

## “QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA”

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### ABSTRACT

*This research identify the remarkable role are playing by various legal bodies constituted and extended by the Indian Government for the aim of attainment and quality assurance of sustainable excellence in the Indian higher education system. Accreditation has now turned out to be vital for all universities in India apart from those formed through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, No legal these institutions to call themselves a awards Degrees and University which are not treat as legal for academic/employment purposes. Ever since quality assurance is a growing matter the emphasis is deliberately given to quality and superiority as the distinct constituent of higher education in India. It is possible through a permutation of external and quality endorsements, evaluations and sustenance initiative. This paper also highlights on higher education accreditation, institutional academic review, development and current status of quality assurance at the programme. These research based on observation, interview, analysis of the documents.*

**Keywords:** Accreditation, Educational, Excellence, India, Path

### INTRODUCTION

For understanding how the higher education system is regulated it is necessary to understand the dissimilarity between “accreditation” and “recognition” in India. In anticipation of recent years, being “recognized” was the only approach of validating postsecondary institutions. The procedure involved assessment of the institution in question by the recognize agency in order to set up whether it meets the standards and norms put forth by the agency. Unlike the common accreditation process which involves periodic re-examine by the accreditation agency to ascertain if an institution is meeting its objectives and established standards, whereas “recognition” is a one-time process. Higher education accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of post-secondary educational institutions or programs are evaluated by an external body to determine if applicable standards are met. If standards are met, accredited status is granted by the agency”.  
(Wikipedia)

Accreditation is generally used for considerate the “Quality Status” of an institution. In the context of Higher Education, the accreditation status indicates that the particular Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) – a College, a University, or any other recognized Unit therein, meets the standards of quality as set by the Accreditation Agency, in terms of its

performance, related to the educational processes and outcomes, covering the curriculum, teaching-learning, evaluation, faculty, research, infrastructure, learning resources, organization, governance, financial well being and student services (NAAC). Basically accreditation is the process by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational programme in order to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards. The result of this process is usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision), of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity. (Vlăsceanu, *et al.*, 2007, p. 25) Accreditation is important because:

1. The institution knows its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review process.
2. The identification of internal areas of planning and resource allocation collegiality on the campus,
3. Funding agencies look for objective data for performance funding,
4. The institution initiates innovative and modern methods of pedagogy.
5. A new sense of direction and identity for the institution,
6. Provides society with trustworthy information on the quality education presented.
7. Provides employers dependable information on the quality of education presented to the prospective recruits.
8. Intra and inter-institutional interactions. (Source: NAAC)

## HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Ronald Barnett (1992) there are four predominant concepts of higher education:

1. **Higher education as the manufacture of qualified human resources.** In this view, higher education is seen as a procedure in which the students are counted as “products” absorbed in the labour market. Thus, higher education becomes input to the development of industry and business.
2. **Higher education as training for a research career.** In this view, higher education is grounding for experienced scientists and researchers who would continuously expand the frontiers of knowledge. Quality within this viewpoint is more about research publications and transmission of the academic rigour to do quality research.
3. **Higher education as the efficient management of teaching terms.** Many strongly believe that teaching is the core of educational institutions. Thus, higher education institutions focus on well-organized management of teaching-learning provisions by recovering the quality of teaching, enabling a higher completion rate among the students.
4. **Higher education as a matter of extending life chances.** In this view, higher education is seen as an opportunity to participate in the development process of the individual through a flexible, continuing education mode.

## QUALITY

The word quality comes from the Latin word *qualis* meaning ‘what kind of’. With a variety of meanings and connotations, it has been referred to as a ‘slippery concept’ (Pfeffer and

Coote, 1991). To illustrate the slippery and elusive nature of quality and the confusion associated with it many authors (Nigvekar, 1996; Warren *et al*, 1994; Sallis, 1996) have referred to the highly cited words of Pirsig (1974). The British Standard Institution (BSI) defines quality as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (BSI, 1991). Green and Harvey (1993) identified five different approaches to defining quality:

1. in terms of *exceptional* (exceeding high standards and passing a required standard);
2. in terms of *consistency* (exhibited through “zero defects” and “getting right the first time”, making quality a culture);
3. as *fitness for purpose* (meaning the product or service meets the stated purpose, customer specifications and satisfaction); Barnett (1992) quotes a ‘suggestive’ definition by Barrow (1991) to define ‘quality’ in higher education:

...a high evaluation accorded to an educative process, where it has been demonstrated that, through the process, the students’ educational development has been enhanced

... not only have they achieved the particular objectives set for the course but, in doing so, they have also fulfilled the general educational aims of autonomy of the ability to participate in reasoned discourse, of critical self-evaluation, and of coming to a proper awareness of the ultimate contingency of all thought and action .

