Research Paper

Initiatives of UGC on Quality Enhancement and Sustenance of Higher Education Institutions: A Review

Rimpi Phukan
Research Scholar, Department of Education, Gauhati University, Guwahati

ABSTRACT
"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent efforts"-John Ruskin
Quality is a prime concern and a very important aspect in an education system. In a globalisation era as increasing in higher education trends in over the world, in pursuance quality assurances and sustenance is becoming a mandate for producing better output throughout the education system. So, the quality of whole education system especially in a higher education must be an acceptable norms and standard. UGC is such a apex body for coordinating and maintaining standards of higher education in the country, including the quality but also initiatives undertaken for promoting general development of universities and colleges culminating in enhancing access, equity, relevance and excellence. It provides recognition to universities and disburses funds to such recognised universities and colleges under 12(B) ** and 2(f)* of UGC act, 1956 as per approved pattern of assistance under various schemes. UGC has recently take initiatives throughout launching many schemes for Quality and Excellence especially for higher education. This paper examines the schemes taken by Ugc as published their annual report 2021 and UGC XII Plan guidelines and publications. So, the data is analysed by the researcher is a secondary nature.
KEYWORDS: *Quality assurances, Sustenance, UGC, Equity, Excellence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

From ancient Bharat to modern India, higher education has always occupied a place of prominence in Indian history. In ancient times, Nalanda, Taxila and Vikramsila universities were renowned seats of higher learning, attracting students not only from all over the country but from far off countries like Korea, china, Burma (now Myanmar), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Tibet and Nepal. Today, India manages one of the largest higher education systems followed to the United States and China.

In a 21st century, as the rapid expansion of enrolment in higher education leads challenges of ensuring quality in education around the world. Thus, quality enhancement and sustenance is the most important matter in higher education. As we all know that Higher education is conceived as the production of highly qualified manpower, Quality assurance or quality management in higher education is prime responsibility for all regulatory bodies and stakeholders in education. As increasing the number of private and government colleges and universities in our country day by day the accreditation and continuous monitoring are highly required for producing well known graduates and identifying the weakness and strength in a higher education institution in a justified manner. UGC is such a apex body who regulate and promote minimumnorms and standards for all ugc approval colleges and universities in India.

DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

The traditional concept of quality is associated with the idea of providing a product or service that is distinctive and special, and which confers status on the owner or user. Extremely high standards of production, delivery and presentation are set, which can only be achieved at great expense or with the scarce resources, thus putting them out of reach of the majority of the population. The notion of exclusivity is implied (Pfeiffer, N. and Coote, A., 1991).

In a John Ruskin words Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent efforts. Quality assurance is the most talked about issue in higher education; it is also the least understood issue. Systematic and comprehensive quality management approaches have been widely adopted by HEI and nowform

an integral part of institutions' attempts tobecome more efficient, effective and client oriented (Sahney at al.2010). In thepast two decades, the intensified concern for the development of quality management in the field of higher education has been amplified by an increased public and political demand for accountability as well as the strategic use of information on quality indicators for marketing purposes (Boyle and Bowden 1997; Sutic and Jurcevic 2012). The formulation and standardisation of quality management practices have contributed to expansion of quality monitoring and the potential to identify measures for improvement. The quality of education that students receive from a university is emerging as a global priority in academia (Altbach 2010; Blackmur 2010; Ewell 2010; Harvey and Knight 1996).

Quality in education is difficult to define and measure. An adequate definition must include student outcomes. Most educators would also include in the definition the nature of the educational experiences that helps to produce thus outcomes- the learning environment." (World Bank, 1995, p.46)

There are many stakeholders in higher education, including students, employers, teaching and non-teaching employees, government, funding agencies, regulatory bodies, professional bodies and the accreditation agencies. Each of these stakeholders has a different view about quality, influenced by their own interests in higher education and its quality.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

UNESCO (1995) in its policy paper for change and development of higher education emphasized that quality had become a major concern in higher education. This was because meeting society's needs and expectations towards higher education depends ultimately on the quality of its staff, programmes and students, as well as its infrastructure and academic environment. In its view, the search for 'quality' has many facets and the principal objective of quality enhancement measures in higher education should be institutional as well as system-wide self-improvement.

