

Role of Management and Academicians in Implementing Quality Initiatives and Measures in Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Quality Management is a holistic approach that embraces all the processes and procedures in a Higher Educational Institution, in order to serve the students and other stakeholders with the expected quality standards. The success of any quality initiative depends on the support of the management. Hence, quality management should also include strategic management, process management and assessment and control system for enabling the Institutions to improve their processes. Besides, it also requires accurate information systems with full support and cooperation of the members involved in order to integrate the quality assurance system with management processes for enhancing the overall success, and to produce assessable information about quality assurance system. This conceptual paper discusses the importance of delivering quality higher education, the challenges faced in implementing quality measures at the administration and the academic levels, and also how the management and the educators together can achieve success by implementing quality management system in higher education.

Keywords: Quality, Quality management, Administration, Administrators, Management, Educators, Higher education, Higher Educational Institutions.

Introduction

The Indian system of higher education is not in par with the global quality standards as a result of which the major stakeholders – the students are unable to face and outsmart the cut throat competition. Hence, there is an urgent need for an enhanced evaluation of the Quality parameters of the country's educational Institutions. Conventionally, these Institutions were assessed based on internal resources, viz., faculty, library, infrastructure facilities, state-of-art technology, hi-tech campus etc., or by its measurable results such as optimum use of resources, giving exceptionally educated, highly satisfied and well placed graduates. These factors

undoubtedly add value to these Institutions but however are not the means to measure quality. Quality is a much wider term and a broader philosophy. Indeed it is a way of life. In the context of higher education, it means a paradigm shift in the total scenario of Indian prevailing system. The entire system should be revolutionized from “What we offer” to “What you need”. A degree completion certificate is awarded to every student who successfully completes the course. Therefore it is not all that matters.

Concept of Quality in Higher Education

Quality in higher educational Institutions cannot be understood in the same sense as it is understood in the context of business concerns as educational institutes cannot be considered as industry and the products are not their students, but it is the education imparted to the students. Students, their parents, and their future employers are the stakeholders rather than customers of this product (education). By using the term stakeholders, one can understand the responsibilities of the service providers i.e., the Institutions and their faculty members and the importance of delivering the product (education) with high class quality. The students' definition of a Quality experience has to be found throughout their stay in the Institution and through deliberations and observations of what gives them joy of learning, not just fun without learning. If the teaching and learning process is in harmony to their ideas about what is Quality education, students enjoy learning. Educators need to discuss and deliberate such matters with the students like their goals, ambitions, strategies, limitations, SWOC and how can they be instrumental in achieving their goals by overcoming the challenges and limitations. A teacher has to build up a consensus in a class regarding what constitutes a Quality experience and a congenial atmosphere for the entire teaching learning process. This would apparently result in increased interest and commitment levels of the learners and increased efficiency and effectiveness of the educators. Together they find greater delight in the process and make constructive contributions to the society at large. The success of the teaching learning process depends on this consensus and commitment. Hence it is of utmost importance that these Institutions accept the 'Quality' as the Mantra and endow with a consistent evaluation of what precisely the learners are able to do that they were not able to do before as an outcome of their learning and knowledge.

Responsibilities of Higher Educational Institutions

Higher educational Institutions are not only expected to impart knowledge and expertise to the learners through their curriculum but also go beyond curriculum and instill sense of commitment and responsibility, wisdom and character in them. “Knowledge” and “Expertise” enables them to make a career of their choice and get into professional life. But “Wisdom, Commitment, responsibility and character determine their personality and are vital to sustain, progress and excel in the chosen profession as well in their personal lives. In addition to this, these Institutions are also expected to equip them with life skills such as communication, stress management, time management, problem solving, decision making, emotional quotient so on and so forth without which the knowledge and expertise acquired would be of little or of no significance. However, most of the educational Institutions seldom focus on the development of either wisdom or character or these life skills. Many educators are lagging in these qualities themselves and thus wash-off their hands at the thought of imparting it to the students. They tend to stick to their curriculum and agenda and strongly believe that these qualities are to be taken care of by their parents. Wisdom and character, the two imperative Qualities of mankind, are best groomed and nourished by making students involve in resourceful team events, wherein they learn to prioritize, work collectively, and to develop the social abilities required in a society where teamwork is essential to succeed and excel.

