

Quality Assurance through Accreditation in Teacher Education Institutes - Opportunities & Impediments

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Abstract

The quality of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in India is regulated and maintained through different agencies often playing different and complimentary roles. The bodies that are responsible for ensuring quality in teacher education institutions in India are – National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), Affiliating University, Directorate of Higher Education and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), each performing its specific role from being a regulatory framework to academic audits to accreditation. The apex bodies are expected to work in tandem to create an environment that facilitates and encourages teacher education institutions to work towards quality from the day of inception to continuous quest for excellence. Though introduction of NAAC and other regulatory bodies has initiated quality culture and thinking among teacher education institutions but the research literature and the visits to TEIs reveal that there are several criticisms levelled against prevalent quality assurance processes. Whether the extensive process of accreditation, one of the quality assurance mechanism, has led to strengthening of quality of TEI's or prevented poor quality of TEI's is being questioned. The paper examines the role of NAAC as an accreditation agency in supporting the quality assurance in teacher education institutions. It also explores whether implementation of these mechanisms actually create quality. The paper also tries to bring a perspective on the opportunities and impediments to quality assurance in teacher education institutions through accreditation.

Key Words: *Quality Assurance, quality mechanisms, teacher education institutions, accreditation, regulatory frameworks, implementation issues and challenges*

1. Introduction

Quality in education germinates with the quality of the teachers. With an increased evidence that the quality of our teachers is the most important educational resource in our schools, greater attention is being given to factors that shape the quality of teachers and as a consequence the quality of teacher education. Teacher education is not only the target but also is instrumental to quality in education.

Keeping pace with societal changes and technological advancements, professional development of teachers' merits attention for an effective pre-service and in-service teacher education systems, programmes and structures. The quality of teacher education programmes (TEP) directly depends on the manner in which the institution providing the programme operates. It is dependent on the way the institution translates the broader curricular goals and objectives of TEP into its active transaction processes and activities. In context of pre-service teacher education, there are several quality assurance mechanisms which a teacher education institute adopts to regulate, maintain and enhance quality starting from the inception phase to developmental phase like, recognition from statutory body for establishment of the institution, annual academic audits, internal review and monitoring mechanisms and accreditation.

Any endeavour to quality begins with first articulating the concept of quality. Defining quality becomes both essential and desirable in order to make a concerted effort towards improvement or enhancement of quality in teacher education either at institutional or systemic level. This is also because the very spirit and philosophy of quality assurance demands it. The quality assurance is a process that "pertains to the discernment of the variations in the different functional aspects of the institution created by implementation/adoption of any well thought out action or practice" (NAAC, 2007, p.5). "These involve collective thinking and shared action. All these bring in a positive ethos characterized by academic concern, technical rigour, professional development and critical appraisal of aspects, all of which reflect as the concern for quality in the institution" (Ibid.). In this context, the quality is seen in the regular functioning of the institution where shared goals and shared meanings become necessary. Hence, the need for clear articulation by an institution about what they mean by quality in teacher education become desirable for collective action.

2. Quality Assurance in Teacher Education – The Competing Notions

Quality is not an abstract concept. We know it when we encounter it, but it has been a challenge to articulate and define it. There is ample literature that is available on definitional issues of quality. An analysis indicates that there are three layers to complexity when we "say quality of teacher education". The first layer of complexity is related to the abstractness and ambiguity of defining the term 'quality' itself; the second layer is that there are multiple stakeholders who

have competing and often contradictory notions about what they think is quality; and the third layer is that there are multiple perspectives around the concept of teacher education.

The paper will examine each of these layers in detail in order to understand what kind of opportunities and impediments QA mechanisms have for maintaining, regulating and assuring quality in teacher education. This will then lead to a deeper and systematic exploration of the role accreditation as a mechanism of quality assurance to enhance the quality in teacher education and the possible impediments.

a. The Difficulty of Defining Quality

In common parlance, the “goodness” of a thing defines the quality. But quality has dimensions outside good and bad. According to the OERD (2001), ‘quality’ can mean - the degree of excellence of a thing; general excellence; of high quality; a distinctive attribute or faculty; a characteristic trait; the relative nature or kind or character of a thing.

