

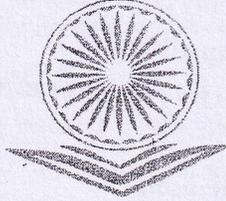
ISSN 2277 - 5730
AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY
QUARTERLY RESEARCH JOURNAL

AJANTA

Volume - VIII Issue - I English Part - I January - March - 2019

Peer Reviewed Refereed
and UGC Listed Journal

Journal No. 40776



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

IMPACT FACTOR / INDEXING
2018 - 5.5

www.sjifactor.com

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❖ PUBLISHED BY ❖

Ajanta Prakashan

Aurangabad. (M.S.)



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Adarsh Arts & Commerce College,
Desaiganj (Wadga) Dist. - Gadchiroli

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18. Facing Naac: Implementing Quality in Higher Education

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Since 1994 National Assessment and Accreditation Council, an autonomous body established and funded by University Grants Commission of Government of India, has been assigned the task of assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in India. In a period of two and half decade NAAC has mobilized the universities, autonomous institutions and constituent and affiliated institutions of higher education in India to prepare and go through the process of assessment and accreditation, ultimately aiming to ensure quality in them. Till date many of them have completed their third cycle of the process. Still there are certain institutions in the country that hesitate for the second and successive cycles and some other that haven't yet applied for the first one.

Frankly speaking by 1994 the institutions of higher education had spread to the rural, tribal and remote parts of the country. However, both the Government and University Grants Commission noticed that it was simply quantitative growth of higher education and the quality had declined and was sure to decline further in the years to come if proper quality assurance measures were not implemented. At the very foundation in 1994 NAAC redefined the concept of higher education, directed these institutions 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 evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the institutions of higher education and shared the information with the public in order to safeguard their quality. To be honest, except certain technical and medical institutions, the rest were practically unaware of the parameters of their worth and worthlessness. As students have started giving responses to those institutions for admission which tops the quality ranking,




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'universities and higher education colleges and institutions have come under public pressure to demonstrate their educational quality and to implement quality mechanisms in each institution.'

The paper is an attempt to showcase the systematic approach towards implementing quality in higher education under the guidelines of National Assessment and Accreditation Council. While quality is a buzzword in higher education, there is no uniformity among the academicians on both the issues of 'quality' and 'education'. In his convocational address at the 14th convocation of Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati on 25th May 2012, Hon. Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam congratulated the faculty members for shaping the young minds and the institution for empowering the students with quality technical knowledge, skill and ability and inculcating in them the right attitude and holistic values. In the later part of his address he stated that *'In present context, the education system has to be designed to see that we generate large number of employment generators and not employment seeks. For this we need to make education more attractive, make it skill imparting and simultaneously create employment potential.'* Similar concept of education is defined by M. K. Ghadoliya, *'How do I see education? To me education is not an uncreative and mechanical process of gathering and storing 'information' that we pass off as knowledge. Computers can do this better than us. Real education implies transformation and not a mere transmission of facts and ideas. The quest for excellence has to do with acquiring knowledge and skills in the most creative way possible. But we often disconnect excellence from relevance and look at it only from the point of view of knowledge for the sake of knowledge or knowledge for success. Relevance has to do with students larger priorities about themselves and the world they live in. Institutes of higher education, through their curriculum, are expected to provide knowledge, know-how, wisdom, and character to the students.'*

The focus point of NAAC has been well defined in above two statements, i.e. to ensure sustainable quality of education in higher education institutions in India through three stages, Quality initiative, Quality sustenance and Quality enhancement. The procedure and parameters/manuals framed and revised by NAAC *'Taking cognizance of changing trends in higher education and aligning the reforms and rapidly transforming global education scenario'* are not only directive but self-explanatory by nature. The close reading of the quality indicators and criterion-wise questions guide and help the institutions / colleges to know that educational institutes are a system of interdependent processes comprising of different units and stakeholders and also that no single component of the institution can lead it to the path of quality.




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In this regard the manuals prepared by NAAC have opened the new avenues of understanding the true concept and ultimate goal of education, the need and role of administrators in setting up of good infrastructure, eco-friendly campus, experienced, knowledgeable faculty, enriched library with books, journals and e-resources, well-equipped laboratories, multiple learner-centric teaching methods, relevant and effective co-curricular activities, updated functional teaching learning aids, strong student support, keen interest and active and enthusiastic involvement of alumni, parents, representatives from industry in the policy making of the institution. The managerial / administrative bodies, for the first time, learnt that the way of running the institutions should not be dictatorial but democratic, and realized how important it is on the part of them to make its different stakeholders feel that it is their own institution and they need to be associated with it.

Before NAAC only medical and technical institutions used to be associated with their alumni, but not in a systematic manner. It was NAAC that brought to the notice of the institutions, running traditional courses, the term 'Alumni' and also guided them how it is integral to establish a bond with alumni, to co-ordinate with them not only in policy making but in activating certain best practices with their financial and academic assistance. The alumni represent their former institutions after going out of the institutional campus. After confronting the realities in the real world the alumni may make the institution aware of the practical requirements of outer world and the need of certain changes to be incorporated in the policy of the institution for creating better graduates. They can share their experience with enrolled students; can provide guidance about employment and self-employment in and out of the country, schemes, provisions and best institutions for further studies.

Neither the parents of the enrolled students were given any importance by the institutions of higher education, however well-educated nor well-informed might they be. Parents, if emboldened and confided with, may voice the complaints or suggestions of their wards regarding certain weaknesses of the institution. NAAC has made it mandatory to the institutions to collect their feedback and also to arrange their meet with NAAC PEER Team during the institutional visit. Knowing certain shortcomings on the part of administration, infrastructural facilities, the faculty, staff, regarding woman harassment in the premises, and also their suggestions regarding the incorporation of certain changes in the institutional academic programmes, administration,




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student support, and welfare and placement activities of the institution is not a part of botheration but knowing and correcting self.

Through the process of accreditation cycle NAAC has made the institutions to be creative and innovative in their practices. No doubt, certain parameters of assessment, incorporated in the revised framework, launched in July 2017, has posed several challenges on the part of higher education institutions, particularly situated in remote rural parts of the country and lacking in technological up gradation. To mention some of them are *Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS)*, *Innovation Ecosystem*, *linkages with recognized national /international agencies* which are possible only to the institutions entitled the status of 12B are funded by UGC, on which I have deliberated in my previous paper, entitled 'Challenge in Facing NAAC Through Revised Assessment and Accreditation Framework.'

To conclude, under the guidelines of NAAC the institutions of higher education can reframe their policy with necessary modification, can adopt a systematic approach toward implementing quality and can achieve the ultimate goal of education.

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