

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract :- Education is the most important factor for Socio-economic development of the society as well as the Country. Educational institutions play a vital role in the development of the Society. So as to maintained the standard of Higher Education, UGC has established National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 to ensure and enhance the Quality of the Universities and Colleges as a Whole. So, the aim of this paper is to highlight on the Quality, Quality Assurance, Process of Accreditation.

Key Words: Quality, Quality Assurance, Higher Education.

Introduction :- The System of higher education in the Indian subcontinents is one of the largest in the world, comprising about 260 universities and more than eleven thousand colleges, about 8 million students and 0.35 million teachers. A selected few Indian universities are second to none in the international scenario, and a large Majority of Indian graduates, especially in the field of information technology have excelled, at times have even dominated the international competition.

Quality, Quality Assurance, total quality Management (TQM), are the words which were associated with manufacturing/production sector some years back. Concept of quality has been extended to cover the domain of the service sector, with the adoption of policy of privatization of education by Govt. of India, higher and technical education has quantitatively increased during the last two decades. This sudden expansion in the quantitative line has put lot of pressure on the stakeholders of education to take necessary steps to divert the growth from quantitative front to qualitative line. This quality aspect of education has become more essential with the phrase. 'wise adoption of liberalization and globalization policy by the Government.'

Definitional analysis : Quality :- Quality is the current buzzword in the academic circle, the literature is full of definitions on quality. Quality is that which is fit for a purpose. (Juran,1979)) ISO 8402 defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and

implied needs. Definitions of quality fall into several categories; some definitions are user based. Higher quality means conforming to standards & making it right the first time. Another approach to quality is product based. It views quality as precise and measurable variable. All approaches though look different and distinct from each other, however, coverage to the definition of ISO8402 All needs as usually translated into product features and characteristics of these features must be then translated into identifiable product attributes and incorporated in the product design and the manufacturing process (Mukherjee,1998).

Quality Assurance : It involves planning and designing quality into all processes involved in delivering the service, coupled with systematic use of quality data throughout the organisation. i.e. shift from concept of Inspecting quality failures out to designing quality in i.e. prevention rather than cure.

Quality Assurance of higher education System in India :- In India there are number of agencies which deal with the enhancement of quality in education sector with its different areas of specialization, eg. UGC, AICTE, MCI , NCTE, BCI, ICAR, ICSSR ECT. All these agencies have their in built mechanism to enhance the quality in their particular sector eq. UGC has established National Assessment and Accreditation council (NAAC) in 1994 to ensure and enhance the quality of the universities and colleges as a whole. Quality assessment is the act of defecting and measuring the difference between efficiency and effectiveness that can be attributed to high quality education including variation across regions and people.

Audit is the critical assessment of state of affairs of any area of an organisation when there is a quality audit it will be critical from every angle considering all the operational points. It is a good measure for quality assessment and grading of university and college taken up by the UGC. This task is to be completed exhaustively and objectively through standard methodology. Universities are engaged in creating awareness through class rooms and public forums for quality management

and governance. Universities are assessing specific areas at micro level of the various segments of the society. How far the universities have been effective in fulfilling the social responsibility required for the task of their self-evaluation which is to be sound exhaustive and objective in all respects otherwise every activity of the universities will be called in questions in the society or creation of utility can be judged only by an effective self-evaluations program.

Guiding principle of Assessment :- As institutions have personalities, the individuals have institution to develop their identity. The personality develops not casually but by action and reaction in its perception vision, planning and execution. Every little thing will count to make up the excellence with which the personality of an institution is moulded. Therefore, following area can be laid down to judge the efficiency of a model for academic and government audit.

- 1) Capable of leading the system to cost effectiveness
- 2) Generating operational value of good governance.
- 3) Making higher education's accountable and socially relevant
- 4) In built provisions and auto force generating system for quality maintenance not only by the universities themselves but primarily their regulating and fund providing masters like the state government & Government of India.
- 5) Generating a system in the universities which creates, "Loyalty to the System" and not to the individuals to do away with the frequently accused problems of transnationalism and politicisations.

Accreditation :- Accreditation assures the educational community, the general public, & other agencies or organisations that an institution or program such as

- a) Clearly defined educational objectives.
- b) Maintains conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected,
- c) Is in fact accomplishing them substantially and
- d) Can be expected to do so (cherney, 90)

Accreditation serves as a mechanism for quality assessment and quality enhancement with a quality defined as the effective utilization of resources to achieve appropriate educational programs, evaluation based on qualitative measures which ultimately depends on the observation and judgment of experienced and capable

evaluators. Final judgment is concerned with the totality of accomplishment and the environment for learning. The decision regarding accreditation is approached from an evaluation of this totality, rather than from a consideration of an isolated particulars.

Need and Purpose :- Quality is the key concern of global Community, Education is committed to the whole community and now the prime concern of our country. Hence it is quiet natural that quality finds a great role in education. The liberalization policies and mass education open vistas for anybody to start an educational institution if proper investment is there. The emerging of number of private universities and colleges, developed a concern on the quality of education rendered by these upcoming organizations. At the foremost the respective governments have regulated the higher education in their region which has lead a path towards an established accreditation agency. Around 130 accreditation bodies existed so far around the world. The following factors demands evaluation of higher education.

