



Role of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in Quality Improvement in Higher Education

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Abstract

The Assessment and Accreditation exercise in India which had beginning about 15 years back has been accepted as a necessary exercise to help improve the quality of Higher education in the country by policy makers, eminent educationist and the academicians. Largely the institutions which undergo the assessment process accept its relevance. So many institutions have gone through the assessment process and most of the institutions have valid accreditation (include institutions which have undergone the process for the third time). It is important to note that assessment process followed By NAAC is a direct engagement between the institution (to be assessed) and the agency (NAAC), based on eligible criteria defined by NAAC and as applicable from time to time. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India's premier higher education quality assurance agency, today stands at crossroads after 20 years of assessing quality standards in Indian higher education. It is an autonomous body established by the UGC on 16th September, 1994 for ensuing quality in higher education, in pursuance of the National policy on Education and Program of Action, 1986. It is located in Bangalore; it is entrusted with the task of performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation of universities and colleges in the country. This paper is an attempt to broadly analysing the need and importance, objectives, and criteria for assessment and accreditation.

Keywords: *quality education, performance evaluation, quality standards*

Introduction

Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives."

---- ***William A. Foster***

Quality is usually thought in terms of an excellent product or service that fulfils or exceeds our expectations. Quality system is the method used to ensure that the Quality level of a product or service is maintained. Quality is a

complex phenomenon based on perceptions by individual's different perspectives on product and services. Quality has become a matter of major important for higher education institutions. Quality is the means through which an institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty, that the standards of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced (Quality Assurance Agency, UK).

Process of Quality Assurance



Quality assurance is a process oriented to guaranteeing that the quality of a product or a service meets some predetermined standard. Quality assurance and accreditation in higher education is defined as systematic management and assessment of procedures adopted by higher education institution or system to monitor performance and to ensure achievement of quality improvement. The Indian education system had its origin in the Gurukula System of ancient times and has evolved through the internationally recognized centres of learning like Nalanda and Takshashila and further reforms during the British rule. Starting with 18 Universities and 591 colleges at the time of Independence in 1947, these have increased to 700 Universities, more than 35,000 colleges and more than 20 million students in all over India; Indian higher education is a large and complex system. Such vast educational system requires proper policies to enforce rules and regulations for maintaining quality in higher education. Quality assessments always have a positive impact for the growth of the institution.

The quality assessment process should have the following criteria in minimum:

- 1) Curriculum design and content
- 2) Teaching and learning
- 3) Student achievement
- 4) Student support and guidance
- 5) Learning resources of laboratories, information technology, library etc.,
- 6) Personality development programs
- 7) Extracurricular activities

- 8) Placement services
- 9) Hostel facilities
- 10) Collaborative activities
- 11) The up programs with other institution and
- 12) Evaluation and promotion

Lacks of facilities pose a constant threat to the quality and standard of higher education

Need For Quality Assurance and Accreditation

The need for quality assurance and accreditation has been established due to globalization and internalization of higher education. In India University level institutions are offering various programs and they are following different curriculum. Every university is framing their own syllabus, medium of instruction, student enrolment, infrastructure, delivery system, sources of funds and governance. Institutions are established by central and state governments and also by local governments and private bodies. The administrative heads are different stakeholders. Some institutions are also autonomous and self-governing institutions.

In such conditions certainly there will be a different design of programs, evaluation and monitoring systems. All these procedures are with the ultimate aim to improve the quality of their products. The accountability of the institutions is paramount in imparting quality education. The necessity of quality assurance is aroused to maintain a uniform standard in education. In the view of maintaining the standard, quality assurance become part of higher education.



National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

It is an autonomous body. This has been established by the University Grants Commission in 1994 with the recommendations of National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and Programme of Action (POA), 1992. This has been established with a special vision to evaluate the quality of higher education in India. It has been envisaged in the memorandum of association of NAAC, that it has the responsibility to assess and accredit the organizations related to higher education, universities, colleges or one or more of their units i.e., departments, schools, organizations, programmes etc. NAAC has been working through its general council and executive committee. These are having educational administrators, policy makers and senior academicians as its members. These members are selected from higher education system.

According to the new methodology introduced by NAAC from 1.04.2007, the higher education institutions are assessed first and later accredited. In the first stage, the institution is required to seek 'Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment' (IEQA) and the second stage is the assessment and accreditation of institute under the grades A, B, C for accredited institutions and 'D' for those which are not accredited. For this NAAC has identified seven types of criterion. Those are

- 1) Curriculum aspects.
- 2) Teaching learning and evaluation.
- 3) Research, consultancy / suggestion and extension.

- 4) Infrastructure and learning resources.
- 5) Student support and progression.
- 6) Governance and leadership and
- 7) Innovative practices.

