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Recent Paradigm shift to Online Learning –

A Challenge and an Opportunity to work on a comprehensive Quality Management System.

The Recent paradigm shift to Online Learning because of COVID-19 pandemic raised serious challenges to quality assurance(QA) practices which are the key for sustainable learning. Assuring the quality of Online learning is a trivial task at individual, institution and system levels. **But the same challenge has given an opportunity to every higher educational institution** to develop a comprehensive QA rubric, an institutional QA review practice for online learning and also work on improving the current practices addressing the challenges of any future risks and get ready for a full proof quality management system(QMS).

The pandemic has forced the global academic community to explore news ways of teaching and learning, and in the process of finding solutions to these challenges, the future of learning became more clear and this crisis has led to some elements of teaching learning process and QA practices being changed permanently. So the need to rethink the strategy for post pandemic period has gained importance all around the world. The compulsion to shift to online teaching and learning in a short time has forced all the institutions to change their traditional pedagogical approach to online teaching and learning. Every HEI has found many good practices in addition to challenges, which can be put into action in the post pandemic period. Especially, this paradigm shift has taught every Higher Educational Institution(HEI), the importance of Blended Learning approach to be adopted in future because of the flexibility it offers for teachers in delivery and assessment and for the student's positive experience in terms of learning. So, the strategy of any HEI for future should be Blended Learning which has its own strengths in minimizing any risk and it also helps in developing student skills with respect to lifelong learning. But the approach requires the mission and vision of the institution to be given a new direction, proper pedagogical training, comprehensive planning, customized instructional design, ICT-oriented learning outcomes, perfect infrastructure and learner support. In other words, **it means Blended Learning requires good Quality Assurance.**

Quality assurance in Online/Blended learning has been a field of practice that has dominated stakeholders during the past several years. Research findings with respect to QA of blended or online approach has revealed variations on the level of QA policy integration in the overall process and in turn these again pose a challenge in ensuring the quality graduates for the industry. The integration of QMS, Accreditation, and Audits/Review should be given a new dimension for this blended approach and carefully worked on. There will be so many specific criteria to be addressed in QA for online/blended learning because of the different characteristics of the system. Student, being a most important stakeholder should be consulted for satisfaction levels to decide on the criteria for further improvement in all the domains of QA.

Future strategic plans and policy directions may have to be redrawn to accommodate all the disruptions and the plans should address the changing needs of the stakeholders. Accreditation agencies should take note of this new norm and seriously be ready with new or customized quality assurance strategies needed to build/assess sustainable blended learning offerings.