

Functional Utility of Internal Quality Assurance Cells in NAAC Accredited Colleges: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

It is a fact that development of higher education and development of a country are closely related. Any country that is developed today in the world is mainly for its quality higher education. Therefore quality assurance in higher education has been one of the major challenges in the development agenda not only in India but also all over the world. In this context IQACs of NAAC accredited colleges are functioning for sustenance and enhancement of internal quality of the higher education institutions. In Odisha only 192 colleges out of 520 UGC affiliated colleges have valid NAAC accreditation status. Therefore it is significant to study the functional utility of IQACs as perceived by members of IQACs taking into consideration the nature of institution as an associated factor.

The exploratory survey method was adopted in the present study to find out the usefulness of IQACs in quality improvement practices. The sample of the study comprised of 12 colleges out of which 6 were autonomous colleges and 6 were non-autonomous colleges, 6 were rural colleges and 6 were urban colleges, 6 were government colleges and 6 were non-government-aided colleges included purposively in the sample of the study. The sample respondents covered 72 members i. e. six from each sample institution. On the basis of pilot study a perception scale was developed to study the perceived utility of IQACs. Data was collected from the sample respondents through perception scale. Collected data was analysed by percentage analysis and chi-square test of independence. The study revealed that there is no significant association between nature of institution and the perceived functional utility of IQACs as perceived by its members. In the process of monitoring and sustenance of quality practices in higher education IQACs are mostly useful. So in the present scenario, where it witnesses rapid expansion of higher education institutions in the country, the prevailed deficits and disorders need to be addressed properly through the mechanism like Internal Quality Assurance Cell with letter and spirit.

KEYWORDS: IQAC, NAAC Accredited Colleges, Quality Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

At the present juncture of globalisation the entire world is witnessing major innovations in science and technology. There is the high competition in the field of development and progress among the countries of the world. Quality higher education contributes to the development and progress of the nation. It is widely recognised that the quality higher education promotes comprehensive and multi-level development by enhancing human and technical capabilities of the

society. Higher education is the apex level of education, which produces knowledge leaders, technicians, teachers, professors, engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists and other similar professionals to determine the progress of human society. The institutional and technical determinisms are the key to development and quality improvement in higher education. Quality assurance in higher education has been one of the major challenges emerged on the

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development agenda not only in India but elsewhere in the world. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) plays the vital role in quality assurance of higher education in India. NAAC has proposed to establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance measure in every accredited higher education institutions. The present study focuses on functional utility of IQACs as perceived by members of IQACs in different colleges of Odisha.

Relevance of the study

Technical change and institutional change are key components of development. Higher education plays an important role in facilitating these changes by incorporating all of the various demographics of the population. Higher education has been found to be significantly related to the human development index and greater for the disadvantaged groups (Joshi, 2006). At the same time lack of quality higher education creates inverse situation in the society. Quality of higher education indicates fitness for the purpose. Improvement in quality of higher education will enhance the level of human development and greater human development influence life expectancy and GDP per capita (Tilak, 1994). Quality assurance in higher education has been one of the major challenges in the development agenda not only in India but also all over the world.

The various policy initiatives of the Government of India such as establishment of University Grants Commission, NAAC and NBA and the process of accreditation, linking development grants with accreditation are the indications of official concerns and efforts for quality management (Mukhopadhyaya, 2012). As per the guideline of NAAC every accredited institution should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance measure. Since quality enhancement is a continuous process, the IQAC would become a part of the institution's system and work towards realisation of the goals of quality enhancement and sustenance. Efforts are being made on the part of NAAC accredited colleges to promote internal quality enhancement practices in respective institutions (Sahoo and Srivastva, 2015). The National Knowledge Commission Report (2006) and the Yashpal Committee Report (2009) on renovation and rejuvenation for structural reforms of higher education are of noteworthy to visualize the futures expansion of higher education in India. We must foster a conception of quality which may be applied to every degree of ability and to every socially acceptable activity. A missile may blow up on its launching pad because the designer was incompetent

or because the mechanic who adjusted the last valve was incompetent. The same is true of everything else in our society. It is in this context of fast changing global development in the domain of higher education the learners' need to have updated knowledge resources and adequate knowledge for their utilization (Das, 2012).

The 12th five year plan suggests a range of reforms in higher education to change the role of the Central Government from "command and control" to "steer and evaluate" giving more autonomy and accountability to the state and to the higher education institutions themselves with the goal of improving quality. In the context of Odisha immediate attention on the part of regional government is required not mere as the concurrent responsibility but as an unaltered major player of regulating and development of higher education institutions (Dansana, 2013). So, according to demands and needs there has been substantial development in higher education in different regions of India. To respond to the present situation the State of Odisha has taken many initiatives in the recent times. It has well organized system of higher education supported by internal and external agencies. There are 520 degree colleges in Odisha, out of which 472 colleges come under section 2 (f) and 12 (B) of the UGC Act, 1956 and 48 colleges come under section 2 (f) only but are not included under section 12 (B) of the UGC Act, 1956, (UGC, 2018^A). Out of these total degree colleges 44 are autonomous colleges (UGC, 2018^B). Up to 27th November 2017 there were 14 university and 192 colleges in Odisha having valid NAAC accreditation status. (NAAC, 2017^{A and B}).

Internal Quality Assurance Cell is UGC sponsored scheme to be established in all its affiliated colleges with the financial support to plan, guide and monitor quality enhancement and assurance activities at institutional level. IQACs are functioning to attain excellence in NAAC accredited colleges in the state of Odisha. This paper is based on research conducted in 12 NAAC accredited colleges in Coastal Odisha. Here an attempt has been made to find out the usefulness of Internal Quality Assurance Cells in NAAC accredited colleges of Odisha in quality improvement practices.