#### THE CHRONOLOGY OF QUALITY MOVEMENT

Pre-1900	Quality as an integral element of craftsmanship
1900-1920	Quality control by foreman
1920-1940	Inspection-based quality control
1940-1960	Statistical process control
1960-1980	Quality assurance/total quality control (the quality department)
1980-1990	Total quality management
1990-Present	TQM, the culture of continuous improvement, organization-wide quality Management

Source: Sallis (1996).

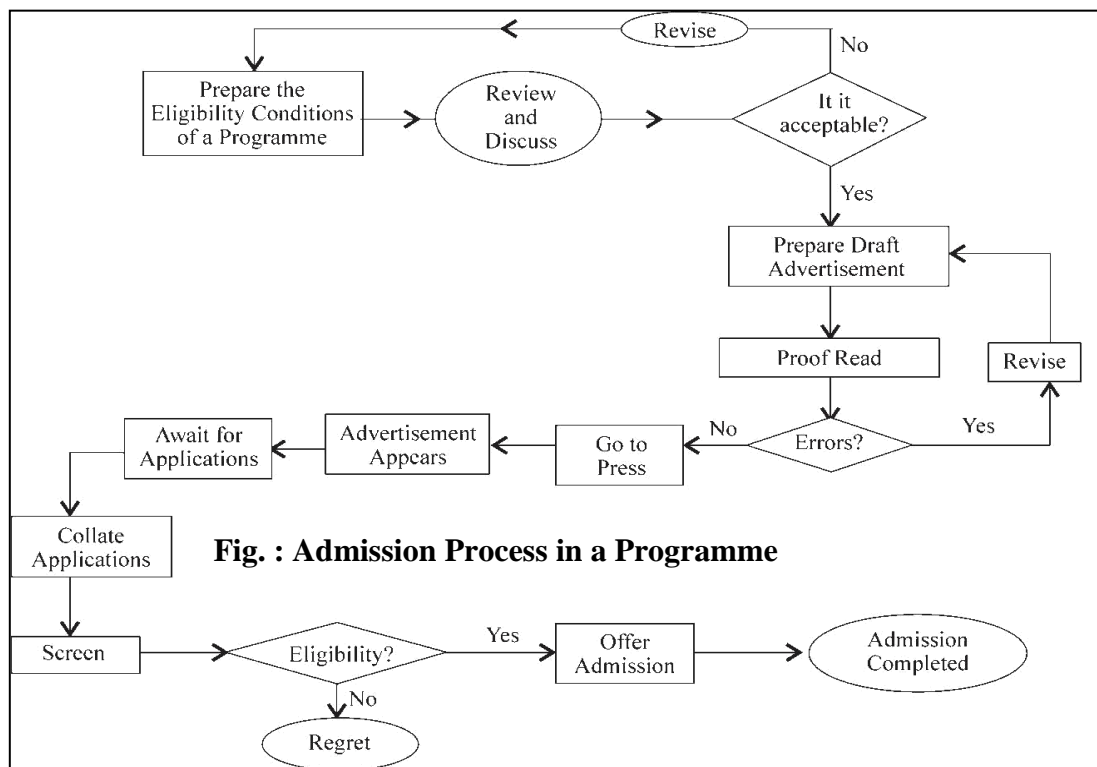
#### TOOLS FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Ishikawa (1982) has identified a set of seven tools that can be used by teams and individuals to interpret available data to derive maximum information. These seven tools are: process flowchart, graphs, Pareto analysis, fishbone diagram, scatter diagram, check sheets and control charts.

