

Academic and Administrative Audit: Need of Quality in Higher Education System

Divya Raj,

Assistant Professor Tika Ram College of Education, Sonipat, Haryana, India

Abstract

The qualities of Higher Education Institutions depend on its efficiency, coordination effective implementation of its academic and administrative plans. Higher Education, in India, is one among the top areas of development undergoing a tremendous change. The country is becoming a global hub for educational activities and a feeder for all kinds of international man-power requirement. Academic and Administrative Audit (AAA) is a structure to control and retain high standards of Higher Education. AAA is playing essential role in providing qualitative education to the learners all over the world. In addition to the developed countries, even the developing as well as underdeveloped countries, are now-a-days coming forward in opting the AAA. It is a continuous process of self-analysis for the better growth of the organization. The advantages of academic and administrative are manifold and it is helpful for the students, teachers, society as well as employers. Hence this paper has been designed to explain the role and significance of AAA in the present day globalized Indian academia.

INTRODUCTION:

In present day's technological society, large number of trained scientists and technologists are required. To meet this demand, many new institutions have been established recently and are being established even now. The Indian higher education sector is facing significant challenges. Despite initiating numerous steps to increase enrolment levels and budgetary support, much remains to be done. Though the country has met the target of gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) 18 per cent in higher education, it would require a Herculean effort to meet the target of GER of 30 per cent by 2020. Our public universities are facing challenges like lack of teaching and research resources, large class sizes, a work culture that lacks accountability, politicization of educational institutions, outdated curricula and bureaucratic procedures that adversely affect the quality of education (Grewal, 2013). In India all higher educational institutions are expected to go through rigid quality assessment and accreditation procedure on a set of predetermined academic and administrative audit criteria. Accreditation and Re-accreditation have become regular processes for showing continuous improvements. The monitoring and evaluation of the institutional processes require a carefully structured system of internal and external introspection.

Education is a dynamic process which is evolving all the time. In pursuit of excellence, educationists have a duty to continuously discover better ways of teaching and learning, thereby shape education. Perfection or excellence can only be the result of determined effort and continuous improvement. Thus, by taking active steps to ameliorate performance, remedy faults and strengthen weaknesses, an institution moves in the direction of improvement. In a climate of constant change, continuous improvement is a means of timely adaptation, which is vital for an institution's growth and survival. There are wide divergences in the structure and functioning of higher education in India.

Academic and Administrative Audit is a standard strategy for quality enhancement of Institutes of Higher Education. Respective state governments have introduced external quality audits in various countries as part of reforms in higher education. According to

Shah and Nair, “in countries such as United Kingdom, various European countries, and in New Zealand, external quality audits have been in place since 1990s. In countries such as India, South Africa, Australia, some Middle Eastern countries, Hong Kong, Malaysia they have been in place since early 2000s (P. 20)”.

The higher education institutions in India are regulated by different statutory bodies such as:

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-1929
- Medical Council of India (MCI)-1933
- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-1942
- Indian Nursing Council (INC)-1947
- Dental Council of India (DCI)-1948
- Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)-1948
- Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR)-1950
- University Grants Commission(UGC)-1956
- Bar Council of India (BCI)-1961
- Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)-1969
- Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)-1971
- Council of Architecture (COA)-1972
- Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)-1972
- Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR)-1977
- Veterinary Council of India (VCI)-1984
- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)-1987
- National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)-1993
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)-1993
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)-1994
- National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI)-1995
- Quality Council of India (QCI)-1997.

To ensure and enhance the quality of higher education, the NAAC as an autonomous body to accredited all higher education programmes offered in the public and private sector institutions in the country. For this purpose, NAAC has developed various components for accreditation of higher education programmes.

Accreditation is primarily part of the process of building accountability by which an institution is recognized by the profession as meeting national standards for the content and operation of its higher education programme as well as for performance of its students/researchers and also for achieving better outcomes of research and teaching. Assessment means the performance evaluation based on certain criteria. Accreditation is a mechanism by which both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of quality in higher education are addressed through self-evaluation and peer review. Accreditation is a self-regulation and peer review process, adopted by educational community to improve and sustain the quality and relevance of higher education. Accreditation differs from recognition for funding where the emphasis is on availability of minimum infrastructures. Recognition is one time process, where as accreditation is a time bound and recurring process. Accreditation may be voluntary or compulsory.

An institution or a program can be accredited by more than one agency.

