INTERNAL ACADEMIC AUDIT: NEED OF THE HOUR IN HOSPITALITY INSTITUTES, NCHMCT, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Background : *Academic audit is an important and essential part of any educational institution. It provides the opportunity for a regular strategic overview of learning and teaching activities of any institution in its entirety. National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT) is an autonomous body under Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The council centrally regulates academics for B.Sc. Hospitality and Hotel Administration and nine other structured courses of study that are imparted at the existing 21 Central Institutes of Hotel Management, 16 State Government Institutes of Hotel Management and 14 Private Institutes of Hotel Management affiliated with NCHMCT.* ***Methods:*** *Data was collected by means of a questionnaire which was sent to all the Hospitality Institutes (n=51) through e-mail under the NCHMCT.* ***Results:*** *49% institutes responded and sent back the filled questionnaire. The study identifies that 92% IHMs recommend a well defined Internal Academic Audit is need of the hour in Hospitality Institutes under the umbrella of NCHMCT.*

Key Words: Hospitality, Academic Audit, Stakeholders, Quality Assurance.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Academic Audit has been well defined and has gathered pace at International level. Various quality assurance systems have been developed to systematize the existing and new institutions to take up the Academic audit process. Hospitality education in India is spread over in universities, private institutions and hotel schools. Hospitality education in India was initiated by Government of India in mid 1950's in Mumbai with United Nations funding support (www.acdemia.edu). Initially 4 Institutes of Hotel Management were set up by National Board of Studies in Food Management, Catering & Nutrition under the administrative control of Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Food), Government of India at Mumbai, New Delhi (Pusa), Chennai and Kolkata. This board and institutes were transferred to Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in 1982 and was rechristened as National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT) in 1984 (http://www.nchm.nic.in).

At present, the Council regulates academics activities in the field of Hospitality Education & Training that is imparted through Twenty One (21) Central Government sponsored Institutes of Hotel Management, Sixteen (16) State Government sponsored institutes, fourteen (14) Private institutes and Nine (9) Food Craft Institutes, that function in different parts of the country.(NCHM-JEE Brochure, 2015)

The study conducted by London & Paul, 2003a examined three systems that are currently available for the certification of education and training in Hospitality and Tourism. They are as follows:

1. City and Guilds

City and Guilds is a leading skills development organization, providing services to training provider, employers, & trainees across a variety of sectors to meet the need of the workplace. This organization franchises its curriculum to organizations, such as businesses or educational institutions that are interested in providing training or education in a wide range of occupations. The organization must meet certain specifications to become a recognized Centre for the specified training. On completion of the specified training, the student must take an external examination set by City and Guilds. If successful, City and Guilds awards a certificate to the student (http:// www.cityandguilds.com).

2. The American Hotel & Lodging Association Institute (AH&LA)

The AHLA offers professional certifications to individuals who meet specified combinations of formal training, occupational or professional experience, and the successful completion of a comprehensive examination. Training may be completed either in an accredited institution or at the Institute. (http://www.ei-ahla.org/, https://ahlei.org).

3. The TEDQUAL Certification System of the World Tourism Organization (WTO)

UNWTO Tedqual is an UNWTO.Themis foundation programme whose main objective is to improve the quality of the tourism education, training and research programmes (themis.unwto.org). TEDQUAL is an acronym for "Tourism Educational Quality." According to the WTO, "The TedQual Certification System offers tourism education institutions the opportunity to obtain a WTO Certification affirming the validity of their tourism education involving them in a continuous improvement process, allowing them to clearly position themselves in the tourism education and training market, raising the credibility of their activity both with respect to their students and personnel as well as to the reputation of their degrees among tourism employers. It is also a necessary pre-condition to join the WTO Education Council" (TEDQUAL Certification, 2003).

It is recommended that a voluntary system of quality assurance and audit be used for Hospitality and Tourism institution in the region. Quality standards, procedures for applying the standards, a secretariat, and a governing body must be identified as essential elements of the system. The proposed QA/audit system must be flexible so that it can be applied to all Hospitality and Tourism training programmes at all levels in all the regions.

Institute of Hospitality Accreditation

As per the Institute of Hospitality Accreditation Guide for Academic Programmes Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism Events and Related Fields (2015); The Institute of Hospitality is recognised as an authoritative international body in the field of accreditation and is recognised by the Higher Education Statistics

Agency (HESA) for the provision of accreditation information on UNISTATS, the official website for comparing UK higher education course data. The Institute accredits academic programmes of study in hospitality, leisure, tourism, events and related fields, from craft level through to senior management level.

