

Internal Quality Assessment System in Open and Distance Learning and the use of Information and Communication Technology

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Abstract - Internal quality assessment has been of major importance for higher education. Ensuring quality, maintaining standards and supporting the university community in their work is the paramount role of internal quality assessment system. Nowadays, we can observe the widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning process to improve the concept and application of teaching and learning and the ways students are learning. Here, the Digital India Campaign has taken the lead in transforming the entire country into a digitally empowered society with a knowledge economy. Also, a recent outbreak of pandemic has posed further implications and challenges for Quality Assessment (QA) implementation in the Open and Distance Learning system because almost all the educational institutes has moved from in-person mode of education to the online process of learning. In this regard, National Education Policy has recognized the importance of technology while considering its potential risks and dangers. This has led to the addition of a new dimensions to a QA process. Moreover, ICT trend has become a new normal for higher education process. Therefore, the most recent issue for QA is to facilitate a sensitive process of ODL transformation to an online digital system. Hence, there emerges a need to overcome critical issues related to quality assurance in ODL in India. This article discusses the trend of using ICT by ODL and its quality assurance by IQAS, best practices and the challenges that comes in the way of this learning process. This paper is based on conceptual study and secondary data.

Key words- Open and Distance Learning, Information and Communication Technology, Internal Quality Assessment System.

INTRODUCTION

On November 2nd, 2012, an internal quality assessment system was established. It takes a collaborative approach. It has become a part of the institution's

system and works toward achieving quality improvement and sustainability goals. The main goal of IQAC is to create a mechanism for improving the institution's overall performance in a conscious, consistent and catalytic way. The institutional policy is to uphold quality assurance and how it supports institutionalising quality assurance processes, students and alumni, institutional integrated framework for quality assurance of academic and administrative activities, institutional training for its staff to effectively implement quality assurance procedures, academic audit of academic provisions with outcomes used to improve institutional activities [1]. Due to pandemic, higher education institutes has shifted their activities to an emergency remote mode. During the session 2020-2021, institutions moved from this emergency mode to fully online arrangements as per the Covid- 19 safety measures. The sudden shift of education mode from offline to online has questions for the effectiveness and flexibility of internal quality assessment system [2].

Information and communication technology (ICT) has come into play these days. A great appreciation to the new technologies that has bring about a significant change in the world of higher education [3]. India lags behind other nations in the effective use of ICT, while being the third largest country in the world for higher education, in comparison to other nations. India placed 134th out of 176 countries in the 2017 ICT development index. In India, educators are utilising ICT for online learning, blended learning, and remote learning. Additionally, India is still in the early phases of incorporating ICT into the teaching and learning process, just like other developing nations [4].

ICT can be characterised as a broad range of technology resources and methods used to manage, create, store, and communicate information [5]. ICT

can be categorised into two main categories, including ICT for education, which refers to the development of information and communication technology for the teaching and learning process, and ICT in education, which suggests that education involves the implementation of general information and communication technology in practical use in the teaching and learning process [6].

In open and distance learning, quality evaluation has always been a top priority. The complexity of ODL's supply chain management, the variety of input processes, and the current paradigm shift of ODL into an online learning system have all presented problems and challenges for the quality of ODL. An integrated online student support system is necessary for the ODL system of learning in order to maintain the quality of open and remote learning. [7]. The management and ODL participants have shared the burden of successfully implementing the QA system in ODL, Open Universities, and online learning [8].

Organizations has been quickly confronting the issue of education affected by Covid-19 pandemic and addressing these problems by publication of policies, ideas, guidelines, sharing practices and action plans to respond to online crises. These sources has helped higher education institutes to respond to the emergency necessities for E- Learning implementation worldwide. In addition to this, Some of the digital initiatives provided as source of learning during pandemic and also for ODL by University Grant Commission and MHRD were – e- Gyan kosh, Gyandarshan, Gyan dhara, Swayam that provides Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), e-Adhyayan, e- Pathya, National Digital Library of India (NDLI), e- yantra, Shodhganga, National Education Alliance for Technology (NEAT), Sakshat, etc [10].

The Quality Assessment of ODL System must be addressed as a result of this abrupt and quick shift to online learning [9]. Furthermore, the decision to move from traditional classroom instruction to the OU and ODL system was made with great consideration for quality. Additionally, QA faces unique problems in the event of a COVID-19 disruption since new rules, processes, and procedures must be adjusted to fit the COVID-19 teaching and learning environment [11].

