Quality Assurance In Higher Education By Academic And Administrative Audit: A Systems Approach
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ABSTRACT
Every country is becoming a global hub for providing quality education with globally acceptable standard curriculum, generating more human resource with intellectual inputs, converting intellectual activity into intellectual capital and hence intellectual property. Promotion of quality would be through greater focus on performance, curricular reforms, better human resource management, schemes to promote high quality research, and technology-assisted monitoring mechanism. Educational institutions are expected to go through stringent quality assessment procedure by establishing Internal Quality Assurance Cell and conducting external quality assurance check by Academic and Administrative Audit Committee (AAAC) and also series of accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) based on a set of predetermined academic and administrative criteria. Educational institutions should collect necessary primary data and information from all academic, administrative and infrastructural facilities and arrange to be assessed by an out-sourcing agent to ensure quality education objectively. The AAAC with external members should address the feedback of the stakeholders - students, teachers, administrators, alumnae, parents, would-be employers, funding agencies, societies, etc., on the action taken report of the seven assessment criteria of NAAC. The AAAC should carry out SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis on academic and administrative activities of the institution to find out the progression towards achieving academic and administrative excellence in providing quality education and becoming a world-class institution.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Academic and Administrative Audit Committee, Objectives, Methodology, Assessment Criteria

AN OVERVIEW:
Higher education should enable the stakeholders - students, teachers, administrators, alumnae, parents, would-be employers, funding agencies, societies, etc., to rise their capacity to the maximum extent of realizing their potential in particular and to integrate the development of the institution, nation and higher education in general by evolving systematic and scientific programmes and projects, synergy and co-ordination between the students and teachers, teaching and non-teaching functionaries, intra and internet system, institutions and funding agencies, monitoring and evaluation system, feedback and refined system, etc. As the younger generation are the torch-bearers of the new century, their aspiration in the frontier knowledge and information and communication technology (ICT) have to be fulfilled by the emerging institutions of higher learning. The core values of higher education should envisage national development, foster global competitiveness, balance ethical values, promote use of technology, and create an atmosphere and quest for excellence. Higher education should ensure to safeguard educational standards of all stakeholders acquired with comprehensive knowledge and skills and to promote continuous enhancement of the quality of teaching, learning, research, consultancy, extension and support services. Globally the internet and technological advances are being changed the educational scenario, manpower demands and market requirements. Global efforts are being much concerned for the systematic conversion of intellectual activity into intellectual capital and hence intellectual property. Gradually curriculum and academic programmes are getting
transferred into commodity of courseware. Every country is becoming a global hub for providing quality education with globally acceptable standard curriculum, focusing on increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio and generating more human resource with intellectual inputs. Private sector growth in higher education (including technical) should be facilitiated and innovative Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) should be explored and developed. The ‘not-for-profit’ tag in higher education sector should, perhaps, be re-examined in a more pragmatic manner so as to ensure quality without losing focus on expansion and equity. Educational institutions are expected to go through stringent quality assessment procedure by establishing Internal Quality Assurance Cell and conducting external quality assurance check by Academic and Administrative Audit Committee (AAAC) and also series of accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of the respective countries based on a set of pre-determined academic and administrative criteria. The monitoring and evaluation of the institution requires carefully structured system of internal and external introspection.

QUALITY ASSURANCE:

Quality assurance in higher education can be defined and adjudged with various terminologies such as academic standards, administrative quality, quality assurance, quality enhancement, quality enforcement, etc, which are interdependent, interrelated and being interacted with one another. Quality assurance is viewed differently in different countries with own philosophy and practice, and assessment and accreditation. Quality is not a static phenomenon, it is dynamic, and excellence target keeps on moving. The five major dimensions of quality in higher education are Performance- the knowledge / skills required and ability of a graduate; Features – course being offered for acquiring the required knowledge / skills; Reliability – the extent to which the knowledge / skills learned is correct, accurate and up-to-date; Conformance – the degree to which an institutional programme / course meets established standard, plan and programme to the client; and Serviceability - how best the institution handles customers complaints and solve the problems. The conceptual frame work of the quality in higher education has been analysed by Owlia and Aspinwell under six criteria such as Tangibles-Infrastructure and learning resources; Competence- Experience in teaching, learning, research, consultancy and extension activities; Attitude- establish good rapport with students and other stakeholders to help and advise ; Content- curricular aspects; Delivery -students support, evaluation, feed back etc; and Reliability : promise to handle complaints and solve problems.