The Institute offers accreditation to academic organisations across the globe and has accredited programmes in Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Hungary, Malaysia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

According to The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2009 (India Overview report, 2009) the primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in UK higher education rests with individual universities or colleges. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) checks that they are meeting their responsibilities for the education of students; its remit does not include the evaluation of their research activity. QAA identifies good practice and makes recommendations for improvement. It provides public information about quality and standards in higher education mainly by publishing reports resulting from a peer review process of audits and reviews, which are conducted by teams largely made up of senior, experienced staff from UK higher education institutions and the professions.

One of QAA's activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative arrangements between UK universities and their partner organisations in other countries. The purpose of these audits is to provide information on how well the UK institutions are maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their partnerships. In 2008-09, QAA conducted 10 such audits (including 2 hotel management institutions) involving collaborations by UK universities with partners in India. These involved discussions between the QAA team and appropriate staff and students at both the UK University and the partner organisation.

In India, the guidelines for the creation of the Internal Quality Assurance in higher education are done by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous institution of The University Grants Commission (UGC).

The mission of NAAC is to arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects; to stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions; to encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education; to undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes, and to collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance (http://www.naac.gov.in).

The study intended to explore the current status of hospitality education in India and the need of Academic audit to improve the standard of education, services and training provided by the institutes under the umbrella of National Council for Hotel Management, Catering & Nutrition.

The objectives of the study were:

- To identify the presence of internal academic audit in the Institutes of Hotel Management under the aegis of NCHMCT in India

- To determine the presence and competence of quality assurance procedures in these institutes.

National Institute of Education Singapore defines Academic Audit as an integral part of the dynamics of higher education and its regulation in many countries that aspire to achieve excellence and international standing. It is an internal quality assurance defined by the policies and practices of an education institution in monitoring and improving the quality of their education provision. It is a process based on the questions framework – why, what, how and does the Institute fulfil its desired outcomes. The audit process focuses on the procedures and conditions that ensure appropriate levels of quality that are effective in meeting their intended purposes. (Academic Audit Manual, 2011a)

The Council on Higher Education also defines the academic audit as an institutional audit seeks to assess an institution's capacity for quality management of its academic activities in a manner that meets its specified mission, goals and objectives, and engages appropriately with and responds to the expectations and needs of various internal and external constituencies. (Higher Education Quality Committee Institutional Audits Manual, 2007)

Academic audit is an important and vital part of any educational institution in any part of the world. The Academic audit is very much applicable to the hospitality education.

Academic Audit Objectives stated by Directorate of Quality Assurance and Graduate Studies, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe as to ascertain the presence and adequacy of quality assurance procedures, their applicability and effectiveness in guaranteeing quality of inputs, processes and outputs are to define the main areas of focus central to quality assurance and enhancement in teaching and learning, identify the processes and procedures used by departments for quality assurance and enhancement in each of the focus areas, appraise the adequacy and effectiveness of the quality assurance processes and procedures and make appropriate recommendations for continuous improvement of the processes and procedures used for quality assurance and enhancement. (Internal Academic Audit Handbook, 2012)

The elements of academic audit defined by Tennessee Board of Regents (Academic Audit Handbook, 2014a) were to examine the five focal areas of the educational process which were to determine learning objectives, designing curriculum and co-curriculum, designing teaching and learning methods, developing student learning assessment and assuring implementation of quality education. These five focal areas were examined on the basis of information regarding the employment in the field, best practices adopted curriculum design, out-of-classroom activities, and student feedback; evaluate teaching and learning methods, quality assurance practices.

The definition of Quality Assurance that is offered by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 1992 adapted from Quality Assurance & Articulation in Hospitality and Tourism Programmes in the Caribbean; (London & Paul, 2003b) states that:

"Quality assurance may relate to a programme, an institution or a whole higher education system. In each case quality assurance are all of those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures which, through their existence and use and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by the programme, institution or system."

They further explained, Quality Assurance & Articulation in Hospitality and Tourism Programmes in the Caribbean Quality assurance come in various forms such as accreditation, assessment, academic audit and external examination. These are different approaches to educational quality evaluation. Common to each practice is the development of standards; the application of those standards to a programme or institution by third parties for the purpose of assessment and enhancement and the subsequent improvement of the educational entity.

