

The Evolution of National Board of Accreditation Standards for Post Graduate Diploma in Management Programmes in India: From Compliance to Outcomes

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Abstract

Purpose:

This paper examines the evolution of National Board of Accreditation (NBA) for Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) programmes in India and ponders what that trajectory tells about changing conceptions of quality in management education.

Design/Methodology/Approach:

The study adopts a qualitative documentary analysis of NBA annual reports, accreditation manuals, Self-Assessment Report (SAR) formats, process documents, frequently asked questions, and official records of accredited programme. The analysis of documents was done chronologically and comparatively across multiple accreditation cycles.

Findings:

The analysis reveals a clear and progressive movement from a compliance-oriented, input-centred model towards an outcome-focused and evidence-intensive quality framework. Over consecutive accreditation cycles, the evaluation methodology for PGDM programmes became more demanding in relation to programme outcomes, faculty scholarly profile, student performance, governance effectiveness, placement quality, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement. Two significant process shifts are also identified: the tightening of programme pre-qualifier requirements and the evolution of the preparation of the eSAR structure from a document-centred submission format to an integrated portal-based workflow. By 2025, institutions were required to submit the eSAR through the eNBA 'PQ/e-SAR' portal and retain a system-generated PDF record.

Research Limitations/Implications:

The study is grounded entirely in documentary evidence and therefore does not capture the lived experience of institutions or peer-review teams navigating the accreditation process. Future research incorporating qualitative fieldwork, institutional interviews, or comparative international analysis would extend and deepen the findings.

Practical Implications:

PGDM colleges must not consider accreditation as merely ticking the boxes. It is a continuous quality system that tightly connects program design assessment evidence generation, and internal review. Regulators, on the other hand, could consider providing capacity-building support to small and emerging institutions to make the accreditation framework developmentally equitable.

Originality/Value:

This article presents a historically oriented approach of the NBA accreditation scope expansion to include PGDM programmes. It places this evolution by referring to the leading discourses of quality assurance, legitimacy, and reform in management education. Besides giving a historical perspective, this article also fills a major gap in the literature by giving a deep academic exploration of the changing NBA accreditation philosophy, especially with regard to higher management education in India.

Keywords: NBA accreditation; PGDM; management education; quality assurance; outcome-based education; India; accreditation reform; higher education governance

1. Introduction

In India, management education expanded very closely with the industrialization of the country, growth of the public sector, and overall economic modernization. As the demand for professionally trained managers grew, at that time, continuing with regular commerce education was considered, insufficient to meet the newly emerging needs of organizing and managing work. It was often said that its main focus was largely on theory and not practically oriented enough to the fulfilment of management practice needs (McMillan, 2016). Therefore, this gap resulted in the emergence of separate management education. The leading organizations such as the Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management (IISWB), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and XLRI Jamshedpur were the main institutional foundations of this discipline. After the economic liberalization in 1991, this sector experienced sudden and largely unexpected expansion through private business schools, autonomous PGDM institutions, and a wide range of specialized management programmes (Bagga et al. 2016; Jagadeesh, 2000). Besides considerably increasing access and institutional diversity, this growth also heightened worries about the academic quality, curricular relevance, graduate employability, and institutional credibility.

Programme accreditation in this respect became a key instrument to differentiate academically strong institutions from the failing ones. Accreditation, as an example, can be explained as the external peer review procedure during which an institution or a programme is evaluated against the set standards in order to confirm the academic quality, to make the institution more accountable to the public, and to motivate continuous improvement (Eaton, 2012). For independent PGDM colleges that don't operate under the usual university affiliation system, accreditation at the programme level is a source of both academic and strategic benefits. As a matter of fact, it has not only affected the legitimacy of the institutions but also the choices of students for enrolment and the opinions of employers (Garwe et al. 2024; Kayyali, 2024; Spence, 1973).

