



NAAC Assessment – Seven Steps to better our Best

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Abstract:

knowledge gaining preeminence in all aspects of life, effects of information and communication revolution, increasing role of marketing aspects in education and inter-disciplinary approach of education with an inclusive policy of all have contributed to the focus on quality education. Quality is a multi-factored phenomenon. NAAC has been adopting seven criteria for assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions. Interestingly the term QUALITY itself contains seven letters. The concepts like Quest for Excellence, Understanding the Concept, Action – orientation, Learner – centric approach, Innovation for Change, Training to build competencies and Year – round activity are the measures that help in ensuring quality of higher education.

Key words: NAAC, Higher Education, Quality

Analysis

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 in response to recommendations of National Policy in Education (1986). This policy was to “address the issues of deterioration in quality of education” and this paved way in the establishment of an independent national accreditation body NAAC with its headquarters at Bangalore. At present in India, accreditation is voluntary for Higher Educational Institutions. Out of 612 universities in the Country, only 172 of them have been accredited by the NAAC and out of the 172 universities accredited only 67 have been placed in Grade ‘A’. A bill – National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010 has been introduced in parliament of India to make it mandatory for every Higher Educational Institution in the Country (other than institutions engaged in agricultural education) to be accredited by an independent accreditation agency.

Our experience with the NAAC peer teams that visited our college in 2005 for Accreditation and in 2011 for RE-Accreditation is that it is a fact-finding body and not a fault – finding body. It gives us a wide scope to present our Best in the form of overall presentation by all the Departments including the office and the aspects of governance. supported by a good documentation. The vision of NAAC states “To make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives. The onslaught of professional and technical courses, easy availability of e-technology to one and all, allowing of foreign universities have made the portals of Higher Education catering to the under – graduate and post – graduate levels, take up the quality measures aimed at the sustenance of the Institutions.

An increasingly competitive global context, knowledge gaining preeminence in all aspects of life, effects of information and communication revolution,



increasing role of marketing aspects in education and inter-disciplinary approach of education with an inclusive policy of all have contributed to the focus on quality education. Quality is a multi-factored phenomenon. NAAC has been adopting seven criteria for assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions. Interestingly the term QUALITY itself contains seven letters. The concepts like Quest for Excellence, Understanding the Concept, Action – orientation, Learner – centric approach, Innovation for Change, Training to build competencies and Year – round activity are the measures that help in ensuring quality of higher education.

‘*Quest for excellence*’ is the first step and the pursuit of excellence is a self – satisfying activity. Where there is a will there is a way is the old saying and the academic world should change its mindset overcoming the cynical attitude. Quality is an attitude of mind and if the collective spirit of the institution is applied to the pursuit of excellence it helps in its survival and sustenance. Spirit of excellence should be encouraged among the staff and also at the institutional level. Even the fundamental duties of Indian constitution states “to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity” hence, quality and excellence should be aimed at, emphasized and achieved.

To know is good, to live is better, to be – that is perfect : The mother, Sri Aurobinda Ashram in 1960, given as Motto of Sri Aurobindo Society. Much later, UNESCO Report “Learning : The Treasure within” (1998) visualizes education as an instrument for the comprehensive development of the individual for the performance of both personal and social goals. It has identified

the four *pillars* of learning namely, *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.*

This envisages that the Institutions are meant for the key functions of : To prepare students for research and teaching:

To provide highly speculised training courses adapted to the needs of economic and social life

To be open to all to as to cater to the many aspects of lifelong education in the widest sense International co-operation

We feel, the student moulded in the classroom through an Inter-disciplinary approach and value added education will not only mould the student to develop into an wholesome personality but, it also helps to bring out his inner core of latent talents through the soul-force.

‘*Understanding the concept*’ of quality is difficult as it is dynamic and flexible. The purpose of the Institution should be clear and the parameters to achieve the quality are to be identified. The NAAC has identified seven criteria and a number of parameters under each criterion for the measurement of quality of higher educational institutions. Measurement in qualitative and quantitative terms is necessary to understand the level of performance. The college is meant for training and nurturing the students and to make them competent enough to fit into the requirements of the employing world. The changing needs of the students and the multi-dimensional job-market has to be taken into account. This should not be at the cost of neglecting the study of languages, humanities and basic sciences. Also, fundamental research should be encouraged on par with applied research.



'Action- orientation' is to put into practice what is being understood. Because, we have a good understanding of quality and best practices but, a general inertia pervades leading to invocation. Educational Institutions need to adopt strategist planning to see that small action by everyone in the institution can add up to a better performance of the Institution. NAAC emphasizes the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) which facilitates the preparation of action plan at the beginning of the Academic year to see that the plan is well executed by the end of the year. It helps in a cooperative approach aimed at high-level work ethics. *'Learner-centric approach'* is to priorities student satisfaction vis a vis the set of competencies acquired by the student. Student participation in pedagogical matters is a value addition to quality and it improves the institutional quality.

An academic approach that motivates the students through assignments, project works, surveys, Industrial visits, Field-Trips are necessary as it increases the interest of a student. An interested and intelligent student in a classroom is a great source of motivation to a good teacher. Ward counselling ; mentoring by the teacher taking into account the social, emotional and understanding capacity of the student; Feedback from students and healthy interaction between the teacher and the taught is essential for quality education. Student charter of NAAC is worth following in letter and spirit.

