

Contribution of NAAC in assessment & accreditation of HEIs

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Abstract:-

Though India's higher education system is ranked very high, the vast education resource could have been utilized more effectively. HEIs in India shoulder the responsibility of enhancing quality standards. Though the institutions are increased in numbers, quality institutions adhering to global standards can be easily reckoned. The present paper is analytical in nature which projects the contribution of NAAC in assessment and accreditation of various HEIs. It initiates to describe how education in India has sailed back so far to mould in its present transformation. It illustrates the role of the Government of India in post-independence period to provide new wings to the existing higher education system and the emerging need of an autonomous body for assessment and accreditation of various HEIs. On the later half, the paper portrays role and contribution of NAAC towards enhancing the quality standards of HEIs by its assessment and accreditation process. The paper aims to throw light on significant role and contribution of NAAC towards attainment of quality standards through HEIs.

Keywords:-

HEIs, Education System, UGC, NAAC, Contribution, Quality standards

I. CONTRIBUTION OF NAAC IN ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION OF HEIS

1. PRELUDE:

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world after US & China. The present India has vast resource of education-providers contributing in higher education which involves more than 1000 universities as compared to only 20 numbers of universities at the time of Independence. The assorted education system in the country is certainly one of the largest education systems in the world. The numbers of colleges were 496 in the year 1947 with around 2.41 lakh registrations. Today the country has more than 50 thousands HEIs to impart higher education, though quality higher education is still a concerned area for the education fraternity. The key accentuation always lies with the system to maintain quality standards in fast-changing scenario time-to-time and to enable various HEIs to fulfil the responsibilities in transforming atmosphere. The education system, particularly serving at higher level is expected to mould itself immediately to take new silhouette as need arises like recently the whole world has experienced due to 2020 pandemic disease, where need of the hour persuade to adopt digital platform worldwide.

The HEIs are thus expected to fulfil national & international standards to impart not only social and moral education but also to provide vocational and practical edification. All the 54 central, 416 state, 125 deemed, 361 private universities and 166 institutions of the country together building the higher education system of the country, shoulders to make better citizens for the world. Significant performance of 159 institutions of National Importance including IIMs, IITs, IIITs, NITs, IISERs and AIIMS cannot be underestimated to enhance the quality education standards, though all necessitates to have continual assessment system to apprise the quality standards emphasising on growth and development to provide more fruitful outcome. Universities in India are no doubt shielded by the Ministry of Education as well as State Governments and the Central Government. Appreciations surely go to UGC at the tertiary level to enforce quality standards and to coordinate the both forms of Government in India.

Ever-rising expectations from various HEIs should not be questioned in the light of the fact that the country has very ancient and deep-rooted education system. The history of education involving higher education has sailed very swiftly so far during this long tenure.

II. EXPEDITION & MILESTONES:

Indians should be considered to be fortunate to have a deep-rooted education system inheriting rich cultural and literal education. Around five thousand year old history of education in India should certainly have observed innumerable reformations to mould into present formal shape. Education was imparted in Gurukuls and Madarasas in the yesteryears. Later universities like Takshashila (6th Century B.C.) and Nalanda (4th Century A.D.) proved landmark and are still referred as a symbol of quality education. India witnessed Vedic Education before 600 B.C. Later in 1830s, the Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay brought schooling with English Language. Soon after, the British Government established Universities at Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Allahabad to promote the formal higher education in India. It transformed the enrooted ancient Indian Education System. In 1925,

Inter-University Board was established with the purpose to promote university activities. In spite of this bitter fact, the higher education system has seen noteworthy progress during pre-independence era.

III. POST-INDEPENDENCE INTENSIFICATION:

Immediately after independence, Indian Education System achieved another milestone when the University Grants Commission came into existence in 1953 on the recommendations of the University Education Commission, a major reform set up in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S Radhakrishnan. This statutory body under the Government of India is making all positive efforts to enhance the quality standards of higher education. Recommendations of various Commissions including Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), Kothari Commission (1966), National Knowledge Commission (2005), National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) Bill (2010) has surely given many constructive recommendations for promotion of higher education and research. During this period, setting up of National Council of Education, Research and Training in the year 1965 and National Assessment and Accreditation Council in the year 1994 has given the system a positive lead. At the time of independence, literacy was a major concern for the Government and therefore the Indian government has taken initiatives by sponsoring various programmes to address the problems of illiteracy in both rural and urban India.