The characteristics of a particular entity are not only the core elements of a particular entity and but also what is upheld and valued. At least in English language texts, these can be regarded as “the meaning potential” (Fairclough, 1992) of the word ‘quality’. The characteristics of different dictionaries are visible here. The OERD sets ‘excellence’ as the first meaning of quality, whereas others, be they English or other language, start out with the meaning of ‘distinctive attribute or characteristic’ (KS 2006; Zingarelli 1994; Collins 1998; RH 1991; MW 1993; Hachette 1993; Moliner 1998 as cited in Saarinen, 2007).

And even if the existence of ‘quality’ can be on some level, intuitively, understood and accepted, it seems to escape closer definitions. Pirsig’s (1976) classic declaration in the cult novel of quality researchers, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, has been quoted in this context often, and with good reason:

"Quality... You know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. [...] Obviously some things are better than others... But what's the 'betterness'? ... So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding any place to get traction. What the hell is quality? What is it?"

(as cited in Saarinen, 2007, p. 52)

As quality has a multiple nature (Vidovich & Porter 1999; Vidovich 2001), new meanings can be attached to it...It seems that concepts such as 'assessment' or 'quality' do, in fact, receive their meaning when they are applied as higher education measures (Vidovich & Porter, 1999; Saarinen & Huusko, 2004 as cited in Saarinen, 2007).

To understand this in the context of educational institutions, they are those characteristics about an institution which one would want to know to assess the educational quality of that institution (Dhir, 2012). Clearly that is an articulation of certain expectations that one may have for a particular institution offering a specific program. These expectations also operate at multiple levels- individual, institutional and at systemic level.

In the context of teacher education, it is critical that the quest for achieving highest level of professional quality be defined in the context of its national aspirations and in that light at the institutional level.

b. Different Stakeholders and their Competing Notions of Quality

The articulation of quality also varies with the different stakeholders. Different stakeholders of a teacher education institution may describe quality in teacher education in terms of different criteria. Therefore, one must conclude that the set criteria by which quality of an institution is defined depends on what is being sought of it. . Now to answer what is being sought of it, we must ask, who seeks it. A teacher education institute has several stakeholders.

First, there are '*faculty members*'. The faculty members are the internal stakeholders. They are entrusted with the responsibility of creating, disseminating and applying knowledge. They create value for an academic institution by their academic expertise and credentials. As internal stakeholders, the way they may describe quality of the teacher education institution could be more in terms of requirement of their roles like, infrastructural facilities, academic resources the institution offers to facilitate their tasks; opportunities, provisions and support for their professional development; competencies of their colleagues with whom they have to collaborate and from whom they might learn; preparation and enthusiasm of the students whom they might teach; and many more.

Second, there are '*students*'. The students may also look for quality in terms of knowledge and skills imparted to them, convenience of access to education, facilities available to them,

employment prospects, and assistance provided to them in getting a job or a career guidance, and so on.

Third, there are those '*who pay the fee*' and bear the cost of education may expect economies and look for scholarships. They can be parents, caretakers, guardians or sponsors or students themselves.

Fourth, the '*employers*', those who employ the students may look for benefits of knowledge and skills required by the graduates for performing specific tasks or functions at the place of employment.

Also the '*society*,' a society at large has certain expectations about the outcomes and impact of education. These could include providing learner value creating learning experiences and developing the learners into well accomplished professionals. Professional education with working knowledge and tools within the context of specific specialisation, promotion of purpose of education to develop good human beings responsible citizens, competent individuals, literate population , willing to take responsibility.

A teacher education institute is also expected to engage the with the ecosystem which includes community, employers, educational functionaries, accreditors, philanthropists, legislators, students, funders, apex government bodies, faculty members and a number of other stakeholders. A teacher education institute owes its stakeholders a clear statement that conveys the institute's priorities. Their vision and mission statements need to ensure that its mission is relevant to its stakeholders and the processes designed to achieve its goals are well managed for effectiveness and efficiency. The shared vision should have direct linkage with all the aspects of the functioning of the teacher education institutions (Dhir, 2012).

The '*apex bodies and the regulatory bodies*' also has expectations that institute complies with stated norms and takes initiatives such as revision of curriculum, introduction of new programs of study, addition of physical facilities, etc. These provisions not only should comply with norms but also should be consistent with the priorities suggested by the vision and mission statements of the particular institution. The institution should be able to demonstrate the availability of adequate resources for its functioning and for it to undertake proposed initiatives for ongoing decision making and for application of resources for priority actions.

All these expectations from multiple stakeholders lays the foundation on which the structure of the institution should be designed for quality. This is done through implementation of processes that reflect multiple expectations and also ensure ongoing or continuous quality improvement.

c. Quality in Teacher Education

Galvin (1993) stated that for quality to exist, we must first have a quality system. That established, we must then measure the right things.

