

“NAAC Accreditation Manual for Universities-2020: An Analytical Study”

‘Need for Holistic Planning by IQAC in the New Framework’

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Abstract:-

In view of New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to ensure the quality in higher education, it became imperative that Government should also improve the accreditation process of the higher education institutions (HEIs). In the pursuit of the same the government took the initiative to simultaneously revise the NAAC manual for HEIs also. After taking feedback from various stakeholders, the NAAC came up with the revised Manual for HEIs in October 2020. The Revised Manual focuses mainly in bringing objectivity, transparency and scalability in the entire accreditation process by making it more and more ICT driven. Some of the items in different Manuals brought out for Universities, Autonomous Colleges and Affiliated Colleges separately are revised so as to bring more clarity in the process. Also, the revision aims to reduce the time period of accreditation process. Eventually it will expedite the accreditation and assessment process of HEIs and also minimize the element of subjectivity in the grading process.

It is appreciated that the Revised Manual provides appropriate differences in the metrics, weightages and benchmarks between those of the universities, autonomous colleges and affiliated/constituent colleges. However, it is submitted that it would be better if appropriate differences in metrics, weightage and benchmarks are also provided between different departments of the same university, autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges. This approach would be better suited to extract quality data from different departments as per their specialized strength.

Key words:-

NAAC, Accreditation and Assessment, Revised NAAC Manual, New Education Policy (NEP), HEIs

I. INTRODUCTION

During last two decades, with the rapid expansion of privatization, innovation and introduction of new & emerging areas in education, India has witnessed widespread diversification in the field of teaching-learning and related activities. This development has put onus the stakeholders to focus on the quality aspect of education also, especially in the higher education sector. In pursuit of the same, the most important role was assigned to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) which has been performing the task of Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) of higher educational institutions (HEIs) in India since its establishment in the year 1994 under the supervision of the University Grant Commission (UGC).

Recently the Central Government has come up with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with the aim to enhance and upgrade the quality of education in the country. With regard to HEIs, the NAAC also revised its Manual for Universities and other higher educational institutions in the light of the said NEP 2020. The objective of the Revised Manual *inter alia* is to further strengthen the quality assurance mechanism in the HEIs and to develop a focused approach for quality as part of their work culture. Some of the more important features of the Revised Manual 2020 are to bring objectivity, transparency and scalability in the entire accreditation process by making it more and more ICT driven. Also, customized approach has been mandated for different types of HEIs in form of separate manuals for different categories viz. Universities, Autonomous Colleges and Affiliated Colleges. This paper aims to analyze the salient features of the Revised NAAC Manual with a view to appreciate its relevance in the present time and also to seek in it the scope of further improvement from a futuristic approach.

II. NAAC FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION

The NAAC Manual divides the core functioning of the HEIs into seven criteria known as Quality Indicator Framework (QIF). The entire A&A process of NAAC is based on these seven criteria, viz.: 1) Curricular Aspects, 2) Teaching- Learning and Evaluation, 3)

Research, Innovations and Extension, 4) Infrastructure and Learning Resources, 5) Student Support and Progression, 6) Governance, Leadership and Management, and 7) Institutional Values and Best Practices.¹

- 1) **Curricular Aspect:** This criterion mainly focuses on curricular aspects which are perhaps the most important pillar of any HEI. Key-indicators of this metric are: curriculum design and development, curriculum planning and implementation, curriculum enrichment and updating through a feedback system involving all the stakeholders.
- 2) **Teaching-Learning and Evaluation:** This criterion assesses the effectiveness of teaching-learning and evaluation processes in the HEIs. The key-indicators in this metrics are: Student Enrolment and Profile, Catering to Student Diversity, Teaching-Learning Process, Teacher Profile and Quality, Evaluation Process and Reforms, Student Performance and Learning Outcomes, Student Satisfaction Survey. The efficacy of the techniques used to continuously assess the performance of teachers and students is one of the main concerns of this criterion.
- 3) **Research, Innovations and Extension:** Criterion three intended to assess the research, innovations and extension activities accomplished in the HEIs. The indicators in the said metrics are: Promotion of Research and its Facilities, Resource Mobilization for Research, Innovation Ecosystem, Publication of Research and Awards, Consultancy, Collaboration and Extension Activities. In this metrics HEIs are assess and accredited on the aforementioned key factors by NAAC.
- 4) **Infrastructure and Learning Resources:** Criterion four of NAAC revised manual mainly put emphasis on utilization of existing infrastructure and resources in the HEIs. And also, to see how frequently it is being used by their students and staff getting benefitted by the same. The Key indicators in the said metrics are: Physical Facilities, Library resources, IT facilities, Maintenance of Campus Infrastructure.
- 5) **Student Support and Progression:** Criterion five of the NAAC revised manual focuses on HEIs efforts put in the progress of the students and its alumni to further their career goals. The key indicators of the said metrics are: Support to the Students, Student Progression, Participation of Students and Activities and engagement with alumni.
- 6) **Governance, Leadership and Management:** Criterion six of the NAAC revised manual highlights and focusses on effective governance by their established policies and principles. The said metrics based on Institutional Vision, Faculty Empowerment and Resource Management, IQAS and Strategy Development and Deployment.
- 7) **Institutional Values and Best Practices:** Criterion seven of the aforementioned manual is intended to asses in the context of responses of HEIs on contemporary issues such as Gender Equality, Environmental Issues etc.

