Need of Holistic Planning by IQAC in the New Frame Work

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Abstract:-

Internal Quality Assurance Cell- IQAC, established as a post- accreditation quality sustenance measure is in fact the very brain of Higher Educational Institution. Its prime task is to develop a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic improvement in the overall performance of the institution in order to achieve holistic academic excellence through holistic planning.

With the introduction of new Quality Indicator framework (QIF), which emphasizes on making accreditation process more objective, transparent, scalable and ICT enabled, the responsibility of IQAC is increased manifold. The new features like more emphasis on Quantitative matrix, introduction of DVV, and SSS(Student Satisfaction Survey) demand holistic planning by IQAC in order to achieve the target of good grade in the assessment and accreditation by NAAC.

Hence an effort has been made in the present research paper not only to trace the need of holistic planning by IQAC but also to suggest the ways to do it.

Keywords:-

IQAC, New NAAC Framework, holistic planning, quality parameters, higher education

IQAC- The product of the vision statement of NAAC :

The vision statement of NAAC itself has paved way for the formation of IQACs(Internal Quality Assurance Cell) in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) accredited successfully by the NAAC in their first cycle.

The vision statement of NAAC is - " To make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives"   (source: UGC NAAC Guidelines for the creation of IQAC).The term 'self quality evaluation' in the vision statement paved way for the formation of IQAC, whereas the term 'external evaluation' paved way for the formation of NAAC.

Thus to ensure honest and sincere self quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives, establishment of IQAC becomes essential. Though the role of IQAC has not much changed in the new framework one has to admit that it has become all the more vital with the introduction of 70% Quantitative metric and DVV. (Data Verification and Validation) process.

New NAAC Framework : It's highlights.

The old process of Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC involved validation of the SSR submitted by HEI by the Peer Team visit through interaction with the heads of the institution, faculty, students, alumni and parents. This would result into arriving at a judgment about the quality of the institution and awarding grades thereby. Subjectivity in the entire process led to a number of disputes regarding grades awarded by NAAC. To quote the authors V.R. Shirgarkar , Shirish Chindhade and Rajendra Lokhande : " It is exactly this problem, which prompted NAAC to revise the system and make it objective to the extent possible by adopting a model based on IT based evaluation of institutions. In the new model IT based evaluation will constitute 70% of the accreditation score and the weightage to the peer team evaluation will be just 30%" (A Companion to Understanding Assessment and Accreditation,5)

Thus the highlights of the New System are :
- Extensive Reliance on IT
- Introduction of Pre-Qualifiers
- Revision of key Indicators, questions, metrics etc.
- Introduction of new process of validating the Quantitative Data
- Student Satisfaction Survey
- Non disclosure of the names of peer team members
- Expenditure on Travel & stay Peer teams – Responsibility of NAAC

Thus the New Framework demands a lot of sincere and honest efforts on the part of IQAC to project and highlight positives aspects of the HEI. In other words, holistic planning by IQAC is needed to undergo the process of re-accreditation in a smooth and successful manner in New Framework. Let's therefore try to comprehend the concept of Holistic Planning and its need in terms of Assessment and accreditation by NAAC.

Need of Holistic Planning by IQAC :
A well –constituted and dedicated IQAC can work wonders for the HEI, the vision of its members selected from all stakeholders could transform the very face of the institution – taking it ahead on the path of progress in every cycle of re-accreditation till it achieves the most coveted autonomy. Hence the composition of IQAC should be as per the norms laid down by NAAC. Under the expertise of coordinator and the members of IQAC combined together, the institution could march ahead on the self created path of progress. The saying in English-'Well begun is half done' is very much applicable as far as the composition of IQAC is concerned. Suggestions and vision of the dedicated IQAC members and the successful implementation of the same work wonders to achieve the desired quality benchmark.

Steps Involved in holistic planning by IQAC :
Since 'quality' is the pivot on which the entire functioning of IQAC rests, a realistic work plan to achieve right balance between the health and growth of an institution becomes a must.

The term 'holistic' implies a study of the whole instead of a separation into parts. Thus while doing holistic planning, the IQAC has to consider and work on almost all aspects which contribute significantly in building up the positive image of the HEI. More emphasis on one aspect, leaving the other neglected would not help much as the goal of any HEI is the holistic development of the student. Hence the planning to achieve this goal must be holistic.

Right from formulating the vision statement to submission of AQAR and SSR and a peer teem visit, IQAC has to play a very active role. Hence by doing holistic planning, IQAC can achieve the target of good grades. Envisaging the new challenges in the new framework, IQAC may consider the following **steps for holistic planning**.

