Need for Holistic Planning by IQAC in New Framework

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Abstract:-
First time after the inception of new frame work of NAAC with Quality Indicators in July 2017, the role of IQAC has become more significant and accountable than ever. Besides academic and administrative aspects, QIF also encompasses many emerging & cross cutting and pressing issues. The programmes, activities and events that address these issues need to be taken stock of by IQAC. The Quality Indicator Framework that consists of seven criteria of assessment comprises of qualitative and quantitative metrics. Now, it is more transparent, robust, outcome-based and time bound with 70% quantitative data and 30% qualitative. Internal Quality Assurance Cell of any college is the spine that needs to be strengthened and given free hand to devise plan, monitor various departments and extension units and activities thereby in terms of academics, research, green practices, outreach programmes and community services. This paper attempts to discuss how IQAC coordinates with each and every unit of its institute by proper planning; implementation of policies; quality enhancement, maintenance and sustenance strategies to achieve the core values as stipulated by NAAC in the manual.

Keywords:-
Quality Indicator Framework; Green practices; Cross cutting issues; Innovation

I. INTRODUCTION

"We are what we repeatedly do; excellence then is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle

Higher Education Institutions should aim at continuous improvement and acquisition of quality and excellence through its quality assurance systems – decentralized, transparent and impartial policies; their implementation, phasic improvement and flexibility; formation of varied statutory and non-statutory portfolio; activities, programmes and events covering all key aspects; and compliance within purview of regulatory agencies like UGC and NAAC with a vision and mission. To achieve quality, the bodies, cells, committees, boards, departments and units need to shoulder self-regulated responsibilities with a strong sense of commitment. Internal Quality Assurance Cell of any Higher Education Institution is mandated to establish as a post-accredited quality sustenance measure as proposed by NAAC. It functions as a nodal unit by motivating, guiding and educating these quality systems to augment quality related activities with a continuous and consistent monitoring, reviewing and follow up.

NAAC is a national level quality assurance body that plans, prepares and designs frameworks that comprises of annual reports, self-study reports and feedback system to be strictly followed in HEIs. It expects HEIs to chalk out an action plan at their level to achieve quality in academics, research, outreach activities, infrastructural facilities and extension units in terms of initiation, enhancement, maintenance and sustenance of quality. Internal quality Assurance Cell functions as a catalyst agent to bring about coordination, cooperation, collective sense among various sections, units, cells and departments of the college towards a common goal of making its institutions at par with the quality institution at national and international level in pursuance of action plan of NAAC as reflected in its five core values entitled Contributing to National Development; (ii) Fostering Global Competencies among Students; (iii) Inculcating a Value System among Students; (iv) Promoting the Use of Technology & (v) Quest for Excellence. Therefore, directly or indirectly, the primary and significant aim of IQAC to work for a conscious, consistent and holistic improvement. To this end, it requires to marshal all measures and efforts with an absolute and complete blueprint well in advance.

Composed with the representations of teaching; non-teachings; local community members; extension units like NSS and NCC; a few students and management, IQAC work in a democratic manner. Also as per Maharashtra Public University Act 2016, IQAC Coordinator is ex officio member of College Development Committee. Thus IQAC is a think tank – a nucleus which binds various elements together for total quality management. Obviously, to that effect it needs to devise a fool proof plan to integrate and incorporate benchmarking of high graded colleges across the nation into his system. Accordingly it should initiate the best practices with a clear vision and mission statements. Failing to which means lagging behind others. Benjamin Franklin said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." Hence, just formation of IQAC doesn't yield result. Everything cannot be taken for granted. In order to see Indian higher education at par with its counterparts elsewhere across the globe, it is the duty of all stakeholders who belong to HEIs to contribute his or her best.

As 70% of the assessment in the revised framework is quantitative and has become more robust, transparent and ICT enabled, IQAC needs to undertake the following initiatives for the overall development. It should have a crystal clear vision of having a mechanism to attain its goal of measuring the performance indicators at individual, departmental and college level as a whole. It

should help them in designing the policies, planning activities and advising from time to time as required by the concerned. IQAC checks and verifies Annual Performance Indicators. In short, Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) significantly contributes by institutionalizing the quality assurance strategies and processes. Following are the ways, means, strategies and system adopted, undertaken, reviewed and taken care of by IQAC which helps an institution to excel in its quest for quality.