Quality of higher education lies in the effectiveness of transmitting knowledge and skills; authenticity, context, coverage and depth of information; availability of teaching, learning and research materials; help in removing obstacles to learning, applicability and fruitfulness of knowledge in solving the personal and social problems; convergence of wide variety of knowledge across the regions and nations, cost effectiveness and administrative efficiency. Promotion of quality would be through greater focus on performance, curricular reforms, better human resource management, schemes to promote high quality research, and technology-assisted monitoring mechanism. National science experimentation facilities, particularly in the cutting edge areas will be set up as Inter-University Centres and University-housed Networking Centres to provide international quality resource support to all the researchers and PG students. The capacity building and capability enhancement, keeping in tune with modern-day requirement of the faculty resources through the Faculty Talent Promotion scheme by upgrading the Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs) as Faculty Development Centres (FDCs) with redefined roles and responsibilities, would be another priority. With the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and internalization of quality in all spheres of activity, it is important for the leadership and governance systems of the institution to plan and move towards excellence.

Quality in higher education should ensure students to achieve their goals, satisfy the needs of the society and national development. Leading thinkers like Deming, Juran and Crosby give us guidelines to assure quality with implications for higher education. Three ways of assuring quality – self evaluation, best practice benchmarking and external quality monitoring are the best process for continuous improvement, for which tools of quality assurance – flow-charts, graphs, fish-bone diagrams, Pareto analysis, etc are useful. Five generic models of quality assurance used in education, business and software development are Baldrige model, ISO 9000:2000, Capability Maturity Model, Six Sigma, and Total Quality Management. Some of the practices of quality assurance in major developed countries are briefed below:
United States of America: In April 1997, the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was created to carry out the recognition function of the US Dept. of Education (USDE). The USDE recognition is required for accreditors whose institutions or programmes seek federal grants and student aid funds. The CHEA recognition confers an academic legitimacy on accrediting organizations.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education: The primary purpose of NCATE is to ensure high quality teacher educator preparation programmes through accreditation of education units in US colleges and Universities.

United Kingdom: The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education has performed important role in assuring academic quality and standards in higher education, which has been instrumental in defining standards for teaching and enabling poor provision to be identified and eliminated.

Australia: In March 2000, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) was established as an independent, not-for-profit national agency to promote, audit and report on quality assurance in Higher Education.

New Zealand: International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), in April 2005, the general assembly in Wellington, New Zealand agreed on the “INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice” which is the result of discussion and consultation involving representatives from over 65 countries.

Hong Kong: Asia – Pacific Quality Network(APQN) is established in Hong Kong in January 2003 to enhance the quality of Higher Education in Asia and Pacific region through strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the cooperation between them.

European Union: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EAQAHE) encourages co-operation in quality assurance of higher educational institutions in the European Union to develop comparable criteria and methodologies. It envisages a common system of credit transfer and mobility of students and teachers across European countries.

Washington Accord: It is an agreement among the engineering quality assurance organizations of several countries including Australia, Canada, Ireland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Africa, Malasia, Japan, Germany, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

India: The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has identified seven criteria to serve as the basis for the assessment of higher education institutions, which is a voluntary process for all educational institutions. However, some State Governments have made it mandatory for their colleges. It follows a four-phase process of assessment such as nationally evolved criteria for assessment, Self study by the institution, Peer team visit and Final decision by Executive Committee of NAAC.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CELL:

