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A STUDY ON QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SIKKIM

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Abstract

Higher Education in modern society seeks to preserve, transmit and advance knowledge and is committed to bringing change. As education needs to be more dynamic, self-corrective and self-invigorative, a rejuvenation of the system with a drive towards quality is the need of the hour. Assessment means the performance evaluation based on certain criteria. Quality assessment in higher education is defined as the totality of the system, resources and information devoted for maintaining and improving the quality and standards of teaching, learning, research and scholarship. This paper aims to assess the quality of higher education in Sikkim on five dimensions namely: Infrastructure, Core curriculum, Teacher, Research, and Evaluation. The quality of classrooms, library, laboratory etc. was assessed under 'Infrastructure'. Under 'Core curriculum', curriculum's utility, justification and relation to practical life were assessed. The quality and efficiency of teachers who are transacting the curriculum were assessed under the component 'Teacher'. The fourth dimension i.e 'Research' was assessed, by collecting information on acquaintance of the teachers and students about current innovative research findings and seminar. Under the last dimension evaluation system of Higher Education was assessed. Data was collected using structured interview schedule from 50 students of various departments of Sikkim University who were selected using purposive sampling. Percentage analysis was done for evaluating the data. It was found that majority of the students had responded positively on all the dimensions. They expressed their satisfaction over the availability of well-equipped infrastructure, appropriateness of curriculum, resourceful teachers, and evaluation system of Sikkim University. Based on the findings some suggestions have been forwarded.

Keywords: *Quality assessment, Infrastructure, Core-curriculum, Teaching-learning, Research and development.*

INTRODUCTION

'The one thing we can do is invest in the quality of education, especially higher education.' - Ron kind

India has a long tradition of higher learning enriched with cultural heritage where Vedic rishis were the pioneer. Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Odantpuri bears the evidence of this tradition. Although the concept of modern university system of higher education came in the period of 19th century but Dr. Sarvapally Radhakrishnan started to formulate this concept through University Education Commission (1948).

Higher education in modern society seeks to preserve, transmit and advance knowledge and is committed to change. As education needs to be more dynamic, self-corrective and self-invigorative, a rejuvenation of the system with a drive towards quality is the need of the hour. Assessment means the performance evaluation based on certain criteria. Quality assessment in higher education is defined as the totality of the system, resources and information devoted for maintaining and improving the quality and standards of teaching, learning, research and scholarship. As there are good number of students from Sikkim pursuing higher education with a number of institution

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established in the public and private sectors, it becomes imperative to assess the quality education being imparted by these institutions in the state. Therefore, this paper aims to assess the quality of higher education in Sikkim on five dimensions namely: Infrastructure, Core-curriculum, Teaching-learning, Research and development and Evaluation.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Konwar and Chakraborty (2013) conducted a study on higher education scenario of North-Eastern India to analyze and to highlight the status of higher education institution of north-east and steps adopted for quality improvement. The result showed that the general infrastructures facilities were satisfactory but considering changing students' needs are inadequate.

Doley (2014) conducted a study to draw out the importance of assessment in improving quality of higher education and to provide awareness among learner-teachers, academicians, policy makers, curriculum framers on the effectiveness of assessment. This study revealed that the process of assessment stimulated the teaching-learning standard, and made institution effective and efficient to impart quality higher education.

Valikhanova (2015) conducted a study on Market-Based Approaches to Quality Assessment and Management of Higher Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan which considers the problems of the definitions of quality in the educational sphere. This article highlighted on creating conducive environment for bringing quality.

Verma (2016) conducted a study on quality assurance in higher education institutions. This study aimed to provide universities with the evidence for informing their focus and models for quality improvement. In this paper they assess the role of NAAC in maintaining quality assurance and quality improvement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To measure the quality of higher education in state of Sikkim.
2. To study the infrastructural facilities of university.
3. To find the utility of curriculum bring followed in the university.
4. To find the availability of resourceful teachers and their knowledge about innovative modern strategies.
5. Organization of research programs.
6. Adequacy of evaluation system.