The National Board of Accreditation (NBA), the arm of the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), was set up in 1994 with the main objective of checking and improving the quality of professional education in India (Shah, 2015). On the 7th of January 2010, a major institutional change was made as NBA was turned into an independent and autonomous body. This was a move to strengthen its commitment to ensure the quality and relevance of technical and professional education in India (NBA 2016, 2023,2024). At first, the NBA's main role was to accredit programmes. But, through the years, it became much more than just that. Nowadays, it accredits programmes in a variety of technical and professional areas including engineering management pharmacy architecture computer applications, hotel management and related healthcare fields (Chv, 2023). Basically, it is the NBA's main function to ensure and maintain the highest possible level of quality and also to encourage ongoing progress and development in Indian higher education sector.

The NBA accreditation in management education, especially for autonomous PGDM institutions, has gradually turned into a more rigorous tool of academic accountability, a self-study, the presentation of evidence, and continuous improvement (AICTE, 2017; NBA 2023a 2024a). The change of frame did not only consist of new criteria but also of new submission in the historical records. At first management formats were arranged mainly around downloadable manuals and template narrative reports. During the successive cycles however the

accreditation process has been more and more virtually connected with the eNBA portal, integrating pre-qualifier assessment, eSAR progression, fee stages, and institutional workflow into a single digital system. Process documentation by 2025 made it clear that eSAR filing is among the online 'PQ/e-SAR' methods, through which institutions are asked to upload their completed eSAR via the portal and keep the final submitted version as a system-generated PDF copy (NBA 2012, 2017, 2024b, 2025).

This research paper looks at the change in the NBA's recognition of PGDM programs in terms of what their path tells us about the changing notions of quality in Indian management education. The main point is that the NBA has, moved steadily from a framework-based mainly on achieving compliance and resource sufficiency to one centered on outcomes, institutional effectiveness, tangible proof, and continuous improvement. In higher education throughout the world, accreditation is a major quality assurance tool with universal acceptance. National accrediting bodies however vary in the aspects of quality which they highlight. Some are still oriented to the requirements of infrastructure and compliance, while others are giving more and more importance to the learning outcomes, governance, and concrete evidence of the institution's improvement (Kayyali, 2024). In this wider comparative context, the NBA is a good example of how a national accreditor manages the tension between the need for rapid expansion of the sector, the ever-growing expectations of stakeholders, and the changes of quality assurance in professional education internationally (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Puerta-Guardo et al. 2026).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Accreditation and the Conceptualization of Quality in Higher Education

The literature on quality assurance points out that accreditation brings about changes beyond granting mere external formal approval: it has a constituting role in determining how quality is comprehended and aimed at within higher education institutions (HEIs). This literature regards quality as a complex notion rather than a single, unchanging feature. It is often discussed in terms of excellence, fitness for purpose, conformance to standards, value for money and possibility of transformation (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). Harvey and Green's (1993) well-known quality framework for HEIs is still relevant because it highlights that quality is not a one-dimensional concept, and accreditation should be seen not only as an assessment procedure but also as a structure guiding the priorities of the institution, the internal processes and academic conduct. Later research refined this interpretation by providing evidence that accreditation also determines institutional learning, desire to improvement and systems of accountability in the higher education sectors (Kayyali, 2024; Puerta-Guardo et al. 2026).

According to Eaton (2012), accreditation not only serves as a means to assure the public of academic quality but also promotes institutional self-reflection and continuous quality improvement. Stensaker (2008) also believed that the results of quality assurance should be measured not just in terms of regulatory control, but also in terms of their ability to foster learning in organizations and growth at the institutional level. And more recently, Duarte et al. (2023) confirmed that modern accreditation mechanisms are a blend of external peer review, well-organized self-study of institution, and regular evidence-based practices. In summary, these works of literature depict accreditation as a tool for quality improvement rather than an end-of-the-line formality. Moreover, they highlight the great role of accreditation in various top-notch quality practices, such as the review of curriculum, internal quality reporting, faculty examination, and how institutions present academic quality externally. (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Garwe et al. 2024).

