

Quality in Higher Education Institutions
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The last few decades have betokened a drastic change in higher education landscape across the globe. The size and number of higher education institutions have become progressively greater, stemming immediately from an increased demand for education beyond the 12-grade schooling. But with such a sharp increase, institutions go through fierce competition and devote serious effort in pursuit of quality, which cannot be achieved unless institutions show and reflect masterful power and skill in the delivery of education.

Quality should be an inherent feature belonging to an institution either by nature or by habit to achieve a certain degree of excellence. The three main pillars of quality in higher education institutions are represented by the institution's prudence in the management of its affairs, its day-to-day performance which should often be customary and habitual and bespeak considerable practice, and the ability of the institution to evince its practice by the cogency of evidence that compels acceptance by the mind of a truth or a fact. In other words, quality is not something ad hoc, nor can be fashioned from whatever is immediately available. It should be an inherited, established and customary pattern of practice adopted by academic institutions and should be a fundamental percept within the institution's traditions.

Quality has multi-faceted aspects when it comes to higher education. First, a bedrock constituency of an institution is its governance and management. To achieve quality, attention should be directed to governance and management by conforming to accepted standards of academic and non-academic conduct of the institution and keeping its mission, vision and goals elevated while maintaining the status and integrity of academic standards. This includes governance structures, functional units and roles as per the institution's organizational chart. Within governance, risk management and health and safety are of greatest importance to guarantee that the institution is capable of working without failure under a wide range of conditions.

Second, students form a central and foundational part of an institution and are the product of the quality. Quality in education cannot be achieved unless an institution shows vigor, strength, and firmness in the delivery of its academic programs and has a robust system which should correlate with students learning either by coursework or research. This includes entry standards that give students access to programs, teaching quality, and research constituent part of coursework programs. Academic integrity is also of significant worth to ensure firm adherence to academic codes. Another criterion to measure quality is to track the destination of graduates and to gauge the confidence employers vest on graduates of the institution and the ability of graduates to contend with their peers in an open job market. Passing graduation requirements is only the beginning of graduates' journey in career life, but securing a job in a competitive job market is a challenging task which could have long life implications on them.

Third, academic and administrative staff are also solidly fundamental in achieving quality. Staff serve as the basis supporting the existence of higher education institutions. To this end, academic

institutions nowadays devote serious effort to research in order to support teaching quality, gain recognition and boost reputation. This cannot be achieved without adopting a program of action by the institution to encourage its staff to embark on investigation and experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories in the light of new facts or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws. To support this endeavor, institutions should have in place a strongly formed code of ethics, intellectual property rules and any other provisions linking research to teaching.

Fourth, as part of social responsibility, institutions should engage with other institutions and industry by forging relationship with local, regional and international community, enabling students to take part in a form of organized and supervised extracurricular activities and encouraging staff to do an array of community service activities that would benefit both the institution and the community. Planning and management of this aspect should be marked by attentive concern and solicitude, so that the relationship with industry, including employers, professions, other education providers and even with the alumni should extend without interruption regardless of space or time.

Fifth, institutions need to focus on the planning and management of students support services. Quality education cannot be provided without other services given to students, including accommodation, catering, transportation, medical and counseling facilities and social and recreational services and facilities. The last aspect covers support services an institution provides to its staff, such as human resources planning and management, staff profile, professional development, promotion, incentives, and staff organizational climate and retention.