Higher educational institutions are motivated to establish their own internal mechanism for sustenance, assurance and enhancement of the quality education within the institution. The efficiency and effectiveness of the overall quality of the institution would be determined by internal quality assurance systems and processes. Many higher educational institutions have established the IQAC as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity with the objectives of developing a quality system for conscious, consistent and catalytic programmed action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution and promoting the function towards quality enhancement through internalization of quality culture and institutionalization of best practices. The IQAC should develop and apply quality bench mark/parameters for the various academic and administrative activities, facilitate creation of learner-centric environment conducive for quality education and faculty interaction through participative teaching and learning process, arrange for feedback responses from students, parents and other stakeholders and quality related institutional process, disseminate information on the various quality parameters of higher education; organize inter and intra institutional workshops, seminars and conferences on quality related themes and circles; document the various activities and programmes leading to quality improvement; act as nodal agency to coordinate quality related activities and good practices; develop institutional database through Management Information System for
enhancing the quality, develop national as well as international quality culture; prepare Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) of the institutions based on the quality parameters or benchmark or assessment criteria developed by the quality accreditation agencies; bi-annual development of Quality Radars (QRs) and ranking of integral units of the institution based on the AQAR and interact with State Quality Assurance Council in the pre and post accreditation quality assessment, sustenance and enhancement endeavors. The IQAC should channelise and systematize the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence by working out strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality. The internal audit system and the Internal Quality Assurance Cell with the composition of honest academics and administrators would be in better position to monitor and control the system of higher education in an efficient and effective manner and there by ensuring the quality of the institution.

With the establishment of IQAC and internalization of quality in all spheres of activity, it is important for the leadership and governance systems of the institution to plan and move towards excellence as follows:

- **Plan** - Establishment of IQAC, Commitment of leadership to quality assurance, Quality as an internal culture, Quality systems are in place, Annual strategic plans for improvement of quality towards excellence, etc.
- **Do** - Deployment of qualified and appropriate workforce as per need, Assuring systematic implementation of planned processes, Use of appropriate technology, etc.
- **Check / Study** - Review of outputs, Measure against strategic plan, Report and disseminate the lessons learnt organization-wide.
- **Act** - Taking appropriate steps in the light of the results, Plan for the next cycle.

**Academic and Administrative Audit Committee (AAAC):**

One of the primary aims and objectives of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to ensure quality of the academic and administrative performance of the institution, for which, the IQAC has to chalk out various development plans to monitor its progress and evaluate the systems through Academic and Administrative Audit in two ways namely developing structured formats to collect the data from the academic, administrative and infrastructural units and analysis with outsourcing agent to get objective reports and constituting Academic and Administrative Audit Committee (AAAC) with external experts to assess the strength and weakness of the institution based on the assessment criteria as emphasized by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of the countries. This is with a view to assess the improvement processes taking place and what more needs to be done. But many institutions are not prepared to undertake this step mainly due to their reluctance to expose their weaknesses. The AAAC with external members would carry out **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)** analysis to find out the progression towards achieving academic excellence in providing quality education and becoming a world-class institution.

- **Strengths**: attributes helpful to achieve excellence in providing quality education.
- **Weaknesses**: attributes harmful to achieve excellence in providing quality education.
- **Opportunities**: conditions helpful to achieve objectives in providing quality education.
- **Threats**: conditions harmful to achieve objectives in providing quality education.

Identification of SWOT is essential for the subsequent process of planning and achievement of the selected objectives and particularly helpful in identifying areas for development and possibilities for further improvement. Thus the ultimate objectives of AAAC are to evaluate the performance and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and consultancy service and extension activities of the institution. Self-assessment through AAAC with the application of PDSA (Plan, Do, Study and Act) cycle system based on core values and seven criteria of NAAC are fit for ensuring continuous improvement in higher education.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- The major objectives of AAAC are
  - to understand the existing system and assess the strengths and weakness of the Academic, Administrative and infrastructural units and to suggest the methods for improvement and for overcoming the weakness while teaching, learning, research, evaluation, student support and progression;
to ascertain whether the Academic, Administrative and infrastructural Units are functioning efficiently and effectively with proven records of capacity building, research projects, publications and extension over a period of time;

- to identify the bottlenecks in the existing administrative mechanisms and opportunities for academic, administrative and examination reforms to achieve excellence and to face the challenges of internationalization in Higher Education;

- to evaluate the optimum utilization of financial and other resources, issues concerning with leadership and organization, functional autonomy and financial management; and

- to suggest the methods of improvement for maintaining quality in higher education.

**METHODOLOGY:**

Educational institution, with the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and through a well structured format, should collect the necessary primary data and information from all the Academic, Administrative and infrastructural units on programmes offered, performance of teaching, learning, research and extension activities of teachers, students enrolment, faculty strength, infrastructure, evaluation, internal assessment, results of students, placement, student support services, progression of students, etc, to be assessed by out-sourcing agent to ensure quality education objectively.

