

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA'S EXPERIENCE

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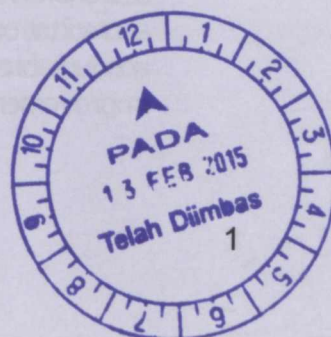
ABSTRACT

As the oldest university in the country, University of Malaya (UM) has long established and implemented various quality assurance mechanisms especially in the core process of Teaching and Learning. The turn of the 21st century saw the need for a formal and more unified mechanism of quality assurance in higher education worldwide. This is closely related to the process of economic growth and globalisation which resulted in the massification of higher education, diversification of academic programmes and mode of teaching.

As a reaction to that phenomena, UM adopted a Quality Management System based on the international requirements of the ISO 9001:2000 in 2001. Quality assurance efforts toward the requirements of the quality assurance framework for public universities started in 2003. This framework is now being consolidated with that of the private institutions under the Malaysian Qualifications Framework. Meanwhile, other quality frameworks such as professional accreditation prevailed alongside new ones such as the Research University requirement as well as other national rating requirements such as the SETARA and international ranking such as the Times Higher Education System (THES). The latest addition to the quality framework is the ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) Quality Guidelines.

This paper overviews the evolution of the UM experience in quality management, highlighting the efforts of integrating one requirement to another from 2001 until today. To date, UM has adopted several major quality frameworks. The unique feature of the UM's approach is her effort in integrating the similar requirements of the various frameworks, carrying out major activities common to all and integrating the monitoring mechanism through a common audit exercise. These efforts are not without challenges, mainly in terms of acceptance by the academic community as well as striking a balance between quality endeavours and the other demands of academia.

Keywords: Globalisation, Quality Management System (QMS), ISO 9001:2000, Quality assurance



INTRODUCTION

Higher education all over the world is undergoing rapid transformation, as a response to both internal and external factors. Economic and population growth led to the increased demand for higher education and thus the increased number of higher education providers. This in turn resulted in the diversification and massification of higher education. The proportion of higher education students have escalated, the number and types of higher education providers risen and more importantly the types of programmes offered are more diversified in terms of contents, structure and thus the qualifications offered.

These changing scenarios of higher education in countries all over the world have also led to the need for a change in the system and mechanisms of quality assurance in higher education. Conventionally, the management of quality assurance in higher education institutions has been solely the responsibility of each institution. Thus, quality control varies from one institution to another. There has been a reconsideration in the agenda for higher education by governments in most parts of the world over the last few decades. This has led to the consensus that quality assurance and quality enhancement becoming a major focus of attention. This shift to formal systems of quality assurance is a significant trend affecting higher education over the last three decades. Today, many countries have organisations or agencies responsible for conducting quality assurance reviews of academic institutions.

This paper provides an overview on the development of quality assurance management in the University of Malaya, with a focus on the efforts of implementing an integrated approach in quality management. The paper also highlights some pertinent challenges faced in embedding the quality culture in an academic institution.

Quality Assurance In Higher Education: The Malaysian Scenario

Generally, the quality assurance system in Malaysia has shifted from the traditional approach focussed on teaching often based on informal procedures, to a more formalised and unified quality assurance system focussed on out-come based learning. Besides, there also exist other quality assurance frameworks which are either internally induced like the Research University Status and the various ratings and ranking exercises by the government or other agencies. It is becoming a trend recently to relate quality in higher education, to national, regional and even world rankings. Higher education institutions tend to adopt mechanisms to measure internal strengths and weaknesses, and on the other hand, seek external evaluation to improve the image of the respective institutions in the international arena. The public, the market, accreditation agencies and stakeholders will insist on performance and accountability of public funds. Rankings and accreditation provides market information and drives the institution to be more accountable and in turn, demand it to perform through systematic continuous improvement measures.

Early Phase- Traditional Quality Assurance

Traditionally, the management of academic quality had solely been the responsibility of the respective institution. The quality control tools varies from one institution to another. The traditional approach of quality assurance constitutes institutional-based mechanisms of academic, particularly teaching control. These include: accreditation of programmes by either national or international bodies, appointment of external examiners who evaluates programmes, courses offered and also moderate student's assessment instruments, e.g examination questions. External examiners are also appointed for higher degree examination of thesis. There is no specific body/unit in the institution, in-charge of quality control and the activities are usually govern by the requirements of specific committees and ultimately the University Senate. There is also no apparent need for standardization or any form of rating or ranking. This was due perhaps to the apparent reason that there was not many education providers then and very little variation in the size, structure and types of programmes offered.

