

"STRENGTHENING HIGHER EDUCATION: THE PARIS SPARSH PEER-MENTORING MODEL"

Dr. Ninad Kashikar

Assistant Professor

Kamla Nehru Mahavidyalya

Email Id : ninadkashikar@yahoo.com

Ph. No 9284470772

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Abstract :

The Paris Sparsh Scheme, initiated by the Government of Maharashtra, is a strategic intervention designed to uplift non-accredited higher education institutions (HEIs) by pairing them with accredited mentor colleges. This paper critically examines the scheme's framework, implementation, challenges, and potential for transforming institutional quality. Through a blend of policy analysis and contextual insights, it offers recommendations to strengthen the initiative and foster sustainable academic excellence.

Key words : Paris Sparsh, Quality Enhancement, Mentor and Mentee,

Introduction :

In the evolving landscape of Indian higher education, accreditation has become a benchmark for institutional credibility and quality assurance. Despite its significance, many colleges in Maharashtra remain outside the accreditation fold, often due to resource limitations or procedural ambiguity. The Paris Sparsh Scheme addresses this gap by promoting a structured mentor-mentee model, encouraging collaborative growth and capacity building.

Context and Need for the Scheme :

Accreditation by bodies like NAAC and NBA is essential for accessing government grants, attracting faculty, and improving student outcomes. However, a substantial number of HEIs—especially in rural and semi-urban regions—struggle to meet the prerequisites. The Paris Sparsh Scheme was conceptualized to democratize access to quality enhancement resources by leveraging the strengths of well-performing institutions.

Objectives :

The scheme is guided by the following goals :

- To assist non-accredited colleges in preparing for NAAC/NBA evaluations
- To foster a culture of continuous improvement through peer mentoring



- To promote data-driven decision-making and institutional benchmarking
- To strengthen internal quality assurance cells (IQACs)
- To encourage the adoption of ICT tools and digital documentation practices

Operational Framework :

1. Mentor Institution Criteria :

Mentor colleges are selected based on:

- Accreditation status (Grade A or higher)
- Demonstrated excellence in academic and administrative practices
- Willingness to mentor up to five institutions

2. Mentee Institution Enrollment :

Interested colleges submit:

- Institutional profile and academic offerings
- Self-identified challenges in accreditation
- Commitment to participate in mentoring activities

3. Formal Agreements :

Mentors and mentees sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining:

- Duration of mentorship (typically one academic year)
- Scope of support (documentation, training, review)
- Mutual responsibilities and expected outcomes

Activities and Support Mechanisms :

Mentor institutions provide :

- Orientation sessions on accreditation frameworks
- Assistance in preparing Self-Study Reports (SSR)
- Guidance on conducting Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSS)
- Mock assessments and peer review simulations
- Templates for documentation and policy formulation

Governance and Oversight :

The scheme is monitored through a three-tier structure:

Level	Committee Composition	Responsibilities
State	RUSA officials, education department heads	Policy formulation and funding oversight
University	Vice-Chancellor-led panels	Coordination and progress tracking



Level	Committee Composition	Responsibilities
District	Local mentors and education officers	Implementation and feedback collection

Financial Provisions :

Funding is allocated for:

- Capacity-building workshops
- Mentor travel and honorarium
- ICT infrastructure upgrades for mentees
- Monitoring and evaluation activities

Implementation Challenges :

Despite its structured approach, the scheme faces several hurdles:

- 1. Resource Limitations :** Mentor institutions often juggle multiple responsibilities, limiting their ability to provide intensive support.
- 2. Technological Barriers :** Mentee colleges, especially in remote areas, may lack basic digital infrastructure, affecting documentation and online submissions.
- 3. Cultural Resistance :** Some institutions are wary of external evaluation, fearing reputational damage or administrative scrutiny.
- 4. Monitoring Gaps :** Inconsistent reporting and lack of standardized metrics make it difficult to assess the scheme's impact uniformly.
- 5. Financial Constraints :** Limited budgets may restrict the frequency and depth of mentoring interventions.

Case Illustrations :

Case A: Successful Mentorship in Marathwada

A rural college in Marathwada, mentored by a university in Aurangabad, achieved NAAC accreditation within 18 months. Key enablers included:

- Regular virtual mentoring
- Customized documentation templates
- Student-led quality circles

Case B: Challenges in Urban Technical Institute

A technical college in Pune faced delays due to:

- Frequent staff turnover
- Inadequate ICT support



- Scheduling issues with peer review teams

These cases underscore the need for contextualized mentoring and robust support systems.

Recommendations :

To enhance the scheme's effectiveness:

- **Mentor Training:** Equip mentors with facilitation and change management skills
- **Impact Metrics:** Develop KPIs to measure mentorship outcomes
- **Digital Grants:** Provide targeted ICT support to mentee institutions
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Institutionalize regular review and reflection sessions
- **Collaborative Platforms:** Create online communities for mentor-mentee interaction

Conclusion :

The Paris Sparsh Scheme exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to quality enhancement in higher education. By fostering peer learning and institutional solidarity, it holds the potential to transform Maharashtra's academic ecosystem. However, its success hinges on sustained investment, adaptive strategies, and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

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