METHODOLOGY

Design of the study: The study was a qualitative study. Percentage analysis was adopted for analyzing the collected data.

Sample: The investigators selected 50 students from various departments of Sikkim University through purposive sampling technique.

Tool used: The investigators used a self developed structured interview schedule for assessing the quality of education in Sikkim University. The details of the tool are mentioned hereunder:



Dimensions	Item No.
Infrastructure	5
Core-curriculum	5
Teaching-learning	5
Research and development	5
Evaluation	5
Total	25

Delimitation:

This study dealt with only five dimensions of quality improvement, out of varieties of dimensions in this perspective. This study was delimited to only one university of Sikkim. There was no scope to assess the quality of other universities of the state.

Research gap:

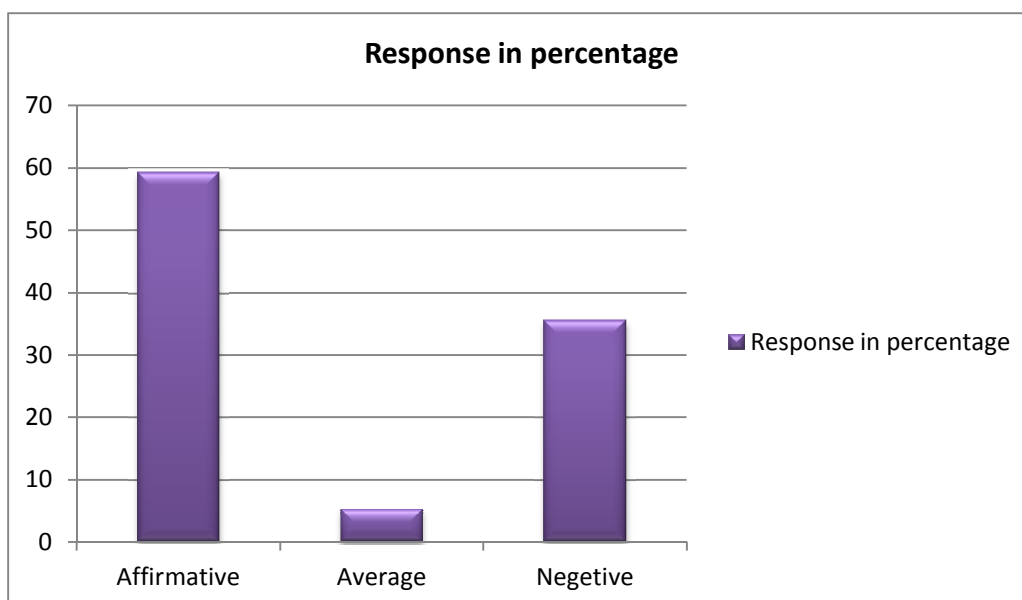
In the era of 21st century, for socio-economic development of higher education in India, it is very essential that the quality higher education should determine the influx of human resources. As North-East India is an isolated part of the country and Sikkim University is the newest central University (2007), very few studies have been conducted in higher education sector. So, this study aimed to highlight the quality of higher education in the state of Sikkim.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Infrastructure: This was the first dimension studied and the findings are presented below-

Table 1. Infrastructure Details

Sl. No.	Questions	% in Affirmative	% in Average	% in Negative
1	Do you have a well-equipped classroom with ICT facilities?	50	2	48
2	How is the infrastructure of laboratory in your department?	58	14	28
3	Have you a digital library?	32	6	62
4	Besides in Indian authors do you have enough books by Foreign authors?	80	4	16
5	Does the classroom have healthy environment?	76	0	24
	Total	59.2	5.2	35.6