Transitional Phase- Formal Systematic Quality Assurance

The changing high education scenario since the late eighties however led to the change in the approach and system of quality assurance. Besides the increase in the number of public universities, the country also witnessed the mushrooming of private higher education providers and international programmes offered. The above resulted in:

1. the establishment of the National Accreditation Board in 1996, responsible of quality assurance of private higher education institutions in the country. The board provides guidelines on various management practices and conduct accreditation assessments. All private institutions succumbed to the requirements of the board.
2. the establishment of the Quality Assurance Division in the Department of Higher Education in 2001.

Since this phase, public institutions of higher education are subjected to the requirement instituted by the Ministry of Higher Education. The quality assurance activities were coordinated by the Quality Assurance Division, which oversee, set, monitor and review the standards of programmes offered by these institutions. The requirements are spelled out in two major documents:

1. Code of Practice- Quality Assurance for Public Higher Education Institutions on Malaysia. This document contains guidelines on criteria and standards as well as procedures for higher education in Malaysia. The criteria/elements are:
 - a. Vision, Goal and learning Outcomes
 - b. Program Design and Teaching-Learning methods
 - c. Assessments of Students
 - d. Students

- e. Academic Staff
 - f. Educational Resources
 - g. Program Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement
 - h. Leadership and Governance
 - i. Continuous Quality Improvement
2. Guidelines on Standards of Specific Disciplines at Bachelor Degree Level. This document contains guidelines on standard of specific disciplin at the bachelor degree level. Standards given in the first edition are for ten disciplines: Accountancy, Business and Trade, Dentistry, Economics, Education, Information and Communication Technology, Nursing, Science and Social Science and Humanities.

The quality assurance for public institutions of higher learning constitute two major processes:

- a. Internal Audit System involving : the documentation of a database for each specific programme pertaining to the nine criteria and writing a self-assessment report based on the strenght and weaknesses of the programme.
- b. External audit involving assessment from an expert panel from other institutions.

An institution/program which has satisfactorily met the specific standards will only be reviewed after a period of five years.

Transformational Phase- Unified, Holistic Quality Assurance

This period witnessed the massification, diversification and internationalisation of higher education. At the same time, the involvement of professional bodies, both internal and external in the award of qualifications remained. These development warrants the development of a system that enables international comparability and mutual recognition of qualification and calls for the formulation of a national Qualifications Framework.

The development of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) should be seen in the international context and is parallel with efforts at the international level. This framework constitute a unified system of qualifications offered on a national basis by all public and private educational and training institutions including, colleges, universities, vocational institutions ,professional organisations as well as workplace training. In terms of quality assurance, the framework secures standards of qualifications and reinforce policies on quality assurance.

Besides the frameworks described above, there are other other quality management models such as the Total Quality Management (TQM), Quality Management System

(QMS) based on the ISO 9000, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) etc.

Most Malaysian universities have adopted the Quality Management System towards enhancing the quality of their core processes, namely teaching and learning, research as well as other support services. The approach taken in the implementation were different and the focus varies from university to university.

This phase also witnessed other quality frameworks which are either internally or externally induced. These includes:

1. Requirement and Criteria of a Research University Status amongst public universities.
2. Ranking of public universities through the SETARA and ARES
3. External ranking by Times Higher Education Supplement.

Each of this framework focus on various perspective of higher education and different criteria and indicators.

Quality Assurance In The Management Of Education: The University Of Malaya's Experience

The University of Malaya is the oldest university in Malaysia. To maintain such a reputation, the university has continuously strived towards maintaining and enhancing her status amidst the ever-increasing competition from both public as well as the mushrooming private institutions of higher education. This aim is reflected in the Vision and Mission of the University :

Vision

"To be an internationally renowned institution of higher learning in research, innovation publication and teaching".

Mission

"To advance knowledge and learning through quality research and education for the nation and for humanity".

