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**Abstract**

*Quality in higher education has become the prime agenda of countries worldwide. In the changing context marked by expansion of higher education and globalization of economic activities, education has become a national concern. The University Grants Commission (UGC), by virtue of the statutory powers conferred on it, is expected to develop effective mechanisms for quality control of institutions. Section 12 of the UGC Act of 1956 specifically requires UGC to be responsible for “the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examinations and research in universities”. Towards fulfilling this mandate, UGC has evolved various monitoring mechanisms for quality control. The term quality assurance usually gets associated with an external accreditation agency for identifying the level of quality of an institution, like the NAAC in India. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), formed under the aegis of UGC has implemented new methodology of evaluation of educational institutions in India. The new dimensions of “Quality Measure” as proposed by the NAAC involve continuous process of assessment of HEIs. The outcome of the Assessment is the final Institutional grading conferred to the institutions. UGC and NAAC have played a vital role in streamlining the Quality HEIs. The process has changed the mind set of all stakeholders towards quality and its sustenance and has involved them to contribute for its achievement. They provide adequate guidelines for formulating quality assurance policies as well as for adopting systems and procedures within teacher education institutions for enhancing the quality of the processes involved in teacher development.*

*Key-words: - Quality Assurance, NAAC.*



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**Introduction**

Quest for quality has been a major concern of human civilization. Quality is not an act, it is a habit. It generally signifies the degree of excellence. It is the totality of features and characteristics of the product, process or services that bear on its ability to satisfy the stated or implied needs. The term ‘quality’ has several meanings. Quality is fitness for use or purpose. In other words, quality is a continuous improvement in performance to satisfy the customers; needs and expectations. Thus, quality is conformity to requirement. In the context of education, quality refers to the features of education which satisfy the needs of students, parents and society at large by developing appropriate knowledge and skills. In short, quality in education refers to the availability of competent teachers, quality and adequacy of infrastructure, quality of students, quality of contents, quality of teaching etc.

Since factors of quality improvement are closely related to the concept of quality in terms of product, process and perceptions of the client/stakeholders, it is a continuous journey and has to be integrated into the system as a pivotal concern. The improvement of quality requires understanding our visions, missions and goals, on the one hand, and various instrumentalities to attain them, on the other.

The ultimate goal of an educational institution, specifically the higher and professional education institution, is to ensure results. It may be borne in mind that there are several stages through which these goals are attained. The first stage is concerned with planning and deciding on policies and programmes.

Education prepares the future generation to take their due place in the society. As an agent it gives direction to developmental process. Its creative force also enables to reshape and remodel society in the desired way. Education contributes to social changes by altering and restricting values and attitudes of the people towards newness. Education prepares an individual with healthy and creative mind. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) aptly specified in its report that the Destiny of India lies in its classroom. The education process cannot achieve the desirable state of mind or objectives without a teacher.

Globally, there is an overwhelming concern over the quality and relevance of education, especially in the developing countries. Quality of school education is the direct consequence and outcome of the quality of teachers and the teacher education system. In this context, importance of quality of teachers in improving the quality of education is beyond question. Therefore, quality improvement of teacher education programmes is one of the indispensable needs. There is a felt need for a drastic change in all aspects of teacher education so as to facilitate teachers for the challenges of the dynamic new world. Thus, the quality of teacher education should be improved to prepare teachers for local, national and global demands.

Developments in teacher education during the post-independence period indicate that the system of teacher education needs renewal and change to meet the emerging challenges and the future needs. Quality teacher education is becoming an important issue in the present context of globalization as well as internationalization. Quality teacher looks for quality performance. Delors Commission (1996) states “the importance of teachers in basic education and improving teachers’ qualifications are the tasks to which all governments must address themselves. The measures are needed to recruit future teachers from among the most

motivated students. Thus, improving the quality and motivation of teachers must be priority in all countries “.

