

# ROLE OF NAAC IN PROMOTING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in the development of any nation. Therefore, the higher education is to be the best on both quantity and quality. There has been a great increase in the number of Universities and Colleges in India. To check and assess the quality of these institutions, an autonomous and independent organization called The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India in 1994.

Its Job is to assess and accredit the institutions of higher education in India. It came into existence as a result of the recommendations by the National policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (POA-1992) that had stressed on enhancing and improving the quality of higher education in the country. In spite of the built-in regulatory mechanisms that aim to ensure satisfactory levels of quality in the functioning of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), there had been no specific modalities to assess and ensure the quality of education imparted by them. To address this issue, the NAAC has been instilling a momentum of quality consciousness amongst Higher Educational Institutions, through a process of assessing their strengths and weaknesses and motivating them for continuous quality improvement. The NAAC after considering the Institutional Assessment and Accreditation application of the intent institution declares the Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IEQA) status for the institution.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

In a society full of diversity, ideologies and opinions, higher education means different things to different people. According to Ronald Barnett there are four predominant concepts of higher education:

- i) Higher education as the production of qualified human resources.
- ii) Higher education as training for a research career.
- iii) Higher education as the efficient management of teaching provision.
- iv) Higher education as a matter of extending life chances.

## QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Approaches to quality in higher education in most countries have started with an assumption that, for various reasons, the quality of higher education needs monitoring. At root, governments around the world are looking for higher education to be more responsive, including:

- making higher education more relevant to social and economic needs;
- widening access to higher education
- expanding numbers, usually in the face of decreasing unit cost
- Ensuring comparability of provision and procedures, within and between institutions, including international comparisons.

Quality has been used as a tool to ensure some compliance with these concerns. Thus approaches to quality are predominantly about establishing quality monitoring procedures.

## NAAC AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The performance of the colleges affiliated with universities, autonomous colleges and universities is assessed after every five years. The programme of assessing an institution is based on international practices and experiences which the academicians, intellectuals and officials connected with the NAAC receive. It inspects the infrastructure, facilities and also assesses the performance and academic excellence of the teachers of an institution. It gives grades on the basis of performance and prospects of an institution.

### NAAC – VISION AND MISSION

#### VISION

To make quality defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives.

#### MISSION

- v To arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects;
- v To stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions;
- v To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education;
- v To undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes, and
- v To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.

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

#### FUNCTIONS OF NAAC

NAAC has been entrusted with the following functions, which are expected to reflect the above mentioned vision, mandate and core value framework.

#### PRIMARY FUNCTIONS:

To assess and accredit higher education institutions which include the following:

- v Assessing and Accrediting Institutions/ Departments/ Programmes
- v Evolving appropriate instruments of accreditation and fine tuning them whenever necessary.
- v Identifying, enlisting and creating a pool of dependable assessors.
- v Providing appropriate training to assessors.
- v Preparing in-house pre-visit documents for the perusal of assessors.
- v Co-coordinating the 'on-site' visit to its effective completion.

#### COMPLEMENTARY FUNCTIONS

To organize promotional activities related to quality in higher education, and Assessment & Accreditation, which include the following:

- v Develop pre- and post-accreditation strategies
- v Disseminate the NAAC processes and quality enhancement mechanisms through relevant publications
- v Organize Seminars/Workshops/ Conferences to share and discuss education quality-related issues.
- v Provide guidance to institutions for preparing their Self-study Reports (SSRs)
- v Partner with stakeholders for promoting A/A
- v Promote the establishment of Quality Assurance units
  - o Internal Quality Assurance Cells(IQAC)
  - o State level Quality Assurance Co-ordination Committee (SLQACC)
  - o State Quality Assurance Cell (SQAC)

v Establish collaborations with other National and International professional Agencies of A/A

#### ELIGIBILITY OF HEIs:

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OF HEIS FOR NAAC A&A:

The NAAC has adopted its New Methodology of Assessment and Accreditation from 1st April 2007.

1 Universities recognized under Sections 2f, 2f and 12B of the UGC Act of 1956 or established under Section 3 of the UGC Act, which have completed 5 years since establishment or with a record of at least 2 batches of students having completed their degree programs, whichever is earlier.

2 All Universities recognized under Section 3 of the UGC Act are eligible, regardless of the number of years of establishment.

3 Colleges/Institutions/Autonomous Colleges, affiliated to a Recognized University, and Constituent Colleges coming under the jurisdiction of Recognized Universities which have the same record as mentioned in the case 1

4 Institutions coming under the jurisdiction of Professional Regulatory Councils are eligible if they are duly recognized by the Concerned Councils.

