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Metrical Amendments in Quality Indicator Framework by National Assessment and Accreditation Council for Rural Affiliated and Constituent Colleges: Need and Importance

Ajit M Mulajkar* and Naresh V Pinamkar**

"Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. Therefore in a just society the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interest."

John Rawls Rawls, 1999

Higher Educational Institution (HEI) sector in India is divided under three broad categories of ownership – central, state and private. Initiatives were taken by private business schools for institutional ranking in India. The first official effort towards accrediting HEIs was started in 1994 with the establishment of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA).

NAAC has been playing a vital role in making quality a scalable thing and higher education relevant to the present time. For bringing scalability in quality, and transparency in its all ways and all steps, NAAC has set many examples in higher education. Undoubtedly, the credit of bringing certain qualitative changes even in the colleges in the most remote parts of India and of course, in the HEIs in urban areas goes to NAAC. It will not be wrong to say that because of NAAC many HEIs came into the main stream of higher education. Certainly, NAAC has set certain benchmarks for qualitative changes in the HEIs in India.

Now certain HEIs in India have undergone the Third Cycle of Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) by NAAC and some are in the process. Since its inception NAAC has been upgrading itself as per its vision and mission. Many HEIs with a lot of doubts and vague preparations appeared for the First Cycle of A&A by NAAC, but passage of time proved that their decision was very correct. The journey for NAAC itself and all the HEIs appearing for the Third Cycle is full of difficulties. Impediments and hurdles in this

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journey taught many things to NAAC and the HEIs. By surmounting and surpassing all the difficulties with the aimed journey NAAC has been continuously progressing toward its vision.

Since its inception, NAAC has been carrying out the process of A&A of HEIs over the last two decades. Several HEIs have gone through this process and; it is important to note that a sizeable number of HEIs have also undergone subsequent i.e. Second and some Third Cycles of A&A. In its Manual for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges, launched on 17th July, 2017, NAAC states, "The A&A process of NAAC continue to be an exercise in partnership of NAAC with the HEI being assessed." "The A&A process of NAAC is being revised and this revision attempts to enhance such a partnership. Over years the feedback procured from the HEIs, other stakeholders and the developments in the national scene– all have contributed in making appropriate revisions in the process so as to accelerate the process with greater quality rigor" NAAC, 2017.

It makes one point very clear that NAAC is never rigid; it always reserves its scope for the qualitative change. For NAAC the suggestions given by various stakeholders and the developments in the national scene are very much valuable; and the HEIs have to learn from it. As NAAC says that the revised A&A Framework launched in July 2017 represents an explicit "Paradigm Shift" making it ICT enabled, objective, transparent, scalable and robust. "The Shift is:

- from qualitative peer judgment to data based quantitative indicator evaluation with increased objectivity and transparency
- in terms of boosting benchmarking as quality improvement tool. This has been attempted through comparison of NAAC indicators with other international QA frameworks
- in providing appropriate differences in the metrics, weightages and benchmarks to universities, autonomous colleges and affiliated/constituent colleges
- in revising several metrics to bring in enhanced participation of students and alumni in the

assessment process” NAAC, 2017. This amendment to which NAAC termed as “Paradigm Shift” implies three points: a) the Quality Indicator Framework (QIF) earlier accepted by NAAC is not fit to the present time, b) NAAC believes in upgrading itself, provided that it must be brought to its knowledge, and c) in future also NAAC will also reconsider its QIF.

While focusing on the quality culture of the institution in terms of Quality Initiatives, Quality Sustenance and Quality Enhancement NAAC says, “Experience has reiterated that these can be ascertained either by on site observations and/or through the facts and figures about the various aspects of institutional functioning” NAAC, 2017. NAAC believes that “quality concerns are institutional; Quality Assessment (QA) can better be done through self-evaluation,” (NAAC, 2017).