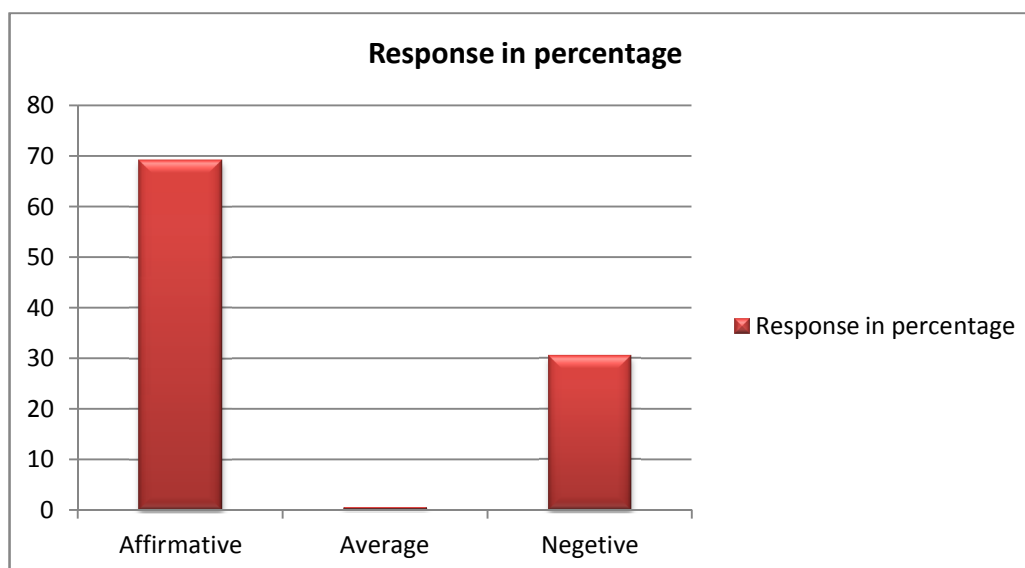


After analyzing the collected data from the students the first dimension i.e. infrastructure showed that 59.2% students were contended of their well-equipped classrooms with healthy environment and ICT facilities. Most of them appreciated the library facility having foreign authors' books. 5.2% were partially satisfied with their infrastructural facilities. It also cannot be neglected that 35.6% were not satisfied in this field. Regarding the question about digital library, 62% students reported about lack of digital library facility an important part of quality in higher education. This dimension showed the discriminative responses for quality improvement.

Core-Curriculum: This is the second dimension studied and the findings are presented below:

Table 2. Core curriculum Details

Sl. No.	Questions	% in Affirmative	% in Average	% in Negative
1	Do you think the present curriculum has utility for you?	84	0	16
2	Is the curriculum helpful for your competitive exam?	76	0	24
3	Is the curriculum lengthy and boring for you?	66	2	32
4	Is the curriculum activity-based?	70	0	30
5	Is there any scope to focus on your co-curricular activities?	50	0	50
Total		69.2	0.4	30.4