Therefore the major issue is that, with the introduction of social media, there has been a worldwide trend toward collaborative content creation and sharing. Any resources made with public monies should be

made available under an open license for others to use as needed. Many people wonder who is responsible for the quality of reused content because anyone can adapt it. How do organization confirm that their credentials are genuine? How the QA agencies responsible?

ICT APPROACH OF DISTANCE LEARNING

E learning –

It is education that has been made possible by information and communication technology. This education encompasses online courses, virtual learning, and other forms of distance learning. It is similar to web-based learning, when knowledge is spread solely through the internet or an intranet. Web-based learning (WBL), web-based instruction (WBI), and web-based training are some examples of different online learning resources (WBT). Distance learning, online learning (OL), mobile learning, advanced distributed learning (ADL), and internet-based teaching (IBT) (m Learning). Anytime, anywhere, everywhere learning, remote learning, onsite learning, etc.

E- Pedagogy-

This approach entails utilising technology to enhance teaching, learning, and evaluation activities that are of a high educational quality, value, and effectiveness. New methods of instruction and learning are thriving, according to studies, thanks to the usage of online networks, remote access to specialists, and more recently, mobile technologies. Individual, assisted, and collaborative learning are all parts of pedagogical learning.

Quality Assessment and Quality Enhancement

In order to assist their teaching and learning operations through QA and Quality Enhancement, higher education institutions have started using the e-learning style of education. While quality enhancement is the focus of quality enhancement, quality assessment is the goal of teaching.

Evaluation of performance

It entails the evaluation of a student's performance, skills, and quality through official processes for evaluating their personalities, contributions, and unique potentials through both internal and external quality assessments. Midterm exams, quizzes, and

personality development programmes are used for Internal Quality Assessments (IQA).

Standardize higher education curricula

A good evaluation method is crucial to producing high-quality results. The curriculum in India has greatly improved access to basic education and increased literacy. Due to predicted industrial growth and the actual beneficiaries, there is a demand for curriculum [12].

REVIEW

A study conducted on 90 teachers from North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon in India. It was observed that teachers were facing lot of issues in using ICT tools in teaching and learning. In addition to this, about 50% of teachers were not in favor of using ICT in higher education and 58% of teachers were lacking in adequate skills required for using ICT [13]. In India most of the higher education institutes are facing acute shortage in the number of faculties and is confronted by failure in meeting the standards set forth by regulatory agencies for higher education, such as University Grant Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education, addressing the student teacher ratio (AICTE). India's main task now is to foster an environment that encourages the artistic, economical, and socialisation among its population [14].

There exist gender based differences in the perception of Distance Education Quality. A study have shown that there is a difference in the types of problems faced by male and female learners studying at a distance. For male students, "financial issues" were the biggest obstacle, whereas for female students, "competition to family duties" was the biggest concern. Therefore, inclusion of ICT as a tool to overcome the barriers of Distance Education (DE), still there exist the question of quality assessment and enhancement. The dimension that best explains DE quality is evaluation and assessment. Clear assessment rules and routine student evaluations of instruction were seen by the learners as being particularly crucial. Pedagogical aspects like teaching and learning and interactive tasks were of less importance than course development and evaluation and assessment but still powerful in measuring the quality of DE. From the context of environmental domain, infrastructure appeared to be most important in assessing the quality of DE [15].

South Korea's circumstance The internal QA mechanism dimension appeared to be significantly influenced by "existence of Quality standards specifically for DE," while the institutional credibility dimension was significantly influenced by "strong leadership" and "National Level external accreditation." [16].

Many DE educators and researchers agree that the fight for equality of regard in DE has been ongoing [17]. This study demonstrates that, in the eyes of Asian Learners, both institutionalization of an internal quality assurance system under strong leadership and external accreditation agency recognition are critical to achieving parity of esteem. Together with external QA and accrediting organizations, Asian DE suppliers must create the necessary internal and external QA policies and procedures.

While the demand for ODL is expanding, many people believe that "free educational resources must inevitably be of inferior quality" [18].

CONCLUSION

Open and Distance Learning has given access for education to all categories of learners from around the world. The mode of supplying education has been transformed from face to face to digital. Introduction of ICT sources such as MOOCs, e-learning, web learning, internet based learning, m-learning, has changed whole scenario of the ODL. Moreover, in the times of Pandemic it has managed to hasten the education system without hindering the teaching learning process and wastage of time. Thus, ICT has created a boon for Open and Distance Learning. In contrast to this, maintaining Quality becomes a topic of concern. Internal Quality Assessment System is confronted with much more challenges than ever due to pandemic and digital learning such as ICT and its functioning in the Open and Distance Learning system in the era of digitalization.

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