

Analysis of the Revised NAAC Methodology for Accreditation

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Abstract:-

Education is an integral component of the society. Education and society are intertwined with each other and cannot function in isolation. One cannot think of development of a nation without proper development of education, particularly Higher Education. Accreditation is one such system where an external agency undertake quality assurance process of different activities of higher education, institutions and determined whether the institutions meet pre decided quality standards or not. Over a period of time this system which is internationally being followed has delivered desire results. Mainly State Universities and colleges are grappling with administrative challenges like vacant position, lack of policy, stability in the state, litigation and other regional issues. As a result the button of the pyramid, where the quality culture and quality enhancement is most required is getting further marginalized.

In India National Assessment and Accreditation council (NAAC) is an organization that accesses and accredits institution of higher education. It is an autonomous body funded by University Grants Commission of Government of India. The new methodology for institutional assessment and accreditation has been brought into effect by NAAC from July 2017. The document released states that the main focus of the revision process has been to enhance the redeeming features of the accreditation process and make them more robust, objective, transparent and scalable as well as make it ICT enabled.

Among them are greater emphasis on data based quantitative evaluation than qualitative peer judgement; extensive use of ICT; reduction in number of question and size of SSR; introduction of pre-qualifier mark for onsite peer team visit; System Generated Score (SGS) and third party validation of data.

I. PROCESS AND INPUT DRIVEN METHODOLOGY

It shows that the revised methodology is predominantly geared towards measuring quantity over quality in the evaluation of the HEI. The revised scoring system for grading HEIs is thus input-oriented. .what is lacking in the new metric system is the tool to effectively measure outcome- outcomes of courses/programmes , of organizational cultural, and of public perception. It has been observed that quantitative data, even when impressive, need not necessarily show commensurate quality; the correlation between the two factors is not always direct and interdependent. One believes that the designing of the new methodology was necessitated by some of the peer team being one of them. Moreover, there was a need to review and revamp the old evaluator system in keeping with the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. The primary reason for the revision as stated in the manual has been 'to enhance the redeeming features of the accreditation process and make them more robust, objective, transparent and scalable as well as make it ICT enabled'

DVV and verification process; the HEI is required to submit data on quantitative metrics that is processed by a third party outsourced by the NAAC. It might seem that because of their operational characteristic HEIs provide ideal context, wherein data is collected and analysed to derive actionable knowledge affecting their core activities but the fact remain that an education institution cannot be treated like a company or an industry whose quality certification is based predominantly on quantitative data . The DVV process however, seems to treat HEIs precisely as production processes where inputs and stages need to be verified at every level. In HEIs, data is to be collected and stored, and formats typically integrated into different organizational units. However, inspite of such compliance the contrast between these rigid and usually siloed institutional units of data management and the need for a holistic approach to education can cause significant friction. Qualitative methods use tool different then numbers and figures to analyse and interpret data . The technique include Interviews, discussion, observation, comment, notes, questionnaires and schemas. Usually the result are more subjective and more difficult process, and thus require more work during analysis. But they give richer and more informative resul

Revised methodology shows a rather disproportionate faith in the efficiency of component tools of data analysis –indexing, cataloguing, categorization, codification, tabulation-to judge institutional performance. Number of curriculum enrichment courses, number of student enrolled, are more important than the value or relevance of the course. There is an over dependency on process and participation rates over actual outcomes.

The estimation of an institution only on the basis of the number of programmes added in the last five years will be insufficient to present a true picture of its academic growth. After all, if a value added course does no more than hand over an extra certificate to the student along with his degree it clearly makes no significant contribution to his career or his employment prospects. What we need is a careful calibration of specific, measurable institutional data with less tangible but more experiential institutional culture. We need outcome measures that assess students attainment across a variety of higher order thinking and life skills; critical thinking, writing, quantitative abilities, problem solving, understanding of their own culture and of the culture of others, development of a sense of civic responsibility.