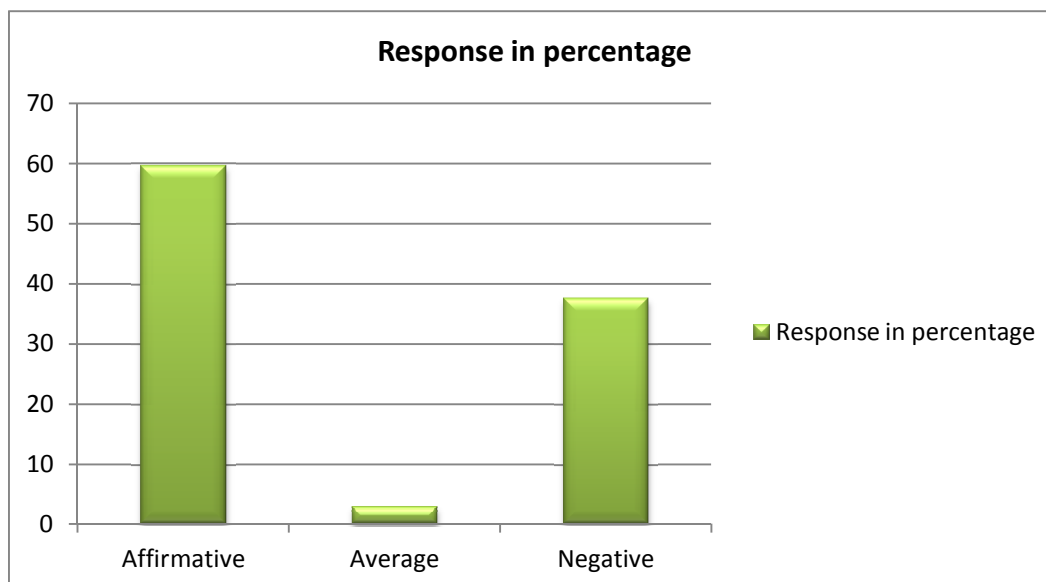


The second dimension provided a positive impression about core-curriculum. 69.2% of students were satisfied with their curriculum. 84% students found the utility value in their curriculum which helped them as a job-oriented skill. 0.4% of the students found curriculum as of average satisfactory level. 30.4% students desired to bring a change in the curriculum. In this table we can find a indecisive response regarding the question of focusing on co-curricular activities. University should focus on co-curricular activities as this a very crucial aspect of quality in higher education.

Teaching-learning

Table 3. Teaching-learning Details

Sl. No.	Questions	% in Affirmative	% in Average	% in Negative
1	Are there sufficient teachers in your department?	66	0	34
2	How many of them are PhD holders?	56	2	42
3	Are you motivated in the classroom by them?	80	4	16
4	Which method they apply most of the time during teaching?	22	2	76
5	Do they give you updated knowledge?	74	6	20
Total		59.6	2.8	37.6

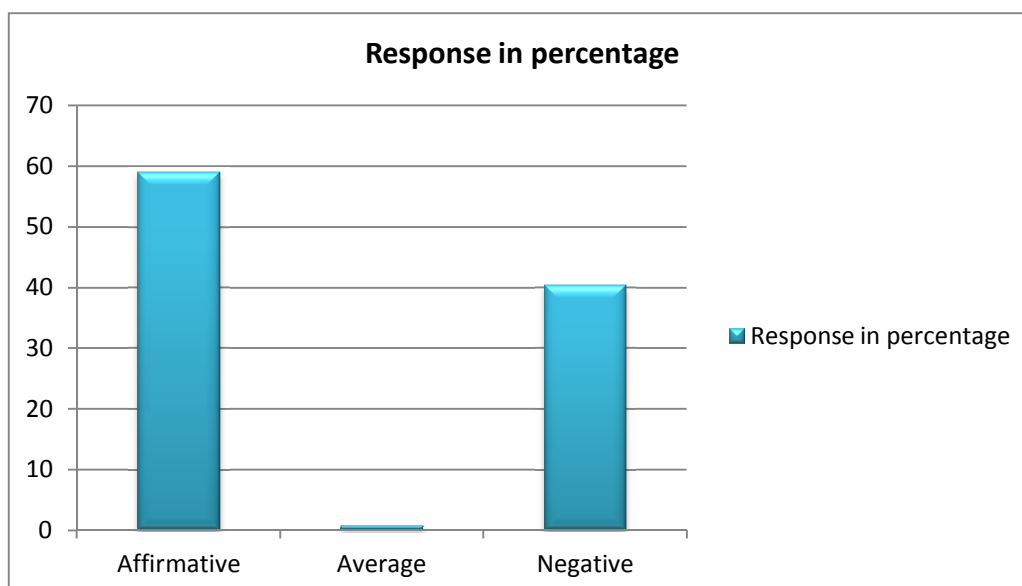


The third dimension i.e teaching-learning process is the backbone of an educational system where teacher has a pivotal role. 59.6% students described their view on teachers as a resourceful , scholar, motivational. 2.8% were not satisfied with teachers' availability and quality. 37.65 disagreed with the positive notions about the teachers. 76% students said that the teachers used only lecture method in the classroom and for this the classroom became very monotonous. For improving the quality in higher education, technology is a powerful instrument and teachers should use ICT based teaching method to remove their monotony. Although this table showed that 80% students were motivated by their teachers.