Teacher Education Institutions and systems, similarly, need to have an understanding about how do to define quality and also how do we know quality when we see it. It first starts with defining what sort of quality we seek and what quality means to us. At policy making level, we as a country have framework, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009/10) which provides the vision of teacher education to guide about the nature of teacher education envisioned in our teacher education programmes both for curricular areas and their transaction. And then it is the issue of whether teacher education institutions have both the competence and commitment to impart the knowledge and skills; and develop attitudes that are expected and promised. Do the learning experiences transform the learner into competent, ethical and humane professionals with willingness and abilities to take responsibility for the learning of the student teachers?

The notion articulated in our national policy document sometimes is aligned and sometimes competes with individual interest and priorities. While the institutions may follow the prescribed curriculum but their institutional, academic and transactional processes may or may not be reflect alignment to the vision of quality of teacher education. This could be attributed to ideological differences or even lack of complete understanding of the vision or even lack competence to implement the curriculum.

3. Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Teacher Education

One of the primary objectives of any quality assurance mechanism in teacher education is to impact the quality of teacher education system by bringing improvement in the institutes of teacher education and influence policy development. These mechanisms are based on some conceptual frameworks that guides the process of programmatic and institutional assessment to support their functioning and facilitate its continuous development. There is immense diversity in the types of teacher education institutions in India, this diversity largely exists based on how and where each of these institutions are positioned in the system of higher education and the

different teacher education programs it caters to.

a. *International Practices of Quality Assurance*

A variety of accreditation processes are being followed all over the world. Each has its own philosophy and practice, though some common features can be distilled. In the USA external monitoring is done by regional national and specialized agencies. These agencies are in turn accredited by Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and /or United States Department of Education (USDE). In USA, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for institutional accreditation and Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) for programmes in teacher education are prevalent. In the UK, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) does the accreditation and the subject reviews. The Indian system of accreditation is similar to UK though the details of the criteria are different. As for the stages of accreditation the Indian system is similar to USA. In Australia, the process of quality assurance is External Quality Monitoring (EQM) though the practices are different from India, USA and UK. The universities and higher education institutes are self- accrediting bodies. They have a system of formal cyclic reviews involving external assessors for evaluation of programmes and organizational units. The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) undertakes institutional audit for which there is no specified criteria. There process is similar to ISO, thus AUQA reviews the institutional promise and delivery of quality (Azim Premji Foundation, nd, unpublished).

b. *Quality Assurance Mechanism in Teacher Education in India*

There are various bodies that are responsible for ensuring quality in teacher education institutions in India, often playing different and complimentary roles. The major ones are the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have been set up by the state and independent bodies with specific agenda to monitor and control quality in teacher education.

- *National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)*: Provides recognition to all TEI's, check for pre-establishment criteria. Prerequisite for establishment of a TEI. National Council for teacher Education (NCTE) was established by an Act of Parliament (Act No.73 of 1993) "with a view to achieving planned and coordinated development of teacher education system throughout the country, the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in teacher education system and for matters connected therewith".

- *National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)*: Provides accreditation to the TEI's; which give a quality rating to the institutions based on specific criteria.
- *University Affiliations*: Various universities affiliate the TEI's; these affiliating authorities mandate the curriculum for specific teacher education programme, and also becomes the examining and certifying body which certifies the students on completion of the programme.
- *National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF, 2015)*: Recently adopted by MHRD

Two of the above mentioned agencies, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have been set up by the state and are each a single independent body. The third agency are the various state and central Universities who act as affiliating and examining boards for the TEIs which run B.Ed and M.Ed programmes. Institutions offering Diploma in Education or similar programs are generally under the purview of the state for continual affiliation. A Committee of members from different departments in state education regularly visit and monitor the institutions for quality. In terms of their roles, NCTE provides recognition to all TEIs, the various Universities affiliate the TEIs and conduct examinations and NAAC provides accreditation to the TEIs. The difference in the processes of recognition, affiliation and accreditation have been highlighted in the table below:

Table: Key Processes in ensuring quality of TEIs

	Recognition	Accreditation	Affiliation
Description	The statutory approval required for a TEI to offer TE programs. It checks for basic infrastructure and presence of faculty through specific norms.	The rating of the quality of TEI based on Seven criteria including infrastructure, teaching-learning, faculty, curriculum, research, governance, etc. Not offered for TEIs providing Diploma in Elementary Education.	The approval of TEI by a body which shall assess the student teachers and certify their preparedness.
Certifying Agency	NCTE	NAAC	The State or Central University for B.Ed and M.Ed, State Department of Education/

