



ISSN: 2249-894X
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF)
UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514
VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 8 | MAY - 2019



IQAC COORDINATOR - THE PIVOT OF INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND SUSTENANCE

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ABSTRACT:

India has one of the world's largest and diverse education systems. The access to higher education has improved owing to wide-ranging expansion, privatization, augmented autonomy and beginning of programmes in new and emerging areas. However, at the same time, this also led to concern on the issues like quality and relevance. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) were established in 1994. It has the vision of making quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of degree

colleges and universities. NAAC recommends that every institution which is accredited, should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as post-accreditation quality sustenance. The IQAC is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) activities of the colleges. The present paper revolves around the IQAC coordinator who remains the fulcrum of institutional quality enhancement and sustenance. The paper suggests the soft skills and professional skills to be absorbed by the IQAC coordinator; the role to be played by him/her; challenges facing him/her and empowerment of him/her.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, NAAC, IQAC and IQAC Coordinator.

INTRODUCTION

Higher Education sector in India has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions and Colleges since Independence. As of February 2017, there are 789 universities, 37,204 colleges and 11,443 stand-alone institutions in India, as per the latest statistics from the UGC website. Higher Education in India has been undergoing massive changes during post globalization period. Indian

Society's expectations from higher education have kept changing with different social concerns, economic situations and political conditions. Increasing competition, demands for accountability and higher volumes of available information are changing the functioning of institutions of higher education. In view of this the institutions have to focus on quality concerns to stand out in the society locally nationally and globally.

SURFACING OF NAAC

India has one of the world's largest and diverse education systems. The access to higher

education has improved owing to wide-ranging expansion, privatization, augmented autonomy and beginning of programmes in new and emerging areas. However, at the same time, this also led to concern on the issues like quality and relevance. Thus there was a strong need to address these concerns. This led to advocating of an independent National accreditation agency by the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) and the Programme of Action (PoA, 1992). As a result, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) were established in 1994 as an autonomous institution of the

UGC with its head quarter in Bengaluru, Karnataka State, India. The directive of the NAAC is reflected in its vision statement. It aspires for ensuring quality assurance as a vital part in the functioning of degree colleges and universities.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CELL (IQAC)

NAAC recommends that every institution which is accredited, should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as post-accreditation quality sustenance. The IQAC is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) activities of the colleges and universities. The IQAC can coordinate the institution's efforts and measures towards excellence. The IQAC should become a driving force for ushering in quality by working out intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality.

IMPORTANCE OF IQAC

IQAC has the main task that involves the promotion of a system for cognizant and steady improvement in the all-round performance and excellence of institution. Its existence can ensure heightened level of clarity and focus in institutional functioning towards quality enhancement; ensure internalization of the quality culture; ensure enhancement and coordination among various activities and institutionalize all good practices; provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning; act as a dynamic system for quality changes in institution and build an organized methodology of documentation and internal communication.

CONSTITUTING OF IQAC

Every institution can constitute IQAC under the stewardship of the head. It can have the members such as heads of academic and administrative units, select teachers, eminent educationists, representatives from local management and stakeholders. The composition of the IQAC will depend on the size and complexity of the institution. The composition of the IQAC may be as follows:

- Chairperson: Head of the Institution
- One of the senior teachers as the IQAC coordinator
- A few senior administrative officers
- Three to eight teachers
- One member from the Management
- One/two nominees from local society, Students and Alumni
- One/two nominees from Employers /Industrialists/stakeholders

IQAC gives stakeholders a cross-sectional participation in the institution's quality enhancement activities. The membership of the selected members can be for two years. The IQAC can meet once in four months at the minimum. At least two-third of the members should be present in order to make the meeting valid. The agenda, minutes and Action Taken Reports are to be documented with official signatures and maintained electronically.

It is obligatory for the IQAC members to carry on the responsibilities of generating and promoting awareness in the institution and to devote time for working out the procedural details. While selecting members several precautions need to be taken. A few of them are listed below:

- It is advisable to choose persons from various backgrounds who have earned respect for integrity and excellence in their teaching and research. Moreover, they should be aware of the ground realities of the institutional environment.
- It would be appropriate to choose as senior administrators, persons in charge of institutional services such as library, computer center, estate, student welfare, administration, academic tasks, examination and planning and development.
- The management representative should be aware of the institution's objectives, strengths and limitations and is committed to its improvement. The local society representatives should be of

high social standing and should have made significant contributions to society and in particular to education.

IQAC COORDINATOR

The coordinator of the IQAC can be a senior faculty with proven expertise in quality aspects. He/she should be the fulcrum of institutional quality enhancement and sustenance. Secretarial assistance can be facilitated by the administration of the institution. It is preferable that the coordinator should have sound digital literacy, its various functions and usage for effective communication.

SOFT SKILLS OF THE IQAC COORDINATOR

They include all those qualities needed for being a good human being. IQAC Coordinator should have the following soft skills:

- Positive attitude
- Self confidence
- Leadership qualities
- Patience
- Approachable
- Hard working and responsible
- Good communicator of ideas
- Studious and learned
- Commitment towards the development of institution
- Professional ethics
- Wise use of time
- Team spirit
- Creativity
- Problem solver

PROFESSIONAL/HARD SKILLS) OF THE IQAC COORDINATOR

They include all those competencies needed for being a successful IQAC coordinator. They include:

- At least ten years of teaching experience
- Academically well qualified. Should have doctoral degree or at least should be pursuing it.
- Thorough knowledge of the NAAC and IQAC
- Competency in preparing and administering the tools on quality issues
- Proficient in interpreting the data
- Continuously working towards professional development
- Skillful in preparation of AQAR and SSR
- Taking initiation towards organizing seminars, workshops and conferences on quality issues.