METHODOLOGY

The present work follows an exploratory design where the data was collected from Institutes of Hotel Management (IHM), under NCHMCT, India, which of comprises of 21 IHMs under Central government, 16 IHMs under State government and 14 Private IHMs. Out of these 51 institutes 25 institutes responded making a response rate of 49%.

Questionnaire was developed on the basis of the guidelines given by The Week Hansa Research Best College Survey (2015), Tennessee Board of Regents (2014b), University Of Exeter (2013), National Institute of Education Singapore (2011b), and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (Manual for Universities,2013).

The questionnaire was distributed through the Electronic- Mail only after seeking the consent from the participating institutes. A time frame of ten days was given to the respondents and on fifth day a reminder call was given to all the concerned institutes on their official contact numbers.

The study was conducted in the month of July 2014 to March 2015.

The statistical analysis of the data was done by finding the percentage and mean.

RESULT

Out of the 51 institutes, 25 institutes responded and sent back the filled questionnaire making a 49% response rate. The response of different IHMs is as follows-

Table 1: Response rate from various IHM's

	IHMs under Central Govt.	IHMs under State Govt.	Private IHMs affiliated to NCHMCT	Total
Total	21	16	14	51
Response Rate	10	11	4	25
Percentage	47.62	68.7	28.57	49.0

On the basis of data collection and compilation, the following results were observed-

Majority of the institutes (76%) responded that they have mission statement of their Institute while 24% reported that they do not have a mission statement. Similarly majority (72%) have a vision statement for the institute whereas only 28% do not have a vision statement for the institute. All the 25 institutes affirmatively agreed that teaching is the primary activity conducted while 12 institutes also agreed to have Research as equivalent activity. At the same time 68% institutes also provide consultancy as one of the major activity.

Most of the institutes i.e. 23 institutes out of 25 have the course curriculum uploaded on institute's website while 2 institutes said no to it. Half of the institutes (48%) make efforts to upgrade/modify NCHMCT curriculum to suit their requirements while other half (48%) don't make any such efforts whereas only 4% did not reply to this. Majority (52%) agree to have a mechanism to get feedback from faculty/ students to upgrade/ modify curriculum at their institute followed by 44% who do not have any such mechanism at their institute and only 4% did not respond to this question.

The average intake of students was found to be 152.12 falling in the range of 60-380 in an academic year. More than half (57.66%) of the Permanent faculty in 25 institutes have more than 10 years of Industrial and Teaching experience which furthermore helps in providing better knowledge and services to the Institute. Only 3.07% of the permanent faculty have Doctorate Degree while 58.89% have Masters Degree.

Only 9.5% of the permanent faculty have participated in foreign exchange programmes in last three years where 16 institutes do not have any faculty participating in foreign exchange programme. A total of 99 faculty training programmes have been held in 25 institutes in last three years out of which 7 institutes did not held any training programme and a total of 61 Faculty Development Programmes (FDP) have been organized by 25 institutes in last three years from which 6 institutes did not organize any FDP.

In 25 institutes who responded 212 workshops/ seminars on an average of 8.48 have organized and attended by the faculty and students which gives exposure and increases the sharing of knowledge and students with the experts. Only 36% institutes have organized Inter- college festivals and all 25 institutes on an average have attended 6.4 Inter- college competitions which not only help in sharing the knowledge but also help in personality development, cross- learning and gives required exposure to different and competitive environment.

7.05% of total permanent faculty have published 30 books in last three years and 9.81% of existing permanent faculty have 66 research publications in the last three years in ISSN International/ National journals.

All 25 institutes conduct induction/ orientation programme in their institute for new students.

Majority of the institutes (84%) have mentoring system for new students while rest 16% do not have mentoring system. Majority of the institutes i.e. 76% conducts induction/ orientation programme for the new faculty while 20% do not conduct induction/ orientation programme for new faculty and 4% institutes did not reply. More than half of the institutes (68%) have mentoring system for new faculty whereas 28% institutes do not have mentoring system for new faculty while 4% did not respond.

The placement percentage on an aggregate basis increased from 82.13% in 2011-12 (out of 25, 4 institutes did not have passing out batch) to 86.91% in 2012-13 and to 89.54% in 2013-14(out of 25 institutes 3 did not have any passing out batch).

Only 52 % institutes agreed to have an Institution and Stakeholders (parents, industry, alumni, etc) Interaction Cell (ISIC) whereas 48% institutes do not have ISIC. Only 40% prepares Self Evaluation Document (SED) with support documents whereas 60% do not prepare SED. Only 9 institutes of 25 have well defined Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) while 16 do not have QAC in their institutes.