			Affiliation Committee comprising state officials for D.Ed.
Mandatoriness	Yes	No. Unless a TEI is increasing its student intake or offering another TE program	Yes, the affiliation mandates the specific TE programme and the affiliating authority becomes the examining authority which certifies and awards the certificate of completion and grades to the students
Validity	State practices differ. One year- Lifetime	1-3 years. This process is only for institutions offering B.Ed and M.Ed and not those offering D.Ed.	Practices differ, however affiliation is usually for one year, which is then renewed

Source TISS-MHRD, 2013

Apex bodies need to collectively standardize various activities which are almost common and repetitive in nature to ensure an optimum utilization of time and effort spend by institutions to comply and respond to the demands of various quality assurance mechanisms.

In the unregulated sector of QA mechanisms, there is a common practice by some self authorised agencies to communicate quality of an institution in terms of its rank among the community of institutions. This practice influences student decision –making in the choice of institution. Different rankings use different methodology, and report on opinions of different constituent groups, ranging from students to recruiters. Media reports claim to capture all aspects of quality in a single rank number, the rank, overlooking the variety of missions pursued by different schools. The argument is that the criteria used to arrive at the ranking measure are poorly defined, their integration into a single number is rarely explained, and the process of ranking is generally not transparent (Dhir, 2012).

Synthesing the above discussion, broadly there are three major ways of assuring quality - self - evaluation, best practices benchmarking and external quality monitoring. Self - Evaluation is a process of continuous improvement and much widely used in institutions. In order to add value to internal quality and quality assessments external quality monitoring (EQM) is preferred all over the world. On the basis of analysing QA mechanisms across different countries the following are the dominant purposes, approaches and methods for reviewing quality in educational institutions as shared in the table below:

Table: Purposes, approaches and methods and sources/tools for reviewing quality

BROAD PURPOSES OF QUALITY EVALUATION	APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE	METHODS TO REVIEW AND MEASURE QUALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Regulation • For Research • To Improve Practices • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition by the regulatory body at initial stages • Audits • Accreditation • Assessment • Ranking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-review • Peer Review • External Review

In the backdrop of the discussion above, the following sections will discuss accreditation as an approach for quality assurance in the context of teacher education institutions. The discussion will also focus on what are the possible opportunities and impediments of accreditation as a quality assurance mechanism.

4. Accreditation for Quality Assurance in Teacher Education

As stated earlier in this paper that there is an increased evidence that the quality of our teachers is the most important educational resource in our schools. Keeping this in view, greater attention is being given to factors that shape the quality of teachers. These undoubtedly include the capacity of teacher education providers – the teacher education institutions, to not only attract able students and but also to prepare them well to meet the demands of teaching. Assuring this capacity is a joint responsibility of governments, universities and the profession. Accreditation

has been instituted as a quality assurance mechanism in higher education institutes of which secondary teacher education institutions are a part of and it holds immense potential.

Nemecek (2012) points out that “accreditation – the process of obtaining and maintaining it- forces the school into defining itself, its strengths and its distinctiveness”. Therefore, achieving accreditation and maintaining it has been a worthwhile goal for many teacher education institutions.

Accreditation, “refers to an endorsement by an independent external agency that a professional preparation course is adequate for the purpose of a particular profession; that the course is able to produce graduates who meet standards for entry to the profession and are competent to begin practice. It is also considered as a key mechanism for assuring the quality of preparation courses in the professions. Accreditation is also an important mechanism for engaging members of a profession in decisions about standards expected of those entering their profession, as well as standards expected of preparation courses” (Lawrence, et.al, 2006).

It is a process that aims to assure a thorough analysis of institutions, the programmes being offered by the institution, of “what is being done” and “how it is being done”, both internally by the institution and externally by the accrediting body. Institutions by committing themselves to the continuous improvement process through accreditation process, demonstrate and document what are their best practices and by of that constant reflection and action work towards improving the quality of their programmes and institutions.

Accreditation provides a platform for managing the institution, tracking its progress and identifying areas of improvement. But it is not the process of accreditation that actually creates quality per se. Quality is actually created in the interactions, the dialogues and brainstorming that resultant because of the implementation of the accreditation plan. In that sense it can also be said that it is a process of self –improvement.