#### PROCESS FLOW CHART

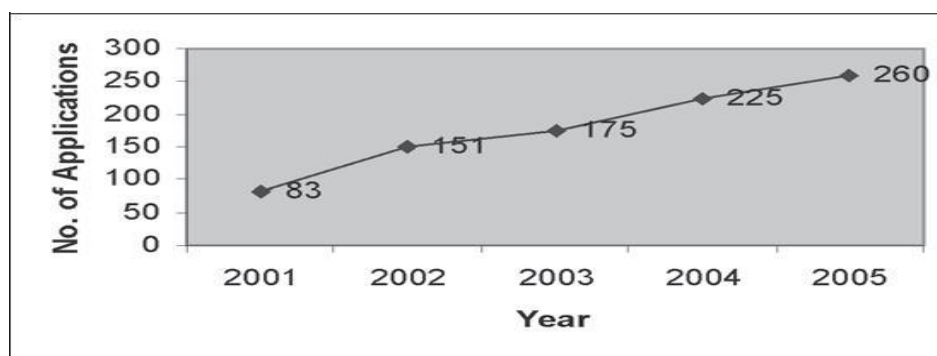
Pictorial/symbolic representation of the stages in a process is called flowchart. It records the

sequence of performance and events in a process in such a way that communication becomes instant and clear. Flowchart is very useful when a problem needs organized approach. Flowchart can help us to recognize critical steps and also make certain that all the steps are carried out without fail making it error free, ensuring quality. Use of a flowchart in a laboratory position can decrease hazards. By following the flowchart of the admission process, it is less likely that any of the departments will make mistakes that may affect the admission cycle. In fact, the development of a flowchart for any activity should be a participatory process by those involved in the task/problem.



### GRAPHS

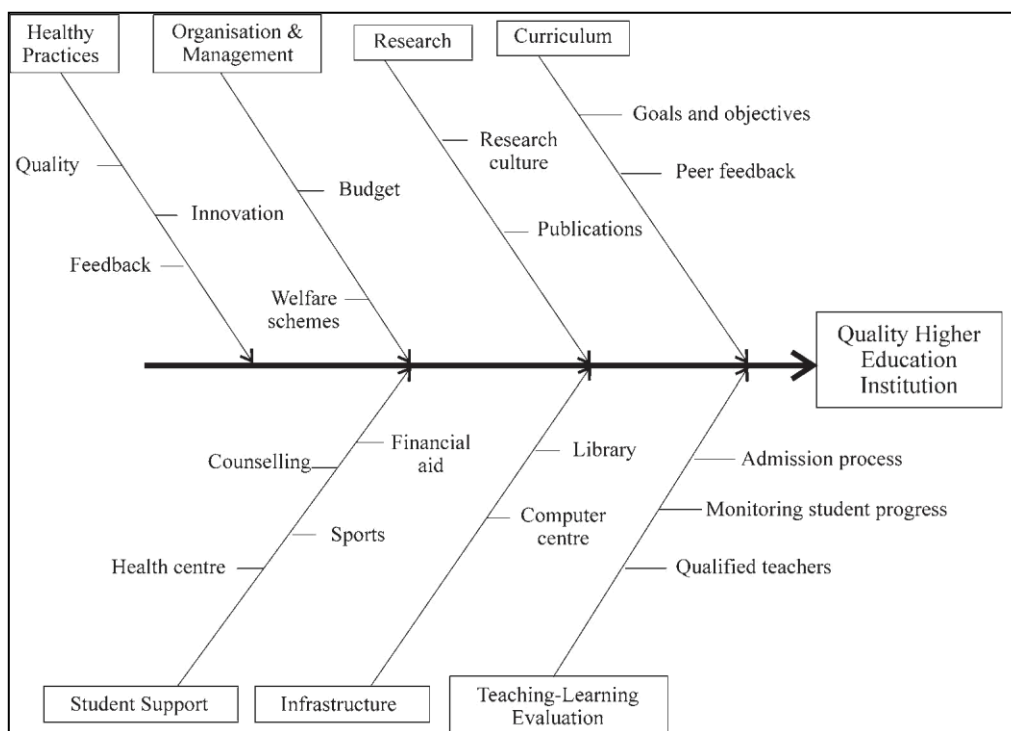
These are tools to present information in a concise and graphical manner. There are many different types of graphs that can be represent data for decision-making. Some of these are line graph, histograms, pie charts, etc. For example, to show the order of popularity of a programme over the years (to showcase the reputation and quality), we can present the number of applications received over the last 5 years for 30 seats in a line diagram, Fig. 4.



