



NAAC ACCREDITATION AND THE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGE LIBRARIES

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Abstract:

The quality indicators framed for library in the NAAC accreditation process have provided guidelines for improving the quality of work of the entire library. The whole process is user centric and provisions and management of the services and facilities and its usage gives good scores. At the same time there is a scope for innovative techniques. Thus accreditation process will make all round development of academic libraries in India. In this paper quality indicators identified for college libraries i.e. collection, automation, services, extension activities, best practices are studied in detail with reference to set of questions prepared for the library by the NAAC.

INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming a global village today. To compete with world, higher education having nationally comparable and internationally acceptable 'standards' has become essential in India. In this competitive world 'quality' has become a pass word. The skilled and well informed citizens can contribute to the value addition to its performance and service. Therefore quality concern in education is also necessary.

UGC an apex body in the higher education in India is entrusted with the responsibility of developments in the higher education at national level. National Policy on education (1986) has shown its concern over the deterioration of the quality of education in India. On recommendations prioritized in the Program of Action (1992) an autonomous accreditation body called NAAC was established by the UGC in 1994 to assess and accredit institutions of higher education in India. It is funded by the UGC of Govt. of India. Its headquarters is at Bangalore. Its vision states that "The make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives." Based on these lines it had prepared guidelines for the institutions who wish to invite this process. The grade or assessment outcome is valid for five years only. After this period institution are required to apply for reaccreditation and again the whole process is invited. The performance of the institution is studied from different angles keeping in mind the role of educational institutions in fulfilling the objectives of the higher education.

In the accreditation process whole system of the institution is brought under scanner. It has developed a mechanism through well framed quality indicators or guidelines which takes care of role played by every component as a separate input unit. This helps in checking the progress of the institution from all angles in the context of the quality. Each section stands as

separate input centre like management, administration, departments, hostel, IT centre etc. In other words whole institution including the students is involved in the accreditation process from the beginning. At the same time external elements like alumni, members of the Parent-Teacher Association are also involved at different stages of the process. Initially institution has to take initiative in approaching NAAC for the accreditation. In the first step institution has to obtain the institutional eligibility for quality assessment with the NAAC before going for accreditation. On receiving approval the institution has to prepare its Self Study Report (SSR) highlighting its functioning based on seven criteria and this report is submitted to the NAAC. In-house analysis of the report is done by the NAAC. Next step is the on-site visit of the peer team for validation of the SSR and report on assessment outcome of the visit is prepared. Finally rewarding of the grade is done by the Executive Council of NAAC.

Status of the Library in the accreditation process:

All units of the institution are categorized under seven heads or criteria. They are Curricular Aspects, Teaching-learning and Evaluation, Research, Consultancy and Extension, Infrastructure and Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression, Organization and Management, and Healthy Practices. Each of these criteria is allotted with scores. Library is one unit under fourth criterion of Infrastructure and Learning Resources. In this heading physical facilities like building, library, playground, hostel, canteen, computer laboratory, health care center and other common facilities are examined. From total 100 marks reserved for this criterion 35 marks have been allotted for the library alone thereby underlining its role as a major support system for learning.

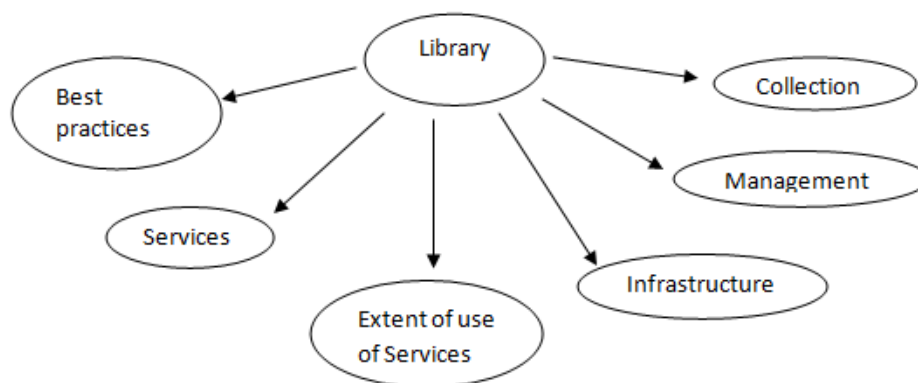
As an important component of the educational organization library encourages students to make progress in their academic and co-curricular endeavors. It is a place for self study and self growth. It supplements classroom teaching and provides a platform where students can develop their potential capacities by using library resources and services. In other words library supports learning, teaching and research processes in the institution. In the recent past, significant developments have been reported in library and information services because of internet and web resources. Information is wrapped in various forms; IT C has influenced traditional set up. In colleges curriculum is updated, new courses are introduced and self financing courses have occupied a respectable position in the colleges. College library has to keep up to these challenges by updating its collection and services. All these developments in the institutional environment plus developments in ICT, and emergence of new media in information world has forced libraries to change their role and shoulder newer responsibilities. Hence the accreditation process has focused on library.

Quality indicators for the libraries:

Special Guidelines on quality indicators in Library and Information Services are published by the NAAC in a booklet form providing directions in organizing and developing library. These guidelines are revised time and again to have compatibility with latest developments in the field. Hence the standards for assessing the quality of library services are updated from time to time.