1. **Developing a Bird's Eye View :** Quite like a bird whose eyesight covers a large area from a certain height, the IQAC too should develop a wider perspective by doing SWOC analysis and make a roadmap to reach the goal. The visionary members of IQAC and their quality initiatives could transform the institution into the best.
2. **Vision Building :** Vision building is the most important task of IQAC. It includes writing vision, mission and objectives jointly by with the Stakeholders, displaying vision, mission prominently on the campus and revising vision mission objectives after every 3 to 5 years, preparing action plan, alignment of activities with vision and mission, preparing vision manual, making provision of funds and taking periodic reviews
3. **Regular Meetings with the Stakeholders :** Stakeholders include the management, staff, students, parents & industry representatives. Minutes of the IQAC meetings should be maintained. Action taken on the decisions made in the earlier meeting should be prepared Minutes should be placed before the Managing Committee for approval before taking actions on the decisions made functioning. Sense of belonging is developed resulting into concrete suggestions to achieve the goal. Effective solutions emerge when the brains representing different fields come together.
4. **Development and Application of Quality Benchmarks :** HEI is not just about academics, administration also plays an important role in its success. Hence IQAC must predecide and clearly define quality benchmarks and parameters for both the sections. Once the target is made visible, choosing the right road to reach it becomes easy.
5. **Facilitating the creation of learner-centric environment:** New NAAC Framework expects learner –centric environment in the HEI. Hence a proactive IQAC must design ways to achieve it by encouraging faculty to update knowledge through faculty development programmes. They should also be encouraged to make extensive use of technology for participatory teaching learning process.
6. **Feedback from Stakeholders:** Feedback from the stakeholders - students, parents, management society, alumni etc. helps to analyse effectiveness of the measures taken to improve quality culture. It is the responsibility of IQAC to develop proper feedback forms for different stakeholders and get them analysed by the Feedback committee.
7. **Dissemination of information on various quality parameters of Higher Education :** With changing times the quality parameters of Higher Education also change. Sometimes not all quality parameters are known to different stakeholders. It, therefore, is the responsibility of IQAC to provide detailed information on various quality parameters of higher education. Quality parameters could be communicated through meetings, notices, correspondence (mail) etc.

8. **Organization of Inter and Intra institutional workshops on quality related themes :** Quality Assurance is the foremost aim of the IQAC. Hence IQAC mast take initiative in organizing inter and intra institutional workshops for discussing the ways to improve overall quality culture of the HEIs. Experts in the related fields should be invited for their expert guidance.

9. **Documentation of Activities and programmes :** New NAAC Framework has introduced a new process of validating the quantitative data. Hence careful & proper documentation of activities and programmes has become important for quality improvement. Careful documentation is as much important as conceptualization and execution of activity/ programme.

    In the new framework, the quantitative data given in the SSR will not be assessed by the peer teams. It will be validated by a third party identified by NAAC. This process is known as DVV process (Data Validation and Verification).

    "An outside agency authorized by NAAC will verify the institutional data by using web –information uploaded by the institution from time to time on its website, the document uploaded by the institution along with its SSR and by referring to the data given by the institution to various other institutions like AISHE, UGC, NIRF and the concerned Councils.

    If any discrepancies are noticed in the process of DVV, clarification from the concerned institution will be obtained. In case it is found that the institution has intentionally given false data/information, it will be liable for punishment".(A companion to Understanding A & A,8)

10. **Acting as a Nodal Agency of the Institution :** Quality related activities conducted by various departments including adoption and dissemination of best practices need to be well coordinated by IQAC. In this regard, IQAC acts as a Nodal Agency of the institution. IQAC has to align all activities well with vision, mission and objectives. It must also suggest ways for careful execution of the activities as well as make provision of funds for carrying on these activities. It is also supposed to take periodic review of the progress made as per the action plan.

11. **Development and Maintenance of Institutional Database :** The prominent feature of New NAAC Framework is 'Extensive Reliance on IT'. There is shifting from qualitative peer judgment to data based quantitative indicator evaluation in order to ensure increased objectivity and transparency. AQAC,IIQA & SSR are to be submitted online. Hence the IQAC needs to be very particular about developing and maintaining institutional database through MIS (Management information system) for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing institutional quality. Maintaining documentary evidences of departmental activities, communications with the stakeholders including the management, scanning of important documents and records have become essential in the New Framework.

12. **Development of Quality Culture in the Institution :** The foremost important function of IQAC is development and application of quality benchmarks in various activities of the institution, especially in teaching, learning, evaluation and research. From time to time IQAC must monitor quality measures adopted by the institution. It also acts as a nodal agency for quality related matters. It also to take a review of the quality policy of the institution once in two years.

13. **Preparation of Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) :** IQAC is responsible for preparation of the Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) as per guidelines and regular online submission of the same to NAAC every year. NAAC thus expects colleges to "adopt a systematic approach a holistic approach in which academic administration is driven by numerous well defined and periodically governed processes. It requires an integrated framework for quality assurance" (A Companion to Understanding A &A, 222) It is the task of the IQAC to fulfill this expectation of NAAC. IQAC is at the apex of the integrated framework with more responsibility on its shoulder which could be fulfilled only through holistic approach.

CONCLUSION

All the above mentioned deliberations highlight the supreme responsibility shouldered by IQAC and how a holistic approach could help shoulder this responsibility smoothly. To put it in nutshell, holistic planning by IQAC must include Quality Assurance initiatives like advanced quality planning, preparation of Quality manuals. Stakeholder driven excellence, focus on future, managing for Innovation, managing mechanism for data analysis, understanding the Institutional Social Responsibility, encouraging to organize result-oriented and value- driven activities and submitting AQAR regularly to NAAC.

Last but not the least, a quotation from 'A companion to understanding A & A sums up the essence of entire exercise called NAAC:

" If an institution desires to achieve excellence, sustain quality and enhance it, it must have a Commitment to student Requirements, Documentation requirements, mobilize and allocate resources and to adopt techniques for the Measurement and Analysis of information / data" (A Companion to A & A, 224)

It is through the holistic approach of IQAC that an institution could achieve this desired excellence expected by NAAC.

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