2.2 Management Education and the Quality Debate in India

Scholarly concern regarding quality in the Indian management education sector received a major boost in the 1990s-2000s along with rapid expansion of the sector. Jagadeesh (2000) clearly pinpointed the main issue of the decade. While there was institutional development, academic standards did not improve accordingly, leading to a sector with a very patchy quality. Later research built on these discoveries. For example, Bagga et al. (2016) contrasted Indian and foreign accreditation bodies for management education and suggested that accreditation has

become a strategic quality indicator rather than simply a regulatory hurdle. Bagga (2017) also showed that accreditation is viewed by campus stakeholders at the same time as a regulatory duty and as a motivator for real academic progress. Kumar and Dash (2017) investigated how accreditation relates to stakeholder satisfaction whereas Gupta (2021) located the quality assurance debate at a higher level of Indian higher education policy changes. Moreover, Reddy et al. (2023) illustrate how accreditation research in India is growing both in terms of content and its interaction with policy making.

These considerations are very crucial for PGDM colleges. In fact, a large number of colleges resort to displaying quality marks provisionally given by external parties as one of the means to indicate their academic integrity to the market where competition is at its peak and there are various differences in quality. Hence, being conferred with NBA accreditation can be regarded a very significant step, it alters one's public credibility, the level of trust students has, one's perception by employers, and even the quality consciousness of the institution (Bagga et al. 2016; Kumaravelu, 2021). This can be seen in a broader context as studies on Indian higher education reveal that quality assurance being a distinct component is a thing of the past. It has become more dependent on the institution's performance, their capability to demonstrate accountability and their actions towards, very loudly expressing the requisition of the stakeholders - the management education sector is perhaps the best example where employability, curriculum relevance and industry engagement are considered as proxies for program quality (Garwe et al. 2024).

2.3 From Input Adequacy to Outcome-Based Quality Frameworks

One of the critical issues raised in recent quality assurance literature is the switch from input-based to outcome-based accreditation models. Earlier models mainly focused on the quantity and quality of infrastructure, availability of faculty, and compliance with set standards. But the newer ones put more focus on learning outcomes, quality of assessment, graduate attributes, and the institution's capability for continuous improvement (Biggs, 1996; Besterfield-Sacre et al., 2000). NBA accreditation, for instance, can be seen as a direct result of this change in perspective (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Kayyali, 2024). Such a change will definitely affect management education, as institutions will have to demonstrate not only the sufficiency of their resources but also the overall effectiveness of their academic offerings in measurable terms. In the quality-related discussion, programme design, curriculum update assessment faculty research, industry collaborations, and alumni feedback have been considered as components. The outcome orientation in India actually goes hand in hand with the speech of the National Education Policy 2020 that points out quality, accountability, and institutional improvement on the basis of evidence (Government of India, 2020).

2.4 The Evolving Accreditation Logic for PGDM Programmes

The changes in the NBA's accreditation systems, considered over a period of time, symbolize the higher education sector's overall change, wherein the focus has shifted from input compliance to outcome accountability. The initial business school accreditation systems, for instance, were quite heavily reliant upon physical infrastructure of a school, faculty quality, effectiveness of governance, and proper procedural adherence. On the other hand, the recent PGDM/MBA SAR formats have emphasized a well-defined specification of Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs), Programme Outcomes (POs), Programme Specific Outcomes (PSOs), and Course Outcomes (COs), besides showing the evidence for assessment results and continual enhancement. The management SAR of 2017 even hinted this change; the 2023 version not only explained the layout but also set higher standards for direct and indirect assessment, stakeholder feedback, and performance data (NBA 2017 2023b). One can very well notice the difference from the elaboration of the reporting style, which was earlier template-driven, to the new integrated PQ/e-SAR digital format coupling pre-qualifier, SAR submission, and process advancement.

2.5 Emerging Expectations: Sustainability, Ethics, and Responsible Management Education

The changing normative requirements that are being put forth for business schools are another dimension of recent literature on management education. Through the efforts of these schools themselves, society and the market are most closely impacted however these institutions are also being assessed for their ethical practice, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and responsible governance (PRME, 2023). The shift is evident, among other things, in the increasing amount of work on ethical management education and in the larger discussions on the long-term ethical standards of business schools. NBA and other national accrediting bodies are using this literature as a basis for questioning whether it is possible to improve outcome-based frameworks so that even the biggest institutional responsibilities become more clearly measurable (Azmat et al. 2023; Russo et al. 2023; Sen, 2025).