**Teachers’ Self-Appraisal** - Format to collect information from each teacher regarding their qualification, experience, research publications, research projects, funds mobilized, conferences attended and papers presented, foreign academic visits, fellowships obtained, countries visited, organization of conferences, membership of academic bodies and societies, etc, through which evaluate the performance of teaching, learning, research and extension activities of teachers.

**Peer Assessment of Faculty by Faculty** - Format to collect teachers’ feedback about his colleagues to maintain congenial academic and administrative atmosphere in the institutions.

**Students Critical Evaluation of Teachers** - Format to collect students’ feedback about the teaching and research commitment of the faculty, role of administrators, delays and denials of justice, amenities with modern tools and techniques, teacher’s regularity, up-to-date information on the subject, curriculum, style and efficiency of teaching, clarity in imparting information, availability of the teacher, general ability, motivating students for progression, etc are normally included.

**Questionnaire on Administration** - Questionnaire to obtain the role of Registrar, Controller of Exams, Finance Officer and the other supporting units such as SC/ST Cell, University Library, Student Welfare Office, University Health Centre, Horticulture Department, Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Estate Office, etc.

**Students Feedback on Campus Facilities** - Questionnaire to obtain the students feedback on campus facilities such as cleanliness and ambiance in campus, security in the campus, library facility, research facility, general student amenities, canteen facility, sports facility, transport facility, medical facility, overall impression, etc.

**Parents Feedback on Campus Facilities** - Questionnaire to obtain the parents feedback on campus facilities such as satisfaction with the University, satisfaction with the discipline, facilities provided in the University, general reputation, campus atmosphere, recommendation of another student, placement record, location of University, overall rating, etc.

The filed-in formats collected from the stakeholders of the institution should be analyzed by out-sourcing agents to get objective reports. The external members of AAAC with the help of the IQAC should initiate the process of visiting, analyzing and evaluating the performance of the academic departments, administrative sections, units and other facilities of the university on the basis of the assessment criteria as emphasized by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of the countries. This exercise should be carried out in all departments and sections to offer valuable suggestions and to improve their performances both individually and
collectively. Sufficient time should also be provided for the academics and administrators to prepare themselves for this exercise.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

In India, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has identified seven criteria through national consultations and consensus to serve as the basis for its assessment procedure and the details of which are narrated below:

I: Curricular Aspects:

Curriculum Design and Development- Designed with institutional goals & objectives, relevant to regional, national and international needs, meets overall development of students, employability, global competencies, value-based education, industry interface, etc.

Academic Flexibility- Designed to obtain different degrees, diplomas and certificates, offering elective options, meeting the needs of the students and the society, Choice Based Credit system, Semester system, etc.

Curriculum & Update- Feedback from students, alumni, parents, employees on frequency of revision of curriculum, emerging thrust & interdisciplinary areas, etc.

II: Teaching, Learning and Evaluation:

Admission Process and Student Profile- Wide publicity and transparency in the admission process is systematically administered based on predetermined criteria, caters to access and equity considering the applicable norms including applicable reservation policies, ensures due representation from different strata gender to locale, etc.

Catering to Diverse Needs- Access to students learning level after admission, conduct appropriate remedial course, adopt appropriate strategies for advanced learners, conduct tutorial classes, evolve mechanism for mentoring students, cater to the needs of differently-able students, etc.

Teaching – Learning Process- Planning and organizing teaching programmes schedule and methodologies in advance, use experiential learning methodologies for participative learning, use educational technology effectively (audio-visual aids), adoption of problem-solving approach as a teaching methodology, adoption of computer-aided information retrieval and teaching methodology, use library resources effectively to augment teaching, learning and research; use laboratory equipment and field experiences effectively to maximize the teaching-learning process, use wide range of techniques, materials and experiences to encourage student interests.

Teacher Quality-Percentage of teacher with Ph.D. qualification, percentage of teaching positions filled against sanctioned posts, adherence to Central, State, UGC, University and other funding agencies’ norms with reference to teachers’ qualification for recruitment, systematic and rigorous faculty recruitment process, faculty development programs initiated and utilized, incentives, awards and recognitions received by faculty, faculty creativity and innovation in teaching and research methodology, etc.

