



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND DISTINCTIVE BEST PRACTICES OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

DR. NARESH V. PINAMKAR

Asst. Professor in Commerce
Maharashtra Mahavidyalaya, Nilanga
. (MS) INDIA

DR. AJIT M. MULAJKAR

Head, Dept. of English,
Maharashtra Mahavidyalaya, Nilanga
(MS) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) are the goldsmiths of the society. They are not only the medium of teaching and learning but HEI's are the engineers of the social structure. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have revised its guidelines for assessing and accrediting the Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) since July, 2017. It has focused on the changing role of HEI's and improving the quality of higher education throughout the country. Off course, improving the teaching, learning, evaluation, research and extension across the HEI's is the key focus of NAAC; but at the same time serving the society should also be the motive of all HEI's. The structure of Indian society is very complex one. It has multi dimensions in almost all fields. Thus, it is supposed to be the prime duty of HEI's to serve the society and bring harmony in it. The students from different socio-economical background have their unique needs. These needs are to be addressed and the HEI's should work for the holistic development of the society. The Criterion VII of NAAC is devoted to institutional values and best practices, in which it is expected that the HEI's should contribute to the society in a novel manner. Off course, not for the NAAC grading, but for integrating the society, the HEI's must adopt some of the distinctive best practices. The present research article is focused on discussing few of such distinctive best practices by HEI's to cater the diversified needs of the society.

Objectives of the Paper:

1. To discuss about the revised accreditation method of NAAC for affiliated/constituent colleges.
2. To discuss about the significance of institutional values and best practices.
3. To discuss the distinctive best practices for affiliated/constituent colleges.

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Revised Accreditation Method of NAAC:

The earlier method of NAAC assessment and accreditation of affiliated colleges was felt to be very subjective. The NAAC peer team had all the rights to assess and accredit the colleges and award grades to HEI's. This system was criticized by many academicians and other stakeholders of higher education. Therefore, to bring more transparency and objectivity in accreditation process, NAAC revised its guidelines and introduced them with effect from July, 2017.

The revised method of NAAC accreditation is a combination of objective and subjective assessment by a third agency and NAAC peer team. However, both of these assessments are kept independent and efficient. The central idea behind revision of accreditation process is to bring transparency, efficiency and objectivity in overall accreditation process. NAAC has divided the whole process of assessment and accreditation into seven criterions which are closely correlated. The total assessment is being given a weightage of 1000 marks comprising of 70% for quantitative metrics and 30% for qualitative metrics. There are 32 key indicators spread across the seven criterions. In the new method, NAAC has introduced Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) which is the key part of the whole assessment process. NAAC has also introduced Data Verification and Validation (DVV) process in the revised method.

The quantitative metrics are given data templates and are assessed by a third agency, while the qualitative metrics are assessed by the peer team visiting the college. The key feature of this entire new method is the time bound program. All the process is completed within a specific period of time. Hence, the revised method of accreditation is more transparent, robust and dynamic than before.

Significance of Institutional Values and Best Practices:

Students are the future responsible citizens of this country and hence, nurturing the students by inculcating social values amongst them should be motive of any HEI. Students enter the classrooms with lot of expectations and ambitions. The social development of the students is based on the awareness created amongst them towards the social change. It is expected by NAAC that the colleges should work like social laboratories. All social changes must be initiated by the colleges so that a better society can be built. Thus, it should be the prime responsibility of the HEI's to promote and protect "*social change*" through its best practices. Hence, criterion VII of NAAC accreditation is devoted to Institutional Values and Best Practices.

Distinctive Best Practices of Affiliated/Constituent Colleges:

NAAC expects that every college should at least take two best practices for sustaining its values as well as making some social changes. Of course, these best practices are to be based on local needs and availability of resources. Further, the best practices must be output oriented and useful for the society. Student's involvement in all such activities is the key point. Students should find out the social problems and work together to address those problems. It not only creates social awareness amongst students but also creates an atmosphere of integrity amongst them. Some of the best practices are elaborated as under-

- 1 • Digital Literacy in Slum Areas
- 2 • Financial Literacy amongst Illiterate and Rural People
- 3 • Soil Testing and Soil Analysis for Farmers
- 4 • Handicrafts & Other Crafts Training for Poor and Needy People
- 5 • Water and Other Natural Resources Conservation
- 6 • Cleanliness, Sanitation and Waste Recycling Projects
- 7 • Anti Superstition Awareness and Promotion of Scientific Temper

There are many other best practices which the colleges may adopt. The urban colleges may adopt other best practices like visits to industries, orphanages, old age homes, banks and financial institutions, social surveys, social audits etc. These best practices help students to understand the basic social problems and contribute in social development.

CONCLUSION:

The rationale of institutional values and best practices is to promote social development initiatives through HEI's. The social responsibilities must be addressed by the colleges at a



large scale. The students taking higher education must be aware of the social issues and they must be trained to find out the solutions on such social problems. NAAC has purposefully kept its seventh criterion on best practices so that colleges should act as the pioneers of social change. The institutional values and best practices of any college determine the social structure in the surroundings of the college. Thus, the colleges play a pivotal role of “*Social Laboratories*” in our higher education system.

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