Here the most important thing which is to be concerned is that QA can be better done through self-evaluation, for when it is evaluated by others there comes a possibility of malpractice. One cannot hide anything from oneself. The study made by the researchers unfolds the facts that there are some areas where the affiliated colleges in rural areas cannot do anything. They are helpless. After two or three years if a certain thing comes to their knowledge, then they may start or make attempts in initiating the same; but there are certain areas where the affiliated colleges remain helpless. Their helplessness in those areas or metrics can neither improve nor reduce the quality, but brings defencelessness and restlessness. While discussing the same points in some seminars, some of the so called resource persons replied that for a certain time NAAC invited and welcomed suggestions from all the stakeholders, as NAAC itself also mentioned the same in its Manual. But the point is that if somebody understood the point later on, or if somebody had not noticed or viewed the website of NAAC or else, it does not mean that nothing can be done. Of course, law is not for those who sleep, but against every judgement—which is considered as unjust by someone and just by someone—there is a remedy in the form of an appeal or revision. One thing is to be noted that the Manual given by NAAC is a living document like the constitution of India. As the Constitution of India provides scope for amendment through its Articles 368 (1), similarly there must be some provision for the amendments in the Manual and especially QIF, which is the core part

of the Manual given by NAAC to the HEI for A&A. (India, 2016) John Rawls in the revised edition of his great work “A Theory of Justice” admits, in the Preface, “In the revision I made in 1975 I removed certain weaknesses in the original edition. These I shall now try to indicate, although I am afraid much of what I say will not be intelligible without some prior knowledge of the text. Leaving this concern aside, one of the most serious weaknesses was in the account of liberty, the defects of which were pointed out by H.L.A. Hart in his critical discussion of 1973” Rawls, 1999. The statements made by Rawls in the Revised Edition to “A Theory of Justice”, clearly indicates that there is always scope for improvement. And NAAC believes: “Overall, the QA is expected to serve as a catalyst for institutional self-improvement, promote innovation and strengthen the urge to excel,” (NAAC, 2017).

The urge to excel can be only strengthen when the affiliated colleges will be A&A by those metrics which are really applicable to them. If they lose some weightage for the no fault of them; then they may not be able to strengthen the urge to excel. It is something like setting a question paper with some out of syllabus questions, and on some student’s argument suppressing his voice by saying that it is from the syllabus of other university, if those students can an answer then why can’t you?

Fee structure given by NAAC for the colleges (government, grant-in-aid and private) is:

- a. General college with multi-faculty is Rs. 185000/-**+ GST18 per cent
- b. General college with mono faculty is Rs. 12500/-** + GST18 per cent

The said clause of fees is applicable w.e.f. March 21, 2018 NAAC (NAAC, 2017).

The decision taken by NAAC regarding the fees is partially correct; for the colleges with good sources of income or in other words self-fund raising units have no problem in it. But what about those colleges with mono faculty and colleges without any such self-fund generating source? When the researchers interviewed the teachers in such colleges they came to know about some striking facts, on the condition of not revealing their identity; the faculties working in such colleges unveiled the secret that the fees and other expenses for appearing for any Cycle of A&A by NAAC is borne, partially or largely, by them. The study made by the

researchers show that there is no provision whereby NAAC inquires or asks any HEI about the funds raised by the HEI to face A&A process of NAAC.

Review of Literature

For the study the review made in this regard remained not so fruitful. In review certain papers and sources which are distinctly related to the problem are studied, for no research, directly related to the problem, was found.

Pranab Mukhopadhyay, Murari P. Tapaswi, P. K. Sudarsan and Kavya Sudarsan in their research article *Assessing the quality of higher education institutions in India: an alternative framework* said, "Developing countries like India should assess the academic quality by working with parameters that are globally acceptable, transparent to all stakeholders and not amenable to the control of lobby groups," (Mukhopadhyay Pranab, 2018).

They further stated, "The assessment of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has a long history where the United States of America (USA) and the Europe have been pioneers. The objective of ranking was primarily to draw prospective students, funding institutions and policy-makers towards HEIs..." It is important to note that in the UK the first research assessment was undertaken in 1986 and in India in 1994, nearly about 8 years later through a Government agency NAAC; whereas in UK through private agencies. (Mukhopadhyay Pranab, 2018).