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

In India, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an organization that assesses and accredits institutions of higher education. It is an autonomous body funded by University Grants Commission of Government of India headquartered in Bangalore. The National Board of Accreditation (NBA), India was initially established by AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education) undertakes periodic evaluations of technical institutions and programmes according to specified norms and standards as recommended by AICTE.

The NAAC was established in 1994 as an autonomous body as per the UGC Act with the objectives of assessment of the Higher Education Institutions in the country and accreditation status. In support of the quality sustenance, the NAAC also help the institutions financially to organize various state and national seminars, workshops in the related topics and provide platforms for stakeholders to debate on the topics which are useful for the quality enhancement in the higher education system. The HEIs are assessed and accredited by studying and analyzing them on the various parameters towards the quality measures. The scheme of assessment and accreditation help institutions to carry out their strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis, and in making their programmes more attractive to the students and to their potential employers.

In fulfillment of the provisions laid down in the NCTE Act 12(K) “to evolve sustainable performance appraisal systems, norms and mechanism for enforcing accountability on recognized institutions” and for quality assurance of Teacher Education Institution (TEIs), the NAAC and NCTE have entered into an MoU for executing the process of assessment and accreditation of all TEIs coming under the provisions of the NCTE Act. The efforts of NCTE and NAAC to ensure and assure the quality of TEIs in the country are complimentary to each other.

### **Definitions :**

1. ‘Accreditation’, with its grammatical variations, means the process of quality control in higher education, whereby; as a result of evaluation or assessment or by any other scientific method followed by Accreditation Agencies, a Higher Educational Institution or any programme conducted therein recognized as conforming to parameters of academic

quality and benchmarking of such academic quality determined by the University Grants Commission.

2. 'Assessment means the process involved in ascertaining or verifying the capabilities of a Higher Educational Institution in terms of its physical infrastructure and human resources prior to the commencement of its academic programmes.

3. 'Assessment and Accreditation Agency' means such as Natidriat Assessment and Accreditation Council already recognized by University Grants Commission, National Board of Accreditation and National Accreditation Board, or an Agency established by or under an Act of Parliament to carry out accreditation.

### **Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)**

At the instance of NAAC many HEIs have established the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post accreditation quality sustenance activity. The experience of NAAC reveals that the IQAC in these institutions are proactive and functioning in a healthy way. Based on this success story, from 1st April 2007 onwards NAAC is propagating to have such a mechanism created prior to the accreditation in all the HEIs which would help establishing quality culture in them. The UGC has recognized this initiative and it has taken a policy decision to direct all HEIs to establish IQACs for which it has decided to provide seed financial assistance (XI Plan Guidelines, 2007-2012).

In pursuance of its Action Plan for performance evaluation, assessment & accreditation & quality up-gradation of institutions of higher education, NAAC proposes that every accredited institution should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure. Since quality enhancement is a continuous process, the IQAC will become a part of the institution's system & work towards realization of the goals of quality enhancement & sustenance. The prime task of the IQAC is to develop a system for conscious, consistent & catalytic improvement in the overall performance of institutions. For this, during the post-accreditation period, it will channelize all efforts & measures of the institution towards promoting its holistic academic excellence.

### **Objectives:**

The process of assessment and accreditation has the following objectives:

a) To accord recognition to the quality and excellence of education impacted by Higher Educational Institutions and thereby to advance academic quality;

- b) To enable students and other stakeholders to make informed choices with regard to Higher Educational institutions;
- c) To enable students, teachers and other stakeholders to provide inputs concerning the quality of education imparted by the Higher Educational Institutions:
- d) To facilitate Higher Educational Institutions to augment quality, by benchmarking uniform reference points pertaining to academic standards;
- e) To facilitate Higher Educational Institutions to secure additional funding and other incentives, if found eligible, from appropriate regulatory and or funding agencies;
- f) To facilitate Higher Educational Institutions to acquire international recognition, cross-border and trans-national collaborations;
- g) To facilitate students achieve learning outcomes appropriate to their course and relevant to their context, as shall be declared by Higher Educational Institutions;
- h) To facilitate students entitlements, as prescribed by the Commission or declared by the Higher Educational Institution, as the case may be, to be met by Higher Educational Institutions.
- i) To facilitate teachers achieve and maintain teaching and research standards as shall be declared by Higher Educational Institutions;
- j) To facilitate effective teaching-learning and access to quality-teaching learning material in all the languages permitted by the Higher Educational Institution as medium of instruction or examination; and
- k) To facilitate Higher Educational Institution achieve effective governance mechanisms in their management and administration.

