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 Prospects & Challenges in Rural Setup

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Facing NAAC : Challenge or Opportunity?

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Abstract :

With liberalization, privatization and globalization the whole world has stepped in the digital era with a new set up in all fields of human life. While the developing and non-developing countries found themselves shaken through the process of meeting the worldwide challenges imposed by LPG, the demand for digitization in almost all fields of life, in the second decade of 21st century shook them again. The field of Higher education was not going to be unaffected by the revolutionary changes worldwide. Quality initiative, Quality sustenance and Quality enhancement in the institutions of higher education and the assessment of the same and their accreditation accordingly by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous body established and funded by University Grants Commission of Government of India, may also be considered as a part and parcel of the same new set up in the field of higher education.

Keywords : Quality, Assessment, Accreditation, Manuals, framework.

Even after our institutions of Higher education have become aware regarding assessment and accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA), why aren't our top institutions, even IITs and IISCs which we consider elite institutions, among the top 300 international high ranking institutions? Following the foreign structure we have started spending a lot on salary, creating infrastructure, research and extension, providing facilities, celebrating achievements. Still our institutions are far back from securing better position in the list. Whatever may be the reasons; this reality has obviously exposed the poor standards of higher education in India on the one hand, and made us to rethink seriously over what more is required to raise the quality of our education from primary to higher level, on the other.

One reason of our failure in securing position in internationally top ranking institutions may be that the efforts we put to secure good ranking were focused at National level and not at International level. While the time has come to think beyond national level accreditation, the assessed and accredited institutions seem involved in no other matter than to improve their CGPA in the subsequent cycle of assessment and accreditation, which is certainly not the expectation from NAAC or NBA. As the majority of average students are made exam-oriented than to be made actively involved in research and extension activities, so the accredited institutions have become NAAC oriented.

At another end, majority of our institutions of higher education, mostly situated in rural parts, are still hesitant on the issue of facing assessment and accreditation by NAAC or NBA. The region-wise joint directors have lately declared the long lists of such institutions, having not yet applied for the first cycle of assessment and accreditation. The reasons of blaming NAAC's or NBA's procedure of assessment and accreditation and clever ways of escaping are no more hidden. NAAC assesses and accredits the institution through certain benchmarks or criterions,





which are revised by NAAC as per the changed educational scenario. As per NAAC's lately revised framework there are seven criterions, namely, Criterion I - Curricular Aspects, Criterion II - Teaching-Learning and Evaluation, Criterion III - Research, Innovations and Extension, Criterion IV - Infrastructure and Learning Resources, criterion V - Student Support and Progression, Criterion VI- Governance, Leadership and Management, Criterion VII - Institutional Values and Best Practices.

The reality is that the performance of these institutions on all the benchmarks or criterions is not even satisfactory. These institutions are still tied to traditional programmes, depending on the curriculum provided by the concerned university. While NAAC has no denial for traditional programmes, but it expects to provide more programme options to the learners, bridge courses, etc. NAAC has more insistence on running short term skill-based; job oriented courses, though on self-financed basis. Again the curriculum provided by the university is imparted / presented, mostly, through an old, out of way teaching methods in a time bound framework, where the target is to complete the curriculum from examination point of view, rather than to impart information in most effective, innovative method to train students to think, analyze and present on their own. The tendency to move beyond curriculum for offering wide range of information to the learners is nearly absent. With limited programme options available to the learners and again keeping them tied to the syllabus, without any incentive to creativity and research activity we cannot expect them to meet the global challenges nor even be employable.

NAAC's basic requirements from the institution of higher education, in spite of its location, are well maintained and time to time updated infrastructure that the institution should provide includes facilities like well furnished classrooms, well equipped administrative office, laboratories, spaces for employment and placement cell, National Service Scheme, population education and extension service cell, women study and empowerment cell, IQAC office, canteen, hostel, well-developed playgrounds for sports, indoor games facilities, gymnasium, Computer lab, language lab, Seminar-Conference Hall, good number of equipments like T.V., CD, VCD Players, Multimedia Projectors, Internet server, Xerox Machines, Photo copy machine, scanners and a good library.

The only institutions, situated in cities and qualifying for special grants for various courses, infrastructure, research and extension, faculty and staff improvement programmes, from University Grant Commission and other funding agencies comply above requirements, have satisfactory and above satisfactory performance on the set benchmarks / criterions have faced NAAC and obtained the grades accordingly.

To work on the quality benchmarks laid down by NAAC and to reach to the true objective of education thereby is difficult but certainly not impossible. The reason why the objective couldn't be achieved is the lack of sense of commitment on the part of all components of the institution. It can be achieved by studying the parameters of standards, seeking guidance and monitoring by renowned academicians and administrators, bringing all the stakeholders of the institution like the faculty, students, parents, Alumni, management, etc. under one umbrella and involving them in the quality policy making and the implementation of the same as well.

As such NAAC has brought to the notice of institutions of higher education the concept of higher education, directed them right from their vision and mission to the administrative responsibilities, inevitability of sound infrastructure, maximum and target oriented utilization of





the available infrastructure, qualified, experienced and knowledgeable faculty and staff, need of faculty and staff improvement initiatives, best practices, target oriented extension activities, mobilization of fund and resources, different stakeholders of the institution and co-ordination between them. NAAC not only evaluates the drawbacks of the institution but guides it on its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Hence facing NAAC is an opportunity on the part of the institution to know its weaknesses, to remove them and to lay the pathway of sustainable quality education.

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