II.   STEERING COMMITTEE

To realise quality across all aspects, IQAC first needs to form criterion-wise steering committees. Coordinator of IQAC, in consultation with the principal, needs to convene the meeting of chairmen of the criteria from time to time to take stock of whether the chairmen are focussing on the key aspects and metrics or not. Proper minutes of the meetings and the resolutions thereof between the criteria chairmen with the coordinator and the principal need to be documented by the coordinator. Periodic review and monitoring of the actions, suggestions, grievances if any of the criterion-wise committees are significant for the internal assessment and audit of the whole system.

III. PERSPECTIVE PLAN

Perspective plan is to be made encompassing all the activities and practices that reflect in the key aspects & metrics of revised and latest NAAC framework. It should include proposed titles of the programmes, venue, date, portfolios in a matter of fact manner. However it should be flexible enough to bring about timely change and amendment under changed contexts and situations.
Annual Calendar

Preparation of annual calendar for the coming year well in advance, conveniently at the end of every year incorporating important dates of the calendar of the affiliated university is also an important action. It should display academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for the year: student centric orientation programmes, debates, competitions and study tour; professional & faculty development programme for teachers; guest lectures; college day programme; extension and outreach programmes; certificate, bridge and value added courses; dates of admission and last date; seminars, conferences and workshops etc.

IV. PORTFOLIO

Portfolio-making is the genesis of all ensuing activities and programmes following IQAC plan with the Principal. Every portfolio should consist of a considerable number of committees, cells, bodies and services across key aspects like academic, administration, governance, infrastructure, research, innovations, curriculum, co-curriculum and extension. Besides College Development Committee (LMC), some exemplary committees of the portfolio may be Internal Grievance Cell (dealing with gender related issues, sexual harassment and ragging); Equal Opportunity Centre; Enabling Unit : HEPSN (Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs); UGC Schemes; Backward Class Cell; Student Council; Internal Compliant Cell; Minority Cell; IQAC; Coaching Classes for entry in Services for SC/ST/OBC and Minorities. They can be categorised as statutory committees.

Apart from these committees, some of the non-statutory committees are Planning and Discipline Board; Purchase; Attendance and Diary Verification; Academic and Administrative Audit; Alumni and Parents Association; Prospectus; Admission; Earn and Learn Programme; Library Advisory; Research Advisory and Development; Salary, Service Books, Income tax and Pay Fixation; Green Audit etc.

As a part of strategy, IQAC should see that proper and timely circulation of notices about meetings and minutes of various actions taken down by these committees are properly recorded and maintained or not at the end of every year.

V.   ACADEMIC AUDIT COMMITTEE.

Individual teachers are an asset to any institution and their excel means an excel and up- gradation of the college.   Their participation with a positive mind set, individually or as a team alone matters a lot. IQAC should form academic audit committee to look into the matter of teachers' academic status every year under the guidance of the IQAC chairman. This committee should check and verify the given data in the format of Academic Performance Indicator (under the performance based appraisal system) with the required documents well in advance. It is a window to the teachers' annual performance and their standing in academics, research, curriculum delivery, professional development, linkages and collaborative actions. Strategically, IQAC should record and report to the Principal about the teachers' poor as well as excellent performance with an intention to get over the shortcomings, if any, of the teachers in the previous year.

VI. FEEDBACK

IQAC should monitor the overall process by collecting, analysing and reporting about the feedback from students, parents, alumnus and also teachers. As a strategic method, it should devise simple, easy and concise feedback formats to be filled on infrastructural facilities, curriculum design and delivery; extension services, innovations in teaching and learning and student support and progression mechanism. Feedback forms should be made available online as well for the easy access by the stakeholders. Robust feedback system is the soul of self-evaluation mechanism.

VII. TEACHING-LEARNING INNOVATIONS

Technological improvement, creation and innovations in educational transactions & delivery have to be undertaken by all HEIs, to make a visible effect on academic development as well as administration. Student is the most important stakeholder in any HEI. He/She is a consumer whose satisfaction should be a top priority. IQAC needs to bring to the notice of the teachers through professional and faculty development seminars; conferences and workshop to imbibe knowledge of innovative practices adopted as benchmarks and standards in the premier institutes. This is the high time to learn technologically or ICT aided teaching and learning to cater to the tastes of the students; to make learning interesting, self-paced and easily accessible. IQAC should take a stock of whether the teachers are techno-savvy or not; whether they are using innovative e platforms and other tools of pedagogy; and whether there is a paradigm shift from traditional teaching to blended and flipped learning. Pedagogy now has now become synchronous and asynchronous as well. Teachers, who are lagging behind in terms of technological up gradation and development, need to be reported so that they can redeem their anomalies. Free and paid Learning Management System software need to be used by teachers to deliver material to the students; administer tests and other assignments; track student progress, and manage record-keeping. Google Classroom, MOODLE etc. are some of the example of open source LMS. Moreover collaborative teaching learning can be done through Google Forms, Google Docs and Google Sheets in real time and off line as well. E platforms like Google meet, Zoom and many free screen recorder software to deliver online lectures to the students are available free of cost to use.

