistency, transformation and relevance. It is defined in various ways.

Quality makes the knowledge relevant to social and individual needs. Quality also enables the person, societies and nations to acquire the competencies required for living meaningfully in a competitive global world. Nyantara Padhi (2006) in his article *"Total Quality Management in Higher education: A Conceptual Review"* combined the different views of

Mukhopdhyay and others about Quality. Mukhopdhyay (2005) remarked that depending on the goals, the term Quality in Education has been defined as excellence in education, Waterman (1992) sees it, 'as value addition in education' and Gilmore (1974) thinks it on the bases of conformance of education output to planned goals, specifications and requirements.

Further Jaspal Singh and Maninder Singh Sarkaria (2007) in his article *"Quality Higher Education in India : Some Issues and Suggestions"* quote the definition of Aggarwal, et al. (2002) and wrote: The term quality in education is based on the following parameters :

- Reliability: the ability to perform the promised service (Imparting Knowledge);
- Responsiveness: Willing-ness to help students and provide prompt guidance;
- Tangibles: Physical facilities, laboratory equipment and their use;
- Assurance ; Knowledge and courtesy of faculty and their ability to convey trust and confidence and
- Empathy; caring, individualised attention to students.

Concept of Quality Culture

Quality culture is a concept, which is related to the environment of performing a particular task with a view to achieve well-defined goal. In this process, at all stages some fix standards are attained or achieved. Quality is always assessed in the context.

Quality differs from material product to the services or both. Teacher education

is more a service than the product but both are important in this case.

Dahlgard et. al (1995) has defined Quality as. "... An educational culture characterised by increased customer satisfaction through continuous improvement in which all employees and students actively participate." Therefore, quality culture is an inclusive concept, which includes both the product and the service. In case of teacher education, it deals with the preparation, development and training of teachers.

Quality Culture according to naac

Every teacher education institution adopts or follows its own practices and achieves quality in the background of its infrastructure, resources and facilities. All colleges of different categories like Government aided and self-financing follow their own practices and thus adopt their own quality culture. To maintain common pattern of quality, NAAC has evolved a set criteria. Earlier there were six criterions but now, they are under revision in order to further enhance quality culture in XI five-year plan.

Healthy Practices for the Development of Quality Culture

Best healthy practices are the images of quality culture. Aristotle said, that it is impossible to think without images. The best practices followed by different institutions not only provide images to the institutions, but also stimulate the replication of the process by other institutions. The National Assessment Accreditation Council (NAAC) has identified healthy practices as one of the parameters to assess the quality of

higher education institution.

The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) strongly advocated the encouragement and consideration of good practices as one of the parameters of quality education. It has suggested the following guidelines for the identification and application of good practices:

- Dynamic and be revisited periodically;
- Diversity in cultural and historical contexts.
- Not leading to dominance one specific view or approach and
- Promoting quality of performance.

Every institution adopts certain healthy practices as per its own resources and work culture. To make these healthy practices more effective, the following five-stage strategy given by NAAC can be adopted:

Five-stage Strategy

- Identification of best practices
- Implementation of best practices
- Institutionalisation of best practices.
- Internalisation of best practices
- Dissemination of best practices

The approach can be described as "Four I and D Model". Let us briefly elaborate the key elements of the approach.

Identification of Best Practices

The identification of best practices depends on many variables such as:

- Institutional Goals
- Pedagogical Requirements

- Global Concerns
- Local Contexts
- Nature of Learners
- Competencies of Staff
- Infrastructure etc.

The input factors, the process factors and output factors should be taken into account in identifying the criteria of best practices. There is a strong feeling that higher education graduates skills no longer match the needs and the expectations of employment sectors. In one of the surveys in Britain, employers identified the following skills:-

- Time Management
- Ability to work under pressure.
- Accuracy and attention to detail
- Communication skills
- Managing different tasks and obligations at the same time.

Is the education system providing necessary training to students to acquire these skills? The answer in most of the cases is no. To fulfill the requirement of world of work and quality culture the prospective teachers are expected to possess the following competencies in different areas of experiences:

Cognitive Competencies

- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Formulating Questions
- Searching for relevant information
- Making informed judgments
- Making efficient use of information conducting observations and investigations

- Innovative and creative things
- Communicating effectively

Meta Cognitive Competencies

- Self-reflection or self-evaluation

Social Competencies

- Leading discussions and conversations
- Persuading, Co-operating and working in groups

Affective Dispositions

- Perseverance
- Internal motivation
- Initiative
- Responsibility
- Self- efficacy
- Independence
- Flexibility

Implementation of Best Practices

The implementation strategies include planning, resource mobilisation, competencies building; monitoring and evaluation. The implementation approach focuses more on performance than promises. Total quality management is an approach of implementation, which focuses on quality of all aspects of operations with the participation of everyone in the organisation.

Institutionalisation of Best Practices

Institutionalisation is the process of making the best practices as an Integral part of institutional working. Mostly it is observed that the best practices are leader-centric. It is true that the transformative leaders (leaders who

have the ability to translate intensions into reality), play a critical role in the development of any institution. The institutionalisation of the best practices can develop quality culture to its core among all the activities of the institution. Institutionalisation is an effort to make it more institution-centric than the leader or individual-centric and also to make best practices as a moral practice.

Internalisation of Best practices

Institutionalisation of best practices is possible when there is an internalisation of these practices among all the categories of staff from the top to the bottom. All members are the measure of everything of all practices. The best practices should become a part of the working culture of everyone in the institution.

To internalise any best practice we look at its quality as strategy or as a value. Internalisation is an attitude formation conducive to sustain quality in higher education.

Dissemination of Best Practices

The institutions not only have the social responsibility of application of best practices, but also an equal social responsibility of dissemination of these practices for wider application in the system. Lack of information about the

feasibility and adoptability of best practices, many institutions can't follow them. We must learn and benefit from other institutions. Some times, there are communication gaps within an institution which affect the expected outcomes of the practices. Therefore, willingness to share ideas and concepts and openness to discuss common areas of interest and concern should be inculcated among at the educational institutions. The NAAC is advocating every institution to establish Internal Quality Assurance Cell, with one of the functions of recording and dissemination of best practice followed by the institution.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the quality culture is the outcome of a continuous and collective effort of all concerned in designing, implementing and evaluating teacher education programmes in view of emerging needs and challenges in global perspective. Further quality culture needs to be enhanced while adopting the innovative healthy practices adopted by other teacher education institutions in the country and else where. In order to evolve and maintain a quality culture, the values like selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability openness honesty and leadership should be internalised among the teaching communities.

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