**Fig. : Line Diagram**

**FISH-BONE DIAGRAM**

The fish-bone diagram is also known as cause-and-effect diagram. This tool is used for analysis and open thinking in problem solving. It is as well useful in organizing ideas during and after a brainstorming session. In a diagrammatic representation, the effect is placed at the right end of a broad arrow. Major causes are recorded on either side of the effect line. Minor causes are aligned to the respective major causes as clusters, as depicted in Fig.



**ACCREDITATION IN INDIA**

*“Quality is a concept; it’s a philosophy; it’s a journey; it’s also what we practice. We at NAAC strive to create awareness and understanding of quality, and quality assurance in higher education as a necessary ingredient to national development”.* (Prasad, 2007; Former Director, NAAC).

In India accreditation for higher learning is overseen by autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission. Accreditation for universities in India is required by law unless the university was created through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, these institutions have no legal entity to call themselves a University/Vishwavidyalaya and to award degrees which are not treated as valid for academic/employment purposes. (Wikipedia) In recent times the Indian government has taken initiatives to establish a systematic mechanism for accreditation in order to maintain and elevate the number of Universities/University-level institutions has increased 18 times from 27 in 1950 to 504 in 2009. The sector boasts 42 Central universities, 243 State universities, 53 State Private universities, 130 Deemed universities, 33 Institutions of National Importance (established under Acts of Parliament) and five Institutions (established under various State legislations).

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The number of colleges has also increase with just 578 in 1950 growing to more than 30,000 in 2011. (Data Source: MHRD).

The Indian system of higher education has always responded well to the challenges of the time. Two decades ago, when the system came under severe criticism that it had allowed the mushrooming of higher education institutions (HEIs), compromising the quality of educational offerings, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) took initiatives to restore the standards of higher education. Consequently, the National Policy on Education (1986) places special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India. On the recommendations of the Programme of Action (1992) document that provided the guidelines for implementation of the National Policy on Education (1986), in 1994, the UGC established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. (Prasad & Stella, 2004)

#### The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is responsible for supervising the performance of all the universities in India through its chief regulatory body- Universities Grants Commission (UGC). The other government organization whose involvement to the Indian educational circumstances worth mentioning are All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The following statutory bodies have been constituted by the Indian government which have been in active role in assuring and maintaining the quality and standards of higher education system in India.

#### University Grant Commission (UGC)

UGC is the apex body that provides recognition for universities in India. In 1956, UGC was established as a statutory body of the Government of India through an Act of Parliament. It is accountable for the determination, examination and research, maintenance of standards of teaching within the context of university education in India. It as well keeps track of the financial requirements of universities and allocates and disburses grants to universities and colleges. The UGC serves as the vital link between the state and Central governments and other institutions of higher learning, and advises them on the measures necessary for the improvement of university education. The UGC's mandate includes Promoting and coordinating university education; formatting and maintaining standards of teaching, inspection and research in Universities; Framing regulations on minimum standards of education; Monitoring manage in the field of collegiate and university education; Disbursing grants to the Universities and Colleges; Serving as a vital link between the Union and State Governments and institutions of higher learning; Advising the Central and State Governments on the measures necessary for improvement of university education. To monitor standards of the higher educational institutions the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was created as an autonomous body, under section 12 (c) of

its Act in September 1994.

### National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established by the UGC in September 1994 at Bangalore for evaluating the performance of the Universities and Colleges in the Country. NAAC's mandate includes the task of performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation of universities and

colleges in the country. The philosophy of NAAC is based on objective and continuous development rather than being punitive or judgmental, so that all institutions of higher learning are empowered to make best use of their resources, opportunities and capabilities. judgment is a performance evaluation of an institution and/or its units and is accomplished through a process based on self-study and peer review using defined criteria. Accreditation refers to the certification given by NAAC which is valid for a period of five years. At present the Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC is done on a voluntary basis. The prime agenda of NAAC is to Assess and Accredite Institutions of higher learning with an objective of helping them work continuously to improve the quality of education. Assessment is a performance evaluation of an HEI and/or its units and is accomplished through a process based on self-study and peer review using defined criteria. Accreditation refers to the certification given by NAAC which is valid for a period of five years. NAAC is entrusted with the task of performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation of Universities and Colleges in the Country. NAAC has been instilling a momentum of quality consciousness amongst Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs or ‘Institutions’), aiming for continuous improvement. NAAC is triggering a ‘Quality Culture’ among the various constituents of the HEI, as well as enhancing the awareness of Institutional Quality Assurance with all stakeholders.

