Quality Assurance and its Impacts on Higher Education Institutions in India

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Abstract

An Institute of Higher education is a place for academic excellence that plays a key role in supporting and enhancing educational, economic and social aspects of our country by Inculcating deep knowledge and extensive talents and skills in the student community and bringing it on par with and/or exceeding Globally reputed Institutes.

With the increase in mobility of the student community across various countries, particularly for Higher Studies, it becomes very important to understand the extent of awareness on Quality and adherence in terms of Quality assurance and identifying any actions that must be taken will be an important contributor in helping the institutes to improve the standards of Quality in Higher education in India.

Quality is a key distinguishing factor that determines the standing and contribution of an institute, both Nationally and Globally, in terms of **superiority of academic excellence** and individual benchmarks and Quality assurance explains the of **adherence to prescribed processes and procedures** aimed at setting the highest standards of excellence and accuracy in educational practices and performance and the subsequent results that are achieved.

To establish themselves and lead in terms of **excellence, research and development** and other key academic attributes, Indian Institutes of higher education would have to adapt highest standards of **Quality assurance** so that they can excel in all fields and build a talented pool of academic community.

This paper intends to study the various aspects of quality assurance like **awareness** on the importance of Quality Assurance among Management, faculty and student community, **status of Quality assurance methodologies adapted** and the **impact** that it has had on academic curriculum and results.

The methodology will be to conduct a survey amongst the relevant stakeholders from the academic community and identify the status and come up with relevant suggestions on the gaps identified.

Comparison with globally accepted Quality benchmarks and Quality assurance processes and sharing these best practices for improving the quality standards will also be one of the major objectives of this paper.

Overall, this paper intends to do a comprehensive study of status of **academic excellence, superior standards in educations, adherence to prescribed process and the complete quality standards and adherence process** in Institutes of higher education in India and come up with the observations and suggest more ideas to improve the Quality standards.

Introduction

In an era of fast paced development, particularly in the field of science and technology, it becomes apparent that the academic institutes that impart these skills, distinguish themselves by exhibiting exemplary levels of excellence in academic standards of teaching and related activities.

Differentiation in terms of Quality of education offered is invariably deciding the ranking of the Institutes and hence it becomes even more important to build a system that meets Global of standards of Quality and evolve even further.

In this century of Globalisation with advancements in communication technology, migration of students towards the best Institutes of Higher Education has become a phenomenon. There is a significant percentage of foreign students in most of the major economies/ countries.

India has a long and illustrious history of being the home to some of the earliest known and best institutes for Science, Maths, Medicine, Astronomy and other allied fields dating back to a thousand or more years. Nalanda, Takshashila University, Ujjain, and Vikramshila Universities are some of the well-known institutes of Institutes of Higher Education in the First Millennium and have flourished in their times. These institutes have attracted the best talent from across the globe and had established themselves as the Premier institutes in their times.

In the present-day scenario though, India has a good scope to further improve its standing amongst the best institutes by adhering to best levels of Quality assurance.

The Student community who are the recipients of knowledge from Institutes of higher education, have evolved drastically and are looking not just within their countries but also across the globe to pursue their dreams and are ready to overcome both the Financial challenges and the social changes that they have to face when migrating to other countries.

The Ranking of the global Institutes play a determining factor in how the students finalise the institutes' of their choice and the rankings are mainly driven by the Quality of Education provided by the Institutes. This directly lays emphasis on the importance of Quality assurance

that Institutes of Higher Education must adhere to, both the distinguish themselves and to attract the best talent towards their respective Institutes.

This paper approaches Quality assurance In Institutes of Higher Education in India, in a sequential manner by covering all critical aspects of Education which are,

➢ The student community and their preferences
➢ Opportunities that the student community provides with for the Institutes
➢ Research and development activities and global ranking of Institutes
➢ Awareness and available mechanisms on Quality assurance amongst Indian Academic community

By gathering and studying all these aspects, this paper intends to come up with possible suggestions and enhancement opportunities and framework to ensure adherence to improve Quality Assurance mechanisms and help Indian Institutes of higher education to compete with the top ranked Institutes of the World.