Adopting Quality Initiatives

The deliberations made above make it evident that imparting Quality education is the need of the hour not only for sustenance and growth of higher educational Institutions but also for achieving excellence and to become pioneers in the field. Therefore these Institutions must earnestly plan and implement quality measures and initiatives. This is not an individual responsibility, rather a collective responsibility of the management, educators and the administrators. Most of the Quality yardsticks for accreditation state that assessment policies are corresponding to the Institution’s clearly defined mission, goals and objectives that direct faculty, administration, employees, and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, programs and content development, and definition of program outcomes. These goals and objectives should pay attention on student learning, other outcomes, and Institutional growth.

Confronting Views

By and large, both the educators and the management recognize and accept that Quality measures ought to be actualized in their Institutions; however the movement endures in view of their widely conflicting opinions.

The management may feel that they are already doing the required things in their educational programs and results evaluation simply builds up criteria for progress and rolling out any further improvements are not necessary. But the educators view points are quite different, as some of them feel that there has to be a consistent support from the top administrators that they are absolutely committed to Quality execution and evaluation programmes. Any quality enhancement initiative introduced by the management is merely viewed as an additional burden on the educators as they are not communicated thoroughly the purpose, need, benefits and outcomes of such initiative. The administrators feel that they are the policy planners and the role of the educators is to merely accept and implement these plans without questioning. On the other hand, the educators feel that they are superior in knowledge and expertise and need to be consulted before making any decisions related to quality enhancement. Thus, they get frustrated if they are not given due importance in policy planning. They counter on the issue of measuring learning and the doctrine of a Quality education, because they misinterpret the goals of Quality and assessment. The difference in opinions and views contributes majorly to a faculty-management conflict and is one of the principal causes for the culture of confrontation in most of the Institutions. However, the services of both are undoubtedly of utmost importance for the success of higher educational Institutions and are complementary to each other. Therefore it is important to establish harmony and synchronization of their ideologies and values which can be achieved by persuading people to change their mindset by reasoning and giving up their long held values, beliefs, and attitudes and adopt new ones, which produce perpetual optimistic outcomes on quality enhancement measures.

Expectations from Educators and Administrators

As stated earlier, the services of the educators and administrators are complementary to each other and therefore there must be a mutual understanding and collective effort amongst both in order to undertake any quality measure and implement it successfully. Every educator is a facilitator who provides students with prospects for personal growth and plays a key role in the

transformation of inputs to outputs of greater value to the Institution and its stakeholders. Educators work 'in' a framework, whereas the management works 'on' the framework and strives to enhance the Quality with the support of educators. Learners study and experience 'in' a framework, and the educators have to constantly work 'on' the framework to improvise and modify the quality of teaching according to the changing needs of the students with the help of students. Quality education is the key for achieving the joy of learning. It creates a unique and an independent learner. Educators must sort out with the students of what comprises a Quality experience for them and fine tune their style and quality of teaching accordingly. Similarly, the Administration must build a platform that fosters a team-oriented culture, which can avert issues and concerns and make persistent improvements. Performance assessment, recognition and incentive systems place people in an internally competitive environment.

Conclusion

The objective of the continuing 3 tier association vis-a-vis administration- faculty- student is innovation and advancement, reduction in variation of critical characteristics, cost control, and better Quality. They should encourage healthy competition, which is inevitable and inherent in human nature.

The objective of Quality management is to continuously seeking a better way of imparting education to the students and to enable them lead a quality life with a sense of social responsibility and commitment. Thus, it is the superior responsibility of the higher educational Institutions and their members to speak the language of quality and adhere to all its requirements to raise and offer future leaders of the nation.

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