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10. Role of Student Satisfaction Survey in Assessment and Accreditation Process

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Abstract

The revised manual of NAAC intends to enhance the redeeming features of the accreditation process and make it more transparent. Proper weight has been assigned to all stakeholders. However, students' participation in teaching-learning process and evaluation is considered of great concern. The learner-centred education through appropriate methodologies facilitates effective learning. Students' satisfaction, thus, is a direct indicator of the effectiveness of teaching learning process in the institution. *Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) is a robust and transparent process to know about actual teaching-learning process in the institution. Thus, NAAC has tried to inspire faculty to upgrade themselves with new interactive and participatory teaching-learning methods. By involving the students in every activity of the institution and imparting the best of knowledge to them with the help of latest ICT tools, we can inspire them to respond to the questionnaire enthusiastically, sensibly and sensitively.*

Key Words- Data validation and Verification, Information and Communication Technology, Self-Study Report, Student Satisfaction Survey,.

Keeping in mind the fact that India has one of the largest and most diverse education systems in the world, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has continuously been striving to revise its assessment process to keep in tune with local, regional and global changes in higher education scenario. The revised manual for Self-Study Report for Affiliated/Constituent Colleges which has been adopted from July 2017 is a part of this policy. The intention behind it is to enhance the redeeming features of the accreditation process and make them more transparent, robust and objective. To evaluate the quality and relevance of higher education imparted through various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), NAAC has incorporated in its manual proper weight to various stakeholders of higher education. These stakeholders include teachers, students, employers, parents, non-teaching staff, etc. The feedback

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from all these stakeholders is necessary to make teaching learning process more relevant and appropriate in catering to the needs of the society, economy and environment. Students, being the focus of all attention, are the most integral part of the whole system. Their active participation in teaching learning process and evaluation process is, therefore, of great concern. This paper is an attempt to throw some light on Students Satisfaction Survey (SSS) and its side wings. It carries 50 weightage.

In the old NAAC manual students were not directly involved in the assessment and accreditation process. The Peer team members used to interact with a group of students and parents, sometimes separately and sometimes together, and used to share their opinions regarding the functioning of the institution. It had no direct impact on the end result of the process. The institutions could form a specific group of such selected students and train them about how to present their views before the peer team members. As a result, these students used to present positive aspects of the institution, and conceal some of the drawbacks.

It is the responsibility of every higher education institution to serve students belonging to different social, economic, educational and regional backgrounds. For this the institutions are advised to make effective use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The age-old lecture method of teaching has proved to be irrelevant in modern world of professionalism. Instead, student-centric interactive teaching-learning methods are more effective today. Quality education and excellent skill development practices are necessary for the youth of India to be productive workforce. The learner-centred education through appropriate methodologies such as participative learning, experiential learning and collaborative learning modes, facilitate effective learning. Interactive and participatory approaches, if employed properly, create a feeling of responsibility among learners and make learning a process of construction of knowledge. Of course, these methods pose many academic challenges to the teachers and ask for their readiness. Quality of learning provided in the institution depends largely on teacher`s readiness to draw upon such recently available technology supports and also the initiative to develop such learning resources to enrich teaching-learning. Interactive instructional techniques that engage students with thinking and investigations lead to asking questions in classrooms. Group discussions, interviews, seminars, debates, projects, presentations experiments and application of ICT resources are important considerations. The teachers need to keep themselves updated; they need

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to learn the techniques of how to handle ICT tools. It also expects the adequacy, competence as well as continuous professional development of the faculty.

As explained by NAAC Manual, all the efforts of teachers and the higher education institutions to make learning a meaningful process can be considered effective and impactful only if students perceive it to be meaningful. They are at the centre in the system. Their satisfaction is of utmost importance. Their feedback is the actual and realistic evaluation of teaching learning process in any institution. They are the proper source to know the strengths of an institution as well as its weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. Through their first hand experience, students can evaluate the performance of their teachers and can suggest possible tips for improvements in their education institution in particular, and in the whole education sector in general. Students' satisfaction, thus, is a direct indicator of the effectiveness of teaching learning process in the institution.

Accordingly, NAAC has advised all institutions to get regular feedback from students making it a continuous process. This is bound to bring many behavioural positive changes among the faculty and administrators of the higher education institutions. Likewise, it is going to end 'empty classroom' concept in India's higher education system. Because, unless and until the students are present in the classroom and teachers teach them regularly, no one can have their proper feedback. Moreover, NAAC has decided to get online feedback of students. Hence, institutions cannot manage and manipulate it according to their interests. This activity will have long-lasting impact on the functioning of higher education institutions, particularly those where there are no teachers or those where classes are not attended regularly. The HEIs are expected to satisfy the needs of the students from diverse backgrounds. They are supposed to bring in students from special categories, and reach out to their special learning needs by initial assessment of their learning levels.

The introduction of Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) is an attempt to engage students who are the main stakeholders in the quality assurance process. The procedure of conducting Student Satisfaction Survey is very transparent and based on students' knowledge of soft skills. It requires all students to have their e-mails and mobile numbers. As NAAC has clarified, the Student Satisfaction Survey will be conducted by the third party simultaneously with Data Validation and Verification (DVV) process. This survey will be based on the entire database of students with e-mail/mobile numbers submitted by the institution at the time of filling of online

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Self Study Report (SSR). The institutions will submit the details of all students enrolled in the institution, i. e. Student enrolment number, Programme, Year of study, e-mail id and mobile number. The SSS questionnaire consists of 20 objective and 01 subjective questions in English. It is advised that the institutions can make local language translation available for information of students at their level so that it will be easy for students to understand the contents in the form. The HEIs can also encourage students to participate in survey and guide them about survey. The form will be e-mailed to all students by NAAC. At least 10% of the students or 100, whichever is lesser, will have to respond, otherwise it will not be considered for evaluation. This means the institutions will lose 50 weights if they fail in this process. Further, the entire process of SSS will be completed within one month after its initiation.

The score emerging out of the survey is part of the second criterion on Teaching-Learning and Evaluation. The questionnaire consists of several facets, particularly, of the teaching learning process. The questions vary from specific teaching skills of the teacher to his/her overall approach to the educational process. Specific skills of the teacher such as subject knowledge, communication skills, class preparation, and use of ICT tools form the contents of the form. The second major component of the questionnaire is related to the overall approach of the teacher and institution with respect to providing the right environment, motivation, interpersonal relationships, feedback, etc. Further, the survey analysis score will be used as a key component of accreditation.

Here-in-lies a great threat, particularly, to the institutions with vernacular medium in rural areas. For example, in our Gadchiroli district majority of our students are the first generation learners who do not know how to handle computers and smart mobile phones. Most of them don't possess their own e-mails and mobile phones too. They are neither well-versed in English language nor are they regular computer users. Even if we open their e-mails at the time of admission, there is very vague possibility of their being updated with e-mails. Because they do not have accession to smart mobile phones or computer labs, they may not be able to respond to the NAAC's questionnaire properly. Moreover, many of our students belong to very poor families; they earn while they learn. In such cases few of them do not attend classes regularly. In this situation the institutions may have to lose 50 weights unnecessarily.

On the other hand, it can be looked upon as a great opportunity to make our higher education institutions students-centric and student-friendly in the true sense. Every activity in the

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institution should aim at providing the best knowledge to its students. Students are at the centre of every activity in the institution. They should have their voice being heard in all deliberations in the institution. Their questions and queries should be heard and adequate solutions should be provided. They should be taught to use various soft skills in their lives. Computer labs must be kept open to them at all hours during office time. For this the administrators and teachers together need to involve among students. By making our students aware of the use of internet and e-mails, we can easily score good grades in this process of SSS. If we use ICT based teaching-learning methods in our classrooms and involve our students in the process, they will certainly answer the questions in a fair manner. This process will definitely bring forward the factual image of the institution. In short, NAAC, by introducing SSS, has tried to inspire the higher education institutions to be dynamic.

Proper planning and systematic execution of strategies are key factors to go through SSS successfully. Regular meetings with students to create awareness among them and to let them know about various facilities and activities in the institution will help us go through the process. Creative initiatives by teachers in teaching, student-friendly non-teaching staff and flexible management are sure to have positive reactions from students in SSS. We must remember that if we impart effective knowledge to our students, they will respond enthusiastically, sensibly and sensitively for us, and our institutions will get benefited.

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