Evaluation Process and Reforms- Provision for continuous evaluation and monitoring student’s progress, conducts mid-term semester evaluations, declares results within two months of the examinations, reforms in examination procedures and process, transparent and realizable examination process, ensure security of the evaluation system, are address students’ grievances regarding evaluation and results, etc.

III. Research, Consultancy and Extension:

Promotion of Research-Institution facilitates faculty to undertake research by providing research funds (seed money), provision for research facilities in terms of laboratory equipment, research journals and research incentives,
encourage and promote research culture (e.g. teaching work load including research, opportunities for attending conferences, etc.), initiate research by collaborating with other research organizations and laboratories for promoting and directing research, establishment of specific research units / centers, etc.

**Research and Publication Output** - Involvement of faculty in research, recognition of research centres (national & international, e.g. UGC, SAP, DST, DBT, UNESCO, UNICEF), number of major and minor research projects, research recognition and awards (including patents), research contribution to the industry’s requirements / productivity, research facilities enhanced through research projects, number of research articles published in reputed / refereed journals, books and proceedings based on research work, citation Index and Impact factor.

**Extension Activities** - Promotion of extension activities, organize need-based extension programme, participation of students and faculty in extension programmes, organize NSS / NCC activities, awards and recognitions received for extension activities, impact of extension activities on the community: evaluation, review and upgrading the extension programmes, establish partnerships with industry community and NGOs for extension activities.

**Collaborations** - Teaching, learning and research collaboration at institutional, local, state, national, international, industry, service sector, agriculture level, etc.

**IV. Infrastructure and Learning Resources:**

**Maintenance of Infrastructure** - Maintenance budget for physical facilities through Plan, Non-plan and other existing and mobilized resources, utilization of funds allocated for maintenance in time, adequate systems for maintaining and utilizing physical facilities, library and information facilities, computer and network facilities, etc.

**Physical Facilities for Learning** - Facilities for classrooms (furniture and fixtures), laboratories (furniture, fixtures, equipment and good laboratory practices), sports facilities for students and faculty, general computer education of students, infrastructural facilities augmented from time to time being utilized optimally, facilities for extra-curricular activities (gym, swimming pool, auditorium, etc.), adequate facilities for women, appropriate facilities for differently-able students, etc.

**Library as Learning Resources** - Number of books, journals (national and international) and other library resources (i.e. CDs / Cassettes, etc.) in the library, resources augmented every year with newer editions, effective and user-friendly library operations (issue of books, getting the necessary references, etc.), reading room facility for faculty and students, reprographic facilities, internet facility for information retrieval, library advisory committee and its effective functioning, Inflibnet / Telnet facilities, computerization of library and networking with other libraries.

**ICT as Learning Resources** - Adequate and up to date computer facilities, access to computers for the faculty and students, provides internet facility for faculty and students, institution website facility, updating of ICT regularly, etc.

**Other Facilities** - Common rooms for students, rest rooms and toilets, health center, vehicles parking, hostels, guest houses, canteens, communication facilities (Telephone, STD, ISD, etc), electricity and lighting, transport, landscape (approach roads / gardens and general ambience), etc.

**V. Students Support and Progression:**

**Student support** - Ensures institutional information access and dissemination, adequate student welfare measures (scholarships, free ships, insurance etc.), adequate counseling services, adequate placement services, provide health services optimally, make the campus safe for students with adequate security and lighting, etc.

**Student Progression** - Makes efforts to reduce the drop-out rate percentage, monitors student progression to higher studies: from UG to PG, from PG to research, from studies to job, monitors institutional academic performance in relation to the university average, etc.
Student activities-Organize students’ cultural and recreational activities, organize indoor and outdoor sports and games activities for students, encourage and provide facilities for students’ participation in institutional, state, national, international level sports events and activities.

VI. Governance and Leadership:

Institutional Vision and Leadership-Vision, mission and goals of the institution in tune with the objectives of higher education, demonstration of effective leadership in institutional governance, management by facts and figures with transparency in relation to objectives, reforms of structural and resources in education, valuing teaching and non teaching functionaries, etc.

Organizational Arrangements-Organizational structure as per Acts, Statutes, Ordinances, Rules and Regulations, formal and informal constitution of committees and sub-committees, decentralization and participative management, coordination of all statutory bodies and advisory committees like Board of Studies, Academic Council, Syndicate/Executive Council, Senate/Court, Board of Management; monitoring the campus of the institutions and affiliated colleges through College Development Council effectively and efficiently, functioning of Grievance cell, Sexual Harassment Cell, etc.