'Innovation for change' is necessitated due to the fast changing society. Higher education becoming an International service with a global reach, there is a growing concern the world over about standards and innovation. Innovation is a new way of looking at

things or finding new patterns in familiar settings and it should become a part of institutional thinking. The on-line education, privatization of education, commercialization of education internationalization of education by opening doors for the invasion of foreign universities have made innovation a key aspect. Teachers, students and managements should generate new ideas and new practices at the institutional level. Autonomy gives freedom to innovate in curriculum development, teaching-learning and evaluation systems. The rigid regulatory systems of the university, inadequate resources, non-recruitment of lecturers by the government are some of the hindrances but, institution sustenance is more important. The Best practices should be implemented and the information should be disseminated among the teaching and non-teaching staff which helps in the percolation of the information to the students.

'Training to build competencies' among the faculty is imperative as in addition to their competence in the Subject they need to be well acquainted with the quality assurance processes and parameters. The management, policy makers who play an important role in quality assurance should be appropriately educated on quality matters. The NAAC publications, their workshops and the Seminars on quality assurance give an ample scope to further the knowledge about the competencies. To prepare the students for 21st century skills, the knowledge imparting faculty need to acquire such skills and competencies which in turn helps in better teaching - learning process.

Similarly, students should be made to understand that they need different



competencies like leadership, responsibility, listening, understanding, team-work, conversation, time-management, communication, problem-solving and appropriate decision-making, creativity, innovative ideas, goal-setting, soft skills etc. Soft skills encompass a cluster of personality traits that are invaluable for employment. Some of the soft skill courses can be on communication skills, computer skills, effective personality skills, presentation skills, self management and emotional values, time allotment for social media in a day and its appropriate use and this will help the student to build up self-confidence through a balanced personality.

'Year-round activity' is necessary so that large group of students with different levels of interest can be involved. A student involved in creative or competitive or talent-oriented or extension activities will have a sense of Belonging to the Institution. An opportunity of interaction will make the student to have a better attendance and develop more interest in the classes. Sustenance of quality over the years is a challenge and a well-planned work process. Year-round activity will help to sustain the quality in the institution. Quality should become a habit with the decision-makers, faculty and the students. The Institute should adopt the activities which should be internalized i.e. the faculty should feel it as their own and only then the information will be disseminated to all the stakeholders, the students. Every institution should institutionalize its best practices and see that the faculty and the managerial staff adopt them. This helps in building up a better pride in the institution which helps in to create a harmonious atmosphere and to have a better quality.

Some may argue that such activities result in the loss of academics and quality assurance is more paper work. On the contrary, the experience of top – grade institutes with varied activities is different. The students are more involved with an opportunity to develop leadership qualities, Better performance in their academics and gain core competencies necessary for a higher career or for the Job-market.

It is a team-work of a team that is well – informed, a team which is aware of its social obligation and a team ready to sow the seeds of knowledge of a high-quality to reap a rich crop of New generation.

We opine, the process of Assessment and Re-assessment once in 5 years by the NAAC team brings out the Best in an institution and in short it helps us to better our best as quality is an ongoing continuous process.

Yesterday's Best may not be Good enough for today and same is the case with the Future. The Institute & the staff have to re-orient themselves and re-engineer their forces to prepare the students as fit to the fast galloping world of technology and to the ensuing neo-job markets.

Some of the **Best practices** of our Institution:

- 6 Class rooms with Audio-Visual facilities
- Field Trips and other activities are being held from the UGC Grants, under plan Block Grant (PBG)
- Coaching for Job oriented programmes to the final year students in the Last semester



- Ward counseling by allotting mentors for every 25 students, feedback from the student and Internal Academic Inspection Committee to monitor activities of the departments
- In the 2nd Internals of Every Semester implemented Attendance-linked continuous Assessment system
- Library hours and career – guidance programme hours through power point presentations in the Auditorium
- Language Lab hours
- Mineral water plant
- 30 kw solar power plant of Rs.19,00,000/- from the UGC funds installed for the supply of solar power to the classrooms and labs in the Main degree block. Another 30 kw solar power sanctioned by UGC
- AC Auditorium & Walking Track in the college grounds being utilized by government organisations and the community
- Frequent Blood donation camps being held in the campus with the help of Red Cross Society for the past several years
- In addition to the camps, our students are donating 30 packs of blood components, every month for Thalassemia (Chromic Congenital disease) patients
- Campus Interviews being held on a regular basis by pharma, IT, Banking and Insurance Companies and 250 students were selected in 2014-2015 to various Jobs. 14 candidates shortlisted by TCS for Final Interview which will be held shortly
- 26 Students selected by WIPRO, INFOSYS and Tech Mahindra in January, 2014
- An Additional New Shed for Student dining facility is built by the management
- This year more than 200 merit prizes and Scholarships awarded to the students with an amount of Rs. 3,50,000. The Scholarships are Instituted by the philanthropists and Alumni Association
- Extended facilities to differently abled student
- Exam fees exemption to differently abled students and Achievers in Sports & Games Events
- Students encouraged to prepare power-point presentation in their subjects and on topics of general interest
- Noiseless generators, Medicinal plants in the Botanical garden, Museums in different departments, Landscaping and greenery of the vast campus add to the Academic ambience
- Decentralisation of administrative work through various committees & cells which are printed in the Annual Calendar given to all the students and staff

References : NAAC Web Site University New Articles News paper cuttings Proceedings of the National Seminar on Best practices in Higher Educational Institutions organized by IOAC, Sir C R Reddy Autonomous College, Eluru on 30th January, 2010.