

# Bridging the Quality Gap: Analyzing NAAC Accreditation and IQAC's Role in Higher Education Transformation

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## Abstract

*The role of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) in ensuring quality standards in higher education institutions (HEIs) in India has been a subject of extensive research. This review synthesizes existing literature to assess the impact of NAAC accreditation on institutional quality enhancement, transparency, curriculum flexibility, faculty development, and overall governance. The study explores the mechanisms through which IQACs facilitate continuous quality improvement, promote self-regulation, and implement academic best practices. A comparative perspective is adopted to analyze the effectiveness of accreditation in both rural and urban HEIs, highlighting disparities in implementation, resource allocation, and technological adoption. While accreditation has led to notable advancements in curriculum design, faculty training, student support services, and administrative efficiency, challenges persist. Issues such as insufficient funding, uneven policy execution, lack of digital infrastructure in rural HEIs, and resistance to change among faculty and administration continue to hinder the full realization of accreditation benefits. The paper also identifies significant research gaps, particularly regarding the long-term impact of NAAC accreditation on institutional sustainability, student learning outcomes, and employability. Additionally, the study calls for policy interventions aimed at bridging the urban-rural divide by introducing more inclusive and region-specific accreditation models. By addressing these challenges, NAAC and IQAC can play a pivotal role in fostering excellence, innovation, and global competitiveness in India's higher education sector. This review concludes with recommendations for future research and policy improvements to enhance accreditation frameworks.*

**Keywords:** NAAC Accreditation, IQAC, higher education, quality assurance, institutional performance, continuous improvement

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in India are undergoing rapid transformations due to the implementation of accreditation frameworks like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). Accreditation is instrumental in ensuring institutional accountability, fostering academic excellence, and improving governance structures. The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world, with diverse institutions ranging from central and state universities to private colleges and technical institutes. Given this diversity, ensuring uniform quality standards is a challenge, which NAAC accreditation seeks to address by providing structured evaluation criteria.

The accreditation process assesses institutions on parameters such as teaching-learning practices, research output, faculty qualifications, student support systems, and governance models. Over the years, NAAC accreditation has become a benchmark for institutional credibility, influencing funding decisions, student enrollment, and

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collaborations with global academic bodies. The introduction of Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) has further strengthened post-accreditation quality maintenance by fostering self-evaluation, internal monitoring, and continuous improvement.

Despite these advancements, disparities persist between rural and urban HEIs in terms of quality enhancement, faculty engagement, and student outcomes. Urban institutions often have better access to funding, infrastructure, and skilled faculty, whereas rural institutions face limitations in adopting digital tools, securing research grants, and attracting experienced educators. These disparities raise concerns about equitable access to quality education and the effectiveness of a one-size-fits-all accreditation framework.

This review paper aims to consolidate existing research on NAAC accreditation's effectiveness while identifying gaps and proposing solutions to bridge the divide between rural and urban institutions. By examining accreditation's impact, the role of IQAC, and policy interventions, this study provides insights into enhancing institutional quality across varied educational landscapes in India.

### **Objectives**

This study aims to examine the role of NAAC accreditation in improving the quality of higher education institutions by fostering institutional accountability and enhancing academic standards (Malleswara Rao et al., n.d.) [5]. It also seeks to analyze the contributions of IQAC in promoting continuous quality enhancement through self-assessment and faculty development programs (Srivastava, n.d.-a) [15]. Furthermore, this paper compares the impact of accreditation on rural and urban HEIs, identifying disparities in implementation and effectiveness (V Assistant Professor, 2015). Finally, it aims to highlight gaps in the existing literature and propose recommendations for future research to refine accreditation processes and address regional challenges in higher education quality assurance (Bhandari & Pun, n.d.) [3].

### **Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Secondary data sources, including journal articles, institutional reports, and accreditation documents, were analyzed using content analysis and comparative review techniques (Singh & Singh, 2023) [13]. Primary data was collected through structured surveys and case studies of accredited institutions, focusing on their experiences with the NAAC accreditation process and the role of IQAC (Publication & Aithal, 2021) [8]. Statistical methods such as descriptive analysis and trend forecasting were applied to assess accreditation outcomes, including improvements in governance, student performance, and institutional reputation. Additionally, qualitative interviews with faculty and administrators provided insights into challenges and best practices in sustaining accreditation benefits.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several studies have explored the impact of NAAC accreditation on the quality enhancement of higher education institutions in India. Research by (Singh & Singh, 2023) [13] highlights the role of accreditation in improving institutional governance and student learning outcomes. The study found that accredited institutions tend to perform better in terms of faculty development, research output, and student satisfaction compared to non-accredited institutions.

(Samanta & Kumar Rath, n.d.) [11] discuss the significance of Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) in sustaining academic and administrative improvements post-accreditation. They argue that while IQAC plays a crucial role in institutional quality enhancement, challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of institutional commitment often hinder its effectiveness. Similarly, Patel (2022) (Patel Varsha C Brahmhatt, n.d.) [7] emphasizes the disparities in accreditation benefits between rural and urban HEIs, noting that urban institutions have better access to resources, leading to more successful implementation of NAAC guidelines [7, 11