2.6 Research Gap

The reviewed research articles demonstrate in detail several facets of accreditation and its role in quality assurance. Along with this, they argue that the focus is gradually shifting from measuring inputs to being responsible for outputs and accentuate the contribution of accreditation in positioning management education bodies in India as 'strategic players'. Still, the scholars have largely ignored the evolution of the NBA accreditation of PGDM programs through a historical lens and the way this change reflects the alteration of ideas of quality in the Indian management education scenario (Shama Akhtar, 2025). The present study attempts to fill this gap through a systematic qualitative documentary analysis of NBA guidelines, accreditation formats, annual reports, and project documentation.

3. Research Objectives and Questions

3.1 Research Objectives

The study is guided by four objectives:

- i. To examine the historical evolution of NBA accreditation for PGDM programmes in India;
- ii. To identify the major shifts in accreditation logic, evaluative criteria, and evidence expectations over time;
- iii. To analyze how the growing emphasis on outcomes, evidence-based demonstration, continuous improvement has shaped the evaluation of PGDM institutions; and
- iv. To assess the policy and institutional implications of the current NBA accreditation framework for management education quality.

3.2 Research Questions

The paper is organized around four research questions.

- i. How has NBA accreditation for PGDM programmes in India evolved over time?
- ii. What major shifts can be identified in the logic, criteria, and evaluative emphasis of that accreditation framework?
- iii. How has the growing emphasis on outcomes, evidence, and continuous improvement influenced the accreditation and development of PGDM institutions?
- iv. What are the policy and institutional implications of the current NBA accreditation framework for management education quality?

3.3 Scope and limitations

This article examines NBA accreditation in postgraduate management education, particularly PGDM programs in India. A comprehensive comparative analysis with the NAAC or with international accreditors such as AACSB, EQUIS, or AMBA, although beneficial, exceeds the parameters of the current study (Reddy, 2024). This paper investigates the development of accrediting philosophy, pre-qualifier design, and SAR/eSAR architecture as well as how the evaluation criteria have changed essentially, what is contained in the official NBA documents and program records of the NBA. Relying primarily on documentary analysis, the study mainly uses written sources and does not include interviews, surveys, or fieldwork. Such limitations do not offer any disadvantages; they are simply the characteristics of the research method that was chosen.

4. Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative methodology for document analysis. Such a method is well-suited for a study that intends to follow the development of an institution through its policy documents, accrediting tools, official papers, and program records. Since accrediting bodies usually express their areas of evaluation, procedural requirements, and fundamental views of quality in official documents, documentary analysis is an excellent way to look at accreditation. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a way of finding out about changes and continuities by using institutional texts that are quite stable in nature. Thus, it represents a methodologically suitable choice for studying the long-term evolution of a quality assurance mechanism.

Primarily, the study used the NBA annual reports from different years, accreditation manuals, PGDM/MBA SAR forms, process documentation, FAQs, and the official lists of recognized programs as research materials. The analysis was split into three major steps. At first, the documents were sorted by their year of publication in order to identify the main landmark moments and change's introduction of the methods of accreditation. Then, as well, the study focused very closely on the management-related documents & compared them with each other, exploring the changes in who is doing the assessments, what kinds of data they are requesting, how the pre-qualifier is being figured out, and the overall move of the process from just document submission to a highly integrated eNBA system. In the end, the study examined the lists of all the accredited programs so that the study could observe how they are spread out, their trends in specialties, and the regularity of NBA crediting very much sector wise PGDM (Lewis, 2024). Methodologically this is interpretive because it is describing and explaining rather than testing hypotheses. It wants to be able to give a detailed account of the development of a quality assurance framework and use this evolution as a way of saying something about changing expectations in professional management education rather than going for statistical inference. In fact, this analytical method is consistent with the practice of educational policy research and organizational studies.

5. Findings

5.1 Early Phase: Accreditation as Quality Control and Standard-Setting

The NBA was established in 1994 to assess the quality of professional and technical education programs during a period of fast industry expansion and noticeable quality discrepancies (Gambhir, 2016). The accrediting bodies mainly relied on setting standards and guaranteeing quality during these early stages. Essentially, the question was whether institutions had enough teacher's facilities management arrangements, and educational methods to meet the standards set. Quality was largely determined by visible inputs and compliance with basic rules. The very design of evaluation can be seen clearly in the 2012 Accreditation Manual for PGDM/MBA programs, which introduced an input-process-output model and required a comprehensive self-assessment report in digital form. The areas for consideration included the institution's mission governance program structure, faculty qualifications, research and intellectual contributions facilities student progress, and societal contributions (NBA, 2012). This was an important step towards quality assurance, though one that was less standardized and less outcome-focused than later management SAR formats.

The defects with the model though went deeper than that. Equipping a business school with sufficient physical facilities, the exact number of academic staff, and properly kept documentation may be indicators of an institution's preparedness; still, these factors alone cannot convincingly demonstrate student learning, the curriculum's relevance, or a program's effectiveness to a significant extent. The gap between compliance with standards and quality delivery hence was an inherent part of the very essence of the framework.

5.2 Institutional Maturation and the Strengthening of NBA's Credibility

The main change of structure occurred when NBA was allowed by the government to operate more independently and at the same time, it also upgraded its governance system. From being merely, a part of the conventional regulatory oversight the NBA's image was raised to a self-regulating accrediting body. Making a permanent member of the Washington Accord in June 2014 was a landmark moment for India. This event besides engineering education, substantially contributed to the recognition of the NBA as a body committed to international peer review, high standards, and evidence-based assessment (Press Information Bureau, 2014; NBA, 2024). Indirectly, accreditation of management education was affected but quite powerfully. The NBA's newly won international status rallied total faith in its methods and also enabled the transition of the verification approach from a rule-based one to an accrediting one which is professional and self-reflective. This piece of work was the foundation on which the extended quality framework of PGDM programmes that was developed later, was based.

5.3 The Shift from Input Orientation to Outcome-Based Accreditation

One of the major changes in PGDM accreditation has been the transition to an outcome-based approach in quality assurance. Recently, a consideration of Self-Assessment Reports (SARs) formats for postgraduate management programs assumes that institutions not only identify their missions, Program Educational Objectives (PEOs), Program Outcomes (POs), Program Specific Outcomes (PSOs), and Course Outcomes (COs) conceptual frameworks but also provide concrete evidences of their achievements. Indeed, this surpasses the earlier mentality of just having sufficient inputs. It rather necessitates the enabling of curriculum design, teaching methods assessment review mechanisms, and stakeholder feedback for which attainable improvement is manifested (NBA, 2023b). At the same time, the reporting system was changed into a more systematic one. Initially, majority of the institutional assignments were by 2025, the model of conducting pre-qualifier approval, SAR submission, and workflow advancement together with the connection of these activities to the eNBA portal through the 'PQ/e-SAR' pathway clearly reflected a shift of accreditation becoming both evidence-based and system-regulated (NBA 2017 2024b, 2025). This change points to a major change in the logic of accreditation. Initially, the main concern was whether a college had sufficient resources; nowadays, the issue is if these resources contribute to the production of educational outcomes that can be measured and if the institution can provide trustworthy and verifiable data as proof. It used to be that accreditation was simply seen as a confirmation of compliance with processes however it has now become a measure of the academic quality of the institution.

5.4 An Integrated and Systemic Understanding of Institutional Quality

Nowadays, accreditation focuses on the entire performance of the institution rather than just checking the fulfillment of the criteria. The accreditation process scrutinizes leadership, financial condition, teaching and learning through academics, student achievements, staff competencies facilities alumni achievements, community involvement, international relations, and continual improvements. Quality is not just a checklist of components; it is the very essence of their integration (NBA, 2023b). Transformations on the ESAR portal have made the forms uniform. This not only decreased the occurrence of off-topic narratives but also brought more explicit data to the surface. Through thorough practice, programs develop tendencies that remain intact even after the assessment period is over. Fundamentally, this method fosters educational institutions maturation in ways that do not depend

on one-time audits only. Actually, when premises earnestly engage with the process, they experience the true advantages of doing things properly - with no dire necessity for the incessant verification by the external bodies.

5.5 Strengthened Threshold Eligibility Requirements

The new framework outlines pre-accreditation eligibility criteria for schools in a way that is clearer, simpler, and stricter especially when it comes to the pre-accreditation eligibility criteria for new management programs. Here is how it is done: This means a PGDM program should, as a matter of its academic maturity, be ready to go through the assessment stage. Concretely, the program should have gone through at least three graduating classes; it should have a certain number of doctoral faculty; a minimal student-faculty ratio; a definite level of admission; sufficient senior academic leaders in professoriate role; and a placement ratio which is an average over the specified period. Looking into the past, such requirements reveal the transformation of the management pre-qualifier from a mere signal of program readiness for launch to a complex standard that not only decides the launching of a program but also its ongoing performance and effectiveness evaluation of its results (NBA 2017 2023b 2025). This limitation reduces the possibility of accreditation being only a token legitimization of organizations that are very new or have very few resources, and simultaneously it reinforces the concept that accreditation should assess the real quality and not just the declared intentions.

5.6 Consolidation of PGDM Accreditation across the Sector

PGDM accreditation has greatly escalated its recognition in the corporate world, as evident from NBA official statistics. Apart from general management programs, the authorized programs also cover specialty areas such as Finance, Business Analytics, Healthcare Management, Retail Management, Rural Management, Business Design Agribusiness International Business, etc. The remarkable fact is that some institutes are involved in different accreditation cycles, which indicates that a lot of management colleges now consider NBA accreditation as a major component of institution and academic quality management planning. Therefore, they do not perceive it as an event-based achievement or mere regulatory compliance (NBA, 2024a). Such embedding clearly illustrates that the framework is progressively becoming the norm within the industry.

6. Discussion

The introduction of NBA's approval for PGDM programs is a great example of how management education excellence is recognized in India these days. At first, accreditation was mainly about checking whether there were enough resources, if the institution was working the prescribed way, and if it was achieving the standards set. Nowadays, quality is seen in terms of relationship, systemic and focusing on results, institutional integrity, education effectiveness and i Continual improvement (Harvey & Green, 1993; Stensaker, 2008). Besides making accreditation more meaningful, this has also led to PGDM institutions completely transforming their curricula revision, evaluation methods, teaching staff development, industry contact, alumni feedback, and internal quality procedures as different components of program governance which are interrelated (Makhoul, 2019; NBA, 2023b). Adoption of a platform-based eSAR approach even more aligns with this change by making accreditation an output-driven operation that is also procedurally more demanding, with better synchronization amongst eligibility screening, data submission, and institutional workflow (NBA 2024b 2025). Nevertheless, despite these improvements, three major tensions remain unresolved. The first problem is related to the volume of documentation. Outcome-based accreditation is, by definition, heavily dependent on proof, the latter being an indispensable prerequisite of any credible assessment process. Yet, if the documentation requirements are pushed to the extreme, institutions might end up giving more importance to keeping records than to genuine scholarly thinking. In that situation, quality assurance may even revert to compliance behavior, and all this notwithstanding an ostensibly outcome-oriented framework (Duarte et al. 2023).

The second restriction relates to glaringly different levels of institutional preparedness. Management schools with top-notch faculties, highly professionalized administrations, and abundant financial resources will be able to meet the tough accreditation standards much more easily than small or newly set-up institutions. However, a lack of developmental guidance and capacity-building support could mean that the framework ends up further perpetuating inequalities in the sector (Garwe et al. 2024; Kayyali, 2024).

Probably, there is another line of tension with the forward-looking aspect of quality content. Management education studies reveal that business schools nowadays are being held responsible for significantly incorporating sustainability ethics inclusiveness, and governance-related accountability. While the current NBA PGDM framework pays much attention to issues like governance, program outcomes, faculty quality, student success, and continuous improvement, the evolution, in the next phase, of this framework may very well hang upon to what extent these totally different responsibilities are brought in as a part of the core assessment for certification rather than just being the side comments (Lim et al. 2026; Sen, 2025).

7. Contributions to the Literature

Research in quality assurance in management education can be enriched through three contributions made by this paper. As a first step, it provides comprehensive systematic historical narrative on the development of NBA accreditation for PGDM programs and beyond perception of accreditation as a static regulatory mechanism and illustrating it as a dynamic and evolving quality framework, second it demonstrates that development is not a merely procedural change, rather it is a radical change the quality in management education in India from mere compliance to result responsibility and third it argues that change in a new framework for NBA's PGDM accreditation will be based most probably on two related purports. Further highlighting sustainability, ethics, and responsible management education, and digital accreditation process keeping the evidence strict without overburdening.

8. Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have implications for both policy and institutional actions. The development of NBA accreditation reflects a more advanced and quality-oriented regulatory framework for policymakers. However, it is also important that the outcome-based review does not turn into a highly bureaucratic exercise. A combination of better evidence templates, standardized assessor training, and comprehensive capacity-building support to small and young PGDM institutions will make the framework not only more developmental but also more credible (AICTE, 2017; NBA, 2024a). There is a strong case for giving more evaluative weight to sustainability, professional ethics, social inclusion, and responsible management education in the NBA PGDM framework, following the global standards for management schools (AACSB International, 2020; PRME, 2023).

The major takeaway for PGDM institutes is quite clear. Accreditation should not be considered as a mere compliance exercise done to please the peer team at the time of evaluation. Instead, it should be one of the components of the entire academic planning assessment evidence collection and internal quality assurance systems. Schools who regularly use outcome mapping, curriculum scrutiny assessment faculty development, and feedback from stakeholders in their working habit will benefit immensely from accreditation. At the same time, they will not find it an external imposition. Accreditation shouldn't be planned as a separate task from daily academic management. It should involve designing the programs, assessing the students' learning, preparing the evidence, and transforming the feedback given by student's alumni employers, and faculty into measurable improvements. When these processes are up and running and well-integrated, the task of accreditation will become even less burdensome and more meaningful.

9. Conclusion

NBA accreditation for PGDM programs has shifted from simply verifying quality to implementing a strict framework that requires academic accountability, effectiveness of the institution, and continuous improvement.

This shift of the assessment mode from mere compliance to a deeper focus on learning outcomes reflects an important change in how quality is viewed in Indian management education. Besides checking whether an institution has adequate academic and physical resources, the NBA now also wants to know whether these resources have been successfully transformed into student learning, program performance, stakeholder loyalty, and continuous development (NBA 2023b, 2024a).

This change is noteworthy because accreditation is no longer just about confirming the adequacy of an institution. Gradually it shapes the way PGDM institutions define their academic goals, build internal quality systems, analyze evidence, and obtain their rightful place in a challenging educational market. A major part of this story is the introduction of the management pre-qualifier and the upgrading of the eSAR process. They show that the NBA has moved to a regime where quality is not only demonstrated beforehand, but also systematically archived and assessed via an integrated digital platform. By 2025, a clear portal-based submission method through the eNBA 'PQ/e-SAR' system had made this procedural change very conspicuous (NBA 2017, 2024b, 2025).

Nonetheless, there remains a major hurdle. NBA accreditation is important because it encourages reflection and improvement. If the process is too focused on paperwork or if the organizations see evidence production as an end in itself, then the benefit will be lost. To a large extent, whether the framework will continue to be strong in the future will depend on its ability to keep being strict without turning into a mere formality. The next step in the development of PGDM accreditation should not only look at outcomes but also focus on sustainability, professional ethics, social inclusion, and responsible management education, which are main factors in debates about the future of legitimacy of business schools all over the world (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Connecting NBA accreditation more to these aspects would make the framework both more meaningful and impactful for the future of management education in India.

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