Though a conceptual framework is provided by the accrediting body as a common guiding framework but the interpretation and implementation of each may well be different from institution to institution because of the purpose, vision and mission of each institution. Most accreditation frameworks are compendium of domains/standards/ indicators or parameters that describe critical areas and “desired characteristics of an institution.”

Give the above discussion, accreditation serves three purposes:

- Aims to ensure quality of teacher education institutions on the basis of well-defined parameters and assessment methodology
- Stimulates reflective thinking on the institution's day to day actions, daily functioning and working towards improvement and enhancement of what it means quality to them.
- And by way of that, provide a system for public trust and accountability.

5. NAAC – Purpose, Opportunities and Impediments in Teacher Education

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India to assess and accredit institutions of higher education in the country. It is an outcome of the recommendations of the National Policy in Education (1986) which laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India.

To address the issues of quality, the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Plan of Action (POA-1992) advocated the establishment of an independent national accreditation body. Consequently, the NAAC was established in 1994 with its headquarters at Bangalore. NAAC has established assessment and accreditation norms for higher education institutions providing professional programmes. Teaching being a profession and teacher being a professional, the system of assessment and accreditation of teacher education institutions has been laid out by NAAC. It has identified seven criteria to serve as the basis of its assessment procedures for all higher education institutions including teacher education institutions.

a. Provisions

“Under the provision of NCTE, NAAC and NCTE signed a MoU in 2002 for implementing the process of assessment and accreditation of all teacher education institutions (TEIs). A two-day National Conference held in December 2002 provided a platform for the launch of a quality oriented process of external assessment of TEIs. A separate set of criteria was established in 2002 for measuring the quality of TEIs was established. Earlier to this, TEIs were also accredited on the same parameters like the other Higher Education institutes offering different professional

programmes. Though very few TEIs came forward voluntarily for NAAC assessment and accreditation. “The NCTE Regulations, 2009 regarding Norms and Standards for recognition of Teacher Education Programmes stipulated that an institution to be eligible for offering M. Ed. programme or for the enhanced intake in the B. Ed. programme, should have NAAC accreditation with minimum B grade. This provision in the Regulations undoubtedly gave impetus to the scheme of Assessment and Accreditation of TEIs by NAAC.” (NCTE, 2014, TISS-MHRD, 2013).

b. Quality Indicators & Process

NAAC as an agency responsible for institutional accreditation for institutions, universities and their affiliated colleges, autonomous colleges against outlined assessment criteria. It has a very rigorous conceptual framework in which seven criteria have been identified. These seven criteria to as the basis of the entire assessment process and these criteria are applicable to all institutes of higher education. The key areas (revised in 2017) include:

- Curricular Aspects
- Teaching-Learning and Evaluation
- Research, Innovations and Extension
- Infrastructure and Learning Resources
- Student Support and Progression
- Governance, Leadership and Management
- Institutional Values and Best Practices

All the teacher education institutions and institutes of higher education are assessed on the basis of above mentioned criteria. These criteria have also been modified for institutions offering different professional programmes. The elements of practice teaching, engaging its teachers in research in education and preparing student teachers for diverse learning environment in the schools are few such modifications.

The TEI has to prepare a self-appraisal report in two parts, where Part I is the organization of data pertaining to the above criteria and Part II is the self-analysis based on Part I. This is followed by a 1-2 day visit to the institution. The peer team who visits the institution comprises teacher educators, principals and/or professors who are given training prior to the inspection. The

peers interact with the various constituents of the institution and also check documentary evidence to understand the functioning of the institution. The aim, during the visit to the institution, is to look for evidences to validate the self-appraisal report. The Executive Committee of NAAC reviews the report based on this inspection and takes a decision about the grade of the institution. These results are then put online for the public. This accreditation status usually holds for 5 years.

At present, NAAC has covers about 1500 TEIs in India. NAAC has a set of detailed manuals and guidelines for the institutions to fill in the accreditation process. The focus is on supporting institutions to think about quality for themselves and develop mechanisms to sustain this quality. NAAC supports institutions to maintain quality. This is done through an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post-accreditation measure. This is an internal team of the institution comprising head of institution, teachers, administration and even community. This ensures that quality standards do not fall. Accreditation by NAAC is not mandatory. However institutions that wish to be allocated additional B.Ed seats or to offer M.Ed. are required to have NAAC accreditation. NAAC covers only B.Ed and M.Ed. and D.El.Ed. or other programs of teacher education.