Till the second millennium there was nothing like global institutional ranking, though the world in the third phase of globalization which dates back to 1492 with the journey of Columbus (Friedman, 2006).

But Mukhopadhyay Pranab and others state, "The beginning of global institutional ranking can be traced back to 2003 when the Shanghai Jiao Tong University published the 'Academic Ranking of World Universities' (ARWU). This was mainly undertaken to measure the gap between Chinese and 'world class' HEIs." They further continue, "ARWU uses six indicators based on four criteria, namely, quality of education, quality of faculty, research output and per capita performance to rank world HEIs." They further argued that ARWU ranks the world's top 400 universities based on three missions: teaching, research and knowledge transfer for this purpose it uses 13 indicators grouped in five categories (Mukhopadhyay Pranab, 2018).

In the Foreword, Rajiv Kumar Director & Chief Executive (ICRIER) given to the *Working Paper No. 180 Higher Education in India: The Need for Change* of Pawan Agarwal, says, "Higher education is critical to India's aspirations of emerging as a major player in the global knowledge economy. The global competitiveness of Indian industry and also its employment generation potential is clearly dependent on availability of required skills and trained personnel," (Agarwal, 2006).

Pawan Agarwal states what Amartya Sen analysed the crisis in Indian education in his lectures at Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial on the 10th and 11th of March 1970 at Hyderabad. "Rather than attributing the crisis in Indian education to the administrative neglect or to thoughtless action, he pointed out that the grave failures in policy making in the field of education require the analysis of the characteristics of the economic and social forces operating in India, and response of public policy to these forces (Sen, 1970)." He further emphasized that due to the Government's tendency to formulate educational policies based on public pressure, often wrong policies are pursued. Unfortunately, even today, the education policies (if any) - particularly on higher education, seek to achieve arbitrarily set goals that are either elusive or pursued halfheartedly," (Agarwal, 2006).

Research Gap

On 17th July, 2017, NAAC launched its Manual for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges. It created many questions, doubts in the minds of many teachers and academicians, which triggered a trend of organizing seminars and conferences on Revised Guidelines of NAAC; and seminars and workshops on a topic new to many academicians, especially in rural parts of India i.e. Intellectual Property Right (IPR). The core issue and points of discussion of majority of these seminars and conferences were certain Metric Numbers such as 2.1.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.5 and etc. For the managements they are ungovernable, for the academicians critical and inaccessible and for the Coordinators of Internal Quality Assurance Council (IQAC) and most of the teachers testing and hypersensitive. The participants in such seminars and conferences and the teachers in different HEIs discussed much about the various other metrics in the different KIs; but the researchers did not found very systematic study of these brain storming metrics and; hence they found the research gap to focus their study.

NAAC launched “Updated” version of Manual for Affiliated/Constituent College on its website on 19/03/2019. But the points of concern i.e. Metric Numbers 2.1.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.5 and some more numbers are kept as is. It further intensified and underlined the need and importance of the study.

Research Methodology

The researchers have focused their study only on the Criteria, Metrics and Key Indicators (KIs) prescribed by NAAC and that too, only for the Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges in India. To collect the data the researchers attended many seminars and conferences on the Revised Guidelines of NAAC. For the collection of primary data the researchers took personal interviews of the many participant teachers, especially the Coordinators of IQAC of the concerned colleges. Primary data is also collected by a set of questioners. Secondary data is largely collected from the Manual for Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges launched by NAAC on 17th July, 2017, which is the core concern of the study, apart from that, other sources like books, journals and e-sources are also used for the study. The data collected is analyzed to reach at the certain conclusions. Analytical research methodology is used by the researchers for the study.

Discussion

“There is nothing known as Perfect,” says Albert Einstein. If NAAC has provided different Manuals for Universities, Autonomous and Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges then NAAC has to rethink about preparing a new manual for affiliated colleges in rural areas.

