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Role of Assessment in Improving Quality in Higher Education

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Abstract

Assessment is that process which measures and evaluates the student and teacher in their respective field. Assessment is needed to know the academic development of student and growth of skill and competency of teacher in the field of learning and teaching. Assessment is that process which appraises individuals' knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills (QAA). An Assessment is a tool designed to observe students behaviour and produce data that can be used to draw a reasonable inferences about what students know (Pellegrino, 2003). Assessment is that method which helps in qualitative learning of a student. Enhancing quality education is an emerging trend in now a day. Quality education encompasses the learner-teacher relationship, learning environment, curriculum and the infrastructural facilities provided by the educational institutions. Through the process of assessment teacher or instructor able to know the students' knowledge, understanding of the learning materials, skills in a particular course and by this knowledge teacher can provide necessary guidance for future career. Furthermore assessment is also useful in enhancing student motivation, self-concept and sense of self-efficacy. By this paper we try to draw a picture of role of assessment in enhancing quality in higher education.

Keywords: - *Assessment, Quality, Higher Education*

Introduction: Assessment is a powerful instrument for quality improvement in higher education and the effect of such reform goes beyond the domain of assignment and examinations. Quality in higher education can be defined as the standard of measuring the worth of something against a similar thing. Assessment is that tool which helps the instructor or teacher to know about the students' understanding of learning materials, skills in particular area and by this knowledge teacher able to provide necessary guidance to the learner. Quality education through assessment means

learner- centred approach. In the process of assessment learners are given more important. And the teacher, innovative teaching methods, and the infrastructure facilities are also included in quality education.

Objectives of the Study: This study is made to draw out the importance of assessment in improving quality in higher education. Another objective of this study is to provide awareness among learner-teacher, academicians, policy makers, curriculum framers on the effectiveness or influential criteria of assessment and to



draw out the educational implications of assessment in this competitive regime.

Methodology of the study:

In this study the researcher followed only the secondary sources in collecting data. The researcher has collected all the information from different books, journals, encyclopaedia, articles etc. The author followed descriptive research methodology.

Limitation of the Methodology:

This study is not based on primary sources. The author has not followed any methods in collecting data like questionnaire, interview, rating scale, observation etc.

Quality: Etymologically the word 'quality' derives from the Latin word 'qualis' which means 'what kind of'. The word quality is defined by different thinkers and educationists in different ways. Quality is that element which can be defined as the standard of a product or service which satisfied the need of the people. The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs". (The British Standard Institution, 1991). Green and Harvey (1993) identified five different approaches

to defining quality:

- i) In terms of exceptional (Exceeding high standards & passing a required standard)
- ii) In terms of consistency (Exhibited through 'zero defects' and getting right the first time", making quality a culture).
- iii) As fitness for purpose (meaning the product or service meets the stated purpose, customer specifications and satisfaction).

iv) As value for money (through efficiency and effectiveness)

v) As transformative (in term of qualitative change).

Quality is very important concept in these days of competition. It enters into the field of education also. According to our objectives of this study we discuss the importance of assessment in improving quality in higher education. For surviving in this regime of competition, for developing teaching skills and competency, maintaining standard and for accountability quality higher education is very necessary in these days. Barnett(1992) defines quality in higher education as follows-".....a high evaluation accorded to an educative process, where it has been demonstrated that, through the process, the students' educational development has been enhanced....not only have they achieved the particular objectives set for the course but, in doing so, they have also fulfilled the general educational aims of autonomy of the ability to participate in reasoned discourse, of critical self-evaluation, and of coming to a proper awareness of the ultimate contingency of all thought and action"(p.61).

Higher Education: As a level higher education includes college and university teaching-learning towards attaining higher educational qualification. Higher education imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to advance the frontiers of knowledge of the students in different walks of life. Higher education is for knowing more and more. It develops the ability to make question and seek truth on contemporary issues. It broadens the intellectual powers of the individual within a narrow specialization, but also gives



him/her a wider perspective of the world around. Generally higher education is understood to cover teaching, research and extension. If we critically analyze the different concepts of higher education, we can see the various activities played by higher education in society. Higher education supplies the much needed human resources in management, planning, design, teaching and research. Scientific and technological advancement and economic growth of a country are as dependant on the higher education system. Higher education provides the opportunities for continuing education and upgrades their knowledge and skills from time to time based on the societal needs.

