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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A STUDY OF STUDENTS OF A.S. COLLEGE, KHANNA

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance has become an essential component of higher education, as institutions are expected to provide quality teaching, effective learning opportunities, relevant curricula, adequate infrastructure, transparent evaluation, and student support services. In India, quality assurance is promoted through institutional mechanisms, including the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), and guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC). The present study focuses on quality assurance in higher education, with special reference to students of A.S. College, Khanna, Punjab. It examines the concept of quality assurance, its major mechanisms, and the importance of students' perceptions in evaluating institutional quality. The study proposes a descriptive survey approach using a structured questionnaire to collect information about teaching and learning, infrastructure, library facilities, assessment practices, student support services, and grievance redressal. The institutional website of A.S. College identifies the IQAC as a mechanism for promoting continuous improvement, developing quality benchmarks, collecting stakeholder feedback, and documenting quality-related activities. The study emphasizes that students' feedback can contribute to identifying strengths, addressing deficiencies, and improving institutional performance. As primary survey data have not yet been collected, empirical findings and statistical conclusions remain to be established. The paper concludes that quality assurance should be understood as a continuous, participatory, and student-centred process rather than merely an exercise in accreditation and documentation.

Keywords: Quality assurance, higher education, student perception, A.S. College, Khanna, IQAC, NAAC, institutional effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays an important role in the intellectual, social, economic, and cultural development of a country. Colleges and universities are responsible not only for providing academic knowledge but also for developing critical thinking, professional competence, ethical values, research abilities, and responsible citizenship. In a rapidly changing educational environment, institutions must continuously evaluate their performance to ensure that students receive meaningful and relevant educational experiences.

Quality assurance in higher education refers to the systematic processes through which institutions maintain, monitor, evaluate, and improve the quality of their educational services. It includes teaching effectiveness, curriculum delivery, assessment practices, infrastructure, research activities, student welfare, governance, and institutional accountability. Quality assurance also requires institutions to respond to students' needs and expectations.

In India, quality assurance has gained considerable importance through the development of regulatory and accreditation mechanisms. The University Grants Commission (UGC) provides regulations and guidelines for maintaining standards in higher education. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), established by the UGC in 1994, evaluates higher education institutions through defined criteria and processes involving institutional self-study and peer review (UGC, n.d.). These mechanisms encourage institutions to assess their strengths, identify areas requiring improvement, and develop plans for continuous quality enhancement.

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) is another important institutional mechanism. It supports the development of a quality-oriented culture through monitoring, feedback collection, documentation, and improvement initiatives. The official website of A.S. College, Khanna, describes its IQAC as a mechanism intended to improve academic and administrative performance, develop quality benchmarks, promote learner-centred environments, and obtain feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders (A.S. College, Khanna, n.d.).

Although institutional policies and quality indicators are important, the actual educational experience of students is equally significant. Students directly experience classroom teaching, laboratory facilities, library services, examinations, administrative procedures, and support systems. Their perceptions can therefore provide useful information about the effectiveness of institutional quality assurance practices.

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The present study, titled "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Study of Students of A.S. College, Khanna," focuses on the student perspective. It seeks to develop an understanding of the major dimensions of quality assurance and propose a systematic method for examining how students perceive the educational environment and quality-related practices of the college.

1.1 Concept of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Quality assurance is a planned and systematic process of maintaining and improving educational standards. It involves establishing appropriate quality indicators, monitoring institutional performance, collecting feedback, evaluating outcomes, and taking corrective action.

Quality assurance differs from quality control in its emphasis on prevention and continuous improvement. Quality control generally focuses on identifying deficiencies in existing services or outcomes, whereas quality assurance seeks to establish systems that consistently support the achievement of educational objectives.

In higher education, quality cannot be measured through a single indicator. A college may possess adequate infrastructure but still need to improve teaching methods or student support. Similarly, good examination results alone may not reflect the overall quality of the educational experience. A comprehensive understanding of quality therefore requires attention to several interconnected dimensions.

These dimensions include:

- Academic quality and effectiveness of teaching.
- Curriculum relevance and implementation.
- Student learning and assessment practices.
- Library, laboratory, and digital learning resources.
- Infrastructure and campus facilities.
- Student support, counselling, and career guidance.
- Transparency, governance, and grievance redressal.
- Research, innovation, and extracurricular opportunities.
- Equity, accessibility, and an inclusive learning environment.
- Student participation in institutional feedback and improvement.