To achieve this objective, data covering the following aspects of Institutes of higher education have been captured and studied in detail in the coming sections.
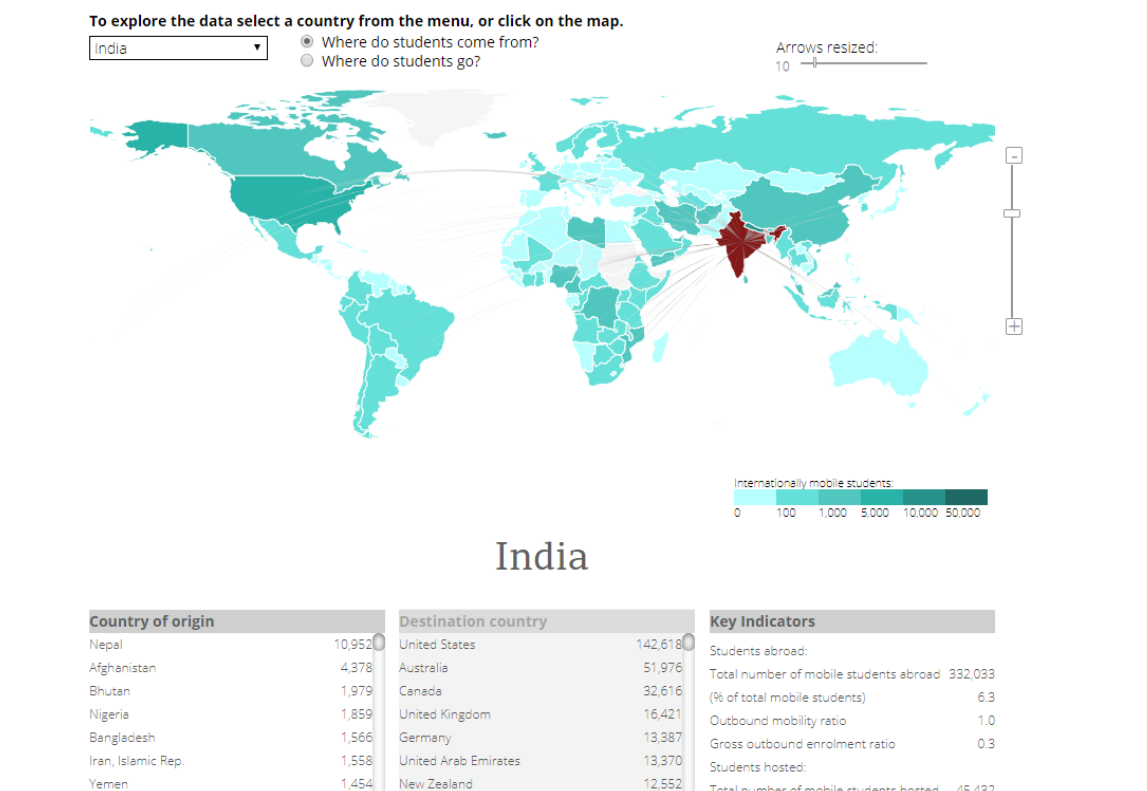
a. Status of Student Migration to India
b. Details of Institutes and Intake of Students in India.
c. Ranking of Global Institutes and impact of Quality
d. Awareness about Quality assurance in India (Through a Sample Survey)
e. Suggestions to enhance Quality Assurance aspect

While the first two topics drive home the potential opportunities that Indian Institutes have in terms of Student Intake, the 3rd Topic would reinforce the importance of Quality Assurance to make the best use of the opportunities. Finally, we look at the awareness and current status of Quality assurance in Indian Institutes and come up with our suggestions and feedback on how to improve the same.

a. Status of Student Migration to India

There are significant signs that India is one of the preferred destinations for students looking to pursue higher education.
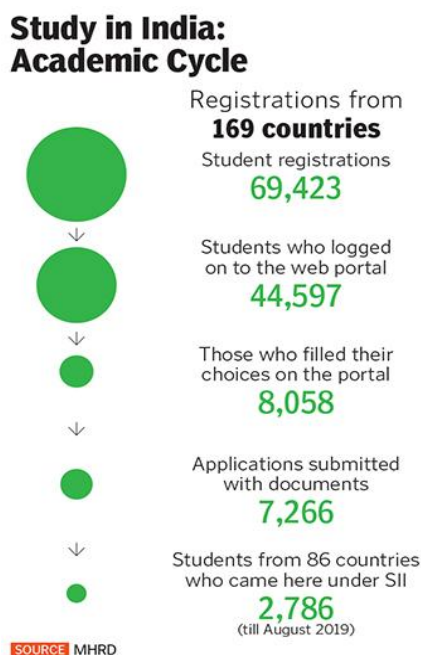
The below graphical Illustration from UNESCO data show that India attracts students largely from Asia pacific region (Country of Origin) and serves as an important educational home for students from these countries. Close to 20,000 Students from the top 6 countries prefer India as their choice for Pursuing Higher Education.

