

Quality Control Indicators for Teacher Education

¹Dr. Dinesh Kumar Sharma, ²Praveen Kumar

^{1,2}Dept. of Teacher Education, J. V. Jain College, Saharanpur, India

Keywords

KAs - Key Areas, TEIs - Teacher Education Institution, ODL - Open Distance Learning, QIs - Quality Indicator

Introduction

The quality of basic education provided to our children is largely influenced by the quality of our teachers in the schools. As no nation can afford to provide poor quality education, it is necessary that we build a strong system of quality teacher education – on which depends the quality of the teacher and ultimately the nation's education. The present standards for the teacher education programmes in most of the Asian and African countries rests totally with government agencies who have very little or no involvement and understanding of the profession. They are concerned only with the issue of growing teachers shortage and of ways and means to overcome the problem. It is high time we realize that it's not just the teacher shortage but the quality of "so called" trained teachers that is primarily responsible for quality in the school system. Realizing that the quality of the teachers as long regarded is a professional responsibility rather than a policy issue, and the need to evolve a frame work and evaluation tool to help institutions in quality assurance and continuous improvement, the national assessment and accreditation council (NAAC) in collaboration with the commonwealth of learning (COL) has initiated the process of developing quality indicators for teacher education using a structured process, the group set out to select indicators to cover the six key areas namely: Curriculum design and planning; Curriculum transaction and evaluation; Student support and progression; Research, Development and extension; Infrastructure and learning resources; Organization and management. The expert group converged on a final list of 75 indicators covering six 'key areas' and 27 "quality aspects". Although these indicators do not focus totally of the quality improvement of the teachers peer se, they provide focus on what institutions can do to improve teacher quality and quality provision of the program.

This paper presents a background perspective to quality in teacher education and its assessment along with a set of quality indicators with descriptors and other details under six key area.

The discussions and deliberations resulted in identifying six priority areas henceforth called as the "Key Areas" (KAs), which are central to the implementation of any teacher education programme. Within each identified key area specified functional aspects have been detailed as Quality Aspects (QAs). These quality aspects represents and cover most of the broad functional aspects of a TEI cutting across geographic locations and transaction modes. Each of the quality aspect is further delineated in terms of the actual tasks, which actually represent the quality of a TEI. These operational features within each quality aspects are called the quality indicators (QIs) and 75 of them were identified by the Expert Group.

Quality Indicators: A Tool For Quality Assessment

The key Areas (KAs) represent six dimensions of a TEI's functioning encompassing all its academic as well as administrative and management activities. Though it is possible to visualize the TEI's functioning differently, the "Toolkit" assumes, at present, that the various dimensions of the functioning of any TEI either

face-to-face or ODL systems are represented by these six KAs. In other words, the KAs provide a backdrop for viewing the several quality aspects and the actual task details therein. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind the description of each KA while trying to discern the QIs. The appropriateness of the QIs has to be seen within the scope of the KA. If in a particular TEI and QI seems either to be inappropriate or partially applicable, it should be redefined or altered accordingly, but without losing sight of the KAs. With a view to clarifying this, a brief description of the KAs is given hereunder.

Key Area I: Curriculum Design And Planning

It is common knowledge that curriculum of most TEIs are similar in that they share a common goal of teacher preparation. The variations are worked out in respect of the type of programme being offered by the TEI. Some may offer preparatory programmes for entrant teachers, some may focus on particular stage for which teacher is being prepared, some may provide backup programmes for working teachers, and so on. At the same time, most TEIs are part of a larger network of institutions, such as universities or departments under the ministries in respective countries. A broad curriculum framework is adopted as a common direction provider to all the constituent institutions. Usually it is the macro unit that specifies details of syllabus including the assessment procedures. In spite of all such streamlining the actual curriculum transaction is unique to each institution. This is because of the institutional goals, the way the institution visualizes the how and why of carrying out selected learning activities and plans the academic programme details. In this sense, what the institution implements is its 'operational curriculum' and it is designed in an internally relevant manner by each institution. This is very institution specific process. The quality concern of the institution is thus reflected in the manner in which this operational curriculum is designed and planned. It is in this purview the quality aspects under this KA are stated to be - The process of Curriculum design, Institutional vision, Curriculum content, and, Curriculum revision.