Earlier, NAAC has had not distinguished the criteria among the universities, autonomous and affiliated colleges; and considered all of them as the same Higher Educational Institutions (HEI). But later on NAAC felt it is must to make certain modifications in it, for “NAAC is learning” as aptly stated by Dr. Ganesh Hegde, Deputy Adviser, NAAC in his Key-note Address in the National Conference on *Revised Accreditation Framework* organized by Shri Shivaji College, Parbhani, Maharashtra on 1st November, 2017.

The following table taken from Manual 2017—it is as it is in new updated Manual July 2019— shows the criterion-wise metrics—qualitative and quantitative—for universities, autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges.

Table 1: Distribution of Metrics and KIs across Criteria

Type of HEIs	Universities	Autonomous Colleges	Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges
Criteria	7	7	7
Key Indicators (KIs)	34	34	32
Qualitative Metrics (Q ₁ M)	38	38	41
Quantitative Metrics (Q _n M)	99	98	80
Total Metrics (Q ₁ M + Q _n M)	137	136	121

(NAAC, 2017)

It is important to note here that total number of metrics 137, 136 and 121 for university, autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges respectively. It makes one point clear that different metrical scales are used for university, autonomous college and affiliated college.

In the year 2018, NAAC made certain necessary modifications and with certain changes it published three different manuals with same weightages i.e. 1000, but with absolute changes in Key Indicators (KIs) 3.1 and 3.5; they are kept as not applicable (NA) and certain variation in KI 1.1 for affiliated colleges, and certain changes in weightages in all most all KIs.

NAAC (2017) says, “Table 2 gives the details of weightage given to the various Key Indicators and Criteria. In view of the variations in the institutional emphasis on the KIs among the three categories of HEIs, weightages have been appropriately demarcated. Each metric is designated a weightage which is indicated elsewhere in this Manual”.

Table 2 in the Manual for Affiliated and Constituent College—July 2017 and June 2019—gives detailed “Distribution of weightages across Key Indicators (KIs)” (NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges, 2017).

Table 2 makes certain points clear, they are as follows:

1. In Criterion 1, KIs 1.4; in Criterion 4, KIs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4; in Criterion 5, KIs 5.4; in Criterion 6, KIs 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5; in Criterion 7, KIs 7.1,

7.2 and 7.3 have equal weightage for universities, autonomous colleges and affiliated and constituent colleges.

2. The total weightage of Criteria 04, 06 and 07 is the same i.e. 100.
3. The total score for all universities, autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges is the same i.e. 1000.
4. KIs in some Metrics kept as not applicable (NA) they are: Criterion 01 KI 1.1 for and in Criterion 03 KI 3.1 and 3.5 for affiliated colleges.

Why has NAAC made these modifications and on what grounds? To this question NAAC itself states that the suggestions given by various stakeholders and the developments in the national scene are very much valuable for NAAC. And by considering them NAAC revised A&A Framework and launched in July 2017 with an explicit "Paradigm Shift".

The vision—making quality scalable with which NAAC is working is nationally acknowledged. But the above analysis of the table makes one point arguable i.e. if certain changes and modifications in certain weightages of certain KIs are possible for universities, autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges then why a separate weightage system for affiliated colleges in rural areas is not prepared.

Separate Manuals for University, Affiliated Colleges and Autonomous Colleges were launched by NAAC, on its website, on 20th June, 2017, 19th July, 2017 and 05th November, 2017 respectively (NAAC 2017). All these three manuals were launched without haste with 2 and 4 months time gap. Enough time was taken by NAAC for the deliberation to launch these manuals separately.

To the question why there should be no separate scale for rural and urban affiliated colleges. In some personal discussions, some academicians have argued that if there is no difference in the scale of the faculties working in urban and rural areas then why there should be difference in the criterion of A&A by NAAC? But, it is worth to note that, certain differences in the salary i.e. in the dearness and travelling allowance are known to all.

