

## **Mandatory NAAC Accreditation System and the Strategies Need to be Adopted by the Rural Colleges of Assam**

**Dr. Kaushik Kumar Deka,**

Associate Professor, Dept. of English,  
M.N.C. Balika Mahavidyalaya, Nalbari, Assam  
Email: kaushikkdeka@yahoo.co.in

In The Gazette of India Jan 19-Jan25, 2013 it is clearly mentioned that all the educational institutions of India are to be accredited by NAAC on a compulsory basis. In this Gazette notification the main objective of this accreditation system is as we know to impart quality education.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and University Grants Commission (UGC) took initiatives to restore the standards of higher education. Consequently, the National Policy on Education (1986) that laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India noted certain policy initiatives. On the recommendations of the Programme of Action (1992) document that provided the guidelines for the implementation of the National Policy on Education (1986), in 1994, the UGC established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) as an autonomous body to assess and accredit institutions of higher education and its units thereof, with its headquarters at Bangalore. It was also felt that a system of rating by an independent autonomous body recognizing teacher education institutions will bring credibility in functioning of the institutions and the quality of the programme. The Indian system of accreditation puts a focus on quality improvement. The system of assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions by an independent body such as National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is being made an effective instrument for raising the quality of higher education institutions and for enabling institutions in using their physical and instructional infrastructure optimally and professionally. Accreditation and assessment assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution or program (a) has clearly defined and educationally objectives (b) maintain conditions under which their achievement can reasonably or expected (c) is in fact accomplishing them substantially, and (d) can be expected to continue to do so. According to the director of National Assessment and Accreditation (NAAC), H A Ranganath, "The accreditation helps an institution to identify its strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. It is a facilitating mechanism and helps filling in gaps." He added that just as health check-up helps a person to know his physical well being, accreditation too helps educational institutions to assess their performance. Ranganath stressed that universities and colleges should carry out accreditation on a regular basis. On the need of accreditation, he said: "Today, we hardly have Indian universities in top positions. We have quantity but we are failing on quality. The accreditation will help us in rating the institutions so that students can make a right choice." (Dec 16, 2011 *The Times of India* Lucknow)

Accreditation is an assurance of quality of both the institutional processes and outputs. Accreditation ensures accountability and efficiency with reference to the intrinsic and extrinsic functions of the institutions. It enables the society to find out the extent to which society's expectations from the educational system are met and imparts credibility to the system. It safeguards by ensuring quality and standards of the trained individuals from the educational institutions. This is done after carrying out appropriate criteria-based evaluation. For example- The NAAC has identified the following seven criteria to serve as the basis for its assessment procedures: Curricular Aspects; Teaching-Learning and Evaluation; Research, Consultancy and Extension; Infrastructure and Learning Resources; Student Support and Progression; Governance and leadership; Innovative practices. So, it can be said that the whole process of self-evaluation, peer review, assessment and accreditation have to be seen as

ingredients of a development-oriented process for the higher education institutions.

NAAC has unquestionably done the best since its formation in 1994. But is it adequate or sufficient to bring completeness in higher education in India? It may also be a disputable matter. However, the present scenario of Higher Education in India is not far away from satisfaction. As of 22 June 2012, the total number of universities in India is 567. There are universities of some kind in each and every of the 28 states of India as well as three of the union territories, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. The state with the most universities is Tamil Nadu with 55 universities. It is also the state with the most deemed universities, numbering 29. Andhra Pradesh has the most state universities (32), Rajasthan the most private universities (25), while Delhi and Uttar Pradesh have four central universities each, the largest number of all the states and territories.

Apart from the above universities, other institutions are granted the permission to autonomously award degrees. However, they do not affiliate colleges and are not officially called "universities" but "autonomous organizations" or "autonomous institutes". They fall under the administrative control of the Department of Higher Education. These organizations include the Indian Institutes of Technology, the National Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, the Indian Institutes of Management (though these award diplomas, not degrees) and other autonomous institutes. These institutes are not listed below. Also not listed are institutes which are under the control of the professional councils, without approval of the UGC, e.g. Agricultural Universities, which are under the control of the Agricultural Education Division of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), one of the professional councils. Similarly, the total number of colleges in India is 33023 (Source: UGC Brochure: Higher Education at a glance Feb. 2012). Out of which Maharashtra is in top with Total 4631 no of colleges while D & N Haveli is in last having a single college. Till 2012 there are 5,000 colleges out of over 22,000, and 116 universities out of nearly 600 that are accredited by NAAC.