### **Benefits of Accreditation**

- Institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review process.
- Identification of internal areas of planning and resource allocation.
- Collegiality on the campus
- Funding agencies look for objective data for performance funding
- Institutions to initiate innovative and modern methods of pedagogy
- New sense of direction and identity for institutions
- The society look for reliable information on quality education offered
- Intra and inter-institutional interactions

## **Process of Assessment and Accreditation**

The various stages in the process of Assessment and Accreditation are as follows :

**Stage I: Online submission of a Letter** - All TEIs is expected to submit a Letter of Intent online to NAAC. The Institutions receiving confirmation of eligibility may proceed to stage II.

**Stage II: Self Appraisal Process** - The self appraisal process emphasizes on building for the future and the renewal of the institutions through an understanding of the existing institutional strengths and weaknesses.

**Stage III: Validation of the Self Appraisal Report and Peer Review** - The NAAC perform an In-house Analysis of the report for its completeness. For eligible institutions, Peer team visit is organized. The NAAC constitute a panel of peers in consultation with the institutions to be accredited.

**Stage IV: Final Outcome** – The executive committee of NAAC reviews the detailed report and criterion-wise grade point average of an assessed institution submitted by the peer team to NAAC. The decision of the executive committee is final and communicated to the institution.

## **Value Framework**

NAAC has developed five core values:

1. Contributing to National Development
2. Fostering Global Competencies among Students
3. Inculcating a Value System among Students
4. Promoting Use of Technology
5. Quest for Excellence

## **Criteria for Assessment**

NAAC has identified a set of seven criteria to serve as the basis of its assessment procedures. NAAC has categorized the Higher Educational Institutions into three major types (University, Autonomous College, and Affiliated/Constituent College) and assigned different weightages to these criteria under different key aspects based on the functioning and organizational focus of the three types of HEIs.

### **Criterion I - Curricular Aspects**

This criterion deals with how the curriculum –either assigned by a university or marginally supplemented or enriched by an institution or totally remade, depending on the

freedom allowed in curricular design - is compatible with the mission and vision statements of the institution. Along with flexibility and diversity to suit different levels of learners, career orientation, multi-skill development and involvement of stakeholders in curricular updating are also gauged through this criterion. The focus of this criterion is captured in the following criterion statements that spell out the qualitative aspects and good practices expected of an institution.

The key aspects identified under this criterion are:

1. Curricular Design and Development
2. Academic Flexibility
3. Feedback on Curriculum
4. Curriculum Update
5. Best Practices in Curriculum Aspects

### **Criterion II - Teaching – learning and Evaluation**

This criterion deals with the efforts of an institution to serve students of different backgrounds and abilities through effective teaching-learning practices. Interactive instructional techniques that engage students in higher order ‘thinking’ and investigation through the use of interviews, focused group discussions, debates, projects, presentations, experiments, practical sessions, internship and e-resources are important considerations. The criterion has an ample focus on how the institution supports and facilitates the use of ICT and other new and emerging technologies. It also probes into the adequacy and competence as well as the continuous professional development of the faculty who handle the programme of study. The efficiency of the techniques used to continuously evaluate the performance of teachers and students is also a major concern of this criterion.

The key aspects identified under this criterion are:

1. Admission Process and Student Profile
2. Catering to Diverse Needs
3. Teaching –learning Process
4. Teacher Quality
5. Evaluation Process and Reforms
6. Best Practices in Teaching Learning and Evaluation.