The University's concern and move towards quality assurance as a means for improvement and attainment of excellence were seen in the various efforts initiated since the early period. The evolution of the quality efforts in the university closely relates to the phases at the national level. In the early years, UM implemented quality assurance mechanisms which were isolated in nature, focussing more on the core business of teaching and learning. Amongst the mechanisms put in place were the external examiners for programmes and examinations, external assessors for promotion exercises of the post of professors, a minimum qualifications set for student and staff intake, the need for curriculum review and many others. These mechanisms are still in place, but to date strengthened by the implementation of the QMS. During this time, accreditation by professional bodies also constitutes part of the quality assurance mechanism in the University of Malaya. This mechanism is still largely in place and further enhanced today.

The second phase of quality development efforts in UM started with the implementation of a Quality Management System (QMS). The QMS of the University of Malaya was implemented in June 2001. The system is both holistic and integrated in nature. The choice of using the MS ISO 9001:2000 requirement reflects the adherence to international requirements as well as an external form of assessment through a third party audit. This system was developed and implemented with the overriding aim of achieving quality in the management of education, focussing on the management of the core processes. The aim of the QMS is stated in the Quality Policy of the University, that is: University of Malaya is committed towards the implementation of quality teaching and learning, research and related support services, creating and promoting knowledge through continual improvement for the good of her clients namely her students.

The unique feature of the UM QMS compared to other local public institutions was its holistic nature, reflected in the vertical as well as horizontal spread of the system. In line with the main feature of a Quality Management System, that is process-based in nature, the QMS of the University was formulated based on major core processes identified in relation to the major products of the institution, which are: the learning experience, publications and patents and support services. Three major processes were identified as core processes responsible for the products that is the process of teaching and learning, research and the various support services ranging from human, financial and physical resource management, student affairs and residential college management as well as other support services like the sports, cultural and library services. The implementation of the system also cuts across the main campus of the University covering all academic centres which are offering academic programmes (Faculties/Centres and Institutes) and service oriented centres.

The hallmark of development was the MS ISO 9001:2000 certification in December 2002. This certification marks the institutionalisation of a Quality System and the beginning of a Quality Era for the University. The recommendation by SIRIM QAS International Bhd to extend recertification up to 2008 is a reflection that the system is currently well entrenched. This in turn, reflecting in part the success of the university in embedding of a quality culture amongst its population.

When the Ministry of Higher Education introduced the Quality Assurance Framework for public universities, UM once again reacted and adopted the requirement. The university consolidated its efforts towards the documentation of the requirements the Code of Practice for public universities as well as the programme specifications of the various field of studies; determined by the Ministry. To date programmes from faculties of Computer Science and Information Technology, Dentistry, Economics and Business and Accountancy have been assessed by the review panel.

Recently, the quality assurance framework for public universities has been replaced with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework, UM once again reacted to the requirements of the framework and is currently at a transitional stage of adapting to the new requirements towards the preparation of both the programme and institutional audits to be implemented under this framework.

At the same time, the University is also sensitive to the requirements of other Quality Assurance frameworks such as the Research University Status, The Ranking of Malaysian Public Universities (SETARA), and also the Times Higher Education supplement Ranking. Although the criteria used by each framework varies, there are slight overlaps and each have their own strength in terms of the core business of an institution of higher education, that is, teaching-learning, research and research related activities. The University of Malaya has chose to be involved in all these frameworks thus working towards achieving the targets set for each criteria (Table 1).

Table 1: Quality Assurance Framework- Requirements of and Focus

No	Quality Framework	Requirement	Focus
1	QMS based on MS ISO 9001:2000	Government & Institution	Process
2	Quality Assurance for Public Universities	Ministry of Higher Education	Input (Programme)
3	Ranking of Public Universities	Ministry of Higher Education	Input & Output
4	Research Universities	Ministry of Higher Education	Output
5	Accreditation	Government & Professional Bodies	Output
6	THES	External	Output
7	AUN Quality Manual	External	Input (Programme)

To coordinate and facilitate all activities pertaining to the quality frameworks, UM has formed a Quality Assurance Management Unit and to complement this central unit, a Quality Committee has been formed at the various faculties/centres/institute. This committee coordinate and implements quality related activities at the respective responsibility centre.

Parallel to the above development, at the institutional level, UM also since about 2005 embarked on serious strategic planning efforts, involving the revisiting of its vision and mission, realignment of strategic planning with the various aspirations of higher education at national and international levels which resulted in a strategic plan map to be a guide towards the achievement of its vision of becoming an internationally renowned institution of higher learning in research, innovation publication and teaching. The main strategy implemented towards the realisation of the vision and mission of the institution is the formation and implementation of the Key Performance Indicators at all levels of the institutions. To facilitate the strategic planning activities and institute the enforcement and measurement of the key performance indicators, the university has enhanced and realigned the Strategic Planning and Development Unit.