Source: http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow

Figure 1.Where do Students come from to India

Also, a survey in Forbes India, with data quoted from the Ministry of Human Resource development, Government of India shows that, India generates a significant interest amongst the student community looking for migration to India.

Source: https://www.forbesindia.com/article/budget-2020/study-in-india-attracting-foreign-students-in-the-age-of-campus-turmoil/57305/1

Figure 2.Data on Interest shown to Study in India

This data clearly shows the immense potential that Institutes of Higher Education in India can generate from the Global Student community.

b. Details of Institutes and Intake of Students In India.

While the previous section provided insights on the potential opportunities from the Global student community, this section explores the opportunities that the domestic student community provide us with.

Considering the technical Institutes of Higher education, the information from the website of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) provides details insights on the domestic opportunities.

Details of various Programs and volume of Student intake has been captured in the first chart, which shows Engineering field getting the bulk of the students, while unaided private institutes show the maximum intake amongst the various types of Institutes.

The third graphs clearly shows the potential if we consider all types of programs offered in India. There are more than 10K Institutes with more than 3 Million students who undergo various programs in these institutes.

Given the vastness and scale of the Higher education system in India, it becomes undoubtedly clear that Quality of Education Offered will be the single biggest contributor in deciding which of these Institutes top this humungous list
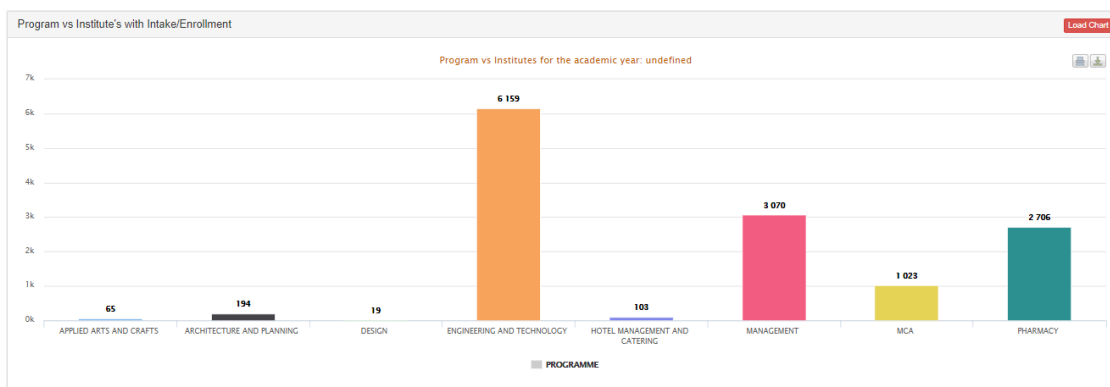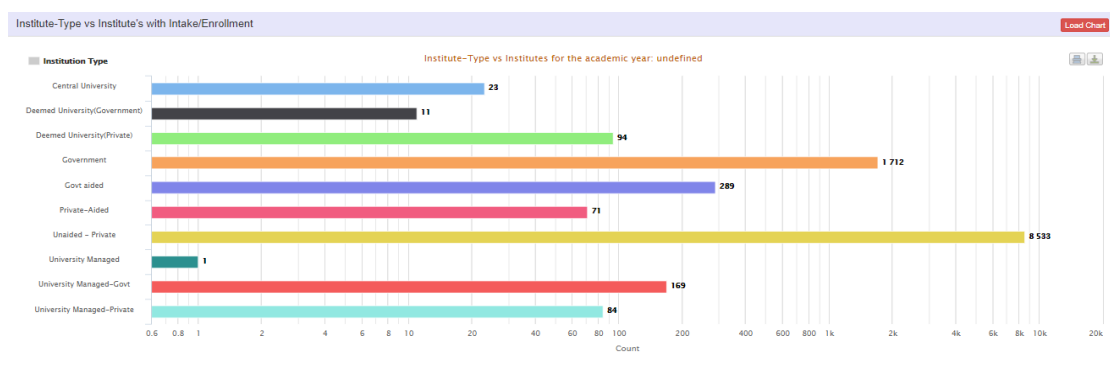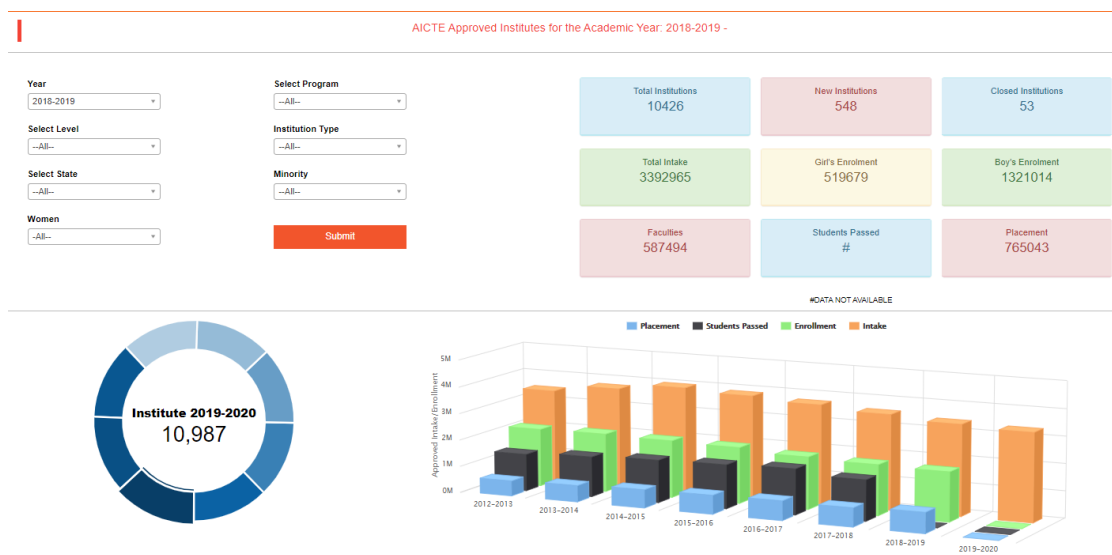