Quality assurance should consequently be regarded as an ongoing institutional responsibility involving teachers, administrators, students, governing bodies, and external quality agencies.

1.2 Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Indian Higher Education

- **University Grants Commission**

The University Grants Commission is a statutory body concerned with the coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards in university education. Its regulations and guidelines address several aspects of higher education, including academic standards, institutional development, student welfare, and educational quality.

The UGC also publishes guidance on institutional development, accessibility, evaluation reforms, and public self-disclosure. Such measures support transparency and encourage institutions to make relevant information available to stakeholders (UGC, n.d.).

- **National Assessment and Accreditation Council**

NAAC evaluates the quality of higher education institutions through a structured assessment and accreditation process. Its framework has traditionally addressed areas such as curricular aspects, teaching and learning, research, infrastructure, student support, governance, and institutional values.

The assessment process encourages institutions to examine their own performance and identify areas for improvement. Accreditation can also encourage institutions to strengthen documentation, planning, accountability, and the systematic evaluation of educational practices.

However, accreditation should not be treated as the sole measure of quality. The actual learning experience, student satisfaction, academic outcomes, and responsiveness to feedback are also important considerations.

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- **Internal Quality Assurance Cell**

The IQAC is an institutional mechanism intended to support continuous quality enhancement. Its functions may include developing quality benchmarks, coordinating quality-related activities, organizing workshops, collecting stakeholder feedback, documenting institutional practices, and preparing quality reports.

According to the official website of A.S. College, Khanna, the college's IQAC seeks to improve academic and administrative performance and promote a culture of continuous quality enhancement. Its listed functions include facilitating learner-centred teaching and learning, collecting stakeholder feedback, maintaining institutional information, and documenting quality improvement activities (A.S. College, Khanna, n.d.).

The effectiveness of such a mechanism depends not only on the existence of policies and committees but also on how consistently their recommendations are implemented.

- **Student Feedback Mechanisms**

Student feedback is an important instrument for evaluating the educational experience. Feedback may be collected through questionnaires, course evaluations, student meetings, suggestion systems, and other institutional channels.

Students can provide information about teaching clarity, classroom interaction, availability of learning resources, fairness of assessment, administrative responsiveness, and access to support services.

For feedback to improve quality, institutions should communicate how it is reviewed and what actions are taken. When students believe that their responses are considered seriously, they may be more willing to participate in quality improvement initiatives.

1.3 Profile and Institutional Context of A.S. College, Khanna

A.S. College is located on Samrala Road in Khanna, District Ludhiana, Punjab. The institution's official website provides information about its academic activities, facilities, administration, and institutional committees.

The college lists an Internal Quality Assurance Cell among its institutional committees. The published description of the IQAC emphasizes continuous improvement in academic and administrative performance, the development of quality benchmarks, learner-centred education, stakeholder feedback, and documentation of quality-related activities (A.S. College, Khanna, n.d.).

This institutional context provides a basis for examining quality assurance from the perspective of students. Rather than assuming that the existence of an IQAC automatically guarantees high educational quality, the study proposes to investigate students' experiences of the processes that contribute to quality.

The study can examine whether students are aware of quality assurance initiatives, whether they consider teaching and learning practices effective, whether learning resources meet their needs, and whether they believe that their feedback is used for improvement.

The research is limited to the student perspective at A.S. College, Khanna. It should not be interpreted as a complete institutional audit, since a comprehensive assessment would also require administrative records, faculty perspectives, learning outcome data, and other evidence.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature on quality assurance in higher education emphasizes that educational quality is multidimensional and requires continuous evaluation. Institutional assessment and accreditation provide formal structures for monitoring educational standards, while internal quality mechanisms support improvement at the institutional level.

The UGC's quality-related regulations and guidelines establish an important policy context for institutional accountability. Its publications address academic standards, institutional development, accessibility, evaluation reforms, and the disclosure of institutional information (UGC, n.d.).

NAAC's approach emphasizes institutional self-study, assessment against defined criteria, and external peer review. These processes encourage institutions to identify strengths and weaknesses and develop plans for quality enhancement (UGC, n.d.).

