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Accreditation Momentum a Threshold for Behavioral Change-A Study on Quality improvement

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ABSTRACT:

Of late, the accreditation and affiliation is a mark of 'Quality'. The accreditation is awarded by some nominated organization either by governmental or non-governmental. But accreditation by governmental authority has its due advantages than other one (private), either fetching government funds or status among the stakeholders etc., and capitalizing the psychologymileage of public in general. The accreditation plays a pivotal role.

This study pertains to the Management Institute's Accreditation (MBA) by NAAC authority in the new format (2017) viz 70:30 ratios. It means 70 percent by Data Validation & Verification (DVV) and 30 percent by the peer team evaluation on the spot visit. The core objective of the new format (DVV) is to leverage the actual functionalities of Institute with every single quality metrics, rather than just on paper text format evaluation. This is basically an empirical insight of the 'on-going NAAC Peer Team Visit and DVV' evaluation metric by metric.

This study is more pragmatic and empirical on recent NAAC accreditation, in one of the MBA Institutes. This study certainly showcases the impact of NAAC accreditation (higher or lower) on the behavioral change of stakeholders.

Key words: accreditation, mark of Quality, and behavioral change of stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

As a matter of fact the Institute in the study got accreditation grade lower than expected and lesser than confidence shown by the staff, though no stone was left unturned and did very continual hard efforts.



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The Self Study Report (SSR) was submitted to the NAAC authorities and after DVV process had few clarifications that have been answered by the Institute well in time viz before 15 days. And a Peer Team Visit (PTV) was scheduled as per the options date given by the Institute. Accordingly, Peer Team visited the Institute and did their job. The presentation of the head of the Institute, interaction with faculties, document verification, physical inspection of entire infrastructure and interaction with non-teaching staff, students, alumni, parents, industry partners as well as nominees of Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) and University all went well. And in the exit meeting too, all went well and its gives prime fascia apprehension that, all was well. After few days the NAAC accreditation results were out and Institute got lesser grade than expected and confidence imposed. That was the Behavioral Change Momentum among the stakeholders and threshold for the vicious move for the staff. Hence author of this paper had pen ‘**Accreditation Momentum a Threshold for Behavioral Change-A Study on Quality improvement**’.

LITERATURE FRAME WORK

As per therevised format (July, 2017) the Institute SSR has to be filled up only online and later on the IT format will be made available on the NAAC website. The Quality Indicator Framework (QIF) presents the Metrics under each Key Indicator (KI) for all the seven Criteria. And for few Qualitative Metrics (Q_iM) which seek descriptive data it is specified as to what kind of information has to be given and how much. It is advisable to keep data accordingly compiled beforehand.

In pertaining to the Quantitative Metrics (QM) the formula is given, it must be noted that these are given merely to inform the HEIs about the manner in which data submitted will be used. *That is the actual online format seeks only data in specified manner which will be processed digitally.* Thus as per revised NAAC manuals 2017, there are 7 main criteria, what we call it is pillars and in every pillar there are many quality metrics’ amounting to 1000 points of weight-age. Pragmatically the drafting of SSR of the Institute begins with ‘Executive Summary’ of the Institute, which has contents like;

- Introduction
- Vision
- Mission
- Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Challenges (SWOC)
- And criteria wise summary need to be narrated followed by the information to each criteria with supporting documents.

Basically these seven main criteria are,

1. Curricular Aspects
2. Teaching-Learning and Evaluation
3. Research, Innovations and Extension
4. Infrastructure and Learning Resources



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5. Student Support and Progression
6. Governance, Leadership & Management
7. Institutional Values and Best Practices

The Distribution of Metrics and Key Indicators across Criteria are shown below for three education centers viz, Universities, Autonomous colleges/Institutes and Affiliated Colleges / Institutes. In this study the author has taken the '*Affiliated Institute*' only.

Table No. I:

Distribution of Metrics			
Type of HEIs	University	Autonomous	Affiliated
Criteria	7	7	7
Key Indicators	34	34	32
Qualitative Metrics	38	38	41
Quantitative Metrics	99	98	80
Total Metrics	137	136	121

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

The criterion wise details are indicated herein for ready and easy reference.

Table No. II: **Criteria I**

Criterion-I	Weightage 100
1. Curriculum Planning & Implementation	20
3. Academic Flexibility	30
4. Curriculum Enrichment	20
5. Feedback System	30

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

Study shows that, for the affiliated Institute there are all possibilities they may depleted weightage in Academic Flexibility and Curriculum Enrichment since Affiliated Institutes following the Universities syllabus and academic calendar. However ad-on, ethical and skill development courses etc., may have greater scope to have better leverage in the weightage.