### **Criterion III- Research, Consultancy and Extension**

This criterion seeks information on the policies, practices and outcomes of the institution with reference to research, consultancy and extension. It deals with the facilities provided and efforts made by the institution to promote a research culture and their outcome. Serving the community through research and extension, which is a social responsibility and a core value to be demonstrated by institutions, is also a major concern of this criterion.

The key aspects identified under this criterion are :

1. Promotion of Research
2. Research and Publication Output
3. Consultancy
4. Extension Activities
5. Collaborations
6. Best Practices in Research, Consultancy and Extension

### **Criterion IV - Infrastructure and Learning Resources :**

This Criterion seeks to elicit data on the adequacy and optimal use of the facilities available in an institution to maintain the quality of academic and other related activities on the campus. It also requires information on how every constituent of the institution – students, teachers and staff-benefit from them. Expansion of facilities to meet future development and maintenance of the facilities is also included among other concerns.

The key aspects identified under this criterion are:

1. Physical Infrastructure
2. Maintenance of Infrastructure
3. Library as a Learning Resource
4. ICT as Learning Resources
5. Other facilities
6. Best practices in the development of infrastructure and learning resources

### **Criterion V - Student Support and Progression**

The highlights of this criterion are the efforts of an institution to provide necessary support to students facilitating good campus experiences and their holistic development. It also seeks information on student and alumni profiles and their contributions to the institution and vice-versa.



The key aspects identified under this criterion are:

1. Student Progression
2. Student Support
3. Student Activities
4. Best Practices in Student Support and Progression.

#### **Criterion VI- Governance and Leadership**

This criterion helps to gather data on the policies and practices of an institution in the matter of planning man power requirement, recruitment training, performance appraisal and finance management. Participatory management procedures and creative governance of human and material resources are relevant here.

The key aspects identified under this criterion are:

1. Institutional Vision and Leadership
2. Organizational Arrangements
3. Strategy Development and Deployment
4. Human Resource Management
5. Financial Management and Resource Mobilization
6. Best Practices in Governance and Leadership

#### **Criterion VII- Innovative Practices**

This Criterion focuses on the special efforts of an institution that impacted its academic excellence. Any innovative practice is a pathway created to further the interest of the students and the institution. The institutions internal quality assurance systems, inclusive practices and stakeholder relationship reflect on the institutions quality culture.

The key aspects identified under this criterion are :

1. Internal Quality Assurance System
2. Inclusive Practices
3. Stakeholder Relationships

#### **Grading System**

After Assessment, the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of an Institution is arrived at. If the overall CGPA is more than 1.50, the institution will get the “Accredited” status and a CGPA equal to or less than 1.50 will lead to the “Not Accredited” status. The accredited institutions will be graded on a 3-letter grade as follows:

Range of institutional Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)	Letter Grade	Performance Descriptor
3.01 – 4.00	A	Very Good (Accredited)
2.01-3.00	B	Good (Accredited)
1.51-2.00	C	Satisfactory (Accredited)

Institutions which secure a CGPA equal to or less than 1.50, are notionally categorized under the letter grade “D” (=Performance descriptor: Unsatisfactory; Status: Not Accredited). Such institutions will also be intimated and notified by NAAC as “Assessed and Found not qualified for Accreditation”.

### CONCLUSION:

NAAC plays important role in improving the quality of our institutions, phenomenal efforts have been taken in accreditation process which helps the institution to know its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities through an informed review. There is need for the SLQACs to act positively and motivate all the accredited institutions in their respective states to establish the Internal Quality Assurance Cells. Ultimately, it is necessary for every accredited institution to rely more on internal quality assurance mechanisms than external quality assessment and evaluation mechanisms. In order to ensure enhancement in the culture of quality assurance within the institution Higher Education Institutions both those which are accredited would realize the significance of internalizing and institutionalizing the quality assurance mechanisms and respond positively so that quality runs in the very arteries of the Institutions as a Quality Culture.

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