

ENSURING HOLISTIC AND MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EDUCATION:ROLE OF IQACs IN HEIs

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Abstract

Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE) are two major attributes of Internal Quality Assurance cell of any higher education institution. It is maintained through the proper quality framework of IQAC in the institution through its policies and procedures is meant for planning, guiding and monitoring the quality initiatives in the HEIs. IQAC has a vital and crucial to play in designing a quality benchmarking procedure for its institution in par with the directions and guidance of UGC and NAAC.

NEP 2020 envisages that all higher education institutions must explore and ensure opportunities for multidisciplinary learning and a holistic education. NAAC has integrated NEP components to the AQAR too. At the same time, the preparedness from the art of institution and the state government are yet to take shape too. It is found very difficult to satisfy the needs of stakeholders as per the recommendation of the government through NEP.

The proposed research paper, explores the scope and prospects of familiarizing multi-disciplinary education through the proper introduction of certificate / add on courses and some similar activities integrating cross cutting issues like gender issue, human rights issues etc too. IQAC can strategize the annual academic activities for each upcoming year with sufficient needy sessions. This paper tries to explore the scope of doing certificate course/ add on courses/ value added courses and other similar practices at the institution to ensure academic mobility, flexibility and multi-disciplinary learning.

Keywords: Quality frameworks, Quality sustenance, academic flexibility and mobility, multi-disciplinary learning, NEP 20220.

Introduction

NEP-2020 states that such "education would be aimed at developing all capacities of human beings - intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner" (NEP, 2020). The policy emphasises the scope and prospect of multidisciplinary education in the higher education institutions to bring a holistic development among the learners in order to equip them with 21st century learning skills and life skills. NEP 2020 envisages a learning that can impart critical thinking skills, human values, professional skills, adaptability skills, environmental awareness and self-management skills among the learners. Hence the insistence on innovative and dynamic curricula is particularly stressed in the policy.

In any higher education institution, affiliated to a university, the curriculum and syllabus designed by the university is transacted at UG and PG levels, whereas the significance for multi-disciplinary approach and holistic learning are minimum. The scope for the same are also considerably low in a disciplinary system implemented at the institutions. The curriculum and syllabus are particularly framed to transact disciplinary

skills for its learners. NEP 2020 insists on the significance of multi-disciplinary approach and the 21st century skills. At the same time the preparedness of the institution within a curricular framework to impart the same in a rigid system of disciplinary programmes is a challenge.

In order to take forward the vision of NEP 2020, translate the ideals into practice and to achieve the goals of this educational policy, the institutions have to remodel the curricular delivery within the system by enhancing and opening platform for multi-disciplinary or Inter Disciplinary learning. Apart from a traditional subject centred approach to curriculum, this design of curricular delivery with the additional learning opportunities, if put forwarded by the institutions, can ensure more academic flexibility and room for holistic education. The lack of multi-disciplinary learning can thus be addressed by the institutions through proper implementation of add on/ certificate/ value added courses. This paper reflects upon the role of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of HEIs in strategizing methods for proper implementation of add on courses/ certificate courses/value added courses at the institutional level in order to translate the NEP goals of multi-disciplinary learning openings as part of 21 st century learning skills.

Role of IQACs at HEIs in Strategic Planning of Multi-disciplinary Learning

The National Education Policy 2020 states, “multi-disciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multi-disciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge” (NEP, 2020). In the disciplinary curricular approach, learner gets minimum opportunity for multi-disciplinary learning. The learning outcome as it is visualised by the NEP 2020, cannot be achieved in such a disciplinary mode of programme. Here if the IQAC of the institution takes proper steps in redesigning the courses through add on courses in each discipline, the scope of multi-disciplinary learning can be maximised within the system. This can be implemented through different stages as follows:

1. Faculty training for familiarising goals of NEP 2020.
2. Faculty empowerment session on designing Add on/ certificate courses.
3. Faculty enrichment programme on outcome-based learning, programme learning outcome and course learning outcomes (PLOs and CLOs).
4. Designing add on courses under each teaching department to address the lack in syllabus such as employability skills, adaptive skills etc.
5. Designing certificate courses by teaching departments for students of other disciplines with a multi-disciplinary perspective to impart holistic learning skills.
6. Designing value added courses that are suitable for all students in the institution, that can impart generic outcomes for any learner.
7. Delivery of courses.
8. Making the courses available in the online platforms/ LMS to enhance distance learning and self-paced learning.
9. Need based Practical sessions.
10. Evaluation and grading.