Figure 3.Program vs Institute's with Intake/Enrolment

Source: https://facilities.aicte-india.org/dashboard/pages/angulardashboard.php#!/graphs

Figure 4.Institute-Type vs Institute's with Intake/Enrolment

Source: https://facilities.aicte-india.org/dashboard/pages/dashboardaicte.php

Figure 5.AICTE Approved Institutes for the Academic Year: 2018-2019 -

c. Ranking of Global Institutes and impact of Quality

Looking at the ranking of the top Universities in the world, its clear that the weightage are mainly given to the Quality of teaching and Research. As we can see below from the rankings taken from the Times Higher Education portal (THE) , quality plays an important role.

Rank	Name Country/Region	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
1	University of Oxford — United Kingdom	95.4	90.5	99.6	98.4	65.5	96.4
2	California Institute of Technology — United States	94.5	92.1	97.2	97.9	88.0	82.5
3	University of Cambridge — United Kingdom	94.4	91.4	98.7	95.8	59.3	95.0
4	Stanford University — United States Explore	94.3	92.8	96.4	99.9	66.2	79.5
5	Massachusetts Institute of Technology — United States	93.6	90.5	92.4	99.5	86.9	89.0

Source: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/world-ranking#!/
page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/scores

Figure 6.Top 5 Universities in the world

These universities, have over the last many decades, distinguished themselves in terms of the quality of education and research outcomes they provide, there by attracting and producing the best talents in the world. The Scores for ranking are largely focussed on Teaching, Research, Citations, Industry Income and International outcome – which are all truly quality driven aspects.

Superior standards of Education and Academic Excellence in terms of above-mentioned aspects are the corner stone of any highly ranked Institute. This clearly indicates that quality assurance will be the single most determining factor for an Institute of Higher education to distinguish itself in global arena and this would invariably apply in equal measure for India as well

d. Awareness about Quality assurance in India (Through a Sample Survey)

This section attempts to understand the awareness on Quality Assurance amongst the India Student and teaching community by conducting a sample survey.

