Quality assurance in higher education

Higher Education Institutions are frequently the focus of attention since they represent valuable resources for any country. They produce the educated men and women that often become the social, political, technological, economic, and religious leaders of the country. Because of the changes that have occurred in the restructuring of the education system as well s the wide-reaching transformation in education policy and practice in India, the above-mentioned concepts are frequently heard in discussions among educationists. Quality Assurance has become imperative for those who are concerned about the future of education in India.

Without knowing what quality means, however, it is not possible to give serious consideration to Quality Assurance. Hence a short overview of a few notations of quality is offered. What is Quality? The abstract notion of quality cannot be framed by means of a single definition or description. It is not neutral or self-evident. Quality is highly contested since people in different contexts have different understandings of what quality is a multi-faceted concept, comprising many aspects that are applicable at different levels.

The meaning of the term ' quality' is best conveyed by the Greek word Peoteta which was used by Plato and Aristotle to single out certain characteristics that were considered to be distinctive of a thing-distinguishing it from other types. The term is also related to specific attributes of people-usually ' good qualities'. Within this frame work, quality becomes a multi-value concept depending on the situation and also a multi-level concept involving different frames of reference in which it can be analyzed.

Quality is a matter of negotiating among all parties concerned since quality will be specified by the outcomes of such negations about the expected requirements quality is not the same as ' efficiency' or being ' excellent'. We can talk about good, better and excellent, but we should not talk about good quality, better quality and excellent quality. Quality is Never an accident It is always the result of:

• Intelligent direction;

• High intention;

• The wise choice between many alternatives;

• Sincere effort;

• Skilful execution " Quality" in the context of higher education is bound up with our values and fundamental aims in higher education.

We cannot adopt a definite approach to quality in this sphere of human interaction without taking normative position, connected with what we take higher education ultimately to be. In turn, what we take higher education to be will have implications for how we conceive of quality, how we attain it, how we evaluate our success in achieving it, and how we approve it. The ISO 9000 concept of quality, where quality is evaluated in terms of customer satisfaction. This concept has been used by institutions, partly because it does provide a good benchmark for institution industry which especially employs professionally trained graduates.

The general feeling is that ISO 9000 is more applicable to institutions offering service-oriented training, as opposed to subject-oriented teaching. Quality should be shaped by the following four considerations:

• The concept of quality is always influenced by political and economic developments;

• The notion of quality used in audits should be adaptable to suit the circumstances of each and every institution;

• The notion of quality used in audits would typically consists of a combination if various degrees of emphasis of the deferent concepts of quality;

• This openness and flexibility in the definition of quality does not, however, imply that there is uncertainty or a lack of clarity in the approach.

What is Quality Assurance? Quality has always been a tacit assumption within the delivery of education, but demonstrating its existence is complex. A college's definition of quality will in part determine the strategies it will employ to assure or improve it. Quality Assurance as an organizational plan of action formed by those involved in the delivery of service to the recipients of the service.

It is a plan of action that aims at organizational excellence in order that a service may be delivered. It focuses, with check-list rigidity, on the pre-determined components of the delivery system. A comprehensive Quality Assurance program includes assessment and assurance which involve problem. A comprehensive Quality Assurance program includes assessment

and assurance which involved problem identification, as well as initiation and monitoring of remedial actions. Quality Assurance can be seen as the hub of the wheel around which all quality – related activities revolve'.

Quality Assurance is a process by which the structure and systems within a school are organized to ensure that certain standards of quality are achieved and maintained. It may involve aspects such as staff development and ways of checking to see wither the school operates in accordance with its mission. One of the ways of maintaining quality is to have outside assessors visited the school to see how well it is keeping to its aims. In summary, all Quality Assurance programs:

• Emphasize effectiveness and efficiency;

• Seek excellence;

• Assure that criteria are met;

• Assure that costs are contained;

• Eliminate unnecessary services;

• Demonstrate efficient use of resources In the educational context, Quality Assurance processes have typically focused on the following essential elements;

• Monitoring and evaluating learner achievement;

• Quality audits and reviews;

• Program, and service reviews;

• Accreditation (of providers, learners and educations as assessors).

Why Quality Assurance is needed? The current debate about quality in higher education globally takes place in a general social, political and economic context. Many parents are jobless-now they are making sure about their children's futures.