Objectives

The present study has been conducted with the following objectives:

1. To study the functional utility of IQACs as perceived by members of IQACs taking into consideration the nature of institution as an associated factor.

Methods and Procedures

All NAAC accredited colleges of Odisha having IQACs were considered as the population of the study. In this study each sample unit was a college. The faculty members and co-ordinators of IQACs were the sample respondents. The sample of the study comprised of 12 colleges out of which 6 were autonomous colleges and 6 were non-autonomous colleges, 6 were rural colleges and 6 were urban colleges, 6 were government colleges and 6 were non-government-aided colleges included purposively in the sample of the study. The sample respondents covered 72 members i. e. six from each sample institution. On the basis of pilot study a perception scale was developed to study the perceived utility of IQACs. Data was collected from the sample respondents through perception scale. Collected data was analysed by percentage analysis and chi-square test of independence.

Major Findings

The perceived functional utility of Internal Quality Assurance Cells has been presented with reference to context-specific dimensions.

Context I Perceived Functional Utility of IQACs in Autonomous and Non-Autonomous Colleges

The major findings related to perceived functional utility of IQACs in autonomous and non-autonomous colleges are presented dimension-wise.

1. In involvement and adoption of quality parameters, 50.83% respondents of the autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was found that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in involvement and adoption of quality parameters was not significantly associated with nature of institutional autonomy.
2. In curriculum improvement, transaction, evaluation and research, 65.56% respondents of the autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was observed that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in curriculum improvement, transaction, evaluation and research was not significantly associated with nature of institutional autonomy at 0.05 level of significance.
3. In practices for feedback response from stakeholders, 43.33% respondents of the autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were viewed that it is most useful. There was no significant association between perceived functional utility of IQACs in practices for feedback response from stakeholders and nature of institutional autonomy.

4. Overall in different aspects of practices in relation to professional development of teachers, 68.75% respondents of the autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It can be observed that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in practices relation to professional development of teachers was not significantly associated with nature of institutional autonomy.
5. Overall in different aspects of documentation and dissemination of quality related activities, 60.56% respondents of the autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was found that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in documentation and dissemination of quality related activities was not significantly associated with nature of institutional autonomy.

Context II Perceived Functional Utility of IQACs in Rural and Urban Colleges

The major findings related to perceived functional utility of IQACs in rural and urban colleges are presented dimension-wise.

1. It was found that majority of respondents (51.11%) from rural colleges stated about highest utility of different functions of IQACs in involvement and adoption of quality parameters than that of urban colleges (50.56%). However the perceived functional utility of IQACs in involvement and adoption of quality parameters was not significantly associated with nature of institutional location.
2. It was noticed that majority of respondents (66.67%) from rural colleges stated about highest utility of different functions of IQACs in curriculum improvement, transaction, evaluation and research than that of their urban colleges (64.44%) counterparts. The perceived functional utility of IQACs in curriculum improvement, transaction, evaluation and research was not significantly associated with nature of institutional location at 0.05 level of significance.
3. It was found that more respondents (44.67%) from rural colleges stated about highest utility of different functions of IQACs in practices for feedback response from stakeholders than that of their urban colleges (42.00%) counterparts. There was no significant association between practices for feedback response from stakeholders and nature of institutional location.
4. It was found that majority of respondents (69.16%) from rural colleges stated about highest utility of different functions of IQACs in practices

in relation to professional development of teachers than that of their urban colleges (68.33%) counterparts. There was no significant association between practices in relation to professional development of teachers and nature of institutional location.

5. It was found that majority of respondents (62.22%) from rural colleges stated about highest utility of different functions of IQACs in documentation and dissemination of quality related activities than that of urban colleges (58.89%) counterparts. It was observed that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in documentation and dissemination of quality related activities was not significantly associated with nature of institutional location.

Context III Perceived Functional Utility of IQACs in Government and Non-Government-Aided Colleges

The major findings related to perceived functional utility of IQACs in government and non-government-aided colleges are presented dimension-wise.

1. In different aspects of evolution and adoption of quality parameters, 50.83% respondents of the government and non-government-aided colleges were viewed that it is most useful. There was no significant association between perceived functional utility of IQACs in evolution and adoption of quality parameters and nature of institutional management.
2. In different aspect of curriculum improvement, transaction, evaluation and research, 65.56% respondents of the government and non-government-aided colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was found that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in curriculum improvement, transaction, evaluation and research was not significantly associated with nature of institutional management.
3. In different aspect of practices for feedback response from stakeholders, 43.33% respondents of the government and non-government-aided colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was observed that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in practices for feedback response from stakeholders was not significantly associated with nature of institutional management.
4. Overall in different aspect of practices in relation to professional development of teachers, 68.75% respondents of the government and non-government-aided colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was found that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in relation to

professional development of teachers was not significantly associated with nature of institutional management.

5. Overall in different aspects of documentation and dissemination of quality related activities, 60.56% respondents of the government and non-government-aided colleges were viewed that it is most useful. It was observed that the perceived functional utility of IQACs in documentation and dissemination of quality related activities was not significantly associated with nature of institutional management.

Conclusions

The study revealed that there is no significant association between nature of institution and the perceived functional utility of IQACs as perceived by its members. However, from the frequencies of responses it is revealed that the members of the IQACs in autonomous-urban-government colleges have more positive perception about the usefulness of IQACs in quality improvement practices than that of their counterparts in non-autonomous-rural-non-government-aided colleges. In the process of monitoring and sustenance of quality practices in higher education IQACs are mostly useful. So in the present scenario, where it witnesses rapid expansion of higher education institutions in the country, the prevailed deficits and disorders need to be addressed properly through the mechanism like Internal Quality Assurance Cell with letter and spirit.

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