The first National Policy on Education was announced in 1968 for radical restructuring and proposed equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. In the year 1986, with the intent to equalize educational opportunities by remove disparities, the new National Policy on Education has come into force. It became renowned for its operation blackboard and made significant role in upliftment of rural education. The policy was revised in the year 1992. Recently introduced new National Education Policy in the year 2020 is yet to be tested against its performance, however, has been brought with the intent to introduce many changes in the education system.

Voyage of Indian Education System at any phase of time emphasises on basic elementary education as well as higher education, though concerned to leave behind few significant aspects. Higher education panorama needs wide framework to reciprocate the education system. Benchmarks scan various HEIs on quality standards and even in the country like India with vast education supply; it's very intricate for HEIs to cross the benchmark standards with the available resource. Ultimately, HEIs have to strive hard to achieve the National/ International ranking to corroborate its value in the education system.

IV. EMERGENCE OF NAAC

The study of higher education has travelled a long distance since its inception, but its growth after India's independence can be taken as significant. Growth in number of HEIs raised the issue of their quality and reliability on part of such institution. The NPE recommended the need for an autonomous accreditation body at national level. Such body was proposed to conduct the assessment and accreditation of various HEIs in order to grade the quality standards with the scope of its improvement.

In 1994, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (popularly known as NAAC) have been established by the UGC. This autonomous body is set up by UGC with certain objectives. The UGC has given green signal to this autonomous body to rate various HEIs for the benefit of the Nation. All the universities, colleges come under the purview of NAAC. As its name suggest, it has the main task of the Assessment and Accreditation. While analysing NAAC's vision, visibility of UGC can be also be analysed reflecting promotion of quality of teaching-learning process and encourage research initiatives. The body of the council comprise academic and administrative heads, specialists. NAAC, no doubt, plays a crucial role in evaluating performance of various colleges and universities by making their proper assessment on voluntary basis in order to provide accreditation through its set of seven criterias as follows:

- 1) Curricular Aspects
- 2) Teaching & Learning, Evaluation
- 3) Research, Consultancy, and Extensions
- 4) Infrastructure and Learning Resources
- 5) Student Support and Progression
- 6) Governance, Leadership, and Management
- 7) Institutional Values & Best Practices

When it comes to manage funding from UGC for academic and research programmes, the accreditation becomes mandatory for various HEIs. Therefore NAAC accreditation can be directly linked to the funding for the government-run institutions. In such case minimum B Grade is required to be obtained from NAAC. It enables an HEI eligible for financial aid by way of UGC as well as RUSA grants.

V. A&A PROCEDURE:

NAAC has provided a prescribed procedure for HEIs to obtain accreditation. HEIs are expected to upload in its own website the Self Study Report (called as SSR) in a particular format not more than 200 pages. The SSR should include the profile of the institution and its executive summary which provides the information pertaining to Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints, termed as its SWOC analysis. The information provided by HEI should be accompanied with sufficient evidence to provide the reliability of the information. The HEI must also provide the necessary inputs from each of its departments in the prescribed format as required to make its assessment possible.

The HEIs are also expected to submit the Letter of Intent (LOI) online in NAAC website alongwith paying the requisite registration fees. LOI should be accompanied by grant certificate and 12B recognition certificate and other relevant documents. It provides the NAAC its necessary groundwork by way of all relevant information pertaining to initial assessment of HEI. This letter of Intent is to be processed by NAAC and the decision taken in this regard is required to be intimated to institute within stipulated time period. If acceptance is provided to the concerned HEI by NAAC, it has to submit the Institution Eligibility for Quality Assessment (IEQA) form within seven days to NAAC. Again, IEQA is get processed by NAAC and on acceptance of the same, HEI is asked to submit its SSR within two weeks time period to NAAC. After reviewing the SSR of the concerned HEI, NAAC inform HEI about physical visit of its team.