Public demand More students are enrolling in Higher Education, causing pressure on national budgets. Expenditure per student is much lower. Governments must assure societies that this does not endanger quality. This problem has been aggravated by economic recessions. On behalf of society, governments have sought a better insight into cost and quality of Higher Education. Demand for relevant programs Society has globally become more interested in Higher Education. The relationship between Higher Education and the labor market became, and is still, a topic for discussion.

Since the unemployment figures are high, it is expected from Higher Education is to steer the students flow in the wanted direction for available jobs. Demand for maintaining academic quality Since 1950, what has been referred to as a quality gap; has crept into Higher Education. On the one hand, governments are spicing to increase the numbers of students enrolled in Higher Education Institutions. On the other hand we see a continuous decrease in investments while, quite ironically, there is an increased demand form governments for accountability in Higher Education Institutions regarding the quality of their work.

Higher Education Institutions are experiencing pressing circumstances and have to improvise in many fields owing to the relative scarcity of resources.

The question is whether Higher Education Institutions will still deliver the same quality within the given boundary conditions. Transformation, Globalization and internationalization Regarding transformation, ' worldwide, higher education is undergoing major changes in its organization. In this context, the concept of quality assurance control has emerged as primary instruments of revaluating accountability in higher education systems'.

Globalization refers to the increasing intensification of work wide social and economic relations, which link distant places and communities in a network of interdependence and interactions to such an extent that local happenings are shaped by remote events, and world affairs are conversely affected by things that occur in local, regional or national contexts. Students and other professional require quality. There has always been an exchange of students between countries and therefore answers are needed to questions such as, will the course be recognized internationally? Or is it good enough?

The European union with and open labor market inquires about the quality of the curricula and the standards of graduates. Throughout the globe, national and regions are preparing themselves for the global marketplace, including the increased mobility of professionals across national borders. Autonomy requires Quality Assurance Owing to underlying societal and political trends, governments have since 1980 abandoned the idea of strongly steering the development of Higher Education. With mass access to Higher Education, the system became so complex that central control became inefficient.

The rapid change of scientific and technological knowledge also inaccessibility a more flexible system, so that many decisions could be made

at institutional level. Therefore in many European countries governments are promising more autonomy to Higher Education Institutions is in exchange for Quality Assurance. National governments retain the prerogative to set broad policies, particularly budgetary ones, while increasingly transferring the responsibility for growth, innovation and diversification to individual institutions'.

The demand to redress the imbalances of the past Because the inequalities and imbalances the Higher Education system needs Quality Assurance. A deliberate program of redress is needed to ' level the playing field' in the Higher Education sector. General improvement of services within higher education institutions If recommendations, resulting from continuous research at local, national and international level, were to be implemented, it would promote the desire for improvement, in order to stay competitive.

Quality Assurance mechanisms are necessary to promote and monitor such improvements. Quality of programs and methodology to accommodate a diverse student population The global trend of magnification in Higher Education Institutions included the addition of members of society who did to traditionally participate in Higher Education. Adaptation in the provision of Higher Education, harder work as well as creative changes in methodology was needed to maintain and improve the levels of quality.

The socioeconomic backgrounds of students have become more diverse in the India. Many students form disadvantaged backgrounds have special needs because of limited English proficiency and poor learning skills. Teachers should be taught how to adapt instruction appropriately, including

using multilingual and multicultural approaches, simplifying English and using sheltered-language techniques, employing individualized instruction and instructional materials, and increasing the use of audiovisual and hands-on approaches. Keeping pace with technological advancement

During the twentieth century we progressed from an agricultural nation to an industrial nation. That took decades to happen. Recently, at mind-numbing speed, we became part of the Information Age. Higher Education is an information-intensive industry. Both hardware and software are used to handle information. Progressive technological advancement is constantly needed to maintain a competitive advantage. Quality Assurance needs to contribute toward the country's technological development, including new methods of instruction to provide for distance education.

Facilitators of learning, as well as learners, need to be familiar with the latest technological advancements to enable them to participate effectively in the outside work. We must make sure that we do not produce student teachers for a nation that, in many ways, no longer exists; sincere technology has changed the way we work and live. Conclusion Regional, national and international opinions were given to answer the why Quality Assurance is needed in Higher Education. One of the numerous tasks of the government is to transform and restructure the Higher Education sector.

Quality imperatives are not the preserve of institutions acting on their own. It must be taken the innovative design to promote and enhance the Quality of Higher Education. Refences Fourie, M (2000), A systems approach to quality assurance and self evaluation, Journal of Higher Education, South Africa.

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