In the Report of All India Survey on Higher Education—2015-16 made by the Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development of Higher Education, New Delhi, 2016; it is mentioned: "There

are 268 affiliating Universities and they have 39071 colleges." It is very important to note that "60 per cent Colleges are located in Rural Area." And "11.1 per cent Colleges are exclusively for Girls... There are 40 per cent Colleges, which run only single programme, out of which 75 per cent are privately managed... Among the major states, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have more than 80 per cent Private-unaided colleges, followed by Tamil Nadu 76 per cent. Bihar has 13 per cent Private-unaided colleges and Assam has only 10 per cent" Govt. of India, 2016.

The size of the college is another important thing that is to be noted here. It is also a defining element. The Report says, "Majority of colleges are smaller in terms of enrolment. 22 per cent of the Colleges are having enrolment less than 100 and 40.7 per cent of the colleges have student strength 100 to 500 which means 62.7 per cent of the colleges enroll less than 500 students. Only 4.3 per cent Colleges have enrolment more than 3000" Govt. of India, 2016.

"College density, i.e. the number of colleges per lakh eligible population (population in the age-group 18-23 years) varies from 7 in Bihar to 60 in Telangana as compared to All India average of 28. The top 8 states in terms of highest number of Colleges in India are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh which have more than 25 Colleges per lakh population" Govt. of India, 2016.

If the salary in dearness and travelling allowance, if the number of student enrolment, if the facilities and accessibilities, if preference of desirous eligible candidates both teachers and students differs in urban and rural colleges, then why not the scale of NAAC with some similarity in basic structure like basic of salary. And above all NAAC itself acknowledges the fact "India has one of the largest and diverse education systems in the world" NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges, 2017.

Fortunately, NAAC is learning, and it is making time to time modifications in its criterion for the scalability of quality; as it is observed from its "Updated" Manuals June 2019 for University and Colleges. While judging, though NAAC says that it is never judgmental, NAAC should not be too rigid, and adopt some flexibility too. Of course, the flexibility is found in 30 per cent as NAAC has adopted 70 per cent and 30 per cent formula for accrediting HEIs. This 30 per cent is subjective Assessment of HEI which is termed as "Qualitative Metrics" by NAAC.

One more thing is to be considered here i.e. when the HEI submits its SSR to NAAC; it assesses 70 per cent to which NAAC terms as "Quantitative Metrics". It is assessed by a third party. If the HEI qualifies in it then NAAC sends its Peer Team for "Onsite Assessment" of 30 per cent which is a qualitative part. The noticeable thing in this is that though the 70 per cent part of the SSR is already assessed; NAAC declares its weightages only after the onsite assessment and after considering the Assessment Report of the Peer Team. The point is that if the result of 70 per cent is ready prior to the "Onsite visit" of Peer Team then NAAC has to communicate it to either the concerned HEI individually or through its website. It will bring more transparency as well as boost the enthusiasm and will guide to prepare in a better way to the concerned HEI for the onsite assessment.

As the Constitution of India is very rigid in certain areas, for it does not allow making any amendment in its basic structure that can endanger its very spirit of democracy; similarly NAAC should not compromise on the issue of scalability of quality. But there are some areas where Constitution allows amendments; similarly there are some areas where QIF needs amendments. NAAC has to revamp its QIF for affiliated colleges and prepare a new QIF for affiliated colleges in rural areas. It has to reconsider the HEIs, particularly in the rural areas because the strength of one may be weakness of other and vice versa and above all NAAC knows the fact that India has a very diverse education system.

Whether NAAC wants to encourage or discourage the rural colleges? If the answer is affirmative then it must make certain modifications in its QIF. The question is if parameters can change for universities and affiliated colleges than why they cannot change for the rural colleges? If the stress on research is given while assessing universities then while assessing rural affiliated colleges the stress should be given on the local needs and local problems.

