

Exploring the role of external accreditation bodies and self-assessment process

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Abstract:

Modern higher educational institutions are focused on developing graduates who can actively contribute to society through their research and innovation. To ensure the same, they meet this goal and maintain high educational standards; these institutions are increasingly prioritizing the ongoing quality improvement. An external accreditation body, acting as an independent entity, sets quality standards and evaluates an institution's compliance primarily through the institution's own self-assessment process, where the institution critically examines its operations against established criteria to identify areas of strength and weakness, ultimately demonstrating its quality and commitment to improvement, leading to accreditation if it meets the required standards. This process fosters continuous quality enhancement within the institution. While the United States has long embraced accreditation, it remains unfamiliar in most other nations. This is because these countries depend upon government oversight and regulation of educational institutions. The impressive achievement and success of American education can be largely attributed to the US's reluctance to impose government restrictions on post-secondary institutions. Additionally, the American accreditation system has played a pivotal role in promoting educational quality while fostering innovation. This article explores the key provision of external accreditation bodies, the self-assessment process, along with its benefits and challenges.

Key Words:- External Accreditation, Self Assessment

Introduction:

Accreditation is a status given to an educational institutions or program that has met or exceeded established standards for educational quality. It has two main purposes:

1. To assure the quality of the institutions or program.
2. To assist the improvement of the institution or program.

Accreditation, which apply to institutions or programs, should distinguished from certification and licensure. Institutional improvement is encouraged by institutional accrediting bodies through the requirement that the accredited institution conducts periodic self evaluations. These evaluations aim to identify what the institution does well, determine areas needing improvement, and develop plans to address those improvements. The certification of Accreditation signifies an acceptable standard of institutional quality. However, even excellent institutions can improve. This improvement stems from a clear understanding of their strengths and weakness.

Institutional progress is also encouraged by the accrediting body. This happens through advice and guidance from a visiting team of seasoned educators from accredited institutions. Additionally, the publication of self-assessment is a crucial part of the accreditation process for universities. It has both benefits and drawbacks. Mulroney (2019) found that students who accurately self-assessed their work achieved higher grades than those who didn't.

Another factor to consider is that university rankings are influenced by self-assessment, but the effects are complex and depend on the context and certain measures used. Self-assessment for university accreditation involves an institution thoroughly examining its strengths and weakness to prove it fulfills or surpasses the standards established by accrediting organizations.

Key points about external accreditation bodies and self-assessment:

Self-Assessment: The foundation before an external evaluation, the institution conducts a thorough self-assessment, examining various aspects like curriculum, faculty qualifications, infrastructure, student outcomes, and governance against the accreditation body's standards, documenting their findings in a self-study report.

External review by Experts: The accreditation body then sends a team of peer reviewers, typically experts in the relevant field, to visit the institution and verify the information presented in the self-assessment report.

Focus on quality improvement: The Primary goal of accreditation is not just to certify compliance but to promote ongoing quality improvement by identifying areas for development and encouraging institution to implement changes based on feedback from the review process.

Standard- based Evaluation: Accreditation bodies establish specific criteria and standards that institutions must meet to achieve accreditation.

Benefits: Enhancing educational quality is an important task for institutions to meet the established minimum standards. Accreditation acts as a seal for approval, signifying that an institution, program, a course has undergone evaluation and meets the required quality with its own standard. The comprehensive accreditation process involves collecting and organizing data over several years, generating in depth self assessment reports to continuously evaluate and compare against the established benchmarks.

Improved quality Assurance: By evaluating against established standards set by external accreditation bodies, institutions can pinpoint areas, where their practices fall short. This allows them to take the necessary steps improve all aspects of their operations. Through self assessment and improvement plans, they can enhance the quality of their operations. Through self-assessment and improvement plans, they can enhance the quality of their programs, services and operations.

Enhanced Credibility and Reputation: The process encourages institutions to be transparent about their operations and demonstrate their commitment to quality. By analyzing data during self-assessment, they can make informed decisions about improvement strategies. This signals to stakeholders like students, employers, and funding agencies that an institution meets recognized quality standards, boosting and attracting more qualified individuals.

Stakeholders’ Engagement : The self-assessment process compels an institution to actively engage with its stakeholders. It allows an institution to analyze its strengths and weaknesses, gaining insights into its current potential for growth. This process, involving faculty staff students and administrators, fosters a shared understanding of quality standards and promotes collaborations. By identifying areas for improvement in teaching curriculum and support services, institutions can better meet students’ needs and enhance learning outcomes. Additionally self assessment helps prioritize resource allocations by highlighting areas needing additional investment to address identified gaps.

Focus on Success of Students: Institutions can enhance student’s success by identifying areas needing improvement in teaching methods, curriculum design, and support services. This enables to better address student needs and ultimately improve their learning outcomes.

Continuous Improvement Cycle: The accreditations process is not an event of one time, it encourages the ongoing evaluation and improvement to maintain high standards. This means institutions are constantly working to add to their practices and adapt to the updates.

Resource Allocation: The self assessment process in resource allocation allows an institution, to identify the areas where they need to invest more resources by pinpointing gaps in their current capabilities essentially creating a priority list for allocating funds to address those shortcomings and achieve the desired outcomes.

Challenges: The path to accreditation presents the organization with many challenges such as repetitive data gathering, formatting issues, data privacy concerns, and the need to create self assessment and evaluation reports. The complexity of these procedures grows exponentially when data and reports spanning multiple years are consolidated.

Subjectivity: The interpretation of accreditation standards can be subjective, potentially leading to inconsistencies in evaluation.

Administrative Burden: This process can be time consuming and resource intensive which requires a significant documentation and data collection.

Compliance Focus: Some institutions may prioritize meeting the minimum standards of genuine quality improvement.

Conclusion: Overall the external accreditation body plays a significant role for establishing quality benchmarks and ensuring institutional compliance. They achieve this through a process that relies heavily on the institution’s self assessment, ultimately fostering continuous improvement and elevating the quality of education or services offered. It isn’t only a bureaucratic formality; rather it is a dynamic process shaping the

future of higher education. As institutions adapt to the changing educational landscape, accreditation acts as a compass, guiding the educational journey towards excellence and continuous improvement. In the pursuit of educational quality, accreditation and self assessment emerge not just as a regulatory measure but as a collaborative effort.

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