5 Any other Institutions/Units may also be taken up for Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC, if directed by the UGC and/or Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India.

#### VALUE FRAMEWORK OF NAAC

The changes in the education system as a result of the impact of technology, private participation, and globalization and the consequent shift in values have been taken into consideration by the NAAC while formulating the following core values for its accreditation framework.

##### i) CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The HEIs have a significant role in human resource development to cater to the needs of the economy, society and the country as a whole, thereby contributing to the development of the Nation. It is therefore appropriate that the Assessment and Accreditation process of the NAAC looks into the ways HEIs have been responding to and contributing towards National Development.

##### ii) FOSTERING GLOBAL COMPETENCIES AMONG STUDENTS

With liberalization and globalization of economic activities, the demand for internationally acceptable standards in higher education has grown. Therefore, the accreditation process of

the NAAC needs to examine the role of HEIs in preparing the students to achieve core competencies (innovative and creative) to face the global requirements successfully.

### (iii) INCULCATING VALUE SYSTEM AMONG STUDENTS

The HEIs have to shoulder the responsibility of inculcating the desirable value systems (values commensurate with social, cultural, spiritual, moral etc.) amongst the students. The NAAC assessment therefore examines how these essential and desirable values are being inculcated in the students by the HEIs.

### (iv) PROMOTING USE OF TECHNOLOGY:

To keep pace with the developments in other spheres of human endeavor, the HEIs have to enrich the learning experiences of their wards by providing them with the state-of-the-art educational technologies.

### (v) QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE:

Excellence in all that the institutions do will contribute to the overall development of the system of higher education of the country as a whole. This 'Quest for Excellence' could start with the preparation of the SAR of an institution. Another step in this direction could be the identification of the institution's strengths and weaknesses in various spheres/criteria.

The five core values as outlined above form the foundation for assessment of institutions that volunteer for accreditation by the NAAC.

## ACCREDITATION

### CRITERIA AND PROCESSES FOR ACCREDITATION

Since the accreditation framework of the NAAC is expected to assess the institution's contributions towards the five core values mentioned above, the NAAC has integrated these into the seven criteria identified for Assessment and Accreditation, which are:

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 and Leadership
7. Innovative Practices



At NAAC, a five-stage process of external quality monitoring/assessment is undertaken covering:

- (i) On-line submission of a Letter of Intent (LoI)
- (ii) Submission of Institutional Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IQEA) required in the case of certain HEIs coming forward for assessment and accreditation for the first time and feedback to the applicant institution regarding specific improvements needed for reaching the threshold level of quality for applying for the comprehensive Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC
- (iii) Preparation and submission of Self-Study Report (SSR)/ Self-Appraisal Report (SAR)/ Re-accreditation Report (RAR), as the case may be, by the HEIs
- (iv) On-site visit by Peer Teams for validation of the SSR/SAR/RAR and reporting the assessment outcome to the NAAC and
- (v) The final decision by the Executive Committee of the NAAC.

#### THE ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

There are two outcomes of Assessment and Accreditation: The qualitative part of the outcome is called Peer Team Report and the quantitative part would result in a Cumulative Grade Point Average, a letter grade and a performance descriptor. The final declaration (1st April 2007) of the accreditation status of an institution is as given below

Range of Institutional Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)

Letter Grade

Performance Descriptor

3.01 – 4.00

A

Very Good (Accredited)

2.01 – 3.00

B

Good (Accredited)

1.51 – 2.00



C

Satisfactory (Accredited)

≤ 1.50

D

Unsatisfactory (Not accredited)

Institutions which secure a CGPA equal to or less than 1.50 will be intimated and notified by the NAAC as "assessed and found not qualified for accreditation". The accreditation status is valid for five years from the date of approval by the Executive Committee of the NAAC.

#### BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

Helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges through an informed review

- v Categorizes internal areas of planning and resource allocation
- v Enhances collegiality on the campus
- v Outcome of the process provides the funding agencies with objective and systematic database for performance based funding
- v Initiates institution into innovative and modern methods of pedagogy
- v Gives the institution a new sense of direction and identity
- v Provides the society with reliable information on the quality of education offered by the institution
- v Gives employers access to information on standards in recruitment
- v Promotes intra-institutional and inter - institutional interactions.

#### REACCREDITATION

#### RE-ASSESSMENT

Institutions which would like to make an improvement in the accredited status in institutional grade may volunteer for re-assessment after completing at least one year, but not after the completion of three years.