- 1) Mass education and quantitative expansion of educational institutions.
- 2) Socio-political and economical changes
- 3) Multidisciplinary approach and diversified programs.
- 4) Marketing of education as a catalyst to makeover overall quality of life.
- 5) Increasing demand for non-formal – lifelong education
- 6) Technological and communication development
- 7) Decreasing pattern of government aids
- 8) To Consider higher education as national investment
- 9) Regional imparity of standards in higher education
- 10) Privatization and transnational education

Role of UGC – NAAC in quality Assurance:

The National assessment and Accreditation council (NAAC), India's one of the premier higher education quality assurance Agency, today stands at a cross roads, after 11 years assessing quality standards in Indian higher education as an autonomous body established by the university grants commission (UGC) in 1994 the council has assessed and accredited more than 2500

institutions and has gone from being viewed somewhat sceptically and suspiciously to being acclaimed for facilitating a culture of academic quality to meet global standard and demand of skilled professionals. In its early years, the NAAC moved continuously to popularize the concept of external quality assurance and to encourage voluntary internal quality assurance and self-improvement mechanism at the institutional level. As the pace of NAAC operations accelerate in its second decade of existence new sets of challenges are emerging which are paving the way for internal policy shifts in coming time.

Process of Accreditation :- The new NAAC guideline mentioned in section (A) provide the Framework for Assessment and Accreditation base core values and criteria for assessment and its Key Indicators. Normally accreditation is a twostep process of evaluation which includes institutional self-study based on published standards and onsite visit from a team of experts to validate the self-study report and preparation of the report with accreditation based on two-point grade or multipoint grade. It is applicable for both institutional and departmental accreditations. While every accreditation agency uses this model, each has its own procedures & different set of Rules.

NAAC Methodology :- Voluntary Accreditation is now mandatory for NAAC for funding, for approval of permission of new course. By 2022 every institute should set accredited minimum score of 2.50 a procedure developed by NAAC to evaluate the institutions coming forward through a process of combining self-evaluation and peer review. The institution has to prepare a letter of intention and send it to NAAC. NAAC will send the format for self-study report along with manual (both hard Copy and soft copy in a CD) as per the type of institution, the officer in Charge of the concerned institution from NAAC will fix up the dates for visit and compile a panel of experts with the concern of the institution and with the approval of the NAAC office. The institution has to submit the self-study report with supporting documents well in advance prior to the proposed dates of peer team visit. NAAC officer prepares peer team document for the respective institution on the basis of the self-study report and circulate to the members of the team so as to have effective validation process. The onsite visit normally is of 2-5 days as to the size and programs of the institute. NAAC will certify the accreditation status on the basis of the evaluation report. NAAC identified 7 points criterion for evaluation, which adherers to the international standards which fits with Indian academic

environment as well. The officer in charge of concerned institute fills 70% of the information online and the rest 30% is verified by the NAAC peer team expert through Onsite visit.

The criterion points are as follows:

1. Curricular Aspects
2. Teaching-learning and Evaluation
3. Research, Consultancy and Extension
4. Infrastructure and learning resources
5. Student support and progression
6. Governance, Leadership and Management
7. Institutional Values and Best Practices

The SSR is expected to highlight the functioning of an institution with reference to these seven criteria. Each criterion has key aspects which form the basis of criterion wise assessment, one key aspect is dedicated to best practices under each criterion.

The NAAC assessment criteria are available on its website at <http://naacindia.org/criteria.asp>

The final Grade :- On the basis of the CGPA obtained by the institution is maximum possible score of 4.00, the final grade is assigned on a seven point refers to the seven letter grades each aligned to the seven specific score range

CGPA Grading System: Table 1 Institutional Grades and Accreditation Status effective from February 2020

Range of Institutional Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)	Letter	Status Grade
3.51-4.00	A++	Accredited
3.26-3.50	A+	Accredited
3.01-3.25	A	Accredited
2.76-3.00	B++	Accredited
2.51-2.75	B+	Accredited
2.01-2.50	B	Accredited
1.51-2.00	C	Accredited
d" 1.50 D	Not	Accredited

Institutions which secure a CGPA equal to or less than 1.50 are nationally categorized under the letter grade "D". Such unqualified institutions will also be intimated and notified by NAAC as "Assessed and Found not qualified for Accreditation."

Outcomes of Accreditation :

- 1) Give the institution a new path of direction and identity
- 2) Reliability on quality of education offered by the institution to the community.
- 3) Helps the institution to know its strength, weakness, opportunities through an informed review Process.
- 4) The outcome of the process provides the funding agencies with objectives and systematic database form performance funding.
- 5) Initiates institution in to innovative and modern methods of pedagogy.
- 6) Accreditation is essential for getting UGC special grants on colleges/Universities with potential for excellence.
- 7) Accreditation leads for permanent affiliation for a college.
- 8) Framework for Assessment and Accreditation (A & A) is desired for autonomy and deemed university status.

Conclusion :- There is no final word on quality. Accreditation is not the end but a milestone in the

journey. Quality assurance is a continuous evaluation process, where quality culture/quality consciousness plays a major role, proper planning, dedication, feedback, positive approach is the success mantra to enhance quality in higher education, which can help to build a conscious nation through a conscious society.

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