Why we need quality in higher education: From earlier discussion we know the general concept of higher education and its value in modern technology era. For smooth functioning of an individual in this competitive regime student, teacher, parents, policy maker and institutions needs quality higher education. Every one of us always seeking the answer why we need quality education? For this question we can go through the following points:

i) Competition: We are entering a new regime, where competition among educational institutions for students and funds will be highly significant. With the impact of globalisation the educational environment become more competitive. Student has to face lot of challenges in all walks of life. In order to survive in this competition, they should get good quality education. And for that educational institution should impart quality education.

- ii) Customer satisfaction: Students, parents or sponsoring agencies as customers of the educational institutions are now highly conscious of their rights or getting value for their money and time spent. Now they are demanding good quality teaching and employable skills. Therefore educational institution worry about the time based, need based courses and programmes for fulfilling demand of the labour market.
- iii) Maintaining standards: Educational institutions always concerned about setting their own standard and maintaining it continuously year after year. In order to maintain the standard they should make efforts to improve quality of the educational transactions as well as the educational provisions and facilities.
- iv) Accountability: Every institution is accountable to its stakeholders in terms of the funds (public or private) used on it. Concern for quality will ensure accountability of the funds utilised and inform the stakeholders about taking appropriate decisions. Thus, quality can be considered as a monitoring mechanism.
- v) Image and visibility: Quality institutions attracts better stakeholders, merited students, increased grants from Philanthropists/funding agencies and higher employer for placement of graduates.
- a) For the Student: Individual pieces of assessment provide a source of motivation for study, they promote learning by providing feedback on performance and help students to



identify their strengths and weaknesses.

- b) For the Teacher: Assessment provides an opportunity to evaluate knowledge, understanding, ability and skills attained by different students. The overall profile of student performance offers useful information for assessing the effectiveness of course, content and teaching methods thereby facilitating improvement.
- c) For the Institution: Assessment provides information upon which decisions as to students' progression and the receipt of awards may be based. The assessment process enables the institution to ensure that appropriate standards are being met, in accordance with nationally agreed framework such as subject benchmark statement and the frameworks for higher education qualifications.

Qualitative Higher Education: Quality in higher education demands the establishment of an institutional culture, not so much a matter of total quality management but rather one of the total quality care, in which each professional is seized of his/her responsibilities and takes care over all his/her own professional efforts (Ronald Barnett, 1992, p133). According to him, quality should be seen as a process of critical dialogue within an institution, where course teams accept ownership and facilitate student engagement towards learning and development and there is a self-critical culture of continuous care for the students' quality course experience. Barnett suggested that there are four core activities

that takes care of quality in higher education-

- i) Teaching and learning
- ii) Student assessment
- iii) Staff Development
- iv) Curriculum/Courses

These form a 'protective belt' to the overall student development and experience that is central to quality higher education.

Assessment: Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) defines assessment as any processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills. Assessment is very necessary for smooth functioning of an educational institution. For assessing learners, teachers and institutions there are various committees and commissions on education. UGC established national research facilities and Academic Staff Colleges to re-orient teachers and provide refresher courses in subject areas. The UGC also conducts the National Eligibility Test (NET) for high standard of teaching. The concept of autonomous colleges as recommended by Kothari Commission (1964-66) has its roots in the concept of Quality Improvement. The constitutional amendment in 1976 brought education to the concurrent list making the central government more responsible for Quality improvement (Stell & Gnanam, 2003). The New Education Policy (1986) emphasized on the recognition and reward of excellence in performance of institutions. The University Grants Commission (UGC) established the NAAC for assessing the quality of the institutions. The NAAC is established by UGC to assess and accredit institution of higher learning in the country. The NAAC was originally formed in 1992 as a result of recommendations



from National Policy on Education-1986 (NPE-1986) which emphasizes on deteriorating quality of higher education in the country.

