Chapter 15

Self–Assessment Reports:
How Do They Support the Accreditation Process

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance has gained momentum in the education sector also after its recognition in the industry. Quality has become a part of service providers like healthcare and education. The field of education has undergone tremendous change since the word quality penetrated into it. Choosing a higher education institution puts in many criteria of which quality assurance and accreditation also has a vital role. The process of accreditation differs from one country to another. The process depends on the outcomes expected by the accrediting agency along with the guidelines of the government regulatory body. Self-assessment report is a self-evaluation made by an institution which is prepared in a report form and submitted to accrediting agency. An expert team evaluates the application for awarding accreditation to a HEI. The role of self-assessment report is to understand the strength and weakness of the HEI.

INTRODUCTION

Quality is defined as "The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs" - ISO

Quality Assurance is defined as "the assembly of all planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product, process, or service will satisfy given quality requirements." – ISO

Quality itself has been defined as fundamentally relational: "Quality is the ongoing process of building and sustaining relationships by assessing, anticipating, and fulfilling stated and implied needs." -Quality Digest, ASQ.

Education is a learning process which enhances knowledge, skills, values through teaching and learning, training and research, etc. Higher education plays a vital role to set career for a student. When a student is promoted to a Higher Education Institute (HEI) from school level education, the activities that mold him into a career oriented person are teaching and learning methods, independent study, research activities, etc. The major aim of a HEI is to bring out hidden skills in an individual and give out responsible citizens to the country. Quality Assurance and Quality Management are not the concepts that are confined to industrial sector alone. These words are highly pronounced in education sector also. It is the responsibility of an educational institution to equip its students with knowledge, skill, competences that they need to lead a successful career and personal life after graduation. To give out successful graduates an institution needs to function with quality management system in every way possible which can create confidence in every individual while moving to the job market.

Where Did Quality Come From?

Quality management, quality control has been a practice at least from middle ages when product quality was considered to be important to retain customers. A formal quality control system conducted inspection, testing and other activities before a product is released in the market. A systematic quality management system focuses on production which includes inspection of material, processing, etc. Until 1915, Great Britain was the only country in which standardization was taking place. Later number of standardization organisations came up in different parts of the world. (Voehl, 1994).

Japan became the main reason for a quality drive after the Second World War. The country re-built itself by creating quality control tools and techniques that supported in improving efficiency in the manufacturing sector. Deming and J.M.Juran promoted quality concepts which enhanced the Japanese businesses that became a worldwide movement in next twenty years. In the beginning of 1980, Great Britain moved forward by introducing BS5750 an international quality standard. Britain was the first country to introduce quality management and set quality standard in the European Commission which was later accepted as an international standard and now popularly known as ISO 9000. (Voehl, 1994)

The term quality and quality management has taken different turns dominating in the manufacturing and engineering sectors since 1940. Emergence of quality as a system and concept of management started in the year 1990 when not only Great Britain but also other European countries acquainted the term quality and quality management. The spread was over and above the sector moving into public sector companies from private manufacturers and still moved on to health care and education. (Scott, 1994) (Woodhouse, 2004)

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Education sector has been using the words quality and quality assurance from late nineteenth century. It all started when quality preferences moved from industry sector to service providers. In the US, quality and accreditation took the starting lane in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. (Woodhouse, 2004). While in Great Britain, external evaluation done to assure the quality standards in the educational institutions dates back to mid – nineteenth century. (D. Anderson, 2000). The external quality audit in the educational sector began in the year 1980 and could emerge into a world-wide phenomenon by 1990. (Woodhouse, 2004).

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