After due assessment, NAAC provides accreditation to the concerned HEI by awarding suitable grade ranging from A++ to C. The last grade which can be awarded to an institute is Grade D (Less than 1.50 CGPA) which represents that the concerned HEI has not been accredited. However there is always a scope of reassessment available for the HEIs. The whole process denotes that the grading of an institution is based on the Institution grading as well as peer team report and the ultimate grading awarded by NAAC can be referred as outcome of qualitative as well as quantitative report findings. Here it is evident to mention that less than 5% of HEIs has achieved A+ grade by the NAAC so far, while less than 1% HEIs has A++ grade.

Periodic revision / re-orientation of any system make it update with the pace of time. Recently, on 1st July, 2018, NAAC has revised its guidelines with a more liberal approach providing HEIs to apply for its accreditation any time in year. in order to improve the quality, it has made it mandatory to submit the AQAR online.

The NAAC has introduced its Revised Accreditation Framework (called as RAF) which has been brought to bring more transparency. It has also included student satisfaction survey in the process.

VI. INVOLVEMENT OF NAAC IN QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

NAAC has prescribed certain parameters through introspection for assessment and accreditation which provides fruitful benefits by making these institutions aware about its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. It also provide basis for performance funding and help institutions to initiate innovative and modern methods of pedagogy. However, accreditation in case of HEIs is entirely voluntary process. It is therefore not much of the HEIs have got accredited by NAAC as on present date. Till last year, 11,816 colleges and 568 universities out of in all 39,000 HEIs in India have got accreditation, which comes to around 32%.

NAAC provides certain criteria for various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to apply for Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) by NAAC. Such HEIs covers Central universities, State universities, deemed to be universities, Institutions of National Importance, Autonomous colleges, Constituent Colleges, Affiliated Colleges and Accredited HEIs. However, it does not cover distance education units of HEIs and offshore campuses. NAAC assigns different weightages under different key aspects based on the functioning and organizational focus of the HEIs and grade various HEIs by A, B, C or D grade based on their final outcome as Cumulative GPA. Apart from NAAC, the accreditation for higher learning is overseen by many autonomous institutions under UGC including AICTE, DEB, ICAR, NCTE, RCI, DCI, VCI, PCI, MCI, INC, CCH, CCIM etc.

The crucial areas for Assessment includes curriculum, teaching-learning methods and assessments, qualification of teachers, research, innovative practices, student support, organisational structure, Infrastructure facilities etc. It is since over two decades, NAAC is performing the task of QA through A&A. The accreditation framework is based on five core values encompassing contributing to National Development, nurturing worldwide competencies among students, encouraging a value system among students, promoting the use of technology and pursuit for excellence. However, the HEIs are free to add their own core values.

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Accreditation provided by NAAC is a symbol of quality for any HEI. The grade provided during accreditation represents the set of quality standards hold by HEI. Recent figures show that in all 364 universities and 8166 colleges got accreditation in first cycle as on 29.10.2020, of which around 66% has been awarded B Grade. The total numbers of accreditations as on date are 13411 which comprises 609 universities and 12802 colleges. Amongst this, in all 1743 institutions from Maharashtra has got accreditation which is much high as compared to other states and UTs.

The Government is taking all effective measures to improve the quality of HEIs so as to produce the better quality. Amongst other appreciable measures, the role of NAAC can be considered effectual. Soon its accreditation becomes

mandatory for the survival of all kinds of HEIs. By 2022, the UGC has new mandate for universities and colleges. So there is no doubt that NAAC is playing a vital role not only the HEIs but also for the students enrolled in various HEIs. Where HEIs get benefitted by way of brand recognition, funding, project allocations, students enrolled in HEIs gets better practical exposure, alumni recognition, placement opportunities and above all, quality standard academic teaching.

In recent years, NAAC has been able to bring more lucidity in terms of grading various HEIs. It is on continual effort to bring simplified and open procedure for assessing the various HEIs and grading these institutions. The use of Information technology has given new wings to NAAC to achieve its unbiased intentions to serve the Nation and Education Society. What is required to mandatorily bring all kinds of HEIs to get assessed and accredited by NAAC. Moreover, there is an urgent need to introduce motivational positive inducements to various HEIs to make continual efforts to improve their quality of teaching by endeavouring for better grade and to maintain it.

NAAC has a lot of work to perform in order to improve the quality standards in higher education and may have to transform in many silhouettes in near future to achieve the same. Overall, there is no doubt that the accreditation agencies like NAAC, NBA are making great contribution on their part to bring the desired standards of teaching which a country with vast education providers should have.

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