The NAAC stresses on making quality assurance, an integral part of the functioning of higher education institution. NAAC has taken cognizance of the sweeping changes and the consequent shifts in values in the contemporary society. In this context it has formulated the five core values to which all higher educational institutions' should relate-

- a) Contribution to National Development.
- b) Fostering Global Competencies among Students.
- c) Inculcation of a Value System in Students.
- d) Promoting the Use of Technology and
- e) Quest for Excellence.

Methods of Quality Assessment:

i) Self-evaluation: Real Quality is that which is sustainable and assessed by self. This is how we know what our strengths and limitations are. Self-evaluation is like looking at ourselves in a 'mirror'. The self-study report required for submission at the time of assessment for accreditation should be self. Critical and reflective as inspection and quality control imposed from outside would not work (Frazer, 1992). Self-evaluation is the indicator of continuous improvement and an important method for ensuring quality.

ii) Best Practices Benchmarking: Benchmarking is used in business and industry for recognizing best practices and implements them. "It is a continuous process for evaluating the products, services and work processes of organizations that are recognized as

representing the best practices for the purpose of organizational improvements"(Spendolini, 1992). We can be practised it in the process of education. Through the use of benchmarking, can bring huge benefits in continuous improvement of quality. As it is based on identification of the best practices, it inculcates competition and constant comparison. By the recognition of best practises of an educational institution can be motivated to other institutions. For example- If one institution has 100 percent placement record of its graduates. It could be a benchmark for others to follow. Another example- If an institute gets success by introducing a new, innovative, skilled subject, others may imitate to that institute for developing quality of their institute. In India NAAC has been practising to bring out best practices of an educational institution.

iii) External Quality Monitoring: The external quality monitoring reassures the legitimate quality of a higher educational institution. It also offers an impartial and objective method for assessing the institution by a peer team not directly related to that particular institution. Peer team critically analyses the self-report, records, policies taken by institution and the quality provision based on established criteria. It also meets and discusses the top management, principal, HoDs, teachers, students and support staff to make its opinion on quality.

In Indian context, the external quality assurance mechanism is a much debated concept; especially because universities are autonomous bodies established by an act of Parliament or State Legislature and are



empowered to award degrees. External monitoring is very often considered as an invasion on the autonomy and academic freedom of the educational institutions. To some the UGC already performs the task of monitoring the universities regularly for funding purpose and thus no further intervention is needed. The universities being, degree awarding agencies, are responsible for assuring their own quality and therefore various internal bodies like the Academic Council, Planning Board, Executive Council, Board of Studies etc, within the system monitor and undertake corrective measures to assure the graduates are worthy of the degree awarded to them . In the case of colleges, the affiliating universities perform the role of assessing the quality. In practice, EQM is a process of continuous improvement, mark of excellence and recognition of all the efforts of the academics by their peers-(Mishra, 06).

iv) Internal Quality Assurance Cell: The continuous improvement process is future directed and believes in a transformation model of a revolution (Mishra). In India NAAC proposes to establish IQAC to continuously improve quality as enhancement and sustain the good work of the institution. IQAC will facilitate the process of internalization of the quality and play a crucial role in performance improvement of the institution. All the accredited institutions with IQAC are expected to submit annual self-reviewed progress report. IQAC will create internal awareness on quality issues and also establish credibility for the

external quality evaluation. Training and development on quality as well as other functional competencies of academic and non-academic staff are crucial to continuous improvement and development of a 'culture of quality'.

Classroom Assessment for Quality Improvement: In the classroom context, the first goal of assessment is essentially formative and learning improvement in nature. It is viewed as a tool to inform the teacher about strengths and weaknesses of individual students as well as the class as a whole and to assist students understand their own progress. (Hoover, 2003) to create a good classroom assessment environment the teacher has to consider the assessment methods to be used, the criteria for selecting them, their quality, the use of feedback and comments, the teachers' perception of the students and students' involvement as self and peer assessor.

