

NAAC Assessment: A Boon for Higher Education

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Abstract: Education plays a vital role in the development of any nation. Higher education is a powerful instrument for creating knowledge and information based society. The mission and vision of higher education is to educate, train, and undertake research activities and service to the community. Higher education is nothing but production and dissemination of knowledge. Therefore, the higher education is to be the best on both quantity and quality. The past few decades have witnessed a sea change in higher education in India. Rapid economic growth, globalization, emergence of the private sector in higher education and an increasing demand for quality education louder than ever before. Higher education is gradually being perceived as a private good with benefits adding to the recipient of higher education. In such an environment, it is necessary to have an effective and efficient quality assurance mechanism in place in the country. There is an urgent need to improve the quality of Higher Educational Institutions. Improving the quality and achieving excellence in teaching, examination, research and extension is the greatest challenge faced by all Higher Educational Institutions today. No educational institution can progress without quality. Accreditation is a body established by the University Grants Commission of India to assess and accredit institutions of higher education in the country. It is an outcome of the recommendations of the National Policy in Education that laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India. For India today, quality in higher education is a key priority. And this must be achieved keeping in mind the issues of relevance, cost, equity and international standards. NAAC's assessment can judge the quality of a college or a university, and it has led to the academic upliftment and qualitative up gradation in the colleges. Thus, NAAC assessment: A Boon for the Higher Education

Keywords: NAAC, Accreditation, Assessment, Quality, Assurance, Higher Education in India,

1. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in the development of any nation. It constitutes the backbone of a country as it produces the human force which plays the most determining role in the advancement of a nation and also in the progress of civilization. Education is one that provides the thrust in getting ahead and building up a powerful democratic society. The development of any country depends mostly upon its growth of education. Progress of any country is possible only when its citizens are dynamic, resourceful, enterprising and responsible. Therefore, higher education is considered as an important instrument for bringing about social, economic, political and technological progress of any country particularly for a developing country like India.

The scope and demand for higher education is increasing day by day and the most important mission of higher education is the creation of intellects by providing world class education for promotion of global standards in the Institutions of Higher Education. The most important factor that should be taken care of is to provide higher education without compromising on the quality of education.

Accreditation plays a vital role in higher education because both the higher education community and government use the system to promote and assure quality and protect the public interest. Accreditation is one of the major ways in which the higher education community sets expectations for quality and how government and the public define and communicate the overriding public interest in higher education. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. The primary purpose of accreditation is to ensure that your program fulfills the basic role of providing you with an education.

Accreditation may be summarized as a process, based on professional judgment, for evaluating whether or not an educational Institution or programme meets specified standards of educational quality. Its primary purpose is to assure prospective students and public that graduates of an Institution, conducting various programmes, have achieved a minimum level of competence in their chosen fields of study, thus serving as a form of consumer protection. In many countries, accreditation is the legal responsibility of ministry of education or other governmental agencies.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with its prime agenda to assess and accredit institutions of higher learning in the country. The UGC have mandated that all colleges should complete the process of assessment and accreditation. The NAAC has been established in the year 1994 is headquartered at Bangalore. The process of assessment and accreditation has created a tremendous momentum among the academia on issues pertaining to quality and this has largely been due to the successful partnership between NAAC and the State governments. Quality Sustenance and Quality Enhancement are the two key words reverberating in most institutions of higher learning in the country today. While the initial phase of the transformation focused on creating phase is now more focused on creating institutions of the future. Also the issue of colleges and universities being adequately prepared for academic life from the perspective of students takes on more importance.

2. Need of Accreditation

Accreditation of educational Institutions/programmes is a global practice and its need has been felt by various developing and developed countries for one or more of the following purposes.

- Funding decisions.

- State recognition of qualification/ certification of professionals
- Accountability of Institutions to stakeholders
- Encouraging self-improvement initiatives by Institutions
- Quality assurance of educational programme

3. Role of Accreditation

- Encouraging quality improvement initiatives by Institutions
- Verifying that an institution or program meets established standards.
- Assisting potential students in identifying acceptable institutions
- Promoting necessary changes, innovations and reforms in all aspects of the institutions working for the above purpose
- Helping to identify institutions and programs for the investment of public and private funds
- Encouraging self-evaluation and accountability in higher education
- Creating goals for self-improvement of weaker programs and stimulating a general raising of standards among educational institutions
- Involving the faculty and staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning
- Establishing criteria for professional certification and licensure and for upgrading courses offering such preparation
- Confidence and assurance on quality to various stakeholders including students.
- monitoring, assessing, and evaluating the standards and quality of the education
- Significance of Assessment and Accreditation:
- Assessment and Accreditation is market-driven and has an international focus. It assesses the characteristics of an Institution and its programmes against a set of criteria established
- Contributes to the significant improvement of the Institutions involved in the accreditation process.
- Assessment and Accreditation is the tool in reaching this objective.
- Accreditation process quantifies the strengths, weaknesses in the processes adopted by the institution and provides directions and opportunities for future growth.
- Accredited institutions may be preferred by funding agencies for releasing grants for research as well as expansion etc.
- It provides a quality seal or label that differentiates the institutions from its peers at the national level. This leads to a widespread recognition and greater appreciation of the brand name of Institutions and motivates the Institutions to strive for more'
- It helps the accredited institutions for quality sustenance and quality enhancement activities by setting up of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in each of the Colleges and Universities.