The assessment procedure of the organization has been done on the basis of the above standards.

Vision of the NAAC

To make quality, the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives. The mission statements of the NAAC aim at translating the NAAC vision into reality, defining the following key tasks of the organization.

- 1) To arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programme or project.
- 2) To stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions.
- 3) To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education.
- 4) To undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programme.
- 5) To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.

Graded by its vision and striving to achieve its mission, the NAAC primarily assess the quality of



institutions of higher education the volunteer for the process, through an internationally accepted methodology.

Mission

- 1) To arrange for periodic assessment, accreditation of institutions of higher education or units or specific educational programmes or projects.
- 2) To motivate the academic environment for the improvement of quality of teaching learning and research in higher education institutions.
- 3) To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education.
- 4) To undertake quality related research studies, consultancy and training programmes; and
- 5) To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.

Guided by its vision, it is striving to achieve its mission. NAAC primarily assesses the quality of institutions of higher education that volunteer for the process, through an internationally accepted methodology.

NAAC as an Accreditation Body

NAAC with its limited manpower has done a remarkable job in making the A & A process acceptable across the length of the country. It is time that the organization is infused with new blood, restructured at all levels and the present organizational roles and responsibilities re-examined. Few areas which need revitalization are the development of assessment expertise that forms the peer team. The notion that higher the designation better the expertise need to

be dumped, the average age of the visiting peer team to be kept around 45-50 years, and the peer team selection process modified. The other aspect which needs examinations is whether assessors should be from academic institutions only or they may be drawn from other sectors.

Keeping in view the past experience the development of multiple models for assessment the development and building in a separate section on evaluation of "skills development efforts of the institutions" into the assessment process may lead to better student performance output vis-a-vis employability in the next few years.

NAAC Value Framework

All the higher education institutions function in a dynamic environment throughout the world. There is no exception to the Indian higher education system from this. As significant changes happen in the mean time, there came new challenges and demands that seek new innovations. The continuous spreading of higher education, the influence of technology on the delivery of education, increasing private sector participation, and the impact of globalization show the necessity of remarkable changes in the Indian higher education field. While formulating the core values for accreditation framework, NAAC has taken into consideration the fast changes related to the Indian higher education and the metamorphosis in the values.

Core Values

- 1) Providing service to the National development.
- 2) Fostering global competencies among students.



- 3) Inculcating a value system among students.
- 4) Improving the use of technology.
- 5) Search for excellence.

Governance Structure

The NAAC's working is governed by the general council and the executive committee. In this, University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), Association of Indian Universities (AIU), Universities, colleges and other professional institutes are represented. In these two bodies, senior academicians and educational administrators are nominated as members.

Committees

NAAC is working through its general council, executive committee, and other academic advisory and administrative subcommittees. NAAC appoints experts from the senior academicians who have integrity undoubtedly, from all over India. National consultant/advisory committees in various areas should provide necessary inputs to establish and strengthening the processes. Vice chancellors of universities, Directors of higher education, Directors of Science and Technology institutes, deans, principals of colleges, heads of the departments -all are representatively drawn from all the disciplines and educational administrators provide expertise and leadership for the academic activities of NAAC. In addition, NAAC is also generating a large number of experts and assessors in all subjects by conducting orientation programmes periodically across the country.

Activities

In addition to many peer team visits which take place every day, the NAAC also facilitates conduct of workshops and seminars in accredited institutions. To create an advocacy for assessment and accreditation, NAAC partners with various state governments and professional bodies. Assessors interaction meetings (AIMS), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) meetings, interactions with governmental agencies form an important part of NAAC's activities.

Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)

In pursuance of the National Action Plan of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Bangalore for performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation and quality up gradation of institutions of higher education, the NAAC proposes that every accredited institution should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure. Quality enhancement is a continuous process. So, IQAC will become a part of an institution's system. It works in the way to achieve the quality goals and quality enhancement. The main task of IQAC is to develop a system for the catalytic improvement, for conscious and consistent improvement in the performance of institutions. IQAC will make significant and meaningful contributions in the post - accreditation phase of institutions. During the post - accreditation phase, the IQAC will channelize the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence.

IQAC shall evolve mechanisms and procedures for



1. Confirmation of suitable, efficient and progressive performance of academic, administrative and financial tasks.
2. Equitable access to academic programmes should be available to various sections of society.
3. Relevance and quality of academic and research programmes.
4. Integration of modern teaching learning processes.
5. Credibility of evaluation methods.
6. Adequacy, maintenance and ensuring the functioning of support structure and services.
7. Research sharing, networking with other institutions in India and abroad.

