

IQAC CONFERENCE REPORT

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Ramanujan College, University of Delhi, organized a one-day conference on 'Quality Assurance in Higher Education' on 26th February, 2018 at the India International Center, New Delhi. The conference made a meaningful and important intervention in the national discourse on the state of higher education, its quality and the need of ensuring its continuous upgradation.



The event was inaugurated with a formal welcome of the guests by Dr. S. P. Aggarwal, the Principal, followed by the lamp lighting ceremony. The key note address was delivered by Padma Shree Prof. Virander Singh Chauhan, former Chairman, University Grants Commission. The Guest of Honor on the occasion was Prof. Aditya Prasad Padhi, former Vice Chancellor, Behrampur University. The invited panelists for the conference included Prof. A.J Dorairaj, former Vice Chancellor, Gandhigram Rural Institute and Ms. Ameeta Mulla Wattal, Principal Springdales School, Pusa Road. Padma Shree Prof. Dinesh Singh, former Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, one of the panelists, unfortunately could not attend the conference.



Prof. Chauhan in his keynote address highlighted the important challenge of setting benchmarks when it comes to quality in higher education and the role of diverse stakeholders' influences in shaping the notion of quality. He also deliberated on the fact that the assessment of quality through the existing systems of evaluation of universities and institutions is being continuously re-assessed and revised. For instance, the principal accreditation council in India, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has evolved over the years to refine its assessment and accreditation procedures. Further, he mentioned that apart from the general criteria of teaching, learning outcomes and research, parameters such as gross enrollment ratios and student gender ratios in academic institutions are also crucial to account for quality in education. In his talk, he also expressed his appreciation on the initiative taken by our college for organizing this conference as such discussions would urge us to understand and debate the issue of quality in the ambit of higher education system.



Prof. Padhi made the formal concluding remarks after the keynote address and emphasized that addressing the issue of quality in higher education calls for a holistic rather than a symptomatic approach. He pointed out that it is vital for educational institutions to be student-centric for ensuring quality in education and outcomes. Moreover, learning resources and infrastructure also serve as an important basis, without which effective learning would be compromised. On this front, he expressed his appreciation at Ramanujan College being selected for providing quality vocational education under the 'Deen Dayal Upadhyay Kaushal Kendra scheme' of the government of India.

Dr. Nirmalya Samanta, Associate Professor, Ramanujan College, successfully moderated the panel discussion. Prof. Dorairaj, the first panelist, initiated the discussion by pointing out the contrasting dimensions on quality in higher education that are existent particularly in the context of India. He systematically structured his presentation around five central questions of what defines quality, the need to discuss the issue of quality, understanding quality assurance, the importance of quality assurance in tertiary education and lastly, the concrete steps needed to assure quality in tertiary education. A discussion on these vital questions led to an acceptance that a pan India benchmark with regard to quality is difficult to accomplish. Prof. Dorairaj remarked that quality is never incidental and teaching alone is not the prerogative for assuring quality.



Ms. Wattal's address was important as it focused on the perspective of educators and administrators at the school level. She expressed her serious concern over the disconnection between the school curriculum and the expectations of the university from the school graduates. She highlighted the importance of understanding the contemporary needs of the students and the vital role of technology as an enabler and equalizer to minimize the gap in student-teacher interaction. She also placed emphasis on relevance of information literacy and cultural literacy in the modern day education system. She also urged that higher education must seriously look into the graduation and post-graduation teacher training courses and ensure that there is greater availability of quality trained school teachers.

A lively question-answer session enlivened the proceedings. Overall, the conference provided important insights into challenges and urgent measures to improve quality in higher education. The fact that the keynote speaker, Prof. V.S. Chauhan stayed for the entire course of the event

and participated in the question-answer session deserves a special mention. The Principal, Dr. S.P. Aggarwal felt that the event marked a historic day for the college and the conference holds a special significance being held in the diamond jubilee year of the college. The convener of the conference was Dr. K. Latha, who is also the director of IQAC, Ramanujan College.

