

NAAC'S ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR BENCHMARKING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

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ABSTRACT:

Quality up gradation in Educational Institutions is not a onetime phenomenon. Quest for excellence is a continuous and perennial pursuit. The task is of building a more strong and well balanced educational society through targeted interventions is necessary to fulfil India's growing need for skilled manpower. It requires all the Stakeholders to contribute towards developing Quality Culture. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is triggering a 'Quality Culture' among the various constituents of the Higher Educational Institutions, as well as creating awareness of Delivering Quality Education. This paper makes an attempt to highlight how the Seven Criteria of NAAC can be used as parameters of benchmarking in educational institutions, three types of widely practiced benchmarking in educational institutions, broadly focuses on outcomes of benchmarking in educational institutions, difficulties encountered when benchmarking, and throws light on strategies to overcome the difficulties in benchmarking.

Key Terms: *Benchmarking, Parameters, NAAC, Quality Culture.*

INTRODUCTION

It is often stated that those who benchmark do not have to reinvent the wheel (Parker, 1996).

Benchmarking at first glance may be mistaken for a copycat form of developing strategic plans and for making improvements within an organization. This is not true. Benchmarking is a process that allows Organizations to improve upon existing ideas. There are several myths and misconceptions about benchmarking. It is important to know exactly what benchmarking is, the different types of benchmarking, the criticisms of benchmarking, and the ethical practices concerning benchmarking to implement Benchmarking in its true spirit.

BENCHMARKING:

"Benchmarking is simply the process of measuring the performance of one's company against the best in the same or another industry.

“Benchmarking is a way to go backstage and watch another company’s performance from the wings, where all the stage tricks and hurried realignments are visible.”

- *The Wall Street Journal*

Benchmarking is a continuous process of comparing a company’s strategies, products and processes with those of world leaders and the best-in-class organisations in order to learn how they achieved excellence, and then setting out to match it and even surpass it.

- The main emphasis of benchmarking is not “Best Performance” but on improving a given business operation or a process by exploiting “Best Practices.”
- “Benchmarking is an ongoing outreach activity; the goal of the outreach is identification of best operating practices that, when implemented, produce superior performance.”

- *Bogan and English, Benchmarking for Best Practices*

- “Benchmarking is a process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices and processes from organisations anywhere in the world to help your organisation improve its performance.”

- *American Productivity and Quality Circle*

PARAMETERS OF BENCHMARKING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

National Assessment and Accreditation Council has identified a set of seven criteria to serve as the basis of its assessment procedures.

NAAC’s Assessment criteria for Accreditation:

1. Curricular Aspects
2. Teaching-Learning and Evaluation
3. Research, Consultancy and Extension
4. Infrastructure and Learning Resources
5. Student Support and Progression
6. Governance, Leadership and Management
7. Innovations and Best Practices

SL NO	Parameters For Benchmarking	Practices and Policies
1	1. Curricular Aspects	1.1 Curricular design and development 1.2 Curricular planning and Implementation 1.3 Academic flexibility 1.4 Curriculum Enrichment

		1.5 Feedback System
2	2. Teaching-Learning and Evaluation	2.1 Student Enrolment and Profile 2.2 Catering to Student Diversity 2.3 Teaching-Learning Process 2.4 Teacher Profile and Quality 2.5 Evaluation Process and Reforms 2.6 Student performance and Learning outcomes 2.7 Student Satisfaction Survey
3	3. Research, Consultancy and Extension	3.1 Promotion of Research and Facilities 3.2 Resource mobilisation for Research 3.3 Innovation Ecosystem 3.4 Research Publication and Awards 3.5 Consultancy 3.6 Extension Activities 3.7 Collaboration
4	4. Infrastructure and Learning Resources	4.1 Physical Facilities 4.2 Library as a Learning Resource 4.3 IT Infrastructure 4.4 Maintenance of Campus Infrastructure
5	5. Student Support and Progression	5.1 Student Support 5.2 Student Progression 5.3 Student Participation and Activities 5.4 Alumni Engagement
6	6. Governance , Leadership and Management	6.1 Institutional Vision and Leadership 6.2 Strategy Development and Deployment 6.3 Faculty Empowerment Strategies 6.4 Financial Management and Resource Mobilisation 6.5 Internal Quality Assurance System
7	7. Innovations and Best Practices	7.1 Institutional Values and Social Responsibilities 7.2 Best Practices 7.3 Institutional Distinctiveness

Source: Annexure 1 Table: Distribution of Weightings across 7 criteria and 34 Key indicators (KIs).

Each of the above mentioned Assessment criteria for Accreditation can be used as parameters for Benchmarking.