The Duties of IQAC

1. To improve and apply of quality parameters for various academic and administrative programmes of the institution.
2. Dissemination of information related to various quality parameters of higher education.
3. Organization of workshops, seminars on quality related themes.
4. Documentation of various programmes leading to quality improvement.
5. Acting as a nodal agency of the institution for quality related activities.
6. Preparation of Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) to be submitted to NAAC based on the quality parameters.

IQAC will facilitate the following

1. To a heightened level of clarity and focus on institutional functioning towards quality enhancement and facilitate internalization of the quality culture.
2. Institutionalize many good practices and enhancement of various activities of the institution and integration.
3. To provide a sound basis for decision making to improve institutional functioning.
4. To act as an agent of change in the institution.
5. To better internal communication.

Composition: The composition of IQAC is as follows

- 1) Chairperson: Head of the Institution.
- 2) A few senior administrative officers.
- 3) Three to eight teachers.
- 4) One or two members from the management.
- 5) One or two nominated members from the local society.
- 6) One of the teachers as the coordinator of the IQAC.

NAAC suggests that the institutions may change their composition depending on the size of the institution.

Grading By NAAC

Institutions are graded for each key aspect under four categories, viz., A, B, C, D, denoting Very good, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory levels respectively. The summated scores for all the Key Aspects under a Criterion is then calculated with the appropriate weightage applied to it and the GPA is worked out for the Criterion. The



Cumulative GPA (CGPA), which gives the final Assessment Outcome, is then calculated from the seven GPAs pertaining to the seven criteria, after applying the prescribed weightage Criterion.

ADVANTAGES OF CGPA

1. Letter grades converted to Numerical Grade Points (overall score in Cumulative Grade Points Average)
2. Qualitative measurements converted to grade points
3. Wider scope for normalizing the scores
4. Extreme biases could be minimized
5. A one points differences between two letter grades, with 50 or 100 points assigned between two successive letter grades results in appreciable fine-tuning of the process.
6. Relative evaluation would be more exact, due to a reduction in variations and standard deviations.
7. Inter-Peer Team variations are substantially reduced.
8. With score scope for adjustment at any stage, the peer team judgment would be more accurate.
9. Changing the Grading pattern from the earlier 9 points scale to the new 3 letter grades, viz., "A, B, C" for accredited institutions and "D" for those which are not accredited.
10. Shifting the institutional overall scoring pattern from the earlier percentage to the Cumulative grade Points Average (CGPA) system on a 4 point scale.

Criteria for Assessment Procedure

The seven criteria identified by NAAC to serve as basis for its assessment procedure.

Key features of Quality Benchmarks (peer team guidelines). The NAAC has evolved 50 indicators which are formulated all 7 criterions used by NAAC. They are further sub-divided as core and desirable indicators. If one carefully sees these indicators, one finds that there are some indicators which would be difficult to apply everywhere as it is. For example, when we speak about patents, it is indeed not possible to have patents in rural universities. At the same it would be nightmare to think of international MoU for the rural universities and colleges. It seems difficult for city colleges.

The NAAC has prescribed different methods of assessing the institutions in India. There are different type of institutions of learning in India viz., university, autonomous college/institutions and affiliated/constituent colleges. The NAAC has evolved criterion wise differential weightages for these different types of institutions. The NAAC started assessing the higher institution from 1996. So far NAAC has been able to accredited 172 universities and 4867 colleges. The government has made mandatory to all universities and colleges to go for accreditation. Institutions cannot use grades for more than five years. It means every institution has to go for accreditation periodically.

Evaluating the Parameters for Quality Assessment: Many organizations have evolved their own parameters for assessing the quality education in the citadels of higher education. But parameter for each organization cannot be same. Measuring rode for assessing



quality certainly varies from country to country. Through India has 3000 years of education, still it has to long way to match with universities of the West. At the same time in India, we have universities with all facilities and also receives state fund. Now new private universities are mushrooming very fact. There are universities with palatial infrastructure.

No doubt, citation per faculty should be encouraged. This should be one of the criterions for assessing the quality education in any education institutes. It is well known fact that the faculty can raise the institution to its height. Institution itself cannot provide quality education. If the faculty is good and involved in research then the quality can be enhanced. As research is part and partial of higher education, then the quality of higher education automatically can be raised. It is the faculty and stakeholders must help in quality assessment. It should be collective responsibility of institution as well as faculty to enhance the quality. Hence, the criterions evolved by the NAAC are the best way of assessing the quality in higher education. Of course, all criterions should not be same of all colleges and universities. The NAAC may evolve separate criterions for assessing for rural universities or colleges.

Conclusion

Indian higher education system is growing very fast but the same time it is not making much impact in the international level. It is time to think about the quality aspect of education in bringing the international standard. Quality assurance has become paramount feature in education. There should be stringent policies, rules and regulations to bring in quality education. Quality

assurance is a tool to bring excellence in education. We have to modernize our education system as we have modernized our life style.

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