An Integrated Approach of Quality Assurance- The UM Way

The above discussion shows the adoption of multiple quality assurance framework adopted by the university. The rationale for the adoption of such wide array of framework is two folds; firstly, the quest to adopt quality frameworks which ensures quality at the various ends of an activity, i.e the input, process and the output. In this context for example in teaching and learning, the programmes (input) are quality assured by the

standards and criteria of MQF, the execution of teaching and learning (process) by the standards of the MS ISO 9001:2000 and the quality of graduates/awards (output) by the requirements of professional bodies or the various ranking and rating criteria. This model is applicable to the other activities namely research and support service.

Secondly, is the quest to adhere to the requirements of the various stakeholders in the business/service, namely higher education both at national and international levels. UM, in adopting these frameworks thus strive towards the requirements of the Ministry of Higher Education, the industry, international agencies/institutions, parents, not forgetting the students and in many circumstances the staff of the university as well.

The main challenge for the university is how to streamline and structure the activities carried out in meeting all the requirements so as to conserve resources (time, finance, human and physical) to avoid duplication and overlaps.

Experiences indicated that, there are substantial overlaps in the requirements of the various frameworks and more important is the existence of certain common traits which runs through all frameworks. Thus, the UM management has agreed that if the activities pertaining to various requirements can be structured and realigned, duplications and overlaps can be minimized, quality assurance activities can be streamlined, coordinated and integrated.

The first task is to identify the common requirements and common traits of all frameworks.

The following are important common traits of all the quality assurance frameworks adopted by UM:

1. Documentation: this includes the documentation of both the procedures and the records of implementation of activities. The principle is "do what is documented and document what is done". All the frameworks requires substantial amount of documentation, thus the challenge is not how to avoid documentation but rather how do we implement a systematic and integrated documentation system.
2. Conformity and Effectiveness: this relates to the requirements of meeting standards/criteria set by the stakeholders/customers and the institution itself and achieving the standards/objectives set. The need for conformity applies to the input, for example, a programme to be offered must meet certain programme specifications, process, an activity must confirm to procedures stipulated by the institution itself or other regulatory or statutory requirement, and the output- the graduates from a programme must meet the professional or industry requirement. Degree of conformity is measured by setting quality indicators.
3. Stakeholders/Customer focus- One of the main idea which drives quality management is customer satisfaction. If an institution can figure out what its customers require and ensure customer satisfaction, then they shall come back to the institution, tell others about the institution and this will increase the

attractiveness of the institutions. Customer satisfaction also relates closely to branding, which is a significant asset to any businesses/service. Brand names deliver trust in any service and customer pays handsomely for services they think they can trust. Without quality assurance branding becomes an impossible proposition. A brand is not a brand if it does not possess a reliable and trustworthy personality, in the eyes of the customers. This can also be translated in the perspective of higher education.

4. Monitoring, Measurement and Factual-based Decision Making – this relates to the need to assess conformance, process performance, and customer satisfaction. It means that the organization should institute a formal and structured mechanism monitoring of process, like audit and assessment as well as for data collection, storage and analysis. The information gathered on process and products would be the basis for decision making and continual improvement which is another common trait of any quality assurance framework.
5. Continual Improvement- The basic tenet for any quality assurance mechanism is not fault finding but rather problem identification for the sake of continual improvement. Two gems of continual improvement are corrective and preventive actions. Other mechanisms are implementing of continual improvement projects and sharing of good practices from within the institution or other institutions.

The need to maintain these traits resulted in the implementation of many activities in terms of documentation, monitoring, data collection as well as actions and strategies to increase conformance to the various standards and achieved targets set by the various quality frameworks. These activities cuts across all frameworks, thus leading to the existence of activities, which are overlapping, duplicative and repetitive in nature thus resulting in the waste of resources be it human, physical and financial. To overcome this problem and induced a more systematic and structured management of quality, UM is now streamlining and restructuring the major activities of all quality assurance framework towards an integrated approach, where common activities cutting across frameworks are identified, organized and managed by a unit identified by the university.