VIII.   FOSTERING GLOBAL COMPETENCIES AND INSTILLING OF VALUES AMONG STUDENTS

The need to develop skilled human resources of high brilliance is imperative in liberalized and globalized context of economic activities. Students need to develop competencies among them through job oriented certificate courses to make them employable for market at par with their counterparts elsewhere at national and international levels. Hence such capacity building, vocational courses need to be designed which not only offer credits to the students but equip them for real challenges, besides regular major subjects. To name a few may be functional English, fashion designing, BUSY, TALLY & Computer Hardware (Assembling); Sericulture; Soil & Water Analysis; Solar Technology; Mushroom Cultivation etc.

This is the high time to inculcate among students the life skills. Departments can design such short term courses of a few hours to prepare students confront the real time situation in the competitive age. Life and soft skill courses like time management; stress management; personality development; communication skills etc.

IX. ECO-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

Besides gender, human values and professional ethics, one of the cross-cutting issues relevant to the current pressing concerns both nationally and internationally is environment. Green practices inside the college should in fact be our pressing concerns. Nothing can be achieved at the cost of nature. IQAC in consultation of principal need to plan to install eco-friendly system & practices like solar plant; recycle energy conservation, rain water harvesting, waste recycling, carbon neutral, green practices etc. Green, energy and environment audit at every institutional level should be the first and foremost priority. Separate budget provision; implementation through the concerned college committees and official audit at the hands of Chartered Accountant be in place to cherish a sound and healthy college environment.

X. COURSE & PROGRAMME OUTCOME

Following revised framework of NAAC which is outcome and performance based, IQAC should see that all the teachers compulsorily have their lucid and objective course outcomes (whether regular, certificate or value added generating life skills); their communication to students through display by various media for students, alumni, parents and others. They can also be planned along with QR code at the top of the course outcome pages to make it easily accessible by the stakeholders, particularly students.

XI. OUTREACH PROGRAMMES THROUGH EXTENSION UNITS

IQAC should devise a proper monitoring and reviewing plan of NSS, NCC, Population and Adult Education, Women Study Centre; Grievance Cells; Internal Compliant Cells. Locational advantages and disadvantages of the village or the city where the college is situated need to be utilized for the public. Programmes, camps and lectures can be arranged on eye donation; sickle cell; AIDS awareness; COVID-19 etc. individually or in collaboration with NGOs. Highly educated and learned teachers who are experts in their fields can play a significant role in human resource development and capacity building programmes in their areas. For example a teacher from Botany can create awareness and encourage ryots in their vicinity to go for the organic farming; and Chemistry department provide the free services of soil and water testing to the farmers. In this way HEIs can indirectly contribute to the national development.

XII. RESEARCH CULTURE

Promotion of research culture is another factor to be institutionalized through well-defined codes and research ethics to avoid any kind of infringement of copyright or intellectual property right acts. To achieve efficacy in this, committees like Research

Advisory Committee; Academic Audit Committee and Planning and Discipline Committee in consultation with IQAC should chalk out policies leading to genuine, individual and original quality research in terms of projects, articles, papers etc.; or organising programmes; establishing centres.   As a part of institutional plan, all kinds of support should be extended and provided to the aspiring and established research scholars.

XIII.   CONCLUSION

To sum up, besides regular submission of annual reports, IQAC, thus, carries out the responsibilities as a nodal unit to devise and implement policies; to bring policies and plans to practice by getting activities organised by the concerned units. Smooth and soft conduction with 100% efficacy of all the quality assurance systems of higher education institutions depends on the credentials of IQAC and its role. Actions, utilization, maintenance and sustenance of the whole system, with accountability, in terms of policies of administration, management, governance; practices and implementation of academics, research, innovations and extension services; sound & healthy infrastructural facilities; and a robust, transparent and flexible student support and progression need to be in place for quality enhancement in HEIs. And this is not beyond realization, if our collective efforts aim at a common interest of quest for excellence. W.H.Foster's remark for total quality management is pertinent in this regard, ***"Quality is never an accident, it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skilful execution."***

XIV.   REFERENCES

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