Strategy Development and Deployment-Long and short term perspective plan document, strategic action plan and schedules for future development, deployment of man and material powers, institutional approach to decision-making, etc.

Human Resource Management-Institutional initiatives in planning teaching and non teaching manpower, filling up vacancies, complying with the state and central government policies on recruitment procedures with regard to access, equity, gender sensitivity and differently-able, evaluating self appraisal of teaching and non teaching functionaries, conducting performance appraisal regularly, redressing specific complaints and legal enquiry about the institutional function, continuously making efforts to improve the overall organizational effectiveness, capabilities, development, action and review; conducting programme for professional development of teaching and non-teaching functionaries, etc.

Finance Management and Resource Mobilization-Plan, Non-plan and Specific grant budgetary provision for maintaining academic and administrative activities, optimal utilization of resources, monitoring financial management practices through internal audit, and external audit regularly, institutional initiatives for mobilization of resources, etc.

VII. Innovative Practices:

Internal Quality Assurance Cell-Systems structure and functions, students’ participation in quality enhancement and quality assurance, institutional initiatives in institutionalizing and internationalizing of best practices and innovations, continuously add value to students through enhancement of quality in education, etc.

Inclusive Practices-Practices to facilitate inclusion of academic and administrative performance for socially deprived groups, special initiatives to promote empowerment of students and women from rural and tribal areas, institutional sensitivity towards gender and differently-able wards, incremental academic growth of the students admitted from deprived sections, etc.

Stakeholder Relationship-Societal perception of stakeholders such as students, teachers, administrators, alumnae, parents, would-be employers, funding agencies, societies, etc., focus on social responsibilities, evidence for students’ satisfaction, etc.

The AAAC should address the feedback of the stakeholders - students, teachers, administrators, alumnae, parents, would-be employers, funding agencies, societies, etc., on the action taken report of the seven assessment criteria of NAAC. The evaluative report of the AAAC on the performance of the academic departments,
administrative sections, units and other facilities of the university will again be informed to the concerned with a view to improve their performance both individually and collectively.

CONCLUSION

Higher education is an increasingly global enterprise; hence educational institutions should embrace internationalization that could provide stakeholders with new opportunities. Institutions’ rationale for internationalization would be to enhance its soft power, improve standards of domestic provision and produce graduates with international competencies and skills. This can best be achieved by having more and more innovative partnership and global hub for higher education. We need to provide greater autonomy to our Centres of excellence to enter into collaborative partnership with the best universities abroad. For both ‘General’ and ‘Professional’ education streams, integrated curriculum with greater flexibility in choice of subjects and innovative pedagogic practices are needed to improve the quality and hence employability. Graduates now require skills beyond the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic (the ‘3Rs’). Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity (the ‘4Cs’) are now important in more and more jobs. Collaborative research, setting up industry incubation parks in Universities and institutions providing more research fellowships, promoting innovation through interdisciplinary research in new and emerging fields, strengthening Inter-University centres etc., need to be emphasized. Accreditation should be at the core of regulatory arrangements and should have clear incentives and consequences. This would require multiple strong and independent accreditation bodies. Institutional leadership and governance system needs to be developed and revamped by balancing institutional autonomy with transparency and accountability. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) should be harnessed to enrich teaching, learning and research experience, extend and diversify delivery, improve research quality and collaboration by making knowledge and information widely available, and ensure effective governance both at the institutional and systemic level. Student service needs to be significantly improved and admissions should be streamlined. The institution, with the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and through a well structured format, should collect the necessary primary data and information from all academic, administrative and infrastructural units on programmes offered, performance of teaching, learning, research and extension activities of teachers, students enrolment, faculty strength, infrastructure, evaluation, internal assessment, results of students, placement, student support services, progression of students, etc. to be assessed by out-sourcing agent to ensure quality education objectively. The AAAC with external members should address the feedback of the stakeholders - students, teachers, administrators, alumnae, parents, would-be employers, funding agencies, societies, etc., on the action taken report of the seven assessment criteria of NAAC. The AAAC should carry out SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis on academic and administrative activities of the institution to find out the progression towards achieving academic excellence in providing quality education and becoming a world-class institution.

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