Donald and Denison (2001) said that to make the assessment effective, it must meet the needs of the people whom it was intended to benefit and aid the evaluated institution to make improvements. Quality assessment was frequently undertaken in response to external authorities who expected clear, ratified criteria to be used in the accountability process. If the assessment was to be beneficial, however, change must be effected within the institution. This meant that administrators, faculty members and students also needed an understanding of the criteria that could guide and facilitate improvements in the way they function. Previously identified by a broad range of stakeholders in a national study of criteria and indicators of quality in post secondary education, it was found that student perceptions of the criteria were consistent with previous research results on input and output measures.

Cheng (2003) in Quality Assurance in Education: Internal, Interface and Future, discussed worldwide reforms for educational quality as experienced by three waves based on different paradigms. The first wave focused mainly on internal quality assurance, particularly the process of teaching-learning. The second wave emphasized interface quality based on ensuring satisfaction and accountability to internal and external stakeholders. The third wave has a special focus on future quality assurance concerning globalization, localization, individualization. To provide necessary knowledge and train the students in areas with multiple intelligences is an urgent need for higher education. He also added that to organize teaching - learning and make the 50 educational services more accountable is needed. According to the study, all the three aspects are important for educational quality improvement and they can provide a comprehensive framework. A higher education institution can struggle to provide services of high interface quality and future quality in a dynamic way governed by continuous learning and development.

Sahney, Banwet and Karunes (2003) in their paper ―Enhancing Quality in Education: Application of Quality Function Deployment-an Industry Perspective‖, remarked that education institutes should aim to satisfy the needs of various stakeholders, through the design of an appropriate system comprising a management system, a technical system and a social system. Quality in education should be defined from an overall perspective including the quality of inputs, the quality of processes and the quality of outputs. In fact, the very concept of quality would infuse within itself the different aspects of academic life.

According to Wahlen (1998), quality assurance in higher education is the activity that aims at maintaining and raising quality, e.g. research, analysis, assessing acceptability, recruitment, appointment procedures and different mechanisms and systems. The aim of quality assurance in higher education is to guarantee the improvement of standards and quality in higher education in order to make higher education meet the needs of students, industries and financiers (Lomas, 2002)

QUALITY ASSURANCEIN INDIAN HIGHEREDUCATIONALINSTITUTIONS

India's standards of higher education compare unfavourably with the average standards in educationally advanced countries. In 1980s, serious concerns were raised about continued deterioration in quality of higher education. It was found that the built-in controls were not able to ensure quality. Various

options were examined. In line with global practices, external quality assurance was conceived in India as a solution (Antony, S.., 2002).

Presently, there are three agencies that evaluate quality of institutions and / or programmes through an external quality assurance in the country. These are: the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) set up by the UGC in 1994 to accredit institutions of higher education's; the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) established by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) in 1994 to accredit programmes in engineering and related areas and the Accreditation Board (AB) established by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) in 1996 to accredit agriculture institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
- To study the initiatives of UGC on quality enhancement and sustenance of Higher education institutions on an annual report 2020-21.
- To study the impact of IQAC on Quality enhancement and Sustenance of HEIs.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY
The paper is a review paper so the data required for the paper is secondary data. Secondary data were collected by reviewing thoroughly various papers, books, articles, reports and government websites etc.

LIMITATION OF THE METHODOLOGY
This study is not based on primary sources. the author has not followed any methods in collecting data like questionnaire, interview, rating scale, observation etc.

INITIATIVESOF UGCONQUALITYENHANCEMENTANDSUSTENENCEOF HEIs
➢ **Students Induction Programme (Deeksharambh**): UGC has formulated and launched, "Deeksharambh-A Guide to Student Induction Programme", To spread awareness about Student Induction Programme (SIP), UGC organized 3-day Workshops for Training of Teachers (ToT) at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pune, Guwahati, Kolkata, Coimbatore, Lucknow and Bhopal. More than 1650 teachers were trained in these Workshops. As on today, approx. 462 HEIs have implemented the Student Induction Programme.