At the institutional level, the IQAC framework provides a mechanism for coordinating quality-related initiatives. The published description of A.S. College's IQAC highlights stakeholder feedback, quality benchmarks, learner-centred teaching, and continuous improvement (A.S. College, Khanna, n.d.).

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These sources suggest that effective quality assurance requires a combination of formal standards, institutional self-evaluation, stakeholder participation, and practical improvement measures.

Nevertheless, general policy documents cannot establish how students at a particular college perceive the effectiveness of quality assurance. A college-specific survey is therefore useful for examining students' experiences and identifying areas that may require further investigation.

The present study seeks to address this institutional question by proposing a student-centred evaluation framework for A.S. College, Khanna. A fuller literature review should additionally incorporate relevant peer-reviewed studies on student satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, institutional quality, and the role of student feedback in higher education.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Statement of the Problem

Quality assurance has become an important concern for higher education institutions in India. Although institutions may establish committees, adopt quality policies, and participate in assessment processes, the effectiveness of these arrangements should also be examined through the experiences of students.

Students interact regularly with teachers, administrative staff, libraries, laboratories, digital learning facilities, and student support services. Their experiences can reveal whether institutional arrangements adequately support learning and personal development.

The problem addressed by the present study is to examine students' perceptions of quality assurance mechanisms at A.S. College, Khanna, with particular attention to teaching and learning, infrastructure, assessment, student support, and institutional feedback.

3.2 Objectives of the study

- To study students' awareness of quality assurance mechanisms in higher education at A.S. College, Khanna.
- To examine students' perceptions of the quality of teaching, learning resources, infrastructure, and student support services at A.S. College, Khanna.
- To suggest measures for improving the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms based on students' perceptions and feedback.

3.3 Research Design

The present study adopted a descriptive survey method to study quality assurance in higher education, with special reference to students of A.S. College, Khanna. The study focused on students' awareness and perceptions of quality assurance mechanisms, including teaching and learning practices, infrastructure, learning resources, and student support services.

The population of the study comprised students of A.S. College, Khanna. A sample of 150 students was selected for the study. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire designed to obtain information regarding students' perceptions of quality assurance practices in the college. The collected data were analysed using appropriate descriptive statistical techniques, such as frequencies and percentages, to interpret students' responses and draw conclusions in relation to the objectives of the study.

For your research paper, "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Study of Students of A.S. College, Khanna," the data analysis and interpretation section should be based on responses from the 150 students in your sample.

Since you have not shared the actual questionnaire results, the following is a ready-to-use format with illustrative figures only. Replace these figures with your actual findings before submitting the paper.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is an important part of the research process because it helps organize and interpret the information collected from respondents. In the present study, data collected from 150 students of A.S. College, Khanna, were analysed using frequency and percentage methods. The analysis focuses on students' awareness of quality assurance mechanisms, their perceptions of teaching and learning facilities, and their suggestions for improving educational quality.

The percentage was calculated using the following formula:

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Percentage=Number of respondents/150×100

Table 1: Students' Awareness of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Fully aware	45	30%
Partially aware	60	40%
Not aware	45	30%
Total	150	100%

Table 1 indicated that 40% of students are partially aware of quality assurance mechanisms, while 30% are fully aware and 30% are unaware. If these were the actual findings, they would suggest a need to improve student awareness of the role of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and other institutional quality initiatives.

Table 2: Students' Perceptions of Teaching and Learning Quality

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Highly satisfied	45	30%
Satisfied	60	40%
Neutral	30	20%
Dissatisfied	15	10%
Total	150	100%

Table 2 depicted 70% of students report being satisfied or highly satisfied with teaching and learning quality. Meanwhile, 20% express a neutral opinion and 10% report dissatisfaction. If confirmed by actual data, the results would suggest generally positive perceptions of teaching, alongside opportunities to improve classroom interaction and teaching methods.

Table 3: Students' Perceptions of Infrastructure and Learning Resources

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Excellent	30	20%
Good	60	40%
Average	45	30%
Poor	15	10%
Total	150	100%

Table 3 showed that 60% of students rate infrastructure and learning resources as good or excellent. However, 30% consider them average and 10% rate them poor. If the actual results show a similar pattern, the college could review library resources, classroom facilities, laboratory equipment, and digital learning facilities to identify areas requiring improvement.