The objective is to find out the awareness and also look at getting feedback on suggestions to improve the quality assurance aspects in Indian Institutes of Higher Education.

The Survey had a Questionnaire of 10 questions covering various aspects on awareness and feedback on Quality assurance. The questionnaire was shared largely among the Urban Student and Teaching community in India and I had received a total of 104 responses.

The summary of the responses has been captured below along with the detailed responses (Fig 7), for reference.

Summary of findings from the Survey

1. 75% of the respondents are aware Quality assurance mechanism in their institutes
2. Statistical Process control and Cause & Effect analysis contribute to nearly 75% of the quality aspects in institutes
3. Innovation and Continuous monitoring of student's assessment constitute to nearly 66% of the overall mechanisms adapted by Indian Institutes of Higher education.
4. Support to Student learning and teaching faculty contribute to 54% of the total activities followed towards quality assurance.
5. 41% of the respondents feel there is enough support in place to implement Quality assurance mechanisms 16% feel there is a lack of support
6. 71% of the respondents are aware of quality assurance mechanisms either in India or from Global Institutes

From the survey its quite clear that there is a good awareness on Importance of Quality assurance and a reasonable level of Quality assurance mechanism has been adapted by various Institutes of Higher Education in India.

The other key takeaway from the survey is on the additional Quality assurance mechanisms that can be adapted to improve the Quality aspect of education and they are as below

➢ Focus on Transformational aspects rather than transactional activities

- ➢ Invest in long term continuous improvement areas
- ➢ Adapt to new technology driven innovative learning models

Though India has a significant number of Institutes of Higher Education as we can see from the earlier sections, its also clear that there is ample scope for improvement from the Global rankings that we provided in the earlier sections.

To improve our standards and position ourselves amongst the top best institutes of the world, focussing on Quality aspect of Education becomes mandatory and a deep level of Quality assurance driven Educational system can only address the gaps that Indian Institutes have in comparison to the Top Ranked Global Institutes.

In this scenario, the outcome from the survey that suggests three key areas for improve the quality assurance mechanism can be considered as important guideline that can be taken as a reference for Institutes to build and work upon to improve the Quality aspects of education in their respective Institutes. Adherence to such a Quality assurance mechanism also becomes an Inevitable aspect of Excellence is Education.

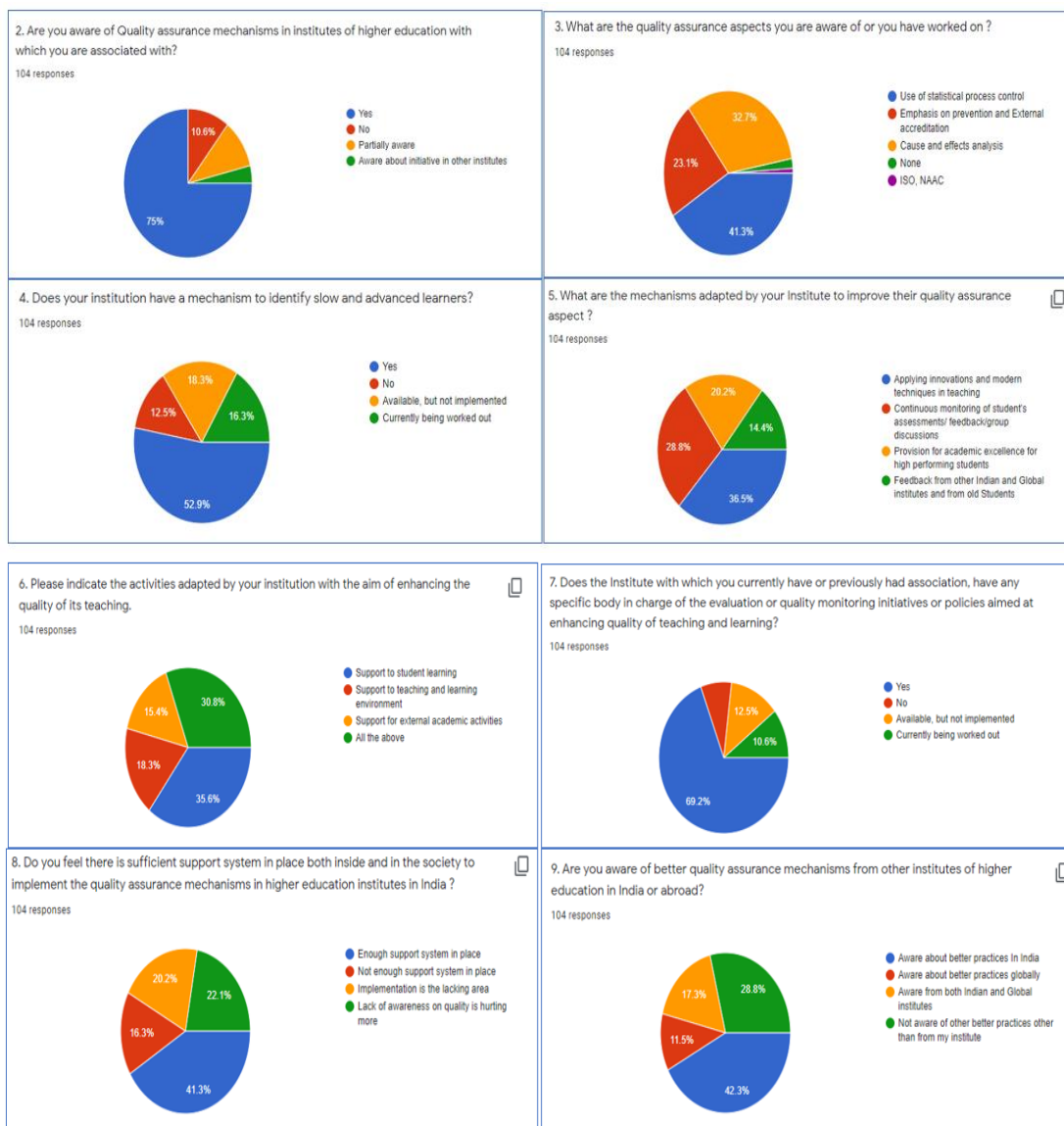### Focus on Transformational aspects rather than transactional activities