➢ **Learning Outcome based Curriculum Framework (LOCF):** UGC has prepared a document on Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework after having consultation with various experts involved in the field, which is available on UGC website. UGC-Quality Mandate-Academic Activities Initiatives 325 premise of Learning Outcomes based Approach is to align the attributes to be attained by a graduate, with Programme Learning Outcomes and Academic Standards. It is a student centric learning approach. LOCF aims to equip students with knowledge, skill, value and attitude. New curriculum in 31 subjects which is based on LOCF has been developed and uploaded on UGC website to facilitate universities to revise the curriculum.

➢ **Evaluation Reforms:** UGC has initiated Evaluation reforms to revamp the current evaluation system in a way that assessment driven learning with continuous evaluation may be promoted. It has been envisaged that by clearly specifying the subject-wise learning outcomes, complete re-structuring of present system may be attempted. The Objectives of Examination System is to test learning outcomes, knowledge gained, attitude developed and skills mattered, Separate suitable model for UG, PG, M.Phil/Ph.D. to be developed,Internal and continuous evaluation to be emphasized without compromising quality and standards, Technological interventions, Digital depository of degrees and mark sheets, Grading and Credit transfer: Ensure a minimum programme wise uniformity in all HEIs, Moderation, On-Demand Examination, Question Bank, Minimum Infrastructure requirement for all HEIs to be achieved in time bound manner and Result Declaration. For implementation of Evaluation Reforms,Regional Workshops for Training Teachers/Administrators/ Dean(Academics)/Controller of Examinations of HEIs have been organized in Hyderabad, Pune, Bhopal, Guwahati and Bangalore around 800 teachers have been trained.

➢ **Life skills (Jeevan Kaushal):** For students A curriculum has been prepared to empower graduates with the vital skills requisite for global employment and for leading a successful life, by making them realize 'What they can do to make the system work for them'. A Curriculum on Life Skills (Jeevan Kaushal) has comprises of four modules: a) Communication skills b) Professional skills comprise career skills and team skills c) Leadership and Management including Entrepreneurial skills d) Universal Human Values including Yoga and Service

➢ **Scheme for Trans-disciplinary Research for India's Developing Economy (STRIDE):** STRIDE aims to promote innovation culture and trans-disciplinary research and aims at enhancing research capacity and nurturing research culture in general, and in particular, for trans-disciplinary research in Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), especially Universities and Colleges with the objectives including To identify young talent, strengthen research culture, build capacity, promote innovation and support trans-disciplinary research relevant to national development and to enhance the overall well-being of society; To fund high impact national network projects in the identified thrust areas in Humanities and human sciences, and Indian knowledge systems.

➢ **Guru Dakshta-Faculty Induction Programme (FIP)** One of the mandates set by the University Grants Commission is the development and implementation of a high quality Faculty Induction programme (FIP) for newly recruited faculty to improve their teaching and management skills, adjust to the culture of higher education institutions and better understand their professional responsibilities in higher education institutions. The Commission has thus, designed a formal systematic Faculty Induction Programme (FIP)-Guru Dakshta for transition of newly recruited faculty into the teaching profession. As per the guidelines, it is mandatory for all newly recruited faculty members to go through the FIP within one year of their joining service and implementing the FIP will be the responsibility of the UGCHuman Resource Development Centres (HRDCs).

➢ **"Paramarsh"-Mentoring of non-accredited institutions to enable them to get accredited by 2022:** University Grants Commission has dedicated itself to the pursuit of excellence with a specific focus on quality as enshrined in the UGC "Quality Mandate". Striving to fulfill this objective UGC has implemented the scheme of "Paramarsh"-a new initiative for mentoring the non-accredited institutions to enable them to get accredited by 2022. UGC invited proposals from eligible institutions of those having NAAC score of 3.26 and above. UGC has approved 167 mentor institutions which shall provide mentoring to 936 identified mentee institutions. The scheme intends to promote well performing accredited institutions to mentor the NAAC accreditation aspiring institutions to upgrade their academic performance and get accredited. A well designed scheme of Mentor-Mentee relationship will not only benefitboth the institutions but also lead to quality education to the 3.9 crore students who are enrolled in Indian Higher Education system at present.