Research and Development

Table 4. Research and Development Details

Sl. No.	Questions	% in Affirmative	% in Average	% in Negative
1	Are you familiar with the new research topic relevant to your subject?	50	0	50
2	Are you aware of the recent research findings in your interested area?	50	0	50
3	Do you have the facility for conducting research in your university?	60	0	40
4	Do you ever conduct any seminar in your university?	60	0	40
5	Do you attend seminars and present papers ?	50	2	48
6	Do the teachers guide and encourage in the research activity?	84	2	14
Total		59	0.6	40.3

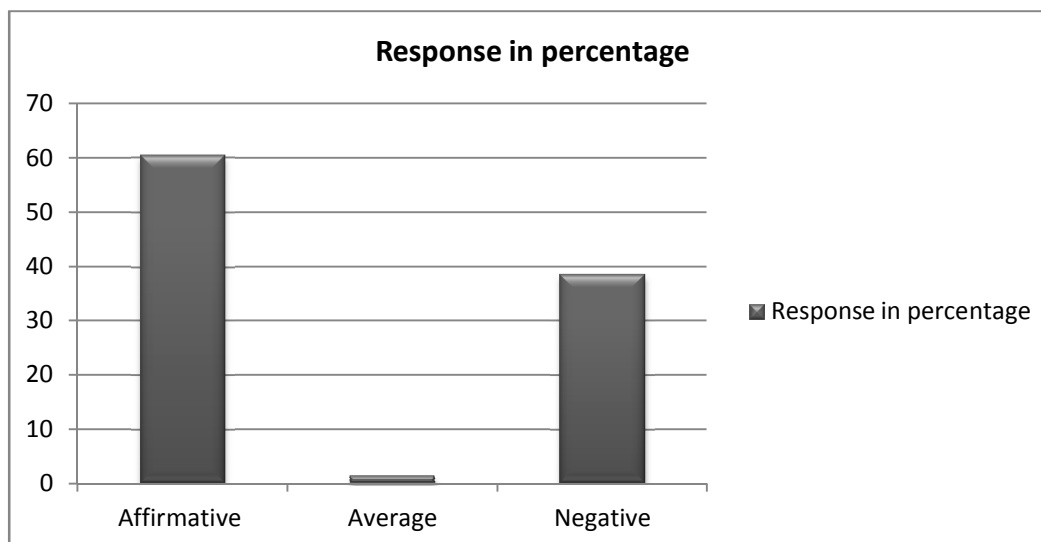


The fourth dimension is an integral part of higher educational institution, which gives a new light and approach to the field of education. 59% of students were familiar and well knower to research programmes. They are also updated with the new findings in their related field. Only 0.6% have vague idea about research and its development. A significant number of students which was 40.3% could not get any chance to explore themselves in research field.

Evaluation

Table 5. Evaluation Details

Sl. No.	Questions	% in Affirmative	% in Average	% in Negative
1	Are you satisfied with the evaluation system?	70	0	30
2	Is it burden to you?	68	4	28
3	Does it properly assess your talent?	64	2	34
4	Are you satisfied with your marks compare with other University?	72	0	28
5	Do you want any innovative changes in evaluation system?	28	0	72
Total		60.4	1.2	38.4



The last dimension is Evaluation. It is the final step which measure how much of desired objectives or aims were fulfilled. 60.4% were satisfied with their evaluation system and they did not take it as a burden. 1.2% of students were partly satisfied with their obtained marks as most of them completed their previous courses from another university. 38.4% told about biasness in evaluation systems which do not assess their proper talent. They wanted some innovative changes in existing evaluation system.

SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the above findings, the investigators forwarded the following recommendations for the university to focus on the following areas for further qualitative development:

- Better ICT facility
- Co-curricular activity
- Applying innovative teaching-learning strategy
- Organizing large number of national and international seminars
- Bringing innovative evaluation system

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