This calls for innovative approaches to identify areas that have so far remained unattended and brining in effective changes in those areas with focus on Quality of education

Invest in long term continuous improvement areas

This suggestion calls for Institutes to not get bowed down by challenges in implementing long term structural changes and work on identifying and implementing changes in areas with a long-term perspective in mind that can withstand the test of time with regards to Quality of education in respective Institutes.

Adapt to new technology driven innovative learning models

In an era of technical advancements, Institutes of Higher education are the beginning points of Research and Development and it makes absolute sense that they adapt technology driven initiatives to improve quality aspects of Education.

10. What are the other better-Quality assurance practices that you are aware of, that needs to be incorporated in Higher education institutes in India ?
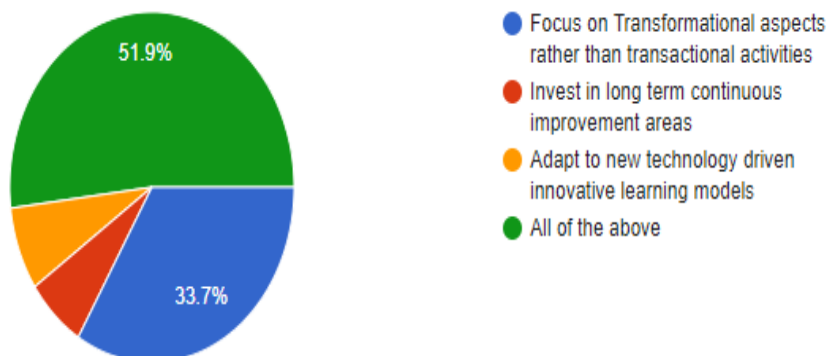
104 responses