ROLE OF IQAC COORDINATOR

The role of the IQAC coordinator is crucial in ensuring the effective functioning of entire institution. Following are the tasks expected from IQAC Coordinator:

- Coordinating the quality-related activities of the institution and taking the initiation towards the timely and efficient execution of the decisions of IQAC committee.
- Development and application of quality yardsticks/parameters for various academic and administrative activities of the institution
- Constantly keeping updated and seeking further quality improvement in areas like curricular aspects; teaching-learning and evaluation; research, innovations and extension; infrastructure and learning resources; student support and progression; governance; leadership and management; and institutional values and best practices.

- Assisting in the creation of a student-centric environment favourable to quality education and teacher skillfulness in order to adopt the necessary knowledge and technology for making teaching and learning process participatory.
- Maintaining a channel to receive feedback from students, parents and other stakeholders with reference to institution's quality matters.
- Enabling the staff to access information on various quality parameters of higher education.
- Organization of inter and intra institutional workshops, conferences, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles
- Documentation of the various programmes/activities leading to quality improvement
- Acting as a nodal officer of the institution for coordinating quality-related activities, including adoption and dissemination of best practices
- Development and maintenance of institutional database through MIS for the purpose of maintaining/enhancing the institutional quality
- Development of Quality Culture in the institution
- Establishing the procedures and modalities to collect data and information on various aspects of institutional functioning.
- Conducting brainstorming session on the quality issues and motivating the colleagues to come out with new ideas/solutions that can contribute to the quality of the institution.
- Motivating the staff towards continuous professional development (CPD) and thereby linking institutional and individual excellence
- Preparation of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) as per guidelines and parameters of NAAC, to be submitted to NAAC. The IQAC coordinator can create exclusive window on institutional website and regularly upload/ report on its activities, as well as for hosting the AQAR.
- Contributing for the preparation of Self Study Report (SSR) prior to the visit of NAAC peer team.

CHALLENGES FACING IQAC COORDINATOR

Working as IQAC Coordinator at institution is not an easy job. As an IQAC coordinator, one has to encounter many challenges;

1. Eliciting the support from the management
2. Devoting time to teaching, research, community development and IQAC
3. Seeking cooperation from colleagues, students, alumni, parents etc.
4. Updating of the feedback tools
5. Constant seeking of feedback on the activities and programmes of the institution.
6. Efficient documenting of the activities and programmes of the institution
7. Timely preparation of AQAR
8. Contributing for the mammoth task of preparation of SSR
9. Preparing and coordinating the visit of the NAAC peer team
10. Taking up the follow up of quality sustenance in the institution.

EMPOWERING IQAC COORDINATOR

Following are few of the strategies for the empowerment of IQAC coordinator:

Understanding the Institution: IQAC coordinator should understand the nature and functioning of his own institution and colleagues and experts. He can seek advice and help from the experienced colleagues for bringing improvement in the quality of institution.

UGC Orientation Programme and Refresher Courses: The UGC-Human Resource Development Centre (UGC-HRDC) at select universities organizes orientation programmes and refresher courses on thrust areas for in service teachers and also for newly appointed teaching faculty. These courses among other matters, also provides opportunities for serving teachers (who are working as IQAC Coordinators) to exchange experiences with their peers and mutually learn from each other on issues of quality concern.

Workshops, Seminars and Conferences: IQAC coordinator can attend seminars, workshops and conferences on the issues related quality concerns of higher educational institutions.

Invite Experts: IQAC coordinator can invite quality experts to visit the institution and request them to provide the suggestions for the improvement in the functioning of the institution. He can seek them to model NAAC inspection, assessment and accreditation of the institution. This can set tone for making necessary corrections and improvements in the quality matters concerned with the institution.

Visit Other Institutions: IQAC coordinator can visit other institutions which have got 'A' grade and make case study of them and take the inspiration to bring quality in his own institution.

Publications: IQAC coordinators can publish their conceptual and research based papers in journals, magazines, newspapers etc. on quality concerns. This can improve their communication ability, gain confidence and establish professional network. In addition they can enrich themselves by studying the conceptual papers and research findings published by other IQAC coordinators.

Attending Public Lectures: IQAC coordinators can avail the opportunity to attend public lectures on topics relevant to education at local places. These lectures are in general organized by NGOs, government bodies etc. They can contribute immensely to the knowledge of them and give rich exposure to them.

CONCLUSION

The IQAC Coordinator of the institution remains the pivot around whom the institution's quality enhancement and sustenance rests. Thus it is the prime responsibility of IQAC coordinator to initiate, plan and supervise various activities that are necessary to increase the quality of the institution. Given the complexities in the field of education in 21st century, it is expected that IQAC coordinator need to constantly update him on the issues of quality concern and which helps him to do justice the position of IQAC coordinator.

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