If the IQAC takes proper measures for needy and suitable course designing and delivery in the college level by the above-mentioned procedures, all the students of the institution can achieve the skills envisaged in the NEP 2020, in a multi-disciplinary way.

Scope and prospect of Multi-disciplinary Approach

Education is seen not just about knowledge of one discipline but about the transferable skills that are gained through multidisciplinary education. These include skills such as critical thinking, analysis, reasoning, logical thinking, problem solving as well as adaptability, communication and flexibility. It is well accepted that employers today are keenly looking for such skills in their potential employees and learners with such portfolios are viewed as being more versatile and adaptable and hence more employable (Anita Priyadarshini and Deeksha Dave 71).

The current curriculum and syllabus are not exactly matching with the needs of students for the 21st century. Often the multi-disciplinary view and approach are missing in the syllabus. For example, a student of psychology learns the wellness and health in the psychological perspective but often lack the same in the physical or physiological perspectives. Here, if the student of psychology could join a certificate course offered by the department of physical education on "Health and Wellness", it will lead the learner to look at her/ his domain of study in a multiple perspective of other discipline too. In the same way, different teaching departments can offer various courses as per the demand of students in the 21st century which will bridge the disciplinary divide and will also widen the learner's knowledge and skills into a wider perspective.

If all the courses are made available as a pool of certificate courses/add on courses, in advance by the institution, learner can choose the course that cater their interest and meet their needs. Such a learning environment will create a system with sufficient choices. In a three-year degree programme, a learner will get a minimum of three courses that can be carefully chosen from the field of various knowledge systems.

Scope of Professional and Employability Skills

It can be observed that the current CBCSS in the HEIs under university of Calicut is having least choices for a learner. The open course delivered in the semester five is the major choice given for a learner. Moreover, curriculum and syllabus are not catering the diverse needs of the learner today like employability skills, professional competency, current research trends in the disciplinary fields, ICT skills, technology-based learning skills, entrepreneurial skills etc. Certificate courses/Add on courses/ Value added courses that discuss the cross-cutting issues like environmental issues, ethics, gender, etc. will offer the right choices for a learner to learn the current aspects of a discipline and create the environment for multi-disciplinary learning. The rigidity in the system of disciplinary divide can be solved effectively through this approach. This system of introducing certificate courses in each year to meet the standards of learning in the 21st century, will be a solution for the rigidity in the current system at HEIs and will create a flexible curricular

design and system in which all learner can get sufficient choices for learning other disciplines that are matching with the needs of the learner.

Each Learner needs to achieve the employability skills with critical skills, ICT skills, communicational skills, adaptability skills, organizational skills, empathy, human values etc. But the disciplinary system in the institutions seems insufficient to meet such needs of the learner. NEP 2020 clearly states the role of institution in equipping the learner with 21st century skills. If the IQAC can devise such courses as value added course or certificate course, each learner will be enriched with these generic learning outcomes.

When this system is introduced through proper preparedness like making the courses clearly available in the website in the beginning of the academic year by IQAC, informing the learners regarding course delivery schedules, enhancing the technology-based learning through LMS if possible, etc., it imparts real opportunity for choice-based learning system with following highlights.

- Flexibility for the learner to move from one disciplinary area of study to another within the duration of study.
- Opportunity for learners to choose the subject/learning area of interest.
- Facilitating online or flipped learning.
- Employability skills.
- Multi-disciplinary approach.
- Holistic idea about the course of study from diverse perspectives of various disciplines.
- Enhances the researches in the future in multi-disciplinary way.

Conclusion

IQAC can ensure the selection and designing of most needy courses in each discipline. Moreover, if the courses can be designed in collaboration with some reputed agency and industry, it will add to the value and quality of the course too. As it is insisted in NEP 2020, the transformational role of a learner and institution can be successfully performed only through the effective strategic planning and deployment through IQAC of the institution. Certificate courses, value added courses and add on courses are the means of effective curricular red designing in HEIs. A learner will be able to achieve the 21st century learning skills and transferable skills through the selection of right courses that will add to the values and bridge the divide too.