Figure 7.Summary of Responses from the Survey

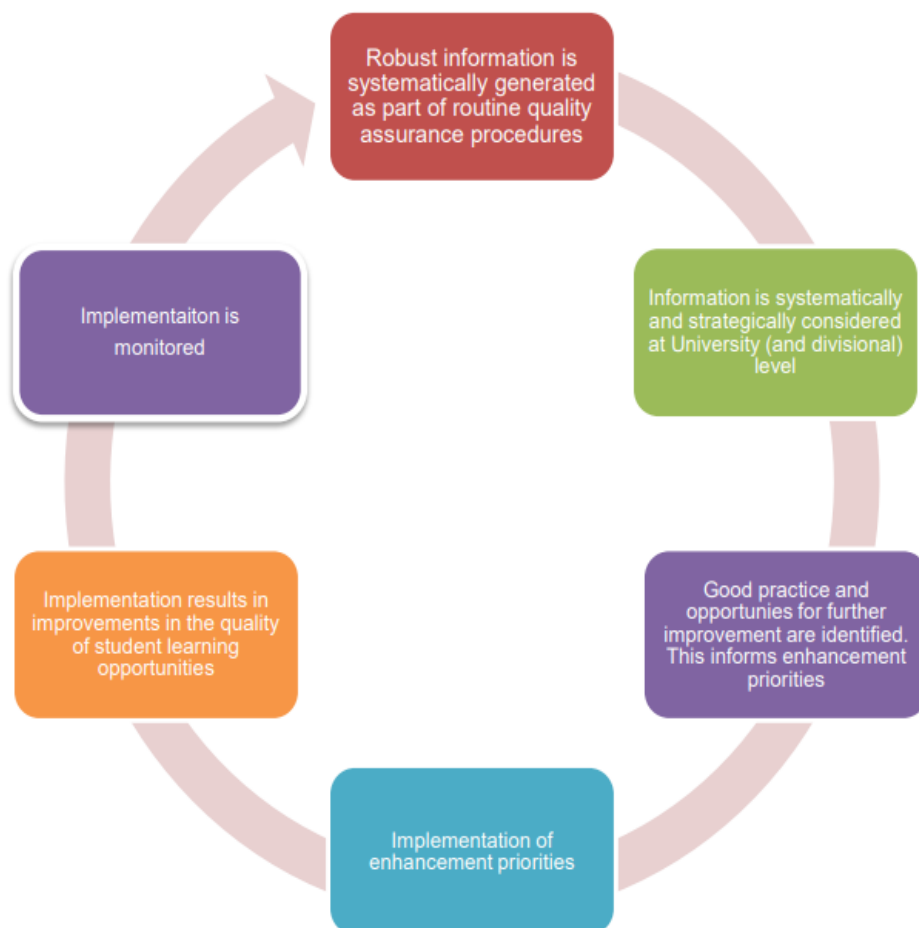### e. Suggestions to Enhance Quality Assurance aspect

As per the survey and in common practice, every institute have their own Quality assurance mechanisms in place and use them to monitor and provide good Quality education and learning atmosphere to the students.

What is then required is a mechanism to enhance the Quality assurance aspect of education and there by ensure better tracking and adherence mechanisms to ensure best quality.

On top of the inference from the Survey responses, reference was taken from the Oxford University Quality Guide Code.

The snapshot below provides a overview of the quality enhancement mechanism that provides a clear sequence of steps that can be a effective value addition to Quality assurance mechanism.

This will be a reference Life cycle for quality mechanism framework that can significantly boost quality assurance approach of an Institute.

Source: https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/academic/documents/media/brief_ guide_to_the_quality_code_july_2017.pdf

Figure 8.Quality Enhancement Approach

Conclusion

From the wide variety of data related to Quality assurance that has been provided in this document there are few things which are very clear, and they are

1. There is huge potential that is available in India which the Institutes can tap to improve their standing
2. Global ranking of Institutes are mainly driven by aspects that are Quality driven reinforcing the Importance of Quality assurance mechanisms
3. While there are quality control and assurance mechanisms in place in Indian Institutes, there is good scope for adapting to new techniques to enhance quality assurance mechanisms.

Considering this, I would like to conclude this study by suggesting that the below aspects be incorporated in the Quality framework of Institutes of Higher Education in India to become Global players and compete with other Top Ranked Institutes in the World.

1. Identify transformative areas and adapt to technology driven Initiatives to improve Quality aspects
2. Adapt a Long-term approach, involving key structural changes, to incorporate a deep sense of quality assurance mechanism that would help institutes withstand the demands of an ever changing world
3. Develop a framework to Enhance the Quality assurance mechanism, similar to the one suggested in fig 8, in the above section. This would help to have a end to end mechanism to ensure improvement in Quality of education and compete and excel amongst the top ranked Institutes of Higher Education around the globe.

Declaration

I, Vidya, Hereby declare that apart from the reference quoted above , the complete paper has been published from my own knowledge and understanding of Quality assurance aspects in Higher Education and supported by the Survey that I had conducted as part of this paper.

References

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