Some of the strategies implemented are as follows:

1. **Alignment and Streamlining of Documentation Activities.** In this process UM has chosen the QMS documentation system as the base, where, documentation of requirements of the various quality frameworks are being adapted and incorporated in either the Quality Manual for those relating to policy matters, or the quality procedures, work instructions as well as guidelines and specifications. The basic task was the identification of common requirements between the frameworks, and incorporating the requirements of a new framework into the QMS system in cases where they do not exist. The process of streamlining the documentation system is an on-going process governed by the procedures stated in the document UM-PT00-PK01- Control of Document which is one of the mandatory documents of MS ISO 9001:2000. The advantage adhering to this

procedure is the assurance that any changes in policies, requirements, specifications must be carried out according to certain procedures, endorsed by a certain level of authority and most important documented. This ensures transparency, consistency and continuity of critical policies and processes. For this purpose, the Quality Assurance Management Unit coordinates the process with the core process owners.

2. **Internal and External Control Mechanisms and Performance Monitoring**-there are several major mechanisms involved, including internal audits for QMS, Finance and Programme, and external audits involving a third party audit for QMS, Management Audit, Research University Audit, Professional accreditation of programmes audits and External assessment of programmes by national and regional agencies. Whilst the external audits/monitoring are beyond the control of the institution, the internal audits and assessments are carried out in-house. Since 2004, UM has adopted an integrated internal audit incorporating the requirements of the MS ISO 9001:2000, research university criteria, programmes standard for public universities as well as achievement in terms of the rating and ranking criteria. Integrated Audits are complex in nature, requiring a well coordinated and integrated checklist representing the frameworks and more important the competency of internal auditors in terms of the requirements of the various frameworks. UM has a lot of room for improvement in this aspect.
3. **Streamlining and Coordination of Customer Feedback Mechanisms**-UM has in placed various customer feedback mechanisms. Two major categories are: centrally coordinated system in the form of a Complaints System and Graduate survey managed by the QAMU. On the other hand, there are isolated mechanisms in the form of surveys and consultative activities carried out by responsibility centres. These include on-line maintenance complaint system, Consumer Day, Course and Teaching Assessment and the various surveys carried out by support service centres. With MQF, there is an apparent need for more customer feedback mechanism including, exit surveys, market surveys and alumni surveys. With such a wide array of customer feedback mechanisms, UM realized the need for a proper coordination in terms of implementation and documentation of survey findings so that they can be utilized in decision making and continual improvement efforts.
4. **Monitoring and Measurement of Performance.** This involves two aspects, data collection and analysis and creation and maintenance of an updated data bases. One aspect of performance monitoring and measurement is the measurement of quality objectives formulated for each core processes under the QMS. Data are collected and analyzed annually and presented at Management Review Meetings. Indicators where performance is consistently high would be changed in terms of the targets or to newer indicators, whilst for low achievement indicators, corrective and preventive actions would be identified and implemented. Since 2007, UM has instituted the system of Key Performance Indicators for several major domains related to the main activities of the university. For each domain,

criteria are set to be achieved by faculties, departments and staffs. These criteria and the standards (targets) are being determined by a committee and endorsed by the management, taking into considerations the various standards set by the relevant quality frameworks: the research university, the national rating system (SETARA) and the national ranking system (e.g THES). Once the KPI system is in place and the criteria are stable, they shall be coordinated with the quality objectives and documented in the Quality Manual. UM has also installed a tracking system of performance, the UMIST which can be integrated with pertinent data base of the QMS. This would provide a comprehensive data base for staff, departmental and faculty's performance.

In addition, the university also has many information system related to important processes, like the Integrated Student Management System (ISIS), Human Resource Information System (HRIS), Financial Information System (FIS) which provides data for decision making and management.

With such a wide array of information system and thus huge amount of information available, UM need to have a unit in place to coordinate relevant information required by the various quality frameworks. This is to enhance accuracy and consistency of data and thus information dissemination. The early steps towards this improvement are the distribution of task to the Quality Assurance Management Unit (QAMU) and Strategic Planning and Development Unit (UPPS) in terms of data coordination.

5. Continual Improvement- this is the life-line of the quality cycle, which all quality frameworks propagate. Since the implementation of the QMS, UM has carried out corrective actions based on audits non-conformance, customer complaints and findings of the customer surveys carried out. Since 2004, the university has instituted the Continual Improvement Projects Programme whereby every responsibility centre is to formulate and implement a project identified from either non-conformance incidents, or regular customer complaints or findings of their customer survey. As incentives, projects are evaluated and the best project would be presented for other responsibility centres to emulate as best practices.

