

Impact of NAAC Accreditation on Higher Education Institutions

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Lines of command are linear

(and turn us reactive)

Lines of communication are circular

(and make us proactive)

~~~~~William Arnold & Jeanne Plas

## **The Context:**

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is a flagship Quality Assurance Council in India. The University Grants Commission (UGC) established the NAAC in 1994 head quartered at Bangalore with a mandate to assess and accredit Higher Education Institutions in India and also with an objective of maintenance and improvement of quality in Higher Education.

NAAC has been actively engaged in the performance evaluation and implementation of quality sustenance procedures in universities and colleges. NAAC vision and mission statements clearly specify its functioning highlighting quality assurance mechanism in higher education institutions with the combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion & sustenance activities and initiatives. The prime agenda of NAAC is to Assess and Accredite institutions of higher learning with an objective of helping them to work continuously to improve the quality of education. Assessment is a performance evaluation of an institution and /or its units and is accomplished through a process based on self-study and peer review using defined criteria. Accreditation refers to the certification given by NAAC which is valid for a period of five Years. The process of Assessment followed by

NAAC is in accordance with internationally accepted practice but, with certain modifications to suit the Indian context.

NAAC is a full member of The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 1994 and also founder member of The Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN). NAAC has an active MoU with AUQA- Australia, COL- Canada, HEEACT-Taiwan, IEEE- USA, HEQC-South Africa, NQA-Nepal and other countries. NAAC has helped many agencies in the Asia Pacific region to set up good quality assurance agencies.

The philosophy of NAAC is ameliorative and enabling rather than punitive or judgmental, so that all constituencies of institutions of higher learning are empowered to maximize their resources, opportunities and capabilities. NAAC has accredited around 9000 institutions (including first cycle: **253 Universities and 6193 Colleges; Second Cycle: 129 Universities and 2353 Colleges; Third Cycle: 27 Universities and 201 Colleges**) in the country as on March 17, 2016.

#### **From Resistance to Acceptance (1994-1999):**

In the initial years NAAC has put forth its best efforts to propagate the quality assurance mechanism in the country. Awareness programmes on assessment and accreditation were conducted in number of Universities and Colleges. To enhance the effectiveness of NAAC activities, diversified activities and strategies have been conducted by involving the Directorate of Higher Education of different States, University Development Councils, Boards of College and University Development, and Academic Staff Colleges. NAAC has faced several challenges and resistance from the academia for the assessment process. Various activities were conducted to infuse the quality culture among Higher Education Institutions. Prof. Arun Nigavekar, the founder Director of NAAC wrote in the book '*NAAC a decade of dedication to quality assurance*' that in one of the University awareness programme one Vice-Chancellor got up half way and said that the idea that is being presented (concept of quality and taking judgment on quality) is not workable in the Indian higher education system and suggested that "*the teachers may go back to their respective departments and spend their time on more meaningful activity*".

During this critical period NAAC has brought out many documents, guidelines on assessment and accreditation, literature on Quality Assurance and Quality Promotions.

Teachers from University and Colleges were involved for the crusade of the quality promotion activities.

Many of the institutions had apprehension and some of them were indifferent or reluctant to undergo the process of accreditation by NAAC. A few institutions with very positive in their approach have volunteered to undergo the process of accreditation. In the year 1999 about nine institutions were assessed. These institutions have served as a catalyst to improve the quality culture.

**Acceptance to Appreciation (1999-2002):**

During this period an array of activities have been undertaken to popularize and publicize the assessment activity. Multi-pronged activities have been undertaken by involving State Governments through establishment of State Level Quality Assurance Cell (SLQAC), with financial support from NAAC. Directorate of Higher Education conducted large number of awareness programmes on quality sustenance and enhancement.

In the year 2001, NAAC has developed National Action Plan in consultation with Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to involve the state governments for quality promotion and assessment activity. State Governments took pro-active role in the accreditation process and in helping the NAACs mission to organize seminars, orientation programmes, discussion meetings for principals, teachers, students and other stake holders to understand the relevance and advantages of accreditation. Bi-annual conference of International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was held at NAAC in the year 2001 which has created an academic ambience for the NAAC.

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has declared the year 2002, the '*year of quality in higher education*'. NAAC has conducted more than 100 awareness programmes through out the country. The sensitization of the accreditation process has been visible in the Indian scenario. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Assam, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh State Governments have made the accreditation as mandatory.

The Grading System From 1999 to 2002 is appended below:

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| <i>Grading System</i> |
|-----------------------|

| <i>Grade</i> | <i>Institutional score</i><br><i>(Upper limit exclusive)</i> |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| A*****       | >= 75                                                        |
| A****        | 70 – 75                                                      |
| A***         | 65 – 70                                                      |
| A**          | 60 – 65                                                      |
| A*           | 55 – 60                                                      |

About 258 institutions of higher learning were assessed during this period.

| <i>Grading System</i><br><i>(upper limit exclusive)</i> |                     |                 |              |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>Grade</i>                                            | <i>Universities</i> | <i>Colleges</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| A***** (>= 75)                                          | 19                  | 21              | 40           |
| A**** (70 – 75)                                         | 22                  | 35              | 57           |
| A*** (65 – 70)                                          | 05                  | 20              | 25           |
| A** (60 – 65)                                           | 01                  | 04              | 05           |
| A* (55 – 60)                                            | -                   | 01              | 01           |
| <b><i>Total</i></b>                                     | <b>47</b>           | <b>81</b>       | <b>128</b>   |

### **Large Volume of Accreditation (2002-2007):**

Due to the national action plan and state governments' initiatives many of the higher education institutions have applied for NAAC for accreditation. From the initial period of resistance it has moved to acceptance. NAAC has accredited 1023 institutions in 2003-04, 1071 in the 2004-05, 478 in 2005-06 and 627 in 2006-07. Many new initiatives such as Annual National Meet of State Commissioners/ Directors of Higher Education were undertaken. Best Practices series like Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Library and Information Services, Community Engagement, Evaluation of Students, Student feedback and Participation, Curriculum Development have been brought out. More than 2000

Institutions have established IQAC and NAAC has supported more than 200 seminars/workshops during this period.

The year 2005-06 has declared '*Year of Student Participation in Quality Assurance*'. Several seminars were sponsored and an International Conference on Student Participation was organised. The year 2006-07 was declared '*Year of Promoting the Internal Quality Assurance Systems*' and a National level workshop was held on IQAC and NAAC supported many workshops at state, and national level. More than 20 Assessors' Training Programmes were held through which about 800 Assessors were trained. NAAC-UNESCO, NAAC -COL Training Programmes for Teacher Educators were also organized. During this period NAAC has developed methodology for Re-Accreditation i.e. Second Cycle of Assessment and Accreditation. Further, National consultative committee meeting was also held to fine tune the methodology and scoring pattern. The change in the scoring pattern for Re-Accreditation from 100 points to 1000 points without changing the grading pattern based on Key Aspects / Micro- Indicators were initiated. NAAC advocates every accredited institution to establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a quality sustenance measure. IQAC would become part of an institution's system and work towards realizing the goals of quality sustenance and enhancement. Almost all the accredited Institutions have established the IQAC and they are engaged in developing strategies to internalize the quality culture. NAAC should insist on Minimum Institutional Requirements (MIRs) for Re-Accreditation, Functional IQAC, Website, compliance on previous assessment report and submission Annual Quality Assurance Report to NAAC.

A workshop on preparation of self-study report and a training programme for assessors on methodology of assessment were conducted to orient both, the institutions and the assessors. Feedback programmes from peer teams and institutions were conducted to fine tune the methodology. Industry persons were inducted as observers in Re-accreditation process to promote industry institution interactions.

NAAC has brought out State-wise analysis of the Accredited Institutions. About 10 States reports have been published and had interaction with Higher Education Secretaries, Vice Chancellors, Director Higher Education and Principals of the Accredited Colleges. The following grading system was followed from 2002 to 2007.

| <i>Grading System</i> |                                                        |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Grade</i>          | <i>Institutional score<br/>(Upper limit exclusive)</i> |
| A <sup>++</sup>       | 95-100                                                 |
| A <sup>+</sup>        | 90-95                                                  |
| A                     | 85-90                                                  |
| B <sup>++</sup>       | 80-85                                                  |
| B <sup>+</sup>        | 75-80                                                  |
| B                     | 70-75                                                  |
| C <sup>++</sup>       | 65-70                                                  |
| C <sup>+</sup>        | 60-65                                                  |
| C                     | 55-60                                                  |

If the overall score is more than 55%, the institution gets the “Accredited status” and any score less than that would lead to “Not Accredited” status. The accredited institutions were graded on a nine-point scale with the above scale values. More than 3500 institutions were assessed during this period. The grade wise analysis is given below:

| <i>Grading System – 9 point scale<br/>(upper limit exclusive)</i> |                     |                 |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>Grade</i>                                                      | <i>Universities</i> | <i>Colleges</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| A <sup>++</sup> (95 – 100)                                        | 02                  | -               | 02           |

|                                 |           |             |             |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>A<sup>+</sup></b> (90 – 95)  | 04        | 51          | 55          |
| <b>A</b> (85 – 90)              | 19        | 256         | 275         |
| <b>B<sup>++</sup></b> (80 – 85) | 31        | 619         | 650         |
| <b>B<sup>+</sup></b> (75 – 80)  | 23        | 857         | 880         |
| <b>B</b> (70 – 75)              | 10        | 851         | 861         |
| <b>C<sup>++</sup></b> (65 – 70) | 03        | 419         | 422         |
| <b>C<sup>+</sup></b> (60 – 65)  | 01        | 248         | 249         |
| <b>C</b> (55 – 60)              | -         | 110         | 110         |
| <i>Total</i>                    | <b>93</b> | <b>3411</b> | <b>3504</b> |

Several eminent academic have suggested changes in the grading, methodology as well as the functioning of peer team members. Hence there was a decision to relook in to the grading system as well as the methodology itself. The ground work for new methodology was done during this period.

#### **Change of Methodology from 2007:**

As we all know Change is only permanent in this world. NAAC is continuously revising and reviewing its methodology to make its methodology as robust as possible to keep abreast in Higher Education. The challenges of Higher Education as well the scenario have changed during recent times. After assessing and accrediting more than 3500 institutions of higher education, it has been decided to fine tune manuals, to focus on the quality parameters and indicators. The purpose of this exercise of change is to implement an appropriate strategy for improvement in line with its vision and mission. The New Methodology was introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. The criterion, key aspects as well as core-indicators as guidelines were introduced to make the methodology for rigour and robust. The grading pattern of 9 (nine) point letter grades has been changed to three letter grades, A, B, C, with Cumulative Grade Point Average for accredited institutions and D for not accredited. The following table shows the present grading pattern:

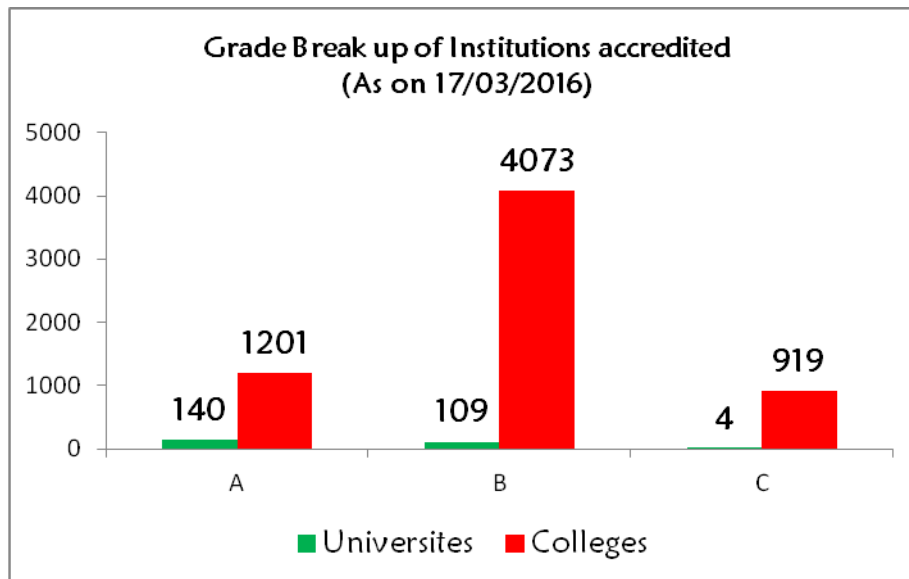
| <i>Range of institutional Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)</i> | <i>Letter Grade</i> | <i>Performance Descriptor</i>   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3.01 - 4.00                                                         | A                   | Very Good (Accredited)          |
| 2.01 - 3.00                                                         | B                   | Good (Accredited)               |
| 1.51 - 2.00                                                         | C                   | Satisfactory (Accredited)       |
| ≤ 1.50                                                              | D                   | Unsatisfactory (Not accredited) |

Under the new grading system, a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is arrived at, which reflects the quality status of the institution.

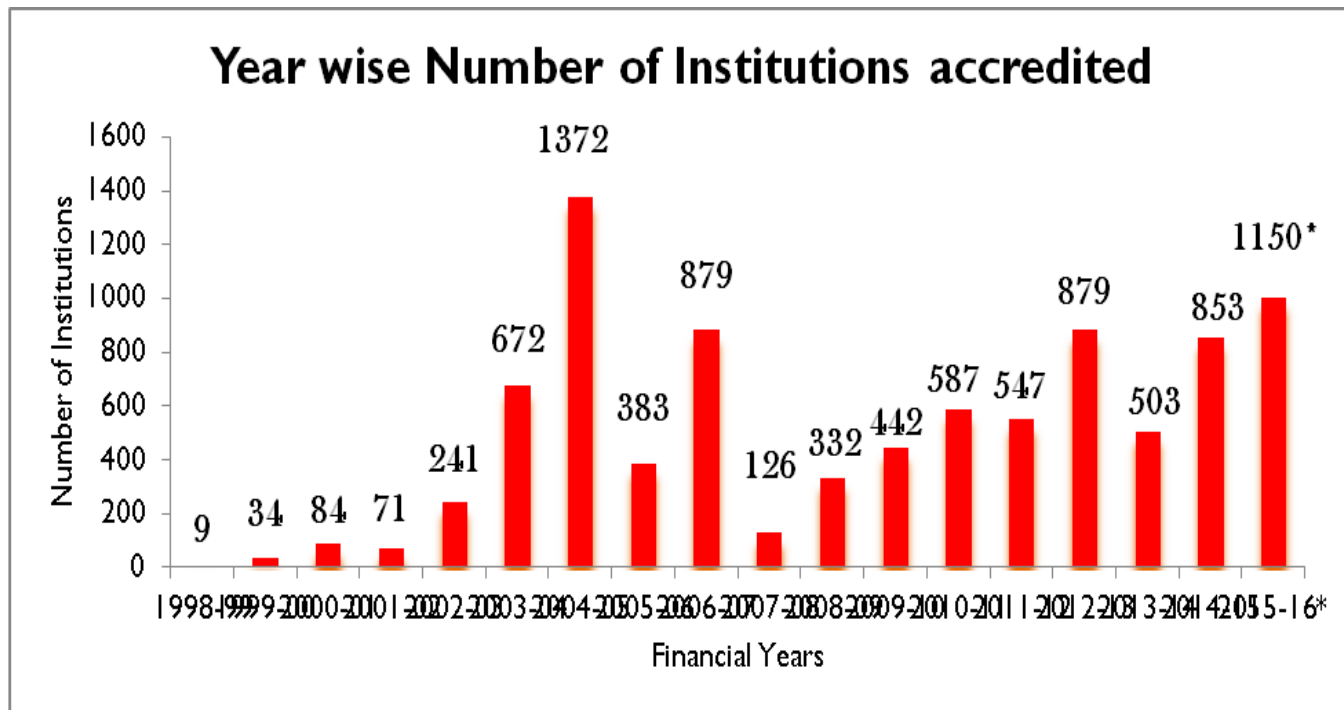
**Grade -wise Break Up of Institutions accredited (As on 17/03/2016)**

|                     | <b>A</b>    | <b>B</b>    | <b>C</b>   | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Universities</b> | <b>140</b>  | <b>109</b>  | <b>4</b>   | <b>253</b>   |
| <b>Colleges</b>     | <b>1201</b> | <b>4073</b> | <b>919</b> | <b>6193</b>  |





NAAC has formulated its core values for its accreditation framework: (i) Contributing to National Development; (ii) Fostering Global Competencies among Students; (iii) Inculcating a Value System among Students; (iv) Promoting the Use of Technology; (v) Quest for Excellence Overall these core values need to be reflected in the self-study report by the institution and the team also need to focus on qualitative changes in the institution. Since inception, NAAC as an apex body for Quality Assurance has done more than 9000 accreditations. Year-wise accreditation data given below:



\* As on 17 March, 2016

#### Impact of NAAC:

1. IQAC funds from UGC: Quality is primarily the responsibility of higher education itself. Each institution should develop an efficient Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) to ensure a quality culture at the institutional level. Annual Quality Assurance Report (AQAR) is to be submitted annually to NAAC. UGC is funding the College for establishment of IQAC with rupees three (3.00) lakhs and Universities with rupees five (5.00) lakhs.
2. Quest for excellence is a continuous process of enhancing the competencies and potentiality of the Institutions to the highest level of standards. For applying for the UGC schemes like the "Universities with Potential for Excellence" (UPE) Universities of Excellence (UoE) Status, applying institutions should have Accreditation by NAAC with Grade "A".

3. Further Colleges with Potential for Excellence” (CPE) will also be decided by the UGC with respect to the NAAC Accreditation status either “B’ or “A”. Only such of the colleges which are accredited with ‘A’ grade with more than 3.5 CGPA will be eligible for consideration as College of Excellence (CE) under the Scheme.
4. Many policy decisions such as UGC Autonomous College Status, continuation of Autonomy by UGC (NAAC/NBA certificate, Whether college has been accredited by NAAC/NBA, mention the rating)
5. One of the major consideration for applying for Deemed to be University Status or Deemed University to open new campus is depends on NAAC Accreditation
6. Mandatory Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions Regulations (2012): All Institution of Higher Learning will have to compulsorily undergo the accreditation from an accrediting agency. Many Institutions are applying to NAAC for the purpose of Accreditation.
7. More than 5000 accredited Institutions have established Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC): Quality enhancement need to be encouraged and Quality must be embedded in the institutional culture. The Academic Audit, need to be periodic process in the HEIs. IQAC has to operate as an internal mechanism of an institution which would work 365 days for qualitative improvement in all activities of the institution.
8. More than 26 states have established State Level Quality Assurance Cells (SLQAC), in turn those states have conducted more than 400 workshops in their jurisdiction.
9. Facilitated more than 2500 seminars/conferences across the country on quality related issues like use of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), Use of ICT for Quality Enhancement, Best practices in Higher Education, Students Participation for Quality Enhancement, Teaching, Learning and Evaluation, Academic and Administration Audit, Curriculum Design and Development.

10. Accreditation has become a powerful weapon in the battle for job placement, Advertising for the Colleges and Universities, draw good staff, attracting good students, management taking interest to improve the Infrastructure, support service, wi-fi campus, library automation, disabled friendly campus, motivating staff and students, Alumni hunt, meet, support, and resource mobilization, etc., are happening on the verge of Accreditation.
11. Rising significance of the Accreditation is reflected in competition among HEIs and student enrolment in the campuses. The societal recognition, competitive market forces on employability and its acceptability has risen in the recent years.
12. Many Universities are taking the cognizance of the NAAC accreditation status for granting permanent affiliation etc. and to apply for UGC Act 1956, 12B status.
13. The Department of Science and Technology under its scheme Faculty improvement in Science and Technology (FIST) utilizes the NAAC accreditation.
14. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) identifies colleges with potential for excellence and provides academic and physical infrastructure for achieving excellence in teaching and unique exposure of students to experimental sciences. Most of the colleges which are the acumen towards research in biotechnology have applied to the DBT availed the grants. Most of the North Eastern States have applied for Star College scheme and got the funding states like Assam, Meghalaya & Aizawl.
15. Consideration for expansion in terms of courses and student in-take in teacher education institutions by NCTE, have been decided based on the NAAC grading.
16. Accreditation motivates faculty to participate actively in academic and related Institutional / departmental activities. The CAS, API schemes has been implemented by the Colleges and Universities facilitates the Improvements at the Individual level initially and further it enhances the involvement of the faculty for institutional growth.

17. Accreditation opens up a sound and challenging academic environment in the Institutions, and adds value to the overall performance of the institution and contributes to social and economic development of the country by producing high quality technical manpower.
18. Accreditation promotes intra-institutional and inter institutional initiatives. Communication Channels has been established for bottom up approach in many institutions. Relationships and papers written by faculty have been increased in the recent years. Inter institutional collaborations, research work, faculty exchange, students exchange has been invented for mutual benefits.
19. Many publications has been brought out within NAAC and in collaboration with UNESCO, APQN, COL Training Programmes for Teacher Educators etc., More details can be obtained from the NAAC website.
20. Many parents, students, employers, Government Agencies, funding agencies, Foreign Universities, Collaborating agencies, are looking the NAAC website for information about status of the Institutions.
21. Many of the foreign Universities are looking for the NAAC accreditation before admitting the students for respective courses. A few Universities have given the fee waive, accommodation, scholarships to the students who are from India and from the accredited Institutions.

### **Conclusion:**

Accreditation plays a critical role in the institutional overall improvement, enhancing its societal image and status. It helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges and identifies internal areas of planning and resource allocation. It also enhances interpersonal relationships and collegiality on the campus. Many Institutions have updated the curriculum and initiated innovative and modern methods of pedagogy for the benefit of students. Accreditation gives the institution a new sense of

direction and identity with greater sense of accountability and enhanced credibility. The impact study on NAAC assessment was not taken up in a systematic manner. The methodology should be robust to elicit the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the process. Good evaluation requires that evaluation efforts themselves be evaluated. Many things can and often do go wrong in evaluation work. Accordingly, it is necessary to check evaluations for problems such as bias, technical error, administrative difficulties, and misuse. Such checks are needed both to improve ongoing evaluation activities and to assess the merits of completed evaluation efforts. A meta-evaluation needs to be undertaken by NAAC at the earliest.

*(The views expressed in the article are personal)*

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