However, the accreditation system by NAAC has not created any kind of fear until the publication of Gazetten Notification of Jan 2013, where NAAC accreditation has become mandatory for all higher educational institutions in India. In Assam most of the colleges and universities have gone through this accreditation system but in the time of re-accreditation only a few have come forward. Compare to the colleges located in urban areas, in rural areas the imitative for accreditation taken by the stakeholders is very poor. In most of these colleges have IQAC but, just for name's sake. As we know that to meet quality challenges every academic institution following the guidelines of NAAC has to set up one Internal Quality Assurance Cell or IQAC. The main objective of this IQAC is to develop a system of conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic and administrative performance of the institution. In Nalbari District we have seven colleges namely Nalbari College, Nalbari Commerce College, M.N.C. Balika Mahavidyalaya, Barbhag College, Kamrup College, Chamata, Tihu College, and Barama College. Here Barama College is at present under BTAD. It is significant that all the colleges of this district are assessed and accredited by NAAC and subsequently all these colleges have set up IQAC in their respective institutions for the development of quality culture. However, in present situation most of the IQACs by and large are seen in an inactive or less active condition as none of these colleges have gone for re-accreditation. In quality improvement IQAC may play a vital role in all the educational institutions of the country. But quality improvement can not be achieved in a short span of time. It can be achieved through a continuous effort and need a long period. The whole journey may be divided into five phases, viz. decide, prepare, start, expand and integrate. And at the end evolution may be added to complete the whole efforts. However, in any educational institution the activities related to IQAC or quality improvement can not be finished as new force will require just after completion of the old ones. Quality in higher education is a continuous process though some institutions give emphasis only in the time of assessment and accreditation. And that may be reason for which govt. has implemented accreditation a must for all higher educational institutions in India.

In The Gazette of India Jan 19-Jan25, 2013 it is clearly mentioned in Clause 7.1 that ‘ No Higher Educational Institute or its faculties, schools, departments, centres or any other units therein by whatever name called, shall be eligible for applying or receiving financial assistance from commission under any of its schemes without having undergone assessment and accreditation within stipulated period as defined in clause 4.1’ Now it become a very serious matter for all the educational institutions to think twice for accreditation or re-accreditation. Because the penalties mentioned in the Gazette notification clearly focused the painful consequences that the non accredited colleges will have to face. Now time has come to move forward or the UGC may get full authority to impose penalties as stated in the gazette notification Jan 2013 on these educational institutions. Here we may quote what H A Ranganath has stated "Today, we hardly have Indian universities in top positions. We have quantity but we are failing on quality. The accreditation will help us in rating the institutions so that students can make a right choice."

It is true that NAAC needs a lot of time and effort to conduct and conclude this assessment and accreditation system in all the colleges of India. During this time the rural colleges of Assam may take full initiative for making their respective institutions for better accreditation or re accreditation. Here an attempt has been made to find out the strategies to get relief from this lacuna and to make the IQACs more active to develop quality culture and to give better environment for accreditation.

**Organization and management:** Organization or management is not a single man's job. For total quality management team work is a must. As quality culture is a continuous process a continuous endeavour is always necessary. Total quality management should facilitate the achievement of the ultimate goal of students' satisfaction, by taking a total system perspective.

Here main emphasis may be given on the following heads:

- a) **Student focus:** Quality education will be counted only when an institution can satisfy the needs, wants and requirements of the students by planning and implementing quality improvement effectively. Therefore, our attention should go beyond the focus of our students.
- b) **Leadership:** effective leadership system is one of the most important requirements of quality management system. Leadership programme is dynamic process, which has to be fuelled by appropriate policies and facilitating environment and resources. Everyone inside the IQAC has to share the philosophy of quality improvement in higher education.
- c) **Confidence building:** Another important factor leading to quality culture of an institution is confidence building. For confidence building the following steps may be taken
  - i. Exposure to success stories
  - ii. Analysis of failure
  - iii. Need to have full proof plan
  - iv. Inculcating a capacity to efficient manage resources- money, materials and human resources
- a. **Participation by everyone in the organization:** An organization can survive only when its members participate actively in every plan and action. Active participation of every member can transform the organization from good to better and from better to best. And to achieve that these members must have love and respect for their respective institution in addition to their zeal to do something better.

- b. **Team work:** A team can not win unless the players co-operate each other. In quality management team work is a must. A teacher may be active, sincere and honest. But he can do little without others co-operation.
- c. **Education and training:** education and training makes a man perfect, competent and sincere. In many cases it is seen that lack of proper training may make situation more complicated. In quality management there are different types of training required depending upon the structure of the organization.
  - I. Training to gain quality awareness: This is training aimed at defining quality, total quality management, students' satisfaction etc.
  - II. Training to support quality improvement skills: This is training in communication skills leaderships, team building and working etc.
  - III. Training to acquire quality improvement skills: this is directed towards teaching employees
- d. **Factual approach to management:** Management in imparting quality should never be compromised with non factual matters. Factual approach can open a new horizon in quality management. In some special cases it is painfully noticed that the authority developed a tendency to hide certain facts from the other members of IQAC and in time of evaluation the institution has to face the most bitter experiences.
- e. **Curriculum Development:** Improvement in education requires a strong emphasis on effective design of educational programmes, curriculum and learning environment. Many academic bodies do not consider the employability of the programmes. The overall design should include clear learning objectives taking into account the individual; need of the students. Though the colleges under G.U. do not have the power to design their own curriculum but their respective representative member may raise the relevant issues in designing the educational programmes so that it helps students in employability.
- f. **Teaching Learning and Evolution:** This criterion deals with the efforts of an institution to serve the students of different background and abilities through effective teaching learning experience. Active learning may require the use of a wide range of techniques, materials and experiences to engage student's interest. Interactive, instructional techniques that engage students in higher order thinking and investigation through interviews focus group discussion debates, projects presentations, experiments, e- resources are different options which the faculty may use appropriately.

The quality of teaching learning depends upon the quality of faculty. The selection and training of the faculty is extremely important in this context so that they facilitate the learning process effectively.

An active IQAC may be the only solution for minimizing the fear of Accreditation or Re accreditation and to provide healthy educational environment in the rural colleges of Assam.

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