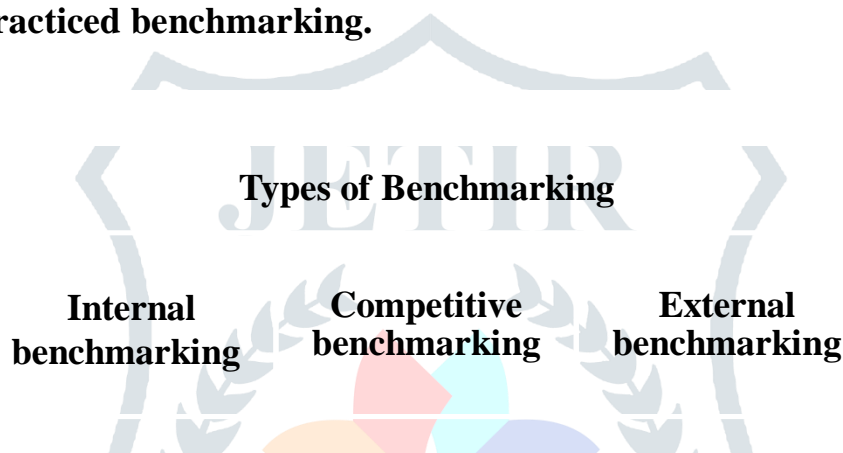
The Institutions need to focus on **three aspects**:

First, record what is the current performance level in each of these parameters.

Second, gather information on what are other institution's performance level.

Finally, implement creative adaptation of Breakthrough Performance.

Best practices in educational institutions can be adopted by any of the following three types of widely practiced benchmarking.



- **Internal benchmarking:** The Institution can compare against the best practices within its own system or framework of policies and practices.
- **Competitive benchmarking:** The Institution can compare against the best direct competitors.
- **External benchmarking:** the Institution can seek outside organizations that are known to be best in class. It provides opportunities of learning from those who are at the leading edge. Although it must be remembered that not every best practice can be just copied and implemented.

PROCESS OF BENCHMARKING

“There is no one Process fits all.” Institutions that benchmark, adapt the process to best fit their own needs and culture. Although number of steps in the process may vary from institution to institution, the following six steps contain the core techniques:

1. To decide what to benchmark.
2. To understand the current performance of the institution.
3. To do proper planning of what, how and when of benchmarking endeavour.
4. To study other institution well (the practices or system which needs to be benchmarked)
5. To gather data and learn from it.
6. To use the findings.

Process involves the following:

Plan: Select a process for benchmarking, document the process, and develop performance measures.

Search: Identify Critical success factors.

Observe: Understand and document the process, both performance and practice against the set standards.

Analyze: Identify gaps in performance and find the root causes for the performance gaps

Adapt: Choose “best practice”, adapt to the condition and implement changes.

OUTCOMES OF BENCHMARKING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

There are several reasons that benchmarking is becoming more important in educational institutions:

1. Benchmarking is a more efficient way to make improvements.
2. Institutions can eliminate trial and error process improvements.
3. Practicing benchmarking focuses on tailoring existing processes to fit within the institution.
4. Compare practices with those of world class institutions.
5. Challenge current practices and processes.
6. Create improved goals and practices for the institution.
7. Change the perspective of academicians and students.
8. Hold people more accountable for their performance.
9. Develop a standardized set of processes and metrics.
10. Speeds up institution's ability to make improvements.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WHEN BENCHMARKING

1. Reliable sources of gathering information regarding Competitors.
2. Difficulties in deciding what activities to benchmark.
3. Successful practices in one Institution may not be successful in another Institution.
4. The benchmark parameters may change over a period of time. It necessitates updates of recent parameters.
5. It encourages the mentality of catching up rather than being innovative.

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES IN BENCHMARKING

1. The Institution should conduct an extensive research and depend on reliable sources like Market Research Agencies.
2. The Institution should sub divide its processes so as to identify the most important activities to prioritize for Benchmarking. Otherwise the whole exercise may be time consuming and expensive.
3. Ideas borrowed should not be copied directly, but rather tailormade to suit the requirements of the Institution.
4. Since the operating environment is highly dynamic, the information obtained from the competitor becomes obsolete if not implemented at the right time. It is necessary to update on latest trends and technology.
5. Instead of just trying to catch up with the competitor, the Institution can focus on better and innovative methods of improvising their current practices.

CONCLUSION

Benchmarking plays a major role in ensuring the best quality of education services. All Institutions should adopt Benchmarking for planning, maintaining and monitoring the quality of education and administration. All Educational Institutions should strive to internalize and institutionalize quality benchmarking. Benchmarking can be as complex as re-engineering or as simple as simply comparing and copying other Institutions. Effective Benchmarking will foster a spirit of openness, freedom, flexibility, competitiveness and contribute to the true sense of quality education.

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