

Strategies for Improving and Sustaining Quality in Higher Education

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Abstract : Higher Education (HE) in the India has experienced a series of remarkable changes over the last fifteen years as successive governments have sought to make the sector more efficient and more accountable for investment of public funds. Rapid expansion in student numbers and pressures to widen Participation amongst non-traditional students are key challenges facing HE. Learning outcomes can act as a benchmark for assuring quality and efficiency in HE and they also enable universities to describe courses in an unambiguous way so as to demystify (and open up) education to a wider audience. This paper examines how learning outcomes are used in HE and evaluates the implications for curriculum design and student learning. There has been huge expansion in the field of higher education, both technical and non-technical, in India during the last two decades, and this trend is continuing. It is expected that another about 400 colleges and 300 universities will be created by the end of the 13th Plan Period. This has led to many concerns about the quality of education and training of our students. Many studies have brought the issues ailing our curricula, delivery, monitoring and assessment. Govt. of India, (via MHRD, UGC, NBA,...) has initiated several steps to bring improvement in quality of higher education and training, such as National Skills Qualification Framework, making accreditation of institutions mandatory in order to receive Govt. grants, and so on. Moreover, Outcome-based Education and Training (OBET) has also been mandated and encouraged in the teaching/learning institutions. MHRD, UGC and NBA has made accreditation of schools, colleges and universities mandatory w.e.f Jan 2014. Outcome-based Education and Training (OBET) approach is learner-centric, whereas the traditional approach has been teacher-centric. OBET is a process which involves the re-orientation/restructuring the curriculum, implementation, assessment/measurements of educational goals, and achievement of higher order learning, rather than merely clearing/passing the university examinations. OBET aims to bring about these desired changes within the students, by increasing knowledge, developing skills, influencing attitudes and creating social-connect mind-set. This approach has been adopted by several leading universities and institutions around the world in advanced countries. Objectives of this paper is to highlight the issues concerning quality in higher education and quality frameworks, to deliberate on the various education and training models, to explain the outcome-based education and assessment processes, to provide an understanding of the NAAC and outcome-based accreditation criteria and processes and to share best-practice outcomes-based accreditation system and process.

Keywords : learning outcomes, curriculum development, pedagogy, outcome based education

Conference Title : ICEHE 2015 : International Conference on Education and Higher Education

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : July 25-26, 2015