Table No. III: **Criteria II**

Criterion-II	Weightage 350
Teaching-Learning and Evaluation	



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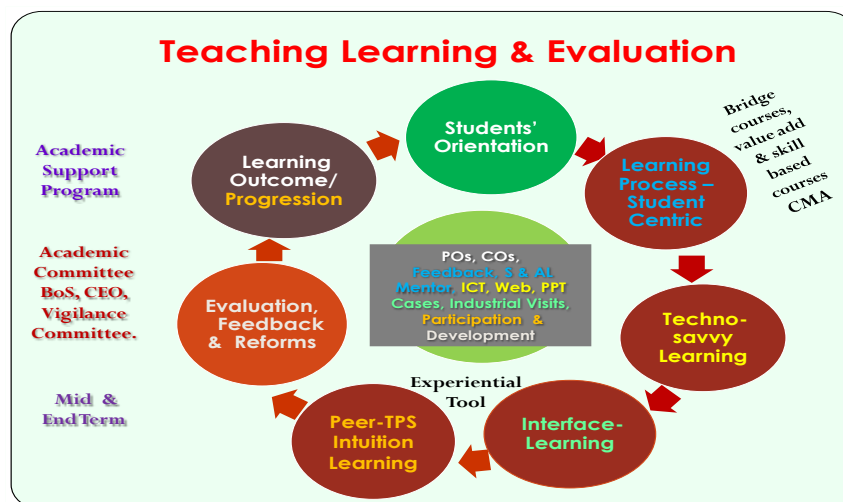
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1. Student Enrolment & Profile	30
2. Catering to Student Diversity	50
3. Teaching Learning Process	50
4. Teacher Profile & Quality	80
5. Evaluation Process & Reforms	50
6. Student Performance & Learning Outcome	40
7. Student Satisfaction Survey	50

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

This is very important criteria rather a main yardstick in the NAAC process and all the metrics play very vital role, hence it required special attention and Institute needed to develop the following process in their Teaching Learning & Evaluation Criteria.

Diagram No. I **Working Model**



Source: Primary Survey

The key indicators like Program Objectives (PO), Course Objectives (CO) and the Program Education Objectives (PEO) needed to be aligned with all metrics of the criteria. A working model was also shown as in the above diagram. The obvious parameters are, Students Orientation, Learning Process- student centric-Technology Savvy-Interface-Peer, TPS-Think Pair & Share- and evaluation, outcome. This model is supported by add-on, skill based courses, Examinations and Academic support activities.

In this criterion generally Institutes gain better weightage and this criteria shows soundness of the Institute. The students are the pivotal and centric source for gaining the weightage. Thus Institute need to focus in this criterion meticulously.



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Table No. IV: **Criteria III**

Criterion-III	Weightage 120
Research, Innovation and Extension	
1. Promotion of Research	10
2. Innovation Ecosystem	10
3. Research Publications & Awards	20
4. Extension Activities	60
5. Collaborations	20

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

The maiden and particularly the standalone Institute most of the time get trapped in this criteria because Innovation Ecosystem and Extension Activities has very distinctive understanding by the NAAC team. However a systematic, semester wise contribution by the faculties, in paper publication in reputed journals and promotion of the same by the Institute certainly brings more weightage.

Table No. V: **Criteria IV**

Criterion-IV	Weightage 100
Infrastructure and Learning Resources	
1. Physical facilities	30
2. Library as Learning Resource	20
3. IT Infrastructure	30
4. Maintenance of Campus Facilities	20

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

Of late by and large most of the Institutes are focusing on this criterion and indeed may get better weightage. The NAAC perspective is the usage of the facilities by the students, like visit to library by the students, use of IT lab and likewise all other physical facilities. In short the foot-fall of the students in each area of facilities.

Table No. VI: **Criteria V**

Criterion-V	Weightage 130
Student Support and Progression	
1. Student Support	50
2. Student Progression	45
3. Student Participation & Activities	25
4. Alumni Engagement	10

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017



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The study indicates that, criterion II and V are very closely related and it is one step ahead. Again for the maiden Institute particularly rural based, above criteria is very much crucial and gaining weightage in, Student Progression, Student Participation & Activities and Alumni Engagement is hard. But a focused attempt may help Institute to gain better weightage.