#### RE-ACCREDITATION

Re-Accreditation Report (RAR) should be submitted to the NAAC by the first half of the fifth year, so that the process of assessment visits could be completed by the end of the fifth year. The NAAC will endeavor to expedite the re-accreditation process to complete within six months after receiving Re-Accreditation Report. The re-accreditation by the NAAC will look upon how far the institution has achieved the objectives enshrined in the five core values mentioned earlier and assesses how it has progressed during the accredited period. In particular, the re-accreditation makes a shift in focus in assessing the developments with reference to three aspects –

(i) QUALITY SUSTENANCE

During the first assessment for accreditation, the NAAC's process would have triggered quality initiatives in many aspects of functioning of the HEIs resulting in significant changes in the pedagogical, managerial, administrative and related aspects of functioning of the accredited institutions. These changes have a direct bearing on the quality of education and re-accreditation will consider how these initiatives have been sustained during the accredited period.

(ii) QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The re-accreditation would give due credit to the quality initiatives promoted by the first assessment and the consequent quality enhancement that has taken place.

(iii) ACTION BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Re-accreditation will address how HEIs have taken steps to overcome the deficiencies mentioned in the first assessment report and also build on the strengths noted in the report and will prepare a Re-Accreditation Report (RAR) accordingly.

## IMPACT AND REACHOUT OF NAAC

### IMPACT OF NAAC

- ü Created better understanding of Quality Assurance among the HEIs
- ü Generated keen interest and concerns about Quality Assurance among the stakeholders
- ü Helped in creation of institutional database of the accredited institutions
- ü Encouraged the institutions to get more funds from the funding agencies
- ü Facilitated regulatory agencies to make use of accreditation for funding
- ü Triggered Quality Assurance activities in many of the HEIs
- ü Activated a 'Quality Culture' among the various constituents of the institution



## REACHING OUT OF NAAC

Reaching out to the stakeholders is an essential component of the NAAC's image building process. This is done through

- § Regular correspondence with the institutions
- § Awareness programmes, region-wise
- § Assessors' Interaction Meetings
- § Meetings of Directors of Higher Education
- § Newsletter : NAAC News
- § Website: [www.naac.gov.in](http://www.naac.gov.in)
- § Press conferences and press releases
- § Special articles in newspapers and magazines on the NAAC activities
- § Directory of Accredited Institutions.

## MOUS WITH GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

The NAAC has entered into a number of MoUs/collaborations with Governments and National & International Agencies, as listed below:

### NATIONAL:

- (1) NAAC-NCTE, (2) NAAC-DCI

### INTERNATIONAL:

(1) with Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada, (2) with Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), South Africa, (3) with Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), (4) with British Council/ Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), UK, (5) with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (6) with International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), (7) with Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN).

## FUTURE OF ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The criteria currently adopted by the two systems- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and NAAC for assessment are just the physical and measurable parameters like space, faculty strength, publication etc., There are suggestions that the accreditation should also assess the "process parameters" too. In addition the quality assessment should include the system of



several other factors like management, administration, transparency, ethics, and so on.

Above all, the assessment should also consider the “outcome parameters” such as the performance of the products of the programme or institutions. But this is not possible by the visit or inspection which last for a few days. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) and the Yashpal Committee (YPC) on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education in India have accorded high priority to the issues concerning accreditation in education sector with different approaches. The NKC has suggested licensing of a large number of private organizations to undertake the accreditation responsibility. The YPC has suggested that the accreditation responsibility be entrusted to a carefully chosen non-profit organization in the public domain.

A Brainstorming Session on the “Role of NAAC in the Changing Scenario of Higher Education” was held at NAAC Campus on 11 Sep, 2009 which was chaired by Prof.

Yashpal. The observations/recommendations from the session are:

- Ø NAAC has done a reasonably good job in the field of Assessment & Accreditation with greater credibility
- Ø Social diversities including gender and location aspects may be taken into consideration for future Accreditation exercises.
- Ø The idea of private accreditation agencies should be discouraged but the members were not averse to multiple accreditation agencies.
- Ø The assessment and accreditation methodology of NAAC needs to be strengthened.

## CONCLUSION

There is a growing concern that quality monitoring has to be about improving what is delivered to stakeholders, even where this requires some substantial reconsideration of the higher education. Accountability still remains a priority in many systems and there is a concern that credibility through accountability has to be established first and then improvement will follow. Real enhancement is internally driven. If enhancement is also intended to develop the transformative ability of students, then quality monitoring needs to adopt a transformative framework, rather than simplified operationalisations such as fitness for purpose. Only if external quality monitoring is clearly linked to an internal culture of continuous quality improvement that focuses on identifying stakeholder requirements in an open, responsive manner will it be effective in the long run. Quality monitoring is in need of a ‘paradigm shift’ that turns it from an accountability tool to a fundamental support in the development of a culture of continuous improvement of the transformative process. Hope NAAC will act upon this.