Recent developments in assessment procedures have also encouraged, having students participate in the generation and even in the scoring of learning activities and assessment tasks or having choices in aspects of the learning activity (Smith, 2003). In describing the advantages of classroom environment for the student, Brookhart, 2003 stated that-From the students' point of view, classroom assessment is not merely information about himself/herself rather, it forms a major part of his/her learning life, become part of the lesson he or she is expected to learn the relationship he/she has with the teacher and the subject matter and relationship with peers.

Different Methods of Classroom Assessment: The teacher can have variety



of assessment to use in the classroom. There have given some kind of methods-

- a) Observation: Observation is greatly used by experienced teachers to identify students progressing or having difficulties in their learning. Some teachers maintain a logbook in which they record observations on students daily work habits and progress they show in learning, particularly when working in groups.
- b) Portfolio: Portfolio or records of work are also another important classroom assessment used by teachers. Portfolio is a kind of file in which a students' written Work or the best examples of it are kept. Portfolio could be used to build record of students' lab reports in science and how it would have relevance in such subjects as drafting, mathematics, languages, history or geography.
- c) Classroom Questioning: Classroom questioning even though it is more of an instructional strategy than assessment, because of the feedback it provides the teacher, it is a form assessment. Students learn better if classroom questions are thought provoking and based on higher order thoughts, such as application, analysis and synthesis. In addition, teachers should take care that their questions are evenly distributed among the different ability level learners in a class. Moreover, pausing between the questions and naming a student can help to involve more students in discussions and increase the quality of student thought and response.
- d) Self- Assessment: Students' self-reflection and their understanding are

used to inform for future teaching and their feedback indicates in what areas the teacher needs to spend more time and effort.

- e) Peer- Assessment: Peer-assessment is also important component to self-assessment that helps to realize curricular targets for students' learning. Peer assessment is also useful in placing the learning task in the hands of students. In this case the teacher is free to observe and reflect on what is happening and frame helpful interventions.
- f) Seminar and Group Discussion: Seminar presentation, group discussions are also important tools of classroom assessment. Through these innovative methods student gets opportunity to explore them self. Students are given chance to write and speak out on particular issues. Without hesitating they try to say something on emerging issues. From those Practices they will able to participate in the competitive world.

For improving classroom practice with respect to assessment, Black&William have suggested the following--

- Students should be encouraged to keep in mind the aims of their work and to access their own progress toward meeting these aims as they proceed. Then they will be able to guide their own work and so become independent learners.
- The criteria for assessing any learning achievement must be made transparent to students.
- Students should be taught the habits and skills of collaboration in peer assessment, because those are



of intrinsic value and peer assessment can help to develop the objectivity required for effective self-assessment.

Educational Implications of Assessment:

Assessment is more effective in quality improvement in higher education in this era. Assessment has valuable implications in the field of education. We should look upon the educational implications of assessment-

- a) Assessment motivates the learner to learn effectively their course content.
- b) Assessment helps the institute to provide world class education to the students and to provide satisfaction to the guardian.
- c) Through assessment student gets quality education which is very necessary in this competitive world.
- d) Assessment helps the teacher to know about their learners' knowledge level and ability broadly.
- e) It develops the language skills and communication skills among learner.
- f) It helps the teacher to provide necessary instruction to the learner.

g) Assessment helps the teacher; instructor to enhance time based and need based education to survive in this world.

h) Assessment is very necessary for all round development of a child or a student.

Conclusion: In conclusion we can say that different innovative assessment methods have a strong lever for quality improvement in learning of substantive knowledge and skill and teaching various courses. Assessment helps in developing the skill of language and skill of communication which are more helpful in this competitive world. But the assessment poses challenges for higher education leaders in a broad range of management domains. The educators and instructors should plan the assessment procedure systematically for the development of quality and standard of higher education. Shortly, we can conclude in one sentence, the process of assessment develops, stimulate the teaching-learning standard, make effective and efficient of an institution and improve quality of higher education for surviving in this world.

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