Key Area II: Curriculum Transaction And Evaluation

Curriculum transaction is the most crucial dimension of an institution's functioning. The dynamism, flexibility and intentions of the curriculum visualized /planned need to be explicated in the transaction modes, which means, these features must be observable in the manner in which the curriculum design is put to practice. The best laid plans may be rendered less effective by weak implementation mechanisms. The extent of teacher involvement and commitment, student interest and motivation, coordination between and among the various units of the institution as well as the several learning activities, meaningful interconnections among the theoretical and practical activities on the one hand and the institutional and the field based activities on the other are important considerations for effective curriculum transaction. Besides these, the kinds and procedures of assessment of student learning, mechanisms of feedback and its use to enrich the curricular inputs, are equally significant as they showcase to students and teachers the actual relevance of the learning activities. There can be a wide range of transaction practices: from well coordinated meaningful activities pre-designed by teachers and participated by students,

systematically monitored by teachers (teacher centric) to entirely learner evolved, learner need based, teacher facilitated, and not pre-designed but evolving set of activities (learner centric). Most institutions are somewhere between these two extremes.

One thing must be remembered. Some of the QIs listed may be found 'not applicable' to particular transaction modes. For instance, time allocation for particular components such as theory classes, practice teaching, community based activities and so on may not apply in the same manner to the ODL mode. Yet, these are not irrelevant to the ODL; they need to be stated differently in order to accommodate the needs of individual learner. Similarly, other aspects also need to be seen in respect of the learning context/institutional situation and appropriately defined.

Key Area III: Research, Development And Extension

These terms are very familiar to most persons, though they are connoted differently quite often. Research is perceived as something technically 'heavy' something that is not ordinary, is very abstract, etc. Thus, every teaching institution may not feel capable of pursuing research. It is true that specialized institutions for research have been established and the earlier expressions may be appropriate for them. The view taken here is slightly variant. Research refers to any systematic attempt to understand something, even practice. Seen thus, every academic institution has research as an integral component of its existence. Every TEI places its emphasis on research differentially on a continuum of need based problem solving to formal rigorous exploration of educational phenomena. The kinds and extent of emphasis on research that a university department places will be naturally different from a teaching college. Pursuing practice in field relevant ways requires generating evidence to find out the process ramifications that worked, the impact generation and the outcome relevance of the practice. In this sense, research development and extension are closely linked to practice in education. The work done as development and extension can be very well the substance for research just as any systematic exploration can contribute to enhancing the worth of development and extension activities. It is necessary not only to be aware of the commonly connoted meanings of the terms extension and development, but also be able to visualize in house and/or field based development activities that lend strength to the regular processes in one's own institution and to other institutions.

Key Area IV: Infrastructure and Learning Resources

Resource sufficiency is crucial to the effective functioning of an institution. It goes to building up a congenial atmosphere, supports and sustains the working ethos within an institution. In a TEI inputs for theory and practical components of the programme require different types of physical infrastructure. Therefore, it is essential that a mechanism is in place to ensure availability of adequate and appropriate infrastructure and for its constant augmentation to keep pace with the academic growth of the institution.

Facilities like the library are the actual learning locations and so it is essential that they have adequate volumes in terms of books, journals, other learning materials and facilities for technology aided learning which enable students to acquire information, knowledge and skills required for their study. Thus it is not only necessary that the computer facilities and other learning resources are available in the institution for its academic and administrative purposes but are also accessible to staff and students who are adept at using them. It is not merely the availability of the space and infrastructure, but the way in which it is maintained and

productively utilized that decides the quality of the infrastructure. Thus, it is necessary that there is an effective mechanism for maintenance of physical and instructional infrastructure such as buildings, ICT facilities, laboratories, learning resource center and other allied infrastructure of the institute.

Key Area V: Student Support and Progression

Students of a TEI are being prepared to operate as professionals with responsibilities and commitment. The extent of their learning and absorption during the TE programme depends considerably on the comfort they feel in the institution. Along with access to the available learning resources and physical comforts it is essential that the students perceive a cohesiveness and involvement in the institution- both with the staff and the peers. The institution has to identify the needs of the students and provide individualized support depending on the nature and extent of problems confronting the students. The various support services thus need to take into account the students' educational, social, personal and vocational needs comprehensively. Facilitating mechanisms like guidance cell, placement cell and financial aid to support students are some examples. Through the various activities on and off the campus the institution encourages positive social interaction and self-motivation fostering the holistic development of the student.

This Key Area thus reflects the efforts of an institution to provide necessary support to students facilitating good campus experiences and their holistic development. It also helps to look at the institution's linkages and attempts to collect, analyze and use feedback and contributions from students and alumni, to the institution and vice-versa.

Key Area VI – Organisation And Management

An effective internal quality management demonstrates dealing with the processes through team work, involving people from all units and levels, improvement and training in management systems, identification and elimination of barriers to teaching-learning and constant review and analysis of data for development. Participatory management procedures and creative governance of human and material resources are important areas which reflect the quality of an institution and ensure that the academic and administrative planning in the institution move hand in hand. The goals and objectives need to be communicated and deployed at all levels to ensure every individual employee's contribution towards institutional development. The institution needs good resource management practices, which support and encourage performance improvement, planning and implementation strategies. The financial resources of the institution need to be judiciously allocated and effectively utilised. All of these are reflected in this key area.