Majority institutes (64%) agree to have a well defined Internal Academic Audit System in their institute whereas 36%say no to have a well defined Internal Academic Audit System.

Majority of the 25 institutes i.e. 92% recommend that a well defined Internal Academic Audit is a need of the hour in hospitality institutes under the umbrella of NCHMCT while only 8% do not recommend to have Internal Academic Audit System. From the survey of best practices it was found that 92% of the institute works out and follow innovative ideas and practices so as to make the classes interactive and to develop a learning environment amongst the faculty and students; however few practices were found to be in connection with the concept of academic audit in any form.

DISCUSSION

Internal academic audit and quality assurance are concepts indissolubly associated with hospitality education and its continuous evaluation and improvement (https://www.naac.gov.in). Internal audit is a long term and ongoing process which involves no cost if implemented and carried out on regular intervals with involvement of faculty, students and head of institute. The study identifies that majority of the 25 institutes i.e. 92% recommend that a well defined Internal Academic Audit is a need of the hour in hospitality institutes under the umbrella of NCHMCT.

The classic approach to curriculum planning involves identifying the key concepts in a field and the relationship between those concepts. This approach serves as a useful starting point, but all too often the remainder of the course design is confined to identifying the classic sources, drawing the together and assigning readings (Powers et al., 1983). The head of institutes should identify, record and assess up the impacts of internal audit and quality assurance in a position to prioritize towards quality improvement in

terms of curriculum, faculty assessment and students feedback as the study shows 48% institutes makes no effort to modify and give inputs to update curriculum and 44% of institutes have no student feedback mechanism indicating a major scope of improvement.

Research is an integral part of quality practice in faculty education. It helps the faculty to keep abreast of the current knowledge and developments in their respective domain, find answer to questions and evolve/adopt strategies and techniques. The faculty needs to undertake research with a view to develop new and innovative tools and approaches.

Quality research is considered by many academician and institutions as an excellent legacy for a faculty member to leave (Chesser & Ellis, 1994), but the study showed that in 50% institutes no research work is carried out by the faculty indicating a major scope for learning and exploring new dimensions in hospitality education and also opens the opportunity for promotion of research and research work publication.

Study also showed that majority (48%) of institutes had no institution and stake holder interaction cell. The head of institutes and faculties must recognize the significance of learners, alumni etc as the main stakeholder in education and timely feedback and valuable inputs should be incorporated on regular intervals.

Self evaluation document (SED) can serve as the foundation for the preparation of an Institutional Self Evaluation Report and for the Commission's external evaluation process (www.accjc.org). A well-organized and thorough self evaluation process will enable the institution to consider the quality of its programs and services and institutional effectiveness, to report its findings, and to share its analysis with the peer evaluation team.

Study also showed that majority of institutes (60%) had no Self evaluation documents (SED) with supported documented proof; self evaluation document serves several purposes. First, it is an opportunity for the institution to conduct a thorough self evaluation against the Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, Eligibility Requirements, and the institution's own objectives. The process should enable the institution to consider the quality of its programs and services and its institutional effectiveness in supporting student success.

In response to the best practices adopted in last three years 92% of the surveyed institutes have mentioned the eco-friendly practices mostly. There is a great scope of best practices related to quality assurance, curriculum design and academic audit and more stakeholders' involvement.

Overall, an academic audit and its processes form an important linchpin in the overall institutional quality assurance processes. Its processes and procedures inform the extent to which objectives meet the intended overall strategic vision and mission of the institution. This in turn provides accountability and theoretical explanations to stakeholders on the academic standards in higher education. In other words, the academic and overall institutional audit both complement each other and need to be seen in totality. (Academic Audit manual, 2011c)

CONCLUSION

Internal audit is a long term and ongoing process which involves no cost if implemented and carried out on regular intervals with involvement of faculty, students and head of institute. The study identifies that majority of the institutes that were the part of the study recommend that a well defined Internal Academic Audit is a need of the hour in hospitality institutes which are regulated by NCHMCT.

It is suggested that the head of institutes should identify, record and assess up the impacts of internal audit and quality assurance in a position to prioritize towards quality improvement in terms of curriculum, faculty assessment and students feedback. Thus it is recommended that Internal Academic Audit system should be an integral part of all the hospitality institutes. It is also proposed that important mechanism and tools like Self Evaluation Document, Institution and Stakeholders Interaction Cell, Quality Assurance Committee which are inherent part of any academic audit must be developed to match the standards and quality of education in accordance with international level.

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