Core guiding principles of accreditation process include: Self –Study which engages the entire faculty in structural analysis, self –reflection, and planning in response to the standards relating to student progression, faculty , teaching learning process; peer review by visiting team of peers; follow up to ensure prescribes institutional change is accomplished. The essential aspect of methodology is to promote innovation and critical thinking.

Accreditation attests to substantial compliance with established qualitative standards, integrity of statements to public describing the institutional programmes, its commitment to improvements and sufficiency of resources. Therefore, the steps facilitate a systematic process of assessment and review which enables an institution or a programme to be recognised or certified as meeting appropriate standards. The quality perspectives, policy and processes is inlaid in the vision, missions and objectives of the accrediting body.

6. Accreditation -Opportunities & Impediments

In quest for quality in the educational context, the decisions about quality are actually the decisions about how the stakeholders choose to respond to their day to day tasks, activities and functioning and the very basis of the choices made by the stakeholders. This leads us to think that in some ways accreditation is also about the behavior of the stakeholders. Therefore, accreditation is about assurance of '*appropriate behaviours*' within a community of learning. Therefore having shared meanings of quality acquire greater significance.

It also brings attention to another critical aspect that where this '*logic of appropriateness behavior*' is derived from. The goals of teacher professional development provide the direction to logic appropriateness of behaviour. Accreditation as a quality assurance mechanism also by providing a conceptual framework facilitates a guidelines for this '*appropriateness*'. The criteria outlined provides a framework for designing institutional and academic processes. It also guides decisions like 'what requires focus' and 'how it needs to be done'.

The call to respond to 'appropriateness' as outlined in the criteria and indicators lays the basis for shift in conventional focus on quality of teaching by a faculty member to the quality of their depth and contemporariness of knowledge. A faculty member would make a shift, both conceptually and methodologically, from teaching to learning, demonstrating not only what is already known, but also how to acquire new knowledge on an ongoing basis. This may further open way to keeping abreast with current body of knowledge and bring more diverse learning opportunities for the learners. For faculty members and learners, it would mean to demonstrate behaviours that highly values both professional and academic experience.

This way accreditation holds opportunities for opening a path for continuous reflection, learning and growth; and even contributing to institutional advancement and development.

And by way of that help to raise professional status and drive quality improvements within the pre-service sector of teacher education. It also assure the public that graduates from specific institutions and programmes are professionally qualified and competent.

But having said that, there are several impediments which if not taken into cognizance can misdirect the well-intended purposes of accreditation in TEIs.

During accreditation often the institutions focus on grades without insistence on higher quality and the quality of provision available to the stakeholders. The focus of the institutions gets

influenced by the physical infrastructure and do not take in to consideration the learning outcomes. Then there are locational advantages and disadvantages of the institutions that are focused at times too narrowly on a particular programme, without regard to the total education context and the mission of the institution.

The prolixity of self-study reports and the unwillingness of some of the peer teams to make tough decisions and the overemphasis and liberal attitude of few others, resulted in the distrust on the process and dissatisfaction of the outcome. The variation of judgments within and between the assessing teams, application of standards and criteria which have no focus on the field realities, the expenses of the process are some of the critical impediments to potential of accreditation as QA mechanism.

Though introduction of NAAC and other regulatory bodies was initiated to bring about a quality culture and thinking among teacher education institutions but currently it has become a subject of several criticisms . The accreditation needs to be naturalized and become part of daily routine academic practices of the institution. The present mindset of it being an event to prepare and get over with, needs to change. The apex bodies need to orchestrate their efforts to create a more enabling ecosystem that facilitates and compels the institutions to quality thinking and practices from the very day of inception to their day to day functioning and working towards their vision leading to transformation and excellence. Otherwise it may well lose its essence and turn into a cumbersome process of tedious documentation to be created and maintained.

The accreditation propels and spiral the institution towards the quality hub. The improvement in quality is a result of incessant and continuous reflection and action, and that is what naturally culminates into accreditation. It also provides as a system and process for providing public confidence and tool for improvement used by educational institutions. Accreditation needs to be re-positioned as a phenomenon for quality assurance a symbol of commitment to excellence by an institution's engagement in the process of continuous renewal; and to an extent has the advantage of helping stakeholders make informed choices regarding institutions and programmes not just another branding gimmick by institutions.

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