Distribution of quality aspects & quality indicators

within the key areas

Key Area (KA)	Quality Aspects (QA)	Quality Indicator (QI)
I. Curriculum Design and Planning	1. Institutional Vision	QI 1
	2. Process of Curriculum Design	QI 2, QI 3 & QI 4
	3. Curriculum Content	QI 5, QI 6, QI 7, QI 8 & QI 9
	4. Curriculum Content	QI 10 & QI 11
II. Curriculum Transaction and Evaluation	5. Induction/Orientation	QI 12 & QI 1e3
	6. Transaction of Theory	QI 14, QI 15, QI 16 & QI 17
	7. Transaction of Practical Experiences	QI 18, QI 19, QI 20 & QI 21
	8. Assessment and Evaluation	QI 22, QI 23, QI 24 & QI 25
	9. Teacher and Teaching	QI 26, QI 27 & QI 28
III. Research, Development and Extension	10. Research and Development	QI 29, QI 30, QI 31 & QI 32
	11. Community Engagement	QI 33 & QI 34
IV. Infrastructure and Learning Resources	12. Physical Infrastructure	QI 35 & QI 36
	13. Instructional Infrastructure	QI 37
	14. Human Resources	QI 38, QI 39 & QI 40
V. Student Support and Progression	15. System Efficiency	QI 41, QI 42 & QI 43
	16. Feedback Mechanism	QI 44, QI 45 & QI 46
	17. Diagnosis and Remedial Programme	QI 47, QI 48 & QI 49
	18. Guidance and Counselling Service	QI 50, QI 51 & QI 52
	19. Admission Procedure	QI 53 & QI 54
	20. Social, cultural and Leisure Activities	QI 55 & QI 56
VI. Organization and Management	21. Internal Coordination and Management	QI 57, QI 58, QI 59, QI 60 & QI 61
	22. Academic Calender	QI 62 & QI 63
	23. Faculty Recruitment	QI 64, QI 65 & QI 66
	24. Financial Governance	QI 67, QI 68, QI 69, QI 70 & QI 71
	25. Academic Quality and Management	QI 72, QI 73, QI 74 & QI 75

The proper identification and definition of QIs assume importance in the context of continuous improvement and quality assurance in teacher education. These QIs are introspective in nature and thereby provide valuable inputs to the development function of the institution. Some of the QIs are interpreted as the areas, activities or processes on which evidence needs to be collected through interviews, feedback sessions, interactions or validation of documented information. Some of them reflect on the evidence and are indicative of the level of achievement or that which has to be achieved. The greatest advantage of the application of QIs in performance appraisal is that it is not static like an instrument i.e. the exercises and approaches can be adopted by an individual or by a team and they can be changed as per the requirements and contexts in which the institution is functioning. This flexibility allows the institutions to gauge the improvement to be made for bringing in effectiveness in the implementation process and performance excellence.

Conclusion

Over the years much data has been collected on the indicators for administrative purposes. Unfortunately it has neither been used for the purpose of quality improvement nor has been rigorously assessed for various dimensions of data quality such as accuracy, reliability and reproducibility. It is therefore essential that a formal process of acting on results be in place. Consideration of these recommended indicators by the institutions with a serious intention for quality improvement might result in good practices resulting in improved Teacher Quality. Although the recommended indicators represents a good set of measures, it is important to recognize that

these indicators will require considerable refinement over time and lot of contextualizing. In a way these indicators are the beginning of the benchmarking process - an identification of the aspects and processes to be addressed. On self-assessment by the institutions, these would highlight the perceived strengths and weaknesses. External assessors can use these indicators and the good practices in evaluating the institutions and the assessment agencies to develop a good practice database and establish benchmarks. The use of these indicators by the external assessors will make the assessment more context free and objective. It is envisaged that a provision of unblended data with public access will enable the performance of teacher education institutions to be opened up to greater public scrutiny and enhance accountability. In terms of future it is the user's view that will be a critical driver behind any upgrades and further conceptual development. A fairly strong association between teacher training and teacher effectiveness and learning efficiency, and adverse effects on the learner appear to be especially common after transitions. Quality of the teacher educators, participatory role of practice teaching school staff in the skill development process, and use of a core set of data in transition from one type of teaching to another are some of the areas on which we would like to work in future. Though development of a standard for a teacher training programme and benchmarking which would result in teacher effectiveness would be highly controversial, and would be especially difficult to do at the teacher education level, given the many differences between the teacher training programmes and school systems, we would like to attempt on it in future

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