In moving towards a more concerted and integrated approach to continual improvement, the university has initiated the preventive Action Request programme recently, where based on either the complaints system or the customer survey, several committees are being formed to look into and take proactive actions onto potential problems. Such committees are the Security Committee, the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Research Committee. These committees shall identify potential problems in relation to their respective processes and come up with strategies to prevent the problems from occurring.

The above form some of the efforts implemented in the University of Malaya towards the aim of integrating and consolidating activities which are common to most if not all the quality frameworks which the university chose to adhere to. The aim is to ensure that

activities are not repetitive and overlapping and that a common mechanism exists to support the relevant frameworks.

Challenges Ahead

University of Malaya like most organisation instituting a quality work culture faces many challenges. The challenges are multi-dimensional in nature constituting the various Ms- Management, Man, Money and Machinery.

The first challenge is the embedding of a quality culture, amongst the various levels of staff within and organisation and amongst higher education institution at the national level. In terms of management, if a quality culture is to be embedded in a department or a faculty or a university a high level management and leadership abilities would be a crucial requirement. The style of management pertinent to such change management would be management for quality rather than management of quality. The former refers to a situation where senior managers need to lead the members sensitively and skillfully employing what Barnett (1992) termed as the two "i" approach- information and involvement as opposed to the two "c"- command and control. The embedment of a quality culture requires a transformational leader rather than a transactional leader. A transformational leader innovates, focus on people, ask what and why and play an active role in raising expectation (Gordon, 2002). The leader/manager must lead based on the principles of teamwork, heartwork and network- gaining trust and involvement of staffs at all levels. To achieve such leadership qualities, institutions have to actively provide leadership training for the management of change which will ensure sustainability of the system.

In terms of man, the university community at large, the challenge is to instill awareness on the importance to a quality culture and the realisation that quality is the shared responsibility. This means that staffs at all levels have their respective role and contribution to the quality of the institution as a whole. One task is to form a mission-focussed workforce characterised by the change from "me to us" and "yours to ours attitude".

The next challenge, in terms of money, is 'opportunity cost'. Quality management like all other activities has an opportunity cost; the cost which gauge the efficiency of the allocation of resources. The setting up and implementation of a quality assurance system is usually high, thus must be carefully considered and evaluated. In England for example, it was estimated that, subject reviews, Research assessment Exercise, bidding for special funds, continuation audits and data collection for monitoring purposes cost the education sector approximately 250 million pound sterling per year (L., Lomas, (2004) argue that this amount of money can be used to hire more staff or purchase more laboratory equipments to improve the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, there are not just the financial opportunity cost but also the "hard managerialism" that requires copious, detailed documentation, standardisation and clearly defined and easily traced paper trails. These can reduce and limit staff creativity and flexibility and consequently lead to decrease motivation amongst staffs (Hargreaves, 1998). Whatever the costs are

and despite the difficulties in estimating them, the point remains that alternative strategies could be adopted using the limited resources in higher education and thus it is pertinent upon senior management team members to ensure that the most effective cost is made.

Last but not least, is the challenge in terms of machinery- this refers to two aspects: firstly the infrastructure and facilities to support quality assurance requirements (space, classes, laboratories, accomodation and transport facilities and the like) and secondly, the management machinery interms of organisational structure, units and distribution of roles and responsibilities. The existence of a central coordination unit is pertinent but not the only critical success factor to quality management. Complimentary units/organisations should be established or enhanced and more important the interlinkages between these units encouraged to assure that the activities are streamlined and compliment each other. The major driver for all the above is top management commitment- which is infact the key success factor to an effective quality management system and the assurance of quality service by the institution.

CONCLUSION

Quality assurance in higher education is not new. It has existed for a long period occuring in different forms and context. Quality has always been considered a journey not a destination, thus there is no end to quality assurance efforts. Challenges are met and overcome, but new challenges emerges as a result of the changing climate of higher education both within the national boundaries and beyond. The important forces of globalisation adds another dimension to the challenges to quality assurance. Quality is the responsibility of many parts- the stakeholders, thus in the context of a globalising higher education the need for collective actions is high both within nation and at the global level. The formation of national and international network of quality assurance agencies is a good sign towards global cooperation in quality assurance.

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