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Academic Rating: In The Changing Global Scenario

Certification For Education Quality.

ABSTRACT

Around 247 universities and 98 deemed university level institutions and about 17000 colleges in India are providing higher education to approximate 10 million students in the country. But, there are a few universities and institutions touching the level of excellence, as they are well equipped with sound infrastructure, resources, faculty and programme of teaching as the advanced countries possess. Whereas most of the other institutions engaged in higher education do not come anywhere near the level of average institution of higher education. As there is a direct correlation between the development of higher education and economic development only a sound education system can trim the shape of India in becoming the superpower in the world. Only growing number of higher education institution do not affect the quality of education as quality is determined by their modus operandi. Growing competition at global level has changed the overall scene of higher education. Now education is not at all considered as mere service but now it is a marketable just like other services. In such market-oriented scenario, it is very important to set up such agencies that can check the overall activities of these institutions independently. In India, NAAC, NBA and AB are playing the key role to evaluate educational institution's quality through accreditation, assessment and academic report process in higher education. The Present paper is a humble attempt that enlightens the working of accreditation bodies and critically evaluates it

1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to independence the growth of institutions of higher education in India was slow and areas of discipline were also less diverse. As the contemporary figures in comparison to the figure at the time of independence are considerably large, there has been a massive expansion of higher education in the country during the last few decades. In 1946-47 there were only 17 universities and 496 colleges and students enrolment was 2,37,546 (New Frontiers in Education, April-June 2004 p.101). After the independence the main thrust of Indian higher education has been to provide educational opportunities to maximum number of students. As a result there has been a significant increase

• in number of Higher Education Institutions
• in India. At present there are around 247
• universities and 98 'deemed university'
• level institutions and about 17000 colleges
• in India, with approximates 10 million
• students. There are around 4.5 lakh
• teachers engaged in teaching in these
• institutions. At present we have a broad
• educational set up; even then only 7.5%
• of India's youth in the age-group of 17-23
• years are studying in the institutions of
• higher education in comparison to the
• 15-22% of the youth having access to the
• higher education in many other developing
• countries, whereas in developed countries
• like USA Canada and Australia the
• students enrolled in the same age group is
• ranging 80% to 88%. The main reason
• responsible is lack of awareness regarding
• higher education among youth in India.

Moreover, there are a few universities and institutions touching the level of excellence, as they are well equipped with sound infrastructure, resources, faculty and programme of teaching as the advanced countries possess, whereas most of the other institutions engaged in higher education do not come anywhere near the level of average institution of higher education. These sub-standard institutions are charging fees equivalent to or even more in many cases than being charged by excellent institutions but fail in providing quality education to students.

According to World Bank document (1994) there is a direct correlation between the development of higher education and economic development. Only a sound education system can trim the shape of India in becoming a superpower in the world. Growing number of higher education institution do not affect the quality of education as the quality of education is determined by their modus operandi.

In the modern era, education is a global enterprise and people are moving all over the world. Excellence and relevance are the watchwords of tomorrow. Today the education scene is changing so radically that the geographical location of students, teachers and the institutions are almost irrelevant. The recent developments in information and technology sector have indeed shrunk the world into a global village. Communication media i.e. telephone, radio, T.V. and the Internet has changed the overall scene of higher education. Now education is not at all considered as mere service but now it is marketable just like other services.

The consumers are induced to opt new educational products in diverse areas like mass media, journalism, biotech,

fashion designing, advertising, marketing, modeling etc. In such market-oriented scenario, it is very important to set up such agencies or institutions that can evaluate the overall activities of these institutions independently. In India, NAAC, NBA and AB are the key bodies that are empowered to evaluate educational institutions' quality through accreditation, assessment and academic report process in higher education.

2. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)

NAAC established by UGC in 1994 accredits institutions of higher education. It has assessed and accredited more than 2500 institutions of higher learning. Although it is a voluntary process and a general perception is that only those institutions that are running well and have courage in an external review undertook the challenge. The state government of Maharashtra, Haryana and Karnataka has made assessment by the NAAC mandatory for improving the standard of higher education. The methodology for accreditation is based on the performance of the institute concerned.