Table 4: Students' Perceptions of Student Support Services

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Highly satisfied	30	20%
Satisfied	60	40%
Neutral	45	30%
Dissatisfied	15	10%
Total	150	100%

Table 4 showed that 60% of students are satisfied or highly satisfied with student support services, whereas 30% remain neutral and 10% are dissatisfied. If supported by the survey, this could indicate the importance of strengthening awareness and accessibility of academic guidance, career counselling, grievance redressal, and other student welfare services.

Table 5: Students' Views on the Need for Quality Improvement

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Strongly agree	60	40%
Agree	60	40%
Neutral	22	14.67%
Disagree	8	5.33%
Total	150	100%

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Table 5 showed that 80% of students agree or strongly agree that quality improvement is necessary. This would indicate substantial student support for continued efforts to improve educational services. However, the specific improvements required should be identified from students' actual responses rather than assumed in advance.

5. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Findings of the Study

The study titled "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Study of Students of A.S. College, Khanna" focuses on students' awareness and perceptions of quality assurance mechanisms in higher education. Based on the dimensions examined in the study, the following findings can be presented, subject to verification against the actual responses of the 150 students.

- **Awareness of quality assurance:** Students' awareness of the role of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and other quality assurance mechanisms needs to be assessed to identify gaps in institutional communication.
- **Quality of teaching and learning:** Students' perceptions of teaching methods, classroom interaction, and academic guidance provide important indicators of the quality of the teaching–learning process.
- **Infrastructure and learning resources:** The availability and adequacy of library facilities, laboratories, classrooms, and digital learning resources are important factors influencing students' educational experiences.
- **Student support services:** Academic guidance, career counselling, student welfare facilities, and grievance redressal mechanisms are important components of institutional quality assurance.
- **Importance of student feedback:** Regular feedback from students can help the institution identify areas requiring improvement and evaluate the effectiveness of its quality enhancement initiatives.
- **Need for continuous improvement:** Quality assurance should be treated as an ongoing process involving regular assessment, corrective action, and monitoring of educational outcomes.

5.2 Suggestions for Improvement

On the basis of the objectives and scope of the study, the following suggestions are offered to strengthen quality assurance at A.S. College, Khanna.

- **Create awareness among students:** The college should organize orientation programmes and awareness activities to explain the role and functions of the IQAC and the importance of quality assurance.
- **Improve teaching methods:** Teachers should be encouraged to adopt learner-centred methods, including group discussions, project work, practical activities, presentations, and appropriate digital teaching tools.
- **Strengthen learning resources:** The college should periodically review its library facilities, laboratory equipment, classroom infrastructure, and digital learning resources to ensure that they meet students' academic needs.
- **Introduce regular feedback mechanisms:** Student feedback on teaching effectiveness, curriculum delivery, assessment, and institutional facilities should be collected systematically and analysed for quality improvement.
- **Enhance student support services:** Academic mentoring, career guidance, counselling, and other student welfare services should be strengthened and communicated clearly to all students.
- **Ensure transparency in assessment:** Examination procedures, assessment criteria, academic schedules, and grievance redressal processes should be communicated clearly to promote fairness and accountability.
- **Encourage student participation:** Students should be provided with appropriate opportunities to contribute suggestions and participate in quality-related discussions and institutional improvement activities.

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- **Monitor quality improvement measures:** The IQAC should review feedback regularly, identify priorities, assign responsibilities, and monitor whether corrective measures have achieved the intended results.
- **Promote an inclusive learning environment:** The college should work towards ensuring equal educational opportunities, accessible facilities, and a respectful environment for students from diverse backgrounds.
- **Review quality assurance practices periodically:** Institutional quality initiatives should be evaluated regularly using student feedback, academic performance indicators, and other relevant evidence.

CONCLUSION

Quality assurance is essential for improving the effectiveness and relevance of higher education. At A.S. College, Khanna, a systematic and student-centred approach can help strengthen teaching and learning, improve institutional facilities, and make student support services more responsive. Regular feedback, transparent procedures, and continuous monitoring can contribute to a culture of academic excellence and institutional accountability.

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