Criterion 2 which deals with Teaching- Learning and Evaluation has 7 KIs out of which Metric No. 2.1.1 in 2nd KI is about assessing the "Average percentage of students from other States and Countries during the last five years". Its weightage is 10. (NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges, 2017 and 2019) This Metric is off-kilter for the affiliated colleges that are started to provide access to higher education to the students from rural areas. Apart from this metric there are certain metrics such as 2.4.1 and 2.4.5 which are like vestigial organs in QIF.

Metric No. 2.4.1 in 2nd KI is about assessing the "Average percentage of full time teachers against sanctioned posts during the last five years". Its weightage is 15. (NAAC, 2017) Here it is important to note that the power to appoint the teachers does not solely vests in the hands of the HEIs. If the Government puts ban on sanctioning and recruiting the posts then what the college can do in such a case? One can witness the same situation in some states of India. It is not just to assess any HEI and consider it as inefficient for the government's decision of ban on recruitment.

Metric No. 2.4.5 deals with "Average percentage of full time teachers from other States against sanctioned posts during the last five years" NAAC, 2017. In this KI the words "from other States" creates great problems to the affiliated colleges. And their trouble is not baseless too, for they give advertisement in some reputed journals like University News and national news papers. If the candidate from other states did not apply/come for the interview, then the college should not be held responsible for the same. Ideally, it is expected that the college should develop itself to that height from where it is noticed by the entire nation at least in and other nearby states. But, practically, at the same time it must be taken into consideration that people from urban areas generally prefer to work in metros or cities and not in the rural areas where there is always scarcity of all facilities which are easily available in urban areas. NAAC should take into consideration that Pahom of Leo Tolstoy has another daughter, who condemns rustic life and unfortunately large part of incredible India, is countryside. (Tolstoy, 2019)

Under a sub-heading "Focus of Assessment" NAAC says, its "assessment lays focus on the institutional developments with reference to three aspects: Quality initiative, Quality sustenance and Quality enhancement. The overall quality assurance framework of NAAC thus focuses on the values and desirable practices of HEIs and incorporates the core elements of quality assurance i.e. internal and external assessment for continuous improvement."

(NAAC, Guidelines for Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC, 2017) But the question is whether the Metric No. 2.1.1, Metric No. 2.4.1, QnM 2.4.5 have to do anything with quality or not? And the second question is how to take initiatives in case of these metrics? These questions remained unanswered in most of the discussions and personal interviews too.

NAAC says, "Self-evaluation is crucial in the process of A&A and has a tremendous contribution in promoting objectivity, self-analysis, reflection and professionalism on the part of HEIs" NAAC, Guidelines for Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC, 2017. But the point is that when a certain HEI is going to lose its 25 points/weightage for no fault of its own then there is a great possibility of malpractice by the HEI to compromise the said loss.

Making Metrics No. 2.1.1, 2.4.1 and 2.4.5— all of them are Quantitative Metrics— mandatory is like taking pregnancy test of a man and on getting negative result declaring him barren! Instead of testing the HEIs for what they do not have; they must be tested for what they have and up to what extent. As these metrics are Quantitative Metric, the Assessment will be very objective. And the research made by the researchers did not find the reflection of NAAC's Vision i.e. "To make quality the defining element of higher education in India..." in these metrics. (NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges, 2017 (NAAC 2019).

Metric No. 2.7.1—a Quantitative Metric— reads as "Online student satisfaction survey regarding teaching learning process" NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges, 2017 (NAAC-Home, 2019). Really it is a great step taken by NAAC towards making quality scalable, but it needs certain modifications. It can be modified and instead of considering the satisfaction survey of students only, it is worth to conduct the satisfaction survey of other stake holders like alumni, people in the community etc.

Metric No. 3.1.2—a Quantitative Metric (QnM)— reads as "Percentage of teachers recognized as research guides at present" and its weightage 03. (NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges, 2017) It is kept not applicable for UG colleges and made mandatory for only those colleges that run PG programs. Apparently it seems just to exclude the UG colleges, but at a deeper level it underestimates the potentials of the teachers working at UG colleges. And it also discourages and hinders them from moving forward as the academicians. Of course, NAAC managed to maneuver the weightage of this QnM in the next QnM, but it does not seem correct and justifiable.