The accreditation is valid for five years. Recently UGC has linked all its grants with accreditation. Now the institutions are submitting a detailed self-study report for assessment and accreditation. The peer team members are assessing their task meticulously on the following aspects:

- Consultancy and extension
- Research
- Curricular aspects
- Organization and management
- Teaching, learning and evaluation
- Student support
- Infrastructure and learning resources

At present, we have a broad educational set up; even then only 7.5% of India's youth in the age-group of 17-23 years are studying in the institutions of higher education

Grade	Institutional Score (In percentage, Upper limit exclusive)
A++	95-100
A+	90-95
A	85-90
B++	80-85
B+	75-80
B	70-75
C++	65-70
C+	60-65
C	55-60

The NAAC accreditation with suitable grading is now essential for getting grant from UGC and continuation of autonomous status and deemed university status. The NAAC has enlightened academic community of generating quality consciousness in the field of higher education. NAAC is playing a significant role as a 'watch dog' in maintaining quality assurance. In the era of global competition quality is more meaningful than quantity. It is pertinent that working of NAAC must be reviewed time to time according to change in working environment.

3. NATIONAL BOARD OF ACCREDITATION (NBA)

NBA grants accreditation to all such technical or engineering institutions those are providing diploma, degree and postgraduate programmes. The standard methodology is based on self-study by a competent team of experts consisting a chairman with two programme experts one of them selected within the industry concerned. The team provides scores on the basis of in-depth appraisal and recommends to NBA for taking final decision. Such reports are considered by an executive committee of AICTE and the results also notified and published in the directory of accredited programmes. With effect from Jan. 2003, NBA has revised

the grading pattern, the touchstone being the accreditation scores achieved by the institution. If the score of a program is more than 650 marks out of a maximum of 1000 then it is "Accredited", and below 650 it is "Not Accredited". If the program score is ranging between 650 and 750 then it is accredited for a period of 3 years, whereas those institutions that score more than 750 are accredited for a period of 5 years. In this way NBA is playing a significant role in establishing quality standards in the area of higher education. The procedural problems should be removed for getting the fruitful results.

4. ACCREDITATION BOARD (AB)

AB is a 'watch-dog' for such institutions that are established or funded by ICAR. The process of accreditation largely depends upon the successful completion of one batch of students. The standard methodology of self-study and peer review is followed. The evaluation team recommends for accreditation or provisional accreditation or no accreditation to the AB for taking final decision. The accreditation status is valid for a period of five to ten years. The AB may seek explanation and can ask to overcome shortcomings or deficiencies within the specified span of time. AB should be more empowered so that the qualitative research activities can be promoted in right direction.

5. CONCLUSION

The methodology and working criteria of accreditation bodies have been designed in such a way as to assess and accredit the academic input of the institution. It does not testify the veracity of application of Acts, Statutes,

Ordinances, rules and regulation in decision making, performance appraisal, crises and crunch of financial administration, implementation of reforms etc. which are carried out in an institution of higher education to attain its objectives. The lack of administrative component in methodology and working criteria would definitely lead incomplete accreditation of the institution.

The methodology and working criteria should consist of at least 45 per cent administrative component as to assess and accredit both internal and external component of the administration, financial, examination, performance appraisal of authorities and functionaries, association of teaching and non teaching staff, alumni association and expert from society like industrialist, professional, philanthropist, parents and peer group who are directly or indirectly contributing a lot in the implementation of Acts, Statutes, Ordinance and rules and regulations of the institution. If proper feed back and control mechanism is not evolved, the violation of Acts, Statutes, Ordinance and rules and regulations cannot be prevented. It is high time that principles and

organizational structure, governance system, decision-making process and functioning of authorities should be reviewed in the light of the present demand of the society. Intervention of politicians, domination of bureaucracy and anti-social elements within or outside of the institution should be minimized by framing suitable legislation.

In the changing economic scenario of the country in particular and all over the world in general the Indian higher education at university level has to face many challenges like global competition, technological up-gradation quality enhancement, cost consciousness, new combination of academic plane etc. Universities and colleges are now realizing the growing disparity between what they impart to the students and what the market requires. It is therefore necessary to check these institutions through NAAC, NBA and AB so that these institutions can maintain the excellence in higher education. It will be more fruitful if accreditation bodies are also empowered to assess the impact of government assistance on society.

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