ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIBRARIANS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE AT THE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING

G.A. Prasad Rao
Lecturer in Library Science
Andhra Loyola Colleg, Vijayawada

INTRODUCTION:

To convert the learning process from gaining knowledge to attaining skill, maintain a high level of professional efficiency and make continuous quality improvement in the field of Library and Information Science at higher learning institutes need the support of many facets. Plato, an ancient Greek philosopher, in his monumental work *The Republic* gave much importance to education. According to him, any improvement is possible with a good system of education. Teachers are the pillars of any education system. In the efficiency of the system a teacher has great role to play.

The Kothari Commission also appropriately observed: *of all the factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant.* If the teachers realize their importance, their commitment to the profession will increase. Much is expected of him from the society. It is said that the teacher is a nation builder, in the sense that he moulds the minds and character of those who in future decide the destiny of the country. In this direction teacher at the Institutes of higher learning contributes a lot. The scientists, engineers, technocrats, doctors, advocates, political leaders, bureaucrats and even teachers are all shaped and trained in the institutes of higher learning.

On the other hand due to liberalization, privatization and globalisation (LPG), in shaping the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) with potential to capture the benefits of LPG and emerging stronger with sustainable quality. There is a need to emphasise, the collective participation of teachers and all other stakeholders in improving Quality at HEI. The stakeholders other than Teachers, include Non-teaching employees, Students, their Parents, Alumni and Administrators like Vice Chancellor, Dean, Principal, Management, Head of the department etc.

Mr. Deming, an American first developed the idea of Quality in the 1940's who tested it on industrial process using statistical techniques. Although the modem day concept of quality originated with Deming about 70 years back, the concept of quality has a very interesting origin. The ancient wisdom of India, contained in the Gita about 4000 years back defines "True Quality". According to Gita: *The glorification of a teacher into an Acharya takes place when the* teacher converts "Work" in to "Service". A teacher's work is different from the work done by a machine. A machine works mechanically and efficiently turning finally into scrap. A teacher, on the other hand by linking his work (Karma) with an inner vision (Spirit) transforms the performance of duty into Yoga. This ultimately leads to Karma Yoga. The performance of such Karma Yoga converts into dexterity, efficiency and excellence. Thereafter, every action of duty

enriches and strengthens the inner spirit preventing him from turning in to scrap. Hence every institution or service provider must have a clearly defined roadmap that provides for quality control, quality assurance and quality maintenance.

The following checklist (Siddiqui, 2004) for different stakeholders of the HEI's is useful to arrive at their own conclusions about what they would like to do in the future. The checklist is not meant for Yes or No response but to be taken as a guide to do some rethinking on the part of all stakeholders in institutes of higher learning.

Checklist for Teachers / Librarians

- Do I love all my students?
- Am I doing justice with my students?
- Do I love my subject?
- Have I learned all there is to learn?
- Am I here by choice or by accident?

Checklist for Administrators (Vice Chancellor, Dean, Principal, Management, Head of the dept, etc.)

- Are we performing our functions efficiently?
- Are we using the resources objectively?
- Are we using the power given to us with justice?
- Are we here to rule or to serve?
- Have we done any thing for quality improvement on our own?

Checklist for Non-teaching employees

- Am I clear about what is my job?
- Do I do my job well?
- Is there some thing pending on my table?
- Do I blame others for my failure?

Checklist for Students

- Am I using the opportunity for self-improvement?
- Am I clear about my learning objectives?
- Did I take any initiative on my own to learn?
- Do I dislike fellow students who are different from me?
- Did I ever help any body without expecting any thing in return?

Common checklist for all stakeholders of the Institution

- Do we believe opportunity for all?
- Do we believe in gender justice and if so what does it mean?
- Do we believe in a secular society and if yes, are we able to accept the other who is different from us?

ROLE OF LIBRARIANS

The teacher/Librarian has much importance in our society. An ancient Indian prayer also signs *Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheswaraha, i.e., the teacher is Brahma, the God of Creation, he is Vishnu, the God of Maintenance, he is Maheswara, the God of Destruction.* He creates knowledge, learning, wisdom, and also creates out of men and women, equipped with certain skills and ability, which will enable them to face the challenges of life. He is the preserver of learning. He is the destroyer of ignorance. Probably in no other country the teacher is praised to such divine heights. Hence teacher/librarian is required to play different roles and even the same role changes over the years.

ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

- Provide a clear vision and mission of the Institution and lead the entire team for fulfillment of the goal
- Institute programmes that satisfy the divorce learning needs of the students
- Inculcate respect and adherence for *core values* of the organization among members of the team and provide an environment, which celebrates Teaching, Learning and Research.
- Build up structures (organizational), systems (good working procedures) and processes (actual delivery) that promote and recognize quality.
- Ensure that "commitment to quality assurance" becomes a grass root level movement.
- Be open and responsive to feedback received through student opinion surveys, alumni feedback and routine programme assessment questionnaires (student as customer).
- Assure the primary stakeholders (the students) that the institution is in continuous pursuit of higher standards and that honest efforts are being undertaken to impart knowledge and skill.
- Undertake rigorous and periodic evaluation of the conduct of academic programme while subjecting all teaching practices and processes to an objective academic audit.
- Analyse and diagnose the existing state of quality assurance and impart Training through seminars for a strategic approach to quality.
- Continuously raise the "performance bar" by adopting best academic practices of better governed institutions to delight the customer (student).
- Carrying out a regular review of all quality initiatives and invest time and resources necessary for fostering a culture of excellence.

ROLE OF ALUMNI

- Alumni association is an important appendage of an institution
- It can generate database out of its annual records
- A day can be declared as a Reunion Day on which students can assemble and discuss the prospects of the association
- In running of the alumni association, information and communication is key to efficiency.

ROLE OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Feedback and evaluation of the institution from other stakeholders viz., academic students, parents of the students, Non-teaching staff, alumni etc. is an integral part of

continuous process of quality enhancement.
- Feedback from parents of the students will provide impressions of an important segment that constitute major stakeholder in the institutions
- Peer evaluation of the institution provides the community impressions on the standing of the college or University. The evaluation by peers can include the visitors, neighbouring institutions, industry, etc.

OBSTACLES TO QUALITY CONTROL

- Failure of Management to plan for the future
- Lack of consistency in purpose
- Short term thinking at the cost of long term effort
- Improvement to be aimed at by degree not by decree
- Excessive / misplaced regulation causes a backlash by forcing the innovators to return back to *chalk and talk and teaching to test* methods

COMMON CAUSES OF QUALITY FAILURE IN EDUCATION

- Poor curriculum design
- Inadequate and poorly maintained buildings (insufficient resources)
- Poor working environment
- Unsuitable systems and procedures
- Insufficiently creative time tabling
- Insufficient staff development
- Failures in communication
- Lack of knowledge and lack of motivation

THE COST OF FAILURE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Loss of student enrolment
- Damage to reputation
- Loss of opportunities
- Beginning of the End of an Institution's Identity.

CONCLUSION:

It can be concluded that, the number of higher education institutions with *Potential for Excellence* is an indicator of the sustainable social development of a Nation. The motto, "*Opportunity for all* " brings people from various backgrounds into the family of stakeholders of the institution. In this direction there are many barriers involved in the improvement of Quality, and this process cannot be achieved overnight. Hence it needs a commitment among all the stakeholders for the cause of quality assurance at their institution. In a way it is a 360- degree performance appraisal.

On the other hand, in this new global setting quality assurance is a universal need. To adopt new

initiatives and to compete with their own ambitious goal of total quality education, it is essential that a collective participation of all stakeholders of the institution of higher learning. Eventually these are the days that all the HEI's has to ensure the continuous improvement by increase in the stakeholders participation individually with a defined role in managing the higher education institution.

REFERENCES

1. Siddiqui, H.Y. (2004). The Social Responsibility of the Universities, University   News. 42(46), Nov. 15-22,2004. New Delhi: Association of Indian Universities.

2. Aruchami, M. (2004). Quality imperatives in Higher education, University   News. 42(05), Feb. 02-08,2004. NewDelhi: Association of India Universities.

3. Mohanty, J. (2000). Current Trends in Higher Education, Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

4. Ranga Sai, C.V.S. (2003). Developing Quality Management Systems in Higher Education: Current Perspectives, University News. 41(10), Mar. 10-16, 2003. New Delhi: Association of Indian Universities.

5. Jugsharan S. Virdi Knowledge Society and the Universities, University News, Vol.42,No.45,November 08-14,2004.

----@@@---