➢ **Inculcation of Values & Professional Ethics:** UGC has developed a policy framework-"Mulya Pravah-Guidelines for Inculcation of Human values and Professionals Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions". Recognising the need to discuss and streamline the process that helps to infuse the culture of human values and ethics in educational institutions, the policy framework has adopted an action-oriented approach, supported with pro-active culture in institutions. The document not only elaborates the objectives, outcomes and framework for establishing a value-based environment but, also suggests guidelines for operation, implementation, monitoring and reinforcement of the relevant programme. Further, it also discusses the value-based and ethical practices of various internal and external stakeholders.

➢ **Good Academic Research Practices (GARP)** The Commission in its 548th meeting held on 9th September, 2020 considered and approved the guidance document on 'Good Academic Research Practices' (GARP). To promote quality of research and to ensure prevention of academic misconduct including plagiarism in academic writing among student, faculty, researcher and staff, a guidance document entitled 'Good Academic Research Practices' (GARP) has been launched to give a general framework for ensuring research integrity by establishing "Office of Research Integrity" as an organizational entity to implement the guideline mentioned in the report at each intuition; training to provide the substantive knowledge, skills, and competencies for a researcher with regard to research integrity and ethics; and to develop materials for training on research integrity, ethical behaviour, and good research practices. It can be used as guidelines by the faculty and students from Indian Higher Education Institutions. All higher education institutions are requested to adopt Good Academic Research Practices prescribed in the document to foster a sound foundation of research culture that emphasizes integrity in the daily practice of every researcher.

ROLE OF IQAC

All stakeholders have to be fully engaged in the endeavour of quality assurance of the HEIs. Therefore, it is imperative that HEIs are motivated to establish their own internal mechanisms for sustenance, assurance and enhancement of the quality culture of education imparted by them. It is significant that such internalization of quality would be invaluable in the enhancement of quality within the institution. The efficacy of external quality assessment would therefore be determined bythe effectiveness of such institutional internal quality systems and processes. At the instance of NAAC many Universities have established the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity. The experience of NAAC reveals that the IQAC in these institutions are proactive and functioning in a healthy way. Based on this success NAAC is propagating to have such a mechanism created prior to the accreditation in all the Universities which would help establishing quality culture in them. The UGC has recognized this initiative and it has taken a policy decision to direct all Universities to establish IQACs for which it has decided to provide seed financial assistance. So,it is conceived as a mechanism to build and ensure a quality culture at the institutional level. The IQAC may channelizeand systematize the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence.

THE IQAC SHALL HAVETHEFOLLOWINGFUNCTIONS

1. Development and application of quality benchmarks/parameters f o r the various academic and administrative activities of the institution.

2. Facilitating the creation of a learner-centric environment conducive for quality education and faculty maturation to adopt the required knowledge and technology for participatory teaching and learning process;

3. Arrangement for feedback responses from students, parents and other stakeholders on quality related institutional processes;

4. Dissemination of information on the various quality parameters of higher education;

5. Organization of inter and intra University workshops, seminars on quality related themes and promotion of quality circles;

6. Documentation of the various programmes/activities of the University, leading to quality improvement;

7. Acting as a nodal agency of the University for Coordinating quality-related Activities, including adoption and dissemination of good practices;

Thus, The IQAC has a great impact on academic excellenceand Quality assurance as a facilitative and participative organ of HEIs. It is conceived as a mechanism to build and ensure a quality culture at the institutional level. Every University should have an internal quality assurance system, with appropriate structure and processes, and with enough flexibility to meet the diverse needs ofthe stakeholders.

III.   CONCLUSION

Quality is a prime and major concern of any Higher education Institution. In India as rapid expansion of growing enrolment ratio quality assurance and sustenance is a most important element for meets the diversified needs of students and stakeholders. In this regard, University Grant Commission has played a significant role by establishing different cells in universities and provides some initiatives for students, faculty and both accreditation and non-accreditation HEIs. For instance Internal Quality Assurance Cell have established at the instance of NAAC as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity. The experience of NAAC reveals that the IQAC playing there functioning in a proactive and a healthy manner. UGC always taken care of establishing and promoting quality culture in a administrative and non-administrating works by providing sufficient amounts of funds and providing the basic suitable guidelines in an annual basis in a systematic way. Therefore itis imperative that HEIs are motivated to establish their own internal mechanisms for sustenance, assurance and enhancement of quality within the institution.

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