4. Benefits of Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC:

Benefits to Institutions

- To know its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review process.
- To initiate innovative and modern methods of pedagogy.
- Intra and inter-institutional interactions.
- To realize their academic objectives.
- Helps the Institution in securing necessary funds from funding agencies for releasing grants for research as well as expansion etc.
- Improves student enrolment both in terms of quality and quantity
- Helps create sound and challenging academic environment in the Institution
- Facilitates global recognition of degrees and mobility of graduates and professionals
- Continuous Improvement
- Ensure heightened level of clarity and focuses on institutional functioning towards quality enhancement
- Ensure internalization of the quality culture.
- Ensure enhancement and coordination among various activities of the institution and institutionalize all good practices.
- Provide a sound basis for decision-making to improve institutional functioning.

Act as a dynamic system for quality changes in HEIs.

- Build an organized methodology of documentation and internal communication.
- Help colleges and universities achieve positive student learning outcomes.
- Stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality in teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions.
- Encourages self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher Education.
- Helps to undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes.
- Collaboration with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.
- Helps to Contribute to National Development

Benefits to Students

- Students studying in NAAC accredited Institutions can be assured that they will receive education which is a balance between high academic quality and professional relevance and that the needs of the corporate world are well integrated into programmes, activities and processes.
- It signifies that he has entered the portals of an Institution, which has the essential and desirable features of quality professional education.
- Enhances employability of graduates.
- Financial aid is available only to students who enroll at a college, university, or other institution of higher learning that has been accredited by an accreditation organization

Benefits to Employers

- Accreditation assures potential employers that students come from a programme where the content and quality have been evaluated, satisfying established standards.
- It also signifies that the students passing out have acquired competence based on well established technical inputs.
- Employers look for reliable information on the quality of education offered to the potential recruits.

Benefits to faculty

- Motivates faculty to participate actively in academic and related Institutional / departmental activities
- The production of qualified human resources.

Benefits to the Public

- Accredited status represents the commitment of the programme and the institution to quality and continuous improvement.
- Provides society with reliable information on quality of education offered.
- Benefits to Industry and Infrastructure Providers.
- It signifies identification of quality of Institutional capabilities, skills and knowledge.

Benefits to Parents

It signifies that their ward goes through a teaching-learning environment as per accepted good practices.

Benefits to Alumni

It reassures alumni that they are products of an institute with a higher standing in terms of learning.

Benefits to Country

Accreditation helps in gaining confidence of stakeholders and in giving a strong message that as a country, our technical manpower is of international standards and can be very useful in enhancing the global mobility for our technical manpower.

Contributes to social and economic development of the country by producing high quality technical human resource. Role in human resource development and capacity building of individuals, to cater to the needs of the economy, society and the country as a whole, thereby contributing to the development of the Nation

5. Catalyst for International Accreditations

Due to accreditation from NAAC, the Institution's systems and procedures get aligned with the Institution's Mission and Vision. All essential prerequisites for international accreditation are included in the accreditation process of NAAC. Therefore, NAAC acts as a catalyst for the Institutions planning to acquire International Accreditation.

6. Conclusion

Education at all levels can shape the world of tomorrow, equipping individuals and societies with the skills, perspectives knowledge and values to live and work in

sustainable manner. The higher education system in India has developed in a noteworthy way, particularly in the Post-independence period, to become one of the prime systems of its kind in the world. It has been used as a reliable tool to build a knowledge-based information society. The main aim of Higher education is to contribute to the development and improvement of society as a whole in the sustainable manner. It also aims at meeting the needs of all sectors of human activity. New developments in higher education require a major transformation in the accreditation process. The overriding public interest of the present century is promoting accountability for moving to world-class quality and performance. In order to survive in the competitive world of globalization, all higher education institutions should pay special attention to quality in higher education. NAAC has taken a number of steps to promote the quality of Indian higher education. NAAC's assessment has made great attempts in bringing about quality culture among the Higher Educational Institutions of India. Quality is the major life giving force in the Institutions of higher education. Without quality higher education is of no use to anyone. In the recent past there has been a mushroom growth of higher educational institutions with sub-standard quality of education. But after NAAC's inception, there has been a massive change in the total scenario of higher education. NAAC's assessment has brought about quality development in the colleges. There has been major improvement in the academic and non-academic activities of the college.

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