NAAC has tried to make the process of revision open and participatory by inviting feedback from all stakeholder institutions across the country. The problem with the old methodological system was that there was no uniform evaluation- even though the parameters were uniform, results had been unpredictable because there was a different visiting team to each institution leading to much subjectivity and criticism. Also perhaps, the experts, the experts in the revision committee of the NAAC methodology, in their anxiety to redress the many allegation that were leveled by HEIs against the fairness and credibility of peer teams.

II. RATIO OF QUALITATIVE TO QUANTITATIVE

The new metric system devised is based on 70:30 ratio- 70 for quantitative, 30 for qualitative. Right combination of qualitative and quantitative metrics for assessing HEIs excellence is always debatable. One would have expected a clearer statement in the NAAC manual as to the *raison d'être* for concluding that the 70:30 ratio is the best. Were other models of quality assurance framework and report of international audit agencies reviewed before determining the current ratio as the most suitable yardstick for quality measurement of an HEI?

III. POOR GRADES FOR HEIS UNDER THE REVISED METHODOLOGY

Consider the result of reaccreditation of HEIs under the new mechanism that came into effect from August, A careful study of the reaccreditation results provided on the NAAC website reveals some disturbing trends. Several colleges that were accredited by NAAC in the previous methodology and graded A/A + with CGPA above 3/3.5 have fare poorly under the new system, with a few losing even their A

IV. LACK OF CONGRUENCE BETWEEN NAAC AND NIRF

National institutional ranking framework uses a five criterion mechanism as opposed to NAAC seven, but share a fair amount of common ground . A comparative study of NIRF ranking and NAAC grading of HEIs reveals considerable disparity in their position, some colleges bagging pole positions in the NIRF list have been graded lower by NAAC than those colleges that do not even figure in the former list. Another discrepancy that is notice is the mismatch between colleges accorded the status of Centre of potential for Excellence (CPE) by the University Grants Commission and the grade with CGPA given by the NAAC. There are several colleges that have CPE status but with poor NAAC score.

V. ISSUES WITH DVV AND SSS

Some information inputs for Data Validation and Verification (DVV) is unnecessary, Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) has functional problems e.g. HEIs are required to scan and upload copies of disability certificates of student in the category of divyangian for the current year during the pre-qualifier stage of DVV. What is important is whether an institution is sensitive to the need of differently-abled student and has in place special facilities, irrespective of the number. Even if there is not a single such student enrolled, the HEIs must have on its campus amenities that cater to the special needs of special students.

Student Satisfactory Survey (SSS) is a key new component of accreditation. HEIs are supposed to upload data of all currently enrolled students with their email address for a questionnaire to be filled by them and sent back. In reality, there still are large number students in rural colleges who have no email accounts. The analysis of the survey administered to a stratified random sample will generate a score out of 50 for the HEIs. In the instance, despite the NAAC injunction there is enough scope for the institution to influence student to project it in a flattering manner. The charge against an institution of tutoring students during the onsite peer team and student interaction in the previous system is very much applicable in the revise method too. In addition , survey based outcome can be highly unreliable when it is dependent on variables such as sample size, composition , location, literacy level, etc. face to face interaction with the peer team could have been retained as part of onsite evaluation.

VI. CONCLUSION

The quality of higher education in the country can only improve if the mandate of quality assessment agencies are positively and rigorously institutionalized and internalized by the HEIs. However, mere compliance with ticks in the boxes will not suffice.

Institutions must align the recommendations of external auditors with continuous improvement in process to deliver the best learning outcome for the students. It is important that the benefit and results of assessment cycles are commensurate with the time, cost and resources that are involved in the processes. After all, nothing reflects the true grade and ranking of an institution more than the quality of the students leaving its portal. Finally, the best way forward for higher education in the country is to continually evolve more effective mechanisms of assessment and accreditation. The NAAC has been admirably shouldering the responsibility of ushering in a “quality revolution” for nearly three decades.

VII. REFERENCE

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