QnM 5.2.3 reads as "Average percentage of students qualifying in state/national/ international level examinations during the last five years (eg: NET/SLET/GATE/GMAT/CAT/GRE/TOEFL/Civil Services/State government examinations)" and the weightage is 05. (NAAC, Manual for Affiliated/

Constituent Colleges, 2017 (NAAC- Home, 2019)) Here one thing is arresting i.e. this QnM asks about the *average percentage of students qualifying in so and so examinations*. But the noticeable thing is that examinations like NET/SLET/GATE/GMAT/CAT/GRE/TOEFL—given as example—are only after PG. Of course, certain examinations like Civil Services/ State government examinations can be taken by the students after UG, but what about those exams which cannot appeared by the UG students. Here the colleges with PG programs will be benefited and there will be difference in weightage and in the assessment of such colleges with PG and without PG programs. If this QnM is treated like QnM 3.1.2., where either non applicability or some difference in the weightage can be kept, then it will also help in bringing more scalability in the Assessment of Quality for which NAAC is striving.

Again 2019 NAAC felt it necessary to revise its manuals, so it relaunched all its three Manuals on 11th January, 2019, 14th February, 2019 and 19th March, 2019 with some revisions, under the head "Updated", for University, Autonomous College and Affiliated College. (NAAC- Home, 2019)

The noticable point is that in this "Updated" Manual launched in June, 2019 for affiliated and constituent colleges, NAAC did not felt any necessity to make any revisions for affiliated colleges in rural areas. The points discussed by the researchers remained unconsidered by NAAC, and some good changes are made by NAAC, but those are not of the present study. But other issues like Metric Numbers 2.1.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.5, 3.1.2, 5.2.3 and finally of preparing a new manual for rural affiliated colleges remained to be noticed, for further revision, by NAAC.

Conclusion

The researchers focused their study only on the QIF and that too only for the affiliated/constituent colleges. For the study they have collected much data from the upward communication in the form of academic discussions, personal talks, interviews and informal group discussions. Metric Numbers 2.1.1, 2.4.1, 2.4.5, 2.7.1, 3.1.2 and 5.2.3 remained at the centre of the all discussions. So the focus of the study remained only on them.

Findings

1. NAAC has to reconsider the HEIs, particularly the affiliated colleges in rural areas because the

strength of one may be weakness of other and vice versa.

2. Metric 2.1.1 is off-kilter metric for the affiliated colleges that are started to provide access to the higher education to the students from rural areas.
3. Metric No. 2.4.5 is offbeat metric for affiliated colleges in rural areas.
4. Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) is a great step towards qualitative change.
5. By excluding colleges that run UG programmes from QnM 3.1.2 NAAC discouraged many faculties in such colleges.

Suggestions

- i. A separate weightage system is to be adopted for affiliated/ constituent colleges in rural areas.
- ii. If NAAC has provided different Manuals for Universities, Autonomous and Affiliated/ Constituent Colleges then it has to rethink about creating a new manual for affiliated colleges in rural areas.
- iii. NAAC has to revamp its quality framework for affiliated colleges in rural areas.
- iv. SSS should be modified and instead of only students' satisfaction survey, the feedbacks of other stake holders like alumni, people in the community etc are to be taken into consideration.
- v. While assessing rural Affiliated Colleges the emphasis should be given on the local conditions and distinctiveness of the college.
- vi. QnM 3.1.2 should be made mandatory for colleges that run UG programmes.
- vii. QnM 5.2.1 is to be treated like QnM 3.1.2., where either non applicability or some difference in the weightage is to be kept for bringing more scalability in the Assessment of Quality.
- viii. After the Assessment of 70 per cent of SSR, which is a quantitative part, NAAC has to communicate its result/ weightage to either the concerned HEI individually or through its website prior to the "Onsite Assessment" by Peer Team.
- ix. Provisions are to be made for showing the source of fund generated for bearing

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