The mission of NAAC is to evaluate and accredit higher education institutions on the basis of clearly defined criteria that include:

1. The Curriculum
2. Teaching and Student Assessment
3. Infrastructure and Resources
4. Student Support and Progression
5. Institutional Management.

NAAC will release a new rating manual soon where the focus will be on new challenges emerging from diverse institutions. (Source: Times of India, Feb 25, 2012) “As of now, we have a single manual for all types of institutions but it is not adequate to address the challenges emerging from the newer types of higher education institutions”. (H.A. Ranganath, Director, NAAC-Source: TOI, Feb 25)

### All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

This organization was established in November, (1945) as a regulatory council to ensure proper planning and development of technical education in India and for maintaining norms and standards in the field. This includes areas of study such as engineering, technology, pharmaceutical sciences, architecture, town planning, hotel management, catering technology and applied arts and crafts. The Council has the authority to establish regulatory measures related to courses, curricula, facilities, etc, grant approval to start new technical institutions and introduce new courses.

The Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development) also constitutes a National Working Group to glance into the role of AICTE in the context of proliferation of technical institutions, maintenance of standards and other related matters. The Working Group recommended that AICTE be vested with the necessary statutory authority for making it more valuable, which would consequently require restructuring and strengthening with necessary infrastructure and operating mechanisms. The purview of AICTE (the Council) covers programmes of technical education including training and research in Engineering, Technology, Architecture, Town Planning, Management, Pharmacy, Applied Arts and Crafts, Hotel Management and Catering Technology etc. at different levels (AICTE). It can also make recommendations regarding the recognition and de-recognition of institutions and programs through the National Board of Accreditation.

#### National Board of Accreditation (NBA)

NBA is established by the AICTE, this body at regular intervals evaluates technical institutions and programs on the bases of the norms and standards laid down by the Council. The difference between AICTE approval and NBA accreditation is that the former regulates whether the institution meets the primary requirements of execution as a technical education contributor or offering a new program whereas the latter monitors whether the institution has proved its ability to sustain and develop upon assessment criteria and has earned credibility by the end users.

NBA in its present form came into existence as an autonomous body on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2010, under the aegis of AICTE, with the goal of guarantee of quality and relevance of education especially in technical disciplines. NBA has been facilitated improvement of quality and relevance of technical and professional education in the country to bring it to par with international standards. NBA also aspires to become a permanent member of the Washington Accord, which was signed, first in 1989 among accreditation agencies of some countries in order to recognize substantial correspondence in qualifications. (NBA) NBA is working with the mission, “to stimulate the quality of teaching, self evaluation and accountability in higher education, which help institutions, realize their academic objectives and adopt teaching practices that enable them to produce high quality professionals and to assess and accredit the programs offered by colleges and/or institutions imparting technical and professional education.” (Source, WOSA 2012, NBA)



### Professional Regulatory Councils

Professional councils are also responsible for the recognition of professional programs, promotion of professional institutions and the providing the grants to undergraduate programs. The statutory professional councils are: (Patil, 2007)

1. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
2. Department of Electronics Accreditation of Computer Courses (DOEACC):
3. Distance Education Council (DEC)
4. Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR)
5. Bar Council of India (BCI)
6. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
7. Rehabilitation Council of India
8. Medical Council of India
9. Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)
10. Indian Nursing Council (INC)
11. Dentist Council of India (DCI)
12. Central Council of Homeopathy (CCH)
13. Central Council of Indian Medicine
14. Council for Architecture
15. National Council for Rural Institute
16. State Councils for Higher Education

### **CONCLUSION**

In this research we discussed how accreditation has taken a major place in the Indian government to carry excellence in higher education. Higher education is the backbone of the society. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources in a country (Prasad, 2007). In education system quality assurance is a vital aspect. For fulfil this aim Accreditation has come into the picture. With the help of above review and discussion on the sense and objectives of the accreditation it can be understood as the quality assurance. It involves giving credit where it is due for some clearly visible and confirmable strategies of academic activities and objectives of the institutions, known to be honestly pursued and efficiently achieved by the resources currently available with a potential for continuous improvement in quality for effective growth (NBA). Through establishing various statutory bodies in India like NAAC, NBA etc, the Indian higher education has addressed a major impediment that prevented the recognition of most university degrees. Focus has shifted to the future face of accreditation and the importance of education to the various stakeholders.

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