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUDIT :

Academic and administrative audit is a standard strategy for quality enhancement of higher education. Academic Audit is a mechanism to examine and enhance the quality of academic aspects of institute of Higher Education. it is a systematic and scientific process of designing implementing, mentoring and reviewing the quality of academic

systems i.e. inputs, processes and outputs. It emphasizes on reviewing the performance of academic inputs with respect to quality assurance. M. Rajendran defines Administrative Audit as “A method of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the operating system of the administrative procedures, policies, decision-making authorities and functionaries, strategies, process, feedback, control mechanism and so on. The academic administrative would certainly make the functionaries to ascertain the strength and weakness of the operating system in general and pin out the areas in particular, and to ascertain where the function is stagnated and affected, and where special attention is required along with man and material resources” (P. 54).

Audits focus on the quality system that HEIs develop for themselves based on their own needs and goals. To evaluate the quality system, the audit focuses on:

- The quality policy of the higher education institution
- Strategic and operations management
- Development of the quality system
- Quality management of the higher education institution’s basic duties:
- Degree education (including first-, second- and third-cycle education)
- Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities
- The societal impact and regional development work (incl. social responsibility, continuing education, Open University of applied sciences education, as well as paid-services education)
- Optional audit target
- Samples of degree education: degree programmes.
- The quality system as a whole.

The audit evaluates how well the quality system meets strategic and operations management needs, as well as the quality management of the HEI’s basic duties and the extent to which it is comprehensive and effective. In addition, the audit focuses on the institution’s quality policy and the development of the quality system, as well as on how effective and dynamic an entity the system forms.

OBJECTIVES OF AUDIT:

- To facilitate awareness among Colleges in the State about processes and systems that can ensure quality enhancement and realization of goals set in higher education.
- To understand the existing system and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Departments and Administrative Units and to suggest the methods for improvement and for overcoming the weaknesses while teaching, learning and evaluation, student support and progression.
- To move in the direction of an accreditation and audit system that enables mentoring more than monitoring.
- To review the implementation of Government schemes in all colleges of the State.
- To evaluate the ideal utilization of financial and other resources, issues concerning with leadership and organization, functional autonomy and financial management.
- To ascertain whether the Departments/ centers are functioning efficiently and effectively with proven records of capacity building, research projects and publications and extension over a period of time or not.
- The GUIDE-AAA Score to be used as a tool to identify the areas for special focus and improvement.
- To evaluate the performance of the institution and to identify the issues those are to be attended to in order to improve the quality of Teaching and Research.

SUGGESTIONS:

The purpose of the Academic and Administrative Audit is to evaluate the performance of the university departments, schools and the centers and appreciate their achievements and give suggestions for further improvement of the quality of teaching, research, administration, and curricular and extra-curricular activities. The after visiting the departments, schools and centers, and interacting with the HODs/Directors/Coordinators, teaching and non-teaching faculties, students, alumni and parents and validating the data the committee would give valuable suggestions on the following points.

- Availability of teaching and non-teaching faculty.
- Infrastructural facilities available for carrying out academic and administrative activities.
- Efforts taken for curricular development.
- To improve the quality of teachers.
- Teaching methods adopted and use of ICT in teaching, learning process.
- Feedback mechanism used for assessing the performance of teachers by students and for curricular development.
- Faculty development programmes implemented by the department.
- Strengths, Weaknesses. Opportunities and Challenges of the department.
- Research facilities and research output in the form of publications and patents.
- Computer, internet and library facilities available.
- Mentoring system, introduction of Remedial classes, Bridge courses, guidance for NET/SET and competitive examinations.
- Skill development and personality development programmes.
- Generation of funds and optimum utilization.
- Evaluation methods adopted for internal and external examinations.
- Future plans of the institution.

CONCLUSION:

Academic and Administrative Audit gives a standard system based on parameters for Quality education. Quality enhancement is defined in terms of institutional policies, procedures and activities that are designed to promote the learning experience and learning outcomes of students and also contribute to the enrichment of the curriculum. The main objective of an academic audit is to ascertain the presence and adequacy of quality assurance procedures, their applicability and effectiveness in guaranteeing quality of inputs, processes and outputs.

In a nutshell, the education system should also change in accordance with the changing times and it is high time that the teachers, students, government and intellectuals realize their responsibilities to ensure a bright future. The aim of higher education institutions are intended upon producing an individual who is socially responsible, globally aware and useful to the nation.

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