While complying with these questions, answers should be based on documentary evidence. Each of the statement made and for each of the number given as an input, proof should be available in the form of various documents and statistical records for verification. There is a

need to maintain all records meticulously though in a routine work sometimes it is not taken seriously due to many constraints. This is because all figures calculated and data produced in turn is the product of the various records maintained by the library. The details relates to the library users, services offered, facilities, collection, rules, budget, usage of services, extension activities etc. and at every step students and teachers are the party in complying with it. In other words we can say that involvement and support of these elements play a crucial role in the self study report writing exercise. Hence maintenance of daily record needs serious attention. Library rules and the awareness among the users combined with alertness on the part of the library staff becomes the major requirements. Library quality indicators can be shown in the following diagram.



Library Components identified by NAAC

Source: designed by the author

It is true that libraries largely support learning, teaching and research processes in institutions. The set of questions framed for the library focuses on library infrastructure, collection, management and services. Extension activities and best practices are also covered. This can be explained in more details by dividing these questions into different headings.

1. Infrastructure:

Library cannot function well without proper infrastructural facilities conducive for organizing and using its resources. Infrastructure includes physical facilities like library Building, Carpet area, IT laboratory, utilities, staff area, seating capacity of reading hall, periodicals section, circulation counter, service area, Information Display, ratio of the seating capacity to the users (students and faculty) Generator facility, etc.

2. Collection:

Resources nowadays are available in various forms. Specific questions are coined that draws complete picture of library collection. Questions are total number of books with details of text books and reference books, current Journals - Indian and Foreign, Peer reviewed Journals, Back Volumes, Magazines , E- Information Resources like CD's /DVD's, Databases, online Journal, Special collection, Competitive Examinations, Braille materials/Rare collection, AV Materials and book bank material. The ratio of the library books to the number of students enrolled is to be given which shows average number of books available to reach student. Special

facilities for visually-and physically-challenged users are included. The ratio between number of users and collection, and the ratio of the budget is also examined.

3. Management of the library:

In colleges, the main objective of the library is to support the academic programs offered and the library develops its collection and services mainly to reflect the curriculum requirements of its users. Besides, the library may design a system to deliver its products and services to attract more users. Ultimately the library should aim at bringing all its target users to the library and ensure optimum usage of resources. The parameters compiled here would facilitate the quality enhancement and sustenance of library services to a large extent. The libraries of the affiliated colleges may firm up their performance by equipping/enabling themselves to answer the following questions in the affirmative Library supports academic programs through its healthy collection and various services. Reaching to all users is a challenging task. Library is looked upon as an independent body. Through well defined procedures library can function effectively. NAAC requires the library to explain about the existence of the Library Advisory Committee and its role, availability of funds from different sources, qualification and the training facilities for the library staff, policy about collection development, loss of books, stock, maintenance and cleanliness of the library

4. Utilization of the library services:

To check the utilization of the available services, various details about the working hours of the library (including Sundays and holidays, and after and before the class hours, during examination) are noted. Facilities like computers and internet connectivity, reprographic service, status of library automation, open access system, number of books issued daily, fine etc are the key questions.

Various services are listed in the guidelines like circulation, clippings, bibliographic services etc. Inter library loan service, user orientation and information literacy programs are to be explained.

Services used are evaluated through different data like average no. of books circulated, no. of reference queries received, no. of students visiting library, no. of teachers visiting library, display of new arrivals, awareness services etc.

5. Best Practices: enhance the academic information environment and usability. 1

In the library context, the ‘best practice’ may be those services through which the users are able to explore more resources and facilities from the library. This includes steps taken by the library to attract more users by creating suitable academic information environment. Here library is expected to focus on users needs while introducing new services and facilities to them. Guidelines speak about the best practices in relation to new developments in the field. Service introduced as a best practice today may turn in to an essential one. Previously internet access in the library was considered as the best practice but today it has become an essential service.

Best practices questions includes computerization of library with standard digital software, inclusion of sufficient information about the library in the college prospectus, compiling student/teacher attendance statistics and locating the same on the notice board, displaying newspaper clippings on the notice board periodically, career/employment information/ services, internet facilities, information literacy programs, suggestion box and

timely response, displaying new arrivals, circulating a list of those to academic departments, conducting book exhibitions on different occasions, organizing book talks, instituting Annual Best User award for students, organizing competitions annually and conducting user surveys periodically.

Advantages:

1. Library is focused and all library functions get streamlined.
2. It supports library demand for new facilities.
3. The recommendations made in the committee's report acts as a roadmap for planning its future activities.
4. It calls for attention by the higher authorities
5. Library also gets status at par with other departments in the institutions.
6. It encourages use of technology.

Weaknesses or threats:

1. Librarian alone has to share the entire burden to cope with new challenges.
2. No trained staff to share his workload in the college.
3. Users are not willing to co-operate specially with formalities needed to maintain various records
4. Attention is for maintaining statistics and has increased the work load..
5. Acquaintance with technology without the technical support is difficult.

Conclusion:

NAAC guidelines serve the purpose of developing college libraries as an information centre. It has considered all tasks which shall improve the quality of library service which in turn will reflect in education. It provides a path on which library has to make efforts to reach the destination. Generally library demand is not considered on priority basis. But since NAAC has given important place in the organization's set up. Libraries will get good attention as a resource centre and one can hope for favorable changes in the libraries in future.

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