III. REVISED MANUAL: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES:

Though the revised manual is a right step forward in order to achieve the objective of maintaining the quality of HEIs in imparting education to students in the fast changing socio-economic and technological scenario of India. However, there are some issues which needs further considerations by the NAAC's General Council and Executive Committee. Amongst the most important challenges faced by HEIs in fulfilling the data requirement in different key-indicators under each of the seven criterion is to bring uniformity between different departments of the University. It is difficult to have same level of quality data in all the departments because each department may have its own uniqueness and specialization, for example, the Engineering department may have its own strength when it comes to outcome of its teaching learning processes whereas the Department of Law may have its own specialized strength.²

In the light of above explained rationale, there are some areas where the Department of Law may not be able to provide very handsome data because of the very nature of its core functioning and objectives in imparting legal education. The said areas are as follows:

1. **Syllabus:** Discipline of law is governed by BCI regulations thus very little scope for going beyond the mandate of BCI when it comes to frequent changes in syllabus or launching of new courses are concerned.
2. **Labs:** There are no labs in law, instead we have Moot Court which is a simulated court environment provided to students for their practice and refining their skills. However, unlike other school's labs it cannot be used for experiments or for doing projects etc where results come out in terms of measurable outcomes.
3. **IPR:** There cannot be any patents in law schools because we cannot produce any product through experiments and also we cannot devise any novel process for creating some product which can be patented (like in science or medical fields). In IPR, at law schools copyrights can be taken for original literary works etc. However, law schools can help in 'filing a patent application' or 'trademark application' or other IPR registration applications by providing legal expertise. But this is not being counted in NAAC criteria.

¹ See Generally, <http://www.naac.gov.in/> last visited on 05/01/2021.

² See also; <http://www.naac.gov.in/menu/archive#announcements> last visited on 06/01/2020.

4. **Consultancy:** Faculty members at law schools are not allowed by the BCI to simultaneously do litigation or legal consultancy, therefore we lack in this criterion. Faculty at law school can contribute in society through Legal Aids etc which is not for profit.
5. **Projects:** Projects are hard to come and funding is also difficult because legal projects do not give certain tangible outcomes which can be used for industrial purposes or for earning money. At the most projects in law are for studying some socio-legal phenomenon and for suggesting changes in legal or policy matters, but such projects do not generate money.
6. **Placements:** Generally students prefer to go for litigation where in initial years very less remuneration is there, therefore, it cannot be considered as proper placement. Though these initial years in court are very important for students for their career. Also, where private firms recruit students, generally they do not pay very high salary. Therefore, it is a issue where assessment should be done while considering these factors in NAAC.
7. **Paper publication:** There are very few SCOPUS Indexed journals in law in comparison to other streams such as science or management. Hence, other indexed journals should also be included in assessment of NLUs.
8. **Noble Profession:** Law being a noble profession, the contribution of law schools in socio-economic wellbeing of the country cannot be always measured in terms of money or tangible things. Rather it could be seen through socio- legal lenses how the law professionals assisting in the imparting justice to the people.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

NAAC revised manual 2020 has paved the way for accreditation and assessment in time bound manner and expediate the accreditation process. In due course, it will expedite the accreditation and assessment process of HEIs and also minimize the element of subjectivity in the grading process assessed by NAAC. However, it is submitted that it would be better if appropriate differences in metrics, weightage and benchmarks are also provided between different departments of the same university, autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges.