

## **A Comparative study of Accreditation Grades of NAAC vis -a- vis NBA for Quality Improvement of Higher Education in India**

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### **Abstract**

In recent time, India has witnessed tremendous growth in the count and types of institutions that provides higher education. The demand for education and training has become more critical than before as organizations and individuals are now willing to meet the competition and the rapidly changing environment. The goal of higher education not only one of helping a student to identify his/her abilities but also to create a mind-set as to how one can be creatively improve further (Verma, 2016)<sup>1</sup>. Excellence in higher education can be achieved when the acquisition of knowledge and skills are linked to both personal transformation and transformation of the world around us. There are many issues that reflect the quality of higher education like accreditation, student intake, qualifications of teaching faculty, basic infrastructure etc. Quality assurance and accreditation in higher education is defined as systematic management and assessment of procedures adopted by higher education institution or system to monitor performance and to ensure achievement of quality improvement. This paper is an attempt to highlight the quality improvement in higher educational institutes through accreditation, to learn the process and type of accreditation for HEI's in India and to study how accreditation can lead to sustainable and continuous quality control in these institutes. Quality assurance (QA) and accreditation in higher education include the systematic management and assessment of procedures to monitor performance and to address areas of improvement. In the context of globalisation, without assuring the quality of higher education programmes it is not possible to ensure credit transfer and student mobility, to address manpower needs, or to improve economic productivity. A joint effort between higher education institutions and accreditation bodies is needed to ensure effective coordination and communication, adhesion to an ethical code of good practice, and objective, fair, and rigorous quality assessment and accreditation (Dey, 2011).

**Key Words:** Quality Improvement, Accreditation, Excellence, Sustainable, HEI's, NAAC.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The system of higher education in India had always achieved success in meeting the targets set in the current competitive scenario. Couple of decades ago, when the Indian higher education system was severely criticised as it had allowed the mushrooming growth in the number of institutes which resulted in compromising the quality of education they offer. Number of initiatives were taken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to restore the standards of higher education. As a result, the National Policy on Education (1986) rigorously put emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India. In 1994, UGC established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) as an autonomous body to assess and accredit institutions of higher education and its units thereof, with its headquarters at Bangalore (Prasad&Stella, 2004).

In India, till date being “recognized” was the only mode of certifying post-secondary institutions. The evaluation of the institutes whether it meets the standards and basic norms was done by the recognised agency wherein, agency checks the quality on various fronts. It was one time process (K.S.Subramanian, 2013). Higher education accreditation is a process where quality assurance is evaluated by an external body to determine whether the services and operations of post-secondary educational institutions or programs are, if applicable standards are met. If standards meet the set target, then accreditation status is granted by the agency”. The accreditation status in case of Higher Education signifies that the particular Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) – a College, a University, or any other recognized unit therein, achieves the standards of quality as set by the accreditation agency on grounds of performance, linked to the educational processes and outcomes, covering the programme, teaching-learning, evaluation, faculty, research, infrastructure, learning resources, organization, governance, financial well-being and student services (*Website: <http://www.naac.gov.in/>*).

The performance of higher education institutions is a growing concern now days. The pressure for quality assurance positions a major challenge for higher education as in case of many developing countries including India.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF PAPER

Quality improvement (QI) is a systematic, formal approach to the analysis of practice performance and efforts to improve performance. The idea of quality is not new, nor that of

quality assurance (QA). Quality has been defined differently in different contexts. It is a much used and least understood term (Mishra, 2006). Quality in the context of higher education can be defined as a judgment about the level of goal achievement and the value and worth of that achievement (Verma, 2016). Teaching, research and extension are general areas covered under higher education. Various roles that higher education plays in the society can be listed if, we critically analyse the different concepts of higher education. Higher education plays crucial role as it is the source or feeder system in all walks of life and hence, supplies the much-needed human resources in various areas covering management, planning, design, teaching and research (Mishra, 2006).

“Quality is a concept; it’s a philosophy; it’s a journey; it’s also what we practice. NAAC strive to create awareness and understanding of quality, and quality assurance in higher education as a necessary ingredient to national development”. In India accreditation for higher learning is overseen by autonomous institutions established by the University Grants Commission. Accreditation for universities in India is required by law unless the university was created through an act of Parliament. Without accreditation, these institutions have no legal entity to call themselves a University/ Vishwavidyalaya and the degrees awarded by them would not be treated as valid for academic/employment purposes (K.S.Subramanian, 2013).

### **3. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

NAAC and NBA are preferred for accreditation in India. The objectives of the paper are: 1) This paper has been attempting to highlight the quality improvement of higher educational institutes through accreditation. 2) It focuses on different accreditation grades given by NAAC and NBA for maintaining Higher Education Index (HEI’s) in India. 3) Paper also highlights how accreditation can lead to sustainable and continuous quality control in these institutes. 4) It gives macro picture of grading system adopted by institute/ universities in India. 5) At last, it attempts to show difference in grades and suggests suitable measures for improving grades of the institutes concerned.

The study is outline of the present process of accreditation and its nature. It is result of review of substantial data from secondary sources and experiences shared by the experts and observations on the present scenario and challenges of higher education in India. Data is collected from accreditation websites, internet, articles by experts, journal, Books, etc.

#### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is not only the summary but also an explanation of the complete and current state of knowledge on a limited topic as found in academic books and journals. A literature review is to explore and evaluate the available literature in a given subject or a chosen topic.

It is the brief summary of the work done by the experts in the chosen fields.

(Subramanian, 2013) has made an attempt to highlight the remarkable role that various statutory bodies constituted and expanded by the Indian Government plays in order to attain a sustainable excellence in the Indian higher education system and for quality assurance. Accreditation now is crucial for all universities in India except the ones that are created through an act of Parliament. The institutions have no legal entity to call themselves a University if, they have no accreditation and awarded 'Degrees' are not treated as valid for academic/employment purposes. As quality assurance is an evolving issue, the emphasis is intentionally given to excellence and quality as the discrete constituents of higher education in India. Finally, the quality of human resource of any country depends on the quality of higher education it gives as it is the backbone of society. Accreditation takes into count the best practices in education and so, it promotes excellence in education through benchmarking process.

(Sumanth and Dasharath, 2016) says that even after so many years of independence, India still fails to be universal literate. Author believes that India has to work on its higher education system to be vibrant, vibrant, significant and determined. Though the country has been facing the problem of fulfilling the needs of the society, still there is absolutely no substitute to the quality of higher education. 3 areas have been majorly emphasised which includes Quality of Education in terms of infrastructure, teachers, and accreditation, Affordability of Education ensuring that poor and deserving students are not deprived of education and Ethics in Education wherein we should avoid over-commercialization of education system and focus to ensure that Indian Higher meets the required standards. Hence, knowledge is not the only factor that would drive the Indian economy.

(Dr.Jadhav, 2016) has highlighted the issue of quality of education in India. He stated that as the number of institutions is very large the quality of education has been hampered and hence suggested setting up various statutory bodies to keep the quality of education in check. After

doing the comparison of three accreditation agencies he reported that NAAC gives proper weightages & the institution is evaluated on the a 4 grade system. vis a vis NBA considers only 2grades and accreditation can be obtained only for 3 to 5 years. He further remarked that the ISO system still has to gain acceptance in the ducational system.

(Mane, 2015) highlighted the commonalities and differences between NBA and NAAC accreditation among engineering institutions in India . He infered that NBA and NAAC has been aggressively taken up by institutions with an objective to establish an transparent evevaluation systems among the institutes and easy and objective comparison between institutions. They have continually updated and improved upon their accreditation process over time. Both institutions expect the HEI to study their processes, prepare SAR/SSR and come out with their strengths, weakness, opportunities and challenges. Statistics reveal more number of engineering institutions preferring NAAC A & A rather than NBA for accreditation. NBA is more objective than NAAC.

(Jisha, 2015)studies the quality of human resources among the accredited Arts and Science colleges and highlighted the role of NAAC in uplifting the quality of higher educationm in Kannur district. She identified seven major criterias that save as an assessment procedures. Theresearh revealed phenomenol change in the quality of education provided at institutions adopting NAAC.

## **5. HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION IN INDIA**

Higher education accreditation is compulsory for all higher educational institutions except those created under the special act of the parliament as without it no institution has right to award degrees or call themselves Universities.(Alisha, 2018)Has identified the following accreditation agencies involved in grading.

### **1. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the chief regulatory body and is responsible for supervising and smooth functioning of universities in India. It operates through its chief regulatory body UGC. Other major organisations that contribute to the educational scenarios are AICTE and NAAC. These Statutory bodies have been constituted by the Government of India which play an active role in assuring and maintaining the quality of higher education in India.

## **2. University Grant Commission (UGC)**

The UGC is the statutory body that came into being by the special act of parliament. in 1956. It is the apex body that provides recognition to universities in India and is also responsible for determination and maintenance of quality of teaching, examination and research within the universities. It further keeps a track of the financial needs of the the universities and disburses grants to various universities as per allocation done by it. It serves as a vital link between state govt. and other institutes of higher learning by advising them regarding various measures to be taken to improve the quality of university education. In order to monitor the standards of higher education an autonomous body under sec 12 c of the Universities Act in September 1994,

## **3. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**

Established in November 1945 this regulatory council ensures the proper planning and development of technical education in India. It includes the following streams of higher education: such as engineering, technology, pharmaceutical sciences, architecture, town planning, and hotel management, catering technology and applied arts and crafts. It is responsible for the proper planning and co-ordinated development of technical education along with accrediting the post graduate and graduate programmes.

## **4. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)**

The UGC established NAAC in September 1994, in Bangalore to elaborate the performance of universities and colleges in the country. Its purpose is to evaluate, assess and accredit universities and colleges in the country. the assessment process designed by NAAC is based on the self-study along with peer review using various criteria's. the Certification given by NAAC is valid for 7/5 years and it has identified 7 criteria's for assessment that includes Curricular aspects, Teaching-learning and evaluation, Research, Consultancy and extension, Infrastructure and learning resources, Student support and progression, Governance and leadership and Innovative practices (Alisha, 2018)The Government has made it mandatory for all the college and universities for accreditation. Institutes failing to do so cannot avail the scholarship and free ship facilities.

## **5. National Board of Accreditation (NBA)**

NBA is established by the AICTE, this body periodically evaluates technical institutions and programs based on the norms and standards laid down by the Council. The difference

between AICTE approval and NBA accreditation is that the former regulates whether the institution meets the initial requirements of functioning as a technical education provider or offering a new program whereas the latter monitors whether the institution has proved its ability to sustain and improve upon assessment criteria and has earned credibility by the end users. NBA in its present form came into existence as an autonomous body on 7th January, 2010, under the aegis of AICTE, with the objective of assurance of quality and relevance of education especially in technical disciplines.

The future of these Institutions will depend on the grades obtained from these bodies and they will have to maintain the higher grades to run the Institutions. The Best parameters will have best results to keep quality in higher educational Institutes (Dr.R.D.Jadhav, 2016).

## **DISCUSSION**

Accreditation justifies the important role it plays for the quality assurance and consistency in the academic programmes and institutions. Business schools offering the accredited management programmes inculcate the leadership skills in the students which helps them to play variety of roles in business settings. An MBA differs from any other Master's program in the sense that rather focusing on a particular specialization, it gives exposure to students giving them all round knowledge about the different areas of business.

But why is accreditation so important for B-schools? What benefits does it offer to institutions, graduates, and employers? Mark Stoddard, accreditation projects manager at international accreditation body Association of MBAs (AMBA) said “Reputation is the key when it comes to choosing a school. Employers not only ask whether you have an MBA, but where you studied and some programs have better reputations than others. You can measure the quality and impact of an MBA program by checking that it has the right accreditations.” Through accreditation systematic and standardized review it allows schools to identify areas of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities and work on them. Accreditation motivates institutions to look for new, innovative, and modern methods of pedagogy which ultimately lead to enhanced educational experience for students and consequently higher patronage.

## **COMPARATIVE STUDY GRADE NAAC AND NBA**

The accreditation relies upon the extent of compliance of the institution upon the seven criteria. The criteria wise reports and their accomplishments are important to assess the quality and continuous improvement of the institution. This brings out the seriousness and

importance of the assessment criteria. The following discussion highlights the difference in grading system of NAAC and NBA.

### 1. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION(NAAC)

NAAC has identified a set of seven criteria to serve as the basis of its assessment procedures. “A grade qualifier is kept for the institution on qualify for valid accreditation. In order to qualify for any Grade (C to A++) Institution needs to score at least 1.51 CGPA aggregated score (quantitative and qualitative) in each criterion”. NAAC has categorized the Higher Educational Institutions into three major types (University, Autonomous College, and Affiliated/Constituent College) and assigned different weightage to these criteria under different key aspects based on the functioning and organizational focus of the three types of HEIs

**Table 1 NAAC ACCREDITATION CRITERIA**

NAAC ACCREDITATION CRITERIA <b>BEFORE</b> 2017			NAAC ACCREDITATION CRITERIA <b>AFTER</b> 2017				
<u>Crit</u> <u>eria</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>NAAC Criteria</u>	<u>Criteria</u> <u>Marks</u>	<u>Crit</u> <u>eria</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>NAAC Criteria</u>	<u>Criteria Marks</u>		
1	Curricular Aspects	100	1	Curricular Aspects	150 (U)	150 (Au)	100 (Aff)
2	Teaching Learning and Evaluation	350	2	Teaching-learning & Evaluation	200 (U)	300 (Au)	350 (Aff)
3	Research Consultancy and Extension	150	3	Research, Innovations & Extension	250 (U)	150 (Au)	120 (Aff)
4	Infrastructure and Learning Resources	100	4	Infrastructure & Learning Resources	100 (U)	100 (Au)	100 (Aff)
5	Student Support and Progression	100	5	Student Support & Progression	100 (U)	100 (Au)	130 (Aff)
6	Governance, Leadership and Management	100	6	Governance, Leadership & Management	100 (U)	100 (Au)	100 (Aff)
7	Innovation and best Practices	100	7	Institutional Values & Best Practices	100 (U)	100 (Au)	100 (Aff)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>



Source: Adopted for NAAC website and its annual report.

From the Table1, we conclude the following:

- i. The marks for each criterion were revised in April 2017.
- ii. It followed different weightage for each criterion for University, Autonomous College and Affiliated colleges.
- iii. Initially (i.e. before 2017) criteria no. 2 Teaching-learning & Evaluation carried 350 marks but whereas, later marks for the same criteria were redesigned and for university it was 200, for Autonomous institutes it was 300 and for Affiliated Colleges it was 350.
- iv. Criteria no.3, “Research Consultancy and Extension” was changed to “Research, Innovations & Extension” it carried 150 marks previously. But, after April 2017 it carried 250 marks for university, 150 Marks for Autonomous Colleges and 120 for affiliated colleges.
- v. Earlier criteria 5 Student Support and Progression had 100 marks but from 2017 it carries now 130 marks. However, marks for the other criterions remain same.

➤ **Range of Grade of NAAC for institutions**

The following Table 2 reveal the grading pattern of accredited institutes in India. Earlier there were four grades from A to D. however in the recently introduced methodology notches have been added such as A++, A+. Notches fill up the gap between two grades such as first class to distinction. Table 3 and 4 also takes stock of various cycles of NAAC. Table 4 shows that hardly 61 % and 21.54 % universities and colleges bagged A grade. The colleges are not able cope with universities due to private management and poor in infrastructure.

**Table 2 Range of Grade of NAAC for institutions With Effect from July 2017**

<b>Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
3.51 - 4.00	A++
3.26 - 3.50	A+
3.01 - 3.25	A
2.76 - 3.00	B++
2.51 - 2.75	B+
2.01 - 2.50	B

1.51 - 2.00	C
<= 1.50	D

Source: Data from NAAC official website

**Table 3 Total Number of Accreditations (Status as on 02/11/2018)**

	<b>First Cycle</b>	<b>Second Cycle</b>	<b>Third Cycle</b>	<b>Fourth Cycle</b>	<b>Number of Accreditations</b>
Universities	336	163	68	1	<b>568</b>
Colleges	7657	3354	792	13	<b>11816</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7993</b>	<b>3517</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12384</b>

Source: Data from NAAC official website

**Table 4 Grade Break up of Institutions accredited (As on 2/11/2018)**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Total</b>
Universities	206(61.30)	122(36.30)	8(1.78)	<b>336 (100)</b>
Colleges	1650(21.54)	5174(67.57)	833(10.87)	<b>7657(100)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1856</b>	<b>5296</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>7993</b>

Source: Data from NAAC official website

## **2 NBA (National Board of Accreditation)**

General Policy on Accreditation by NBA follows the below principles: a) Programs, and not Educational Institutions, are considered for accreditation Programs, and not Educational Institutions, are considered for accreditation. b) The earlier system of accreditation which came into effect from 1st January 2004, the criteria and standards, by which individual programmes in any institution will be judged, have been carefully formulated so as to give a clear and transparent indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. Following table gives an idea of parameters used for grading various kinds of institutions.

Table 5 National Board of Accreditation Criteria

Criteria And Parameters Used In The <b>Earlier</b> System of Accreditation					Criteria and Parameters used in the <b>Revised</b> System of Accreditation		
Crit eria No.	Criteria	Weig hts	Numbe r of Param eters	Criter ia No.	Criteria	Weig hts	Num ber of Para meters
1	Organization and Governance	80	8	1	Vision, Mission & Programme Educational Objectives	60	10
2	Financial Resources, Allocation & Utilisation	70	4	2	Program Curriculum & Teaching- Learning Process	120	6
3	Physical Resources	50	9	3	Course Outcomes Na Program Outcomes	120	6
4	Human Resources: Faculty & Staff	200	9	4	Student's Performance	150	7
5	Human Resources: Students	100	4	5	Faculty Information & Contribution	200	4
6	Teaching – Learning Processes	350	8	6	Facilities And Technical Support	80	7
7	Supplementary Processes	50	7	7	Continuous Improvement	50	4
8	Research & Development and Interaction Effort	100	7	8	First Year Academics	50	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>56</b>	9	Student Support Systems	50	
10				Governance, Institutional Support & Financial Resources	120		
				<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>49</b>	

Source: adopted from NBA website and annual report.

From the above table we can conclude that:

- i. The numbers of criteria have increased to 10 whereas it was 8 before.
- ii. The number of parameters to be assessed has been reduced from what is previously.
- iii. A new focus of outcome approach can be viewed in the revised system compared to the resource and process approach in the earlier system.
- iv. More weight is given for students' outputs and faculty contributions in Research and Development projects, Research publications, IPRs, consultancy work and interactions with outside world in the revised system of accreditation. Table 6 reveals the points required for allocating grade duration wise.

**Table 6 GRADING SYSTEM OF NBA**

ACCREDITATION SYSTEM	TOTAL POINTS (OUT OF 1000)		
	5 Years	3 Years	Not Accredited
Earlier System	>750*	650 – 750	<650
Revised System	≥750*	>600 provisionally accredited for 2 years	<600

Source: adopted from NBA website and annual report.

**Table 7 COMPARISONS OF NAAC AND NBA**

Sr. no.	Points	NAAC	NBA
1	Self-assessment	Yes, Self Study Report (SSR)	Yes, Self-Assessment Report (SAR)
2	Total Points	1000	1000
3	Criteria for Evaluation Sub Criteria	Evaluates on Seven Criteria. Thirty Two	Evaluates on the basis of 10 criteria. Eight
4	Evaluation Scale	Out of 4, i.e. 1,2,3,4 per sub criteria Then calculated for each Criteria	Points awarded based on calculations as per SAR

5	Evaluation Institute Level	1000 points Criteria GPA Institutional Cumulative GPA	220 Points Student level 780 Program level
6	IQAC	Mandatory	Optional
7	Accreditation	Institute Level	Program Level
8	Vision, Mission &PEO	Not considered for marks	Evaluated for 60 points
9	Supporting Documents	Mandatory	Compulsary
10	Accreditation Officials	Chairperson plus 2 or 3 members and NAAC official	Chairman plus 2 Evaluators per program
11	Records i.e. Files generated	Comparatively less than NBA	Rigid than NAAC
12	Qualifying Grades	A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B, C, D	No Grades Only 3 years or 5 Years.
13	Validity Of Accreditation	5 years/ 7years	5 years if program scores 750 points or else 2 years if points >600 but <750
14	Eligibility Criteria for HEI	Min 2 batches of students graduated	Min 2 batches of students graduated
15	Evaluation	The sum total of marks in all the criteria's are considered finally	Under all criteria institution should qualify with 60% marks
16	Accreditation for	Entire College, Institute, University	Programme certification only

Source: adopted from NBA website and annual report.

Table 7 reveals the comparative grading and criterion pattern of NAAC and NBA .The above study shows the comparative study between NAAC and NBA. Both accreditations help to identify the strengths and weakness of the HEIs and are registered under UGC. NBA provides accreditations of the particular program whereas; NAAC provides accreditation to entire institute or university. Compared to NBA there is less work pressure in NAAC in terms of files. NAAC provides results by grading the institutes / universities for a tenure of 5 years and NBA provides accreditation “Yes” for 5 years or 2 years or else or else “No” accreditation is given. Hence, the above study shows that excellence in education can be achieved through accreditation. NAAC and NBA are the most accepted accreditations by Indian HEIs.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Higher education accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of post-secondary educational institutions or programs are evaluated by an external body to determine if applicable standards are met. If standards are met, accredited status is granted by the agency". The accreditation status in case of Higher Education indicates that the particular Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) – a College, a University, or any other recognized Unit therein, meets the standards of quality as set by the Accreditation Agency, in terms of its performance, related to the educational processes and outcomes, covering the curriculum, teaching-learning, evaluation, faculty, research, infrastructure, learning resources, organization, governance, financial well-being and student services.

Accreditation process is not yet set into motion in India. Student and parents hardly think of grades while joining college and universities. The accessibility, facilities of fee waiver, infrastructure are the prime motive in selecting institutions in India. Some state govt, universities, and colleges have not taken grading seriously.

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