Table No. VII: **Criteria VI**

Criterion-VI	Weightage 100
Governance Leadership and Management	
1. Institutional Vision & Leadership	10
2. Strategy Development & Deployment	10
3. Faculty Empowerment Strategies	30
4. Financial Management & Resource Mobilization	20
5. Internal Quality Assurance Systems	30

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

More importance need to be given on Strategy Development & Deployment, Faculty Empowerment Strategies and Financial Management & Resource Mobilization, because it will help to gain more and act as multiplier.

Table No. VIII: **Criteria VII**

Criterion-VII	Weightage 100
Institutional Values and Best Practices	
7.1 Institutional Values and Social Responsibilities	50
7.1.1. Gender Equity 10	
7.1.2.Environmental 10 Consciousness & Sustainability	
7.1.3.Differently-abled (Divyangjan) 10 10 Friendliness Resources available in the institution	
7.1.4.Inclusion and Situatedness10	
7.1.5. Human Values & 10 Professional Ethics	30
7.2. Best Practices	
7.3. Institutional Distinctiveness	20

Source: NAAC Manual wef July, 2017

The above metrics basically are qualitative in nature and also multipliers, during the visit of Peer Team it will be assessed and accordingly multipliers will be assigned from 0 to 4 scales. The SSR will be the main source of information which will be assessed during the visit of the team. In this criterion generally Institute will gain better score.



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IMPORTANT: In revised NAAC manual 2017, Institute has option of ‘**opt-out**’ upto (maximum) 50 mark/weightage points; it means $1000-50=950$ will be taken for assessment. And on submission of SSR the DVV partner may seek clarification from Institute to validate the information.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

During course of NAAC preparation and in a meeting, a motivation and confidence is shown by Team that, Institute will get ‘Good Grade’. But in real sense this statement had a motivational perceptive as to create ‘Goody Goody, Feel Good Working Environment’ down the line and as whole in the Institute, than anything else viz instilling positive mind-set.

After NAAC Team Visit Institute got lower grade than expected one, despite of all best work, presentation, documentation etc., few whistleblowers created down-right in the Management.

As a matter of fact the staff and Institute Head are core hard persons to care, nourish and articulate Institute at wade times. Such kind of accreditation (low grade than expected one) should be part of the Institute progress rather than behavioral change that too tarnishing efforts of the staff, for the sake of Good Grade and Confidence Waves.

Further the Institute in study is less than a decade and only practically five batches are in the market and it is self finance Institute in rural area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory study driven and crafted on experience, realistic and pragmatic in-puts particularly from the today’s ‘*Accreditation Happens Scenario*’. The author of this paper has indeed undergone an extensive study of NAAC manual/literature and enlightened with the working of NAAC process, particularly with Management Institute of a rural area.

Further to increase the correctness of the study, an actual NAAC accredited Management Institute is taken as sample for the study and all the primary inputs are driven. And simple statistical tools have been used wherever required so as to arrive at the essential findings. The secondary data was collected from relevant sources and NAAC manuals 2017. The major limitation of the study is that, the entire study is done on basis of primary inputs of NAAC accredited Management Institute in the rural area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are described herein,

- a. To study the perception of accreditation.
- b. To analyze the morale of the staff and its driving force.
- c. To study the impact of NAAC gradelon staff.

EMPIRICAL DISCUSSION



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Indeed empirical discussion is very important part of the paper, which deals with the '**Confidence a Touchstone**' which is cultivates high morale and congenial environment in the Institute and among staff. The discussion had with the NAAC Graded Institutes (lesser than the expected one) expressed that, they have not left any stone un-cornered and made lot of work to attain in better way in all metrics in real sense. And looking to the work, even the mock expert had imposed similar confidence of good grade. But all in life, Institute did not get the expected, planned, waved grade from the NAAC, and it marginally missed the A Grade.

Further an in-depth and analytical study reveals that, Institute has submitted the SSR in the month of February, 2019 and next day the online Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) for weightage of 50 commenced. It had 10 days time limit. And as per norm, the SSS should be 10% of registered students (215) or 100 students whichever is less. The Institute's students had completed the SSS in one day, it contained 22 questions, mostly student centric and one open ended question.

Based on SSR, DVV partner of NAAC sought around 42 clarifications to be submitted on line within 15 days time, but Institute answered all the clarification within 10 days. However all the Institute level submission to NAAC was over in the month of March, 2018 and subsequently SSR got through by DVV and was approved. Institute had to proceed for the balance 50% payment; thereafter window for the Peer Team Visit will be visible viz one month after the payment date. The second option and third option for visit should be 15 days apart. However Institute first option was in the month of April and accordingly the NAAC Peer Team visited the Institute, which consisted three members. The Institute was updated in all aspects whatsoever in nature and was all set and ready to go. The informal welcome, hospitality was done by the Institute.

ACTUAL VISIT

The Day one of visit started with the presentation of Director for which all staff was also present. The presentation and interaction with staff went upto 1 PM and had meeting with Management on lunch. Thereafter had discussion with DTE officials and representative of Pune University. The NAAC team inspected placement cell records, physical infrastructure, Alumni meet, non-teaching discussion, parent and industry interaction. And in the evening cultural program by the students, as a matter of fact the cultural program was really nice/superband mark of hats off. Even the NAAC peer team appreciated it and remarked it as commendable.

During the physical inspection they appreciated the infra, boys and girls Hostels, documentationsystem, library, computer lab and the arrangement in toto.

Record Management System



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Criteria No .	Criteria Name	File No.	Total Main Files	Total Registers	Total Supporting Files
1	Curricular Aspects	1 - 24	24	1	52
2	Teaching, Learning & Evaluation	25 – 47	23	12	36 (369) = 405
3	Research, Inno & Extension	48 - 63	16	2	30
4	Infrastructure Learning Resources	64 – 83	20	3	-
5	Students Support & Progression	84 - 97	14	12	44
6	Governance, Leadership & Mgmt	98 - 118	21	7	12
7	Institutional Values & Best Practices	119 - 140	22	-	18
	TOTAL G. Total 369 (738)		140	37	192 (561)

Source: Primary Survey

The seven criteria of NAAC had been color coded in seven colors namely yellow, pink, green, blue, orange, navy blue, lemon yellow, and sky blue and each criterion was headed by faculty and scrutinized by IQAC coordinator. The file of each criterion was color coded there were 140 main files, 37 registers, 192 supporting files for events etc., and 369 course files, the total files were 738, and were systemically and scientifically arranged. During the inspection of documents shown to the NAAC team, they were indeed happy and appreciated the work done.

Team visited library, IT department, classrooms, administrative office, faculty rooms, campus greenery and play ground. On day two they had exist meet in the evening and told about the plus points (strengths) and areas of improvement. In nutshell everything went well and it had an impression that, the expected grade that the Institute will get will be not less than A.

RESULT

The NAAC announced the result of NAAC assessment after few days of NAAC peer team visit. Astonishingly the Institute in study got lesser grade than expectation and Institute missed the A grade by margin. Naturally entire staff of the Institute was in shock since everybody was expecting of at least A grade, indeed it was scandalous situation.

In any organization few witch-hunt forces will be present; they started nagging and murmuring about the low grade than expected by giving this and that example. And this is how the accreditation changes the behavior and fringe the negativity.

FINDINGS

- A NAAC accreditation generally has symbolic quality perception among the stakeholders, more particularly among the students and governmental agencies at large.



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- b. It is noted that, a better grade, in tune with the efforts and work, always keeps high morale of the staff and it is also driving force for doing much. But lower grade than expected always has issues with morale and initiatives of the staff.
- c. Indeed, NAAC grade of low / high has impact on staff. If somebody working with crystal clear objectives, if it doesn't match with outcome, the impact would be negative and in some cases if efforts are synchronized with results, things go well with positive behavior.
- d. Study reveals that, creation of positive mind set, inculcation of confidence and cultivating 'Feel Good Working Environment' down the line and in the Institute is very essential.
- e. It is found that, all is well never end with well because the co-relation among various variable will turn as 'out layer' and results and outcome will be very strange. Hence expectation needs to shrink or rather better not have high hopes.
- f. Without saying the study reveals that, the staff and Institute Head are main persons to nourish, cherish and articulate Institute at wade times. A lower accreditation shouldn't be a hassle, rather it should be a part of the Institute progress.
- g. Further the Institute in study is less than a decade and practically only five batches are in the market and it is self finance Institute in rural area.
- h. The study indicates that, very dynamic instrument in the process of accreditation is the 'Peer Team'. As a matter of fact their perception, ideology and mind set, makes the grade of the Institute. Because the assessments of 41 metrics is indeed multiplier and that is judging factor (metrics) to arrive for the grade.

CONCLUSION

In precise the quality of the 'Education Institute' is being gauged by the NAAC accreditation and moreover it has become a psychological factor in the 'Education Sector' to have NAAC accreditation with better grade. But a complete analysis showcased that, the Peer Team mind set has also greater influence on accreditation process. Indeed, few Institutes which are really doing better and perhaps student's '*first impulse choice for their admission / studies*' may slide down and cause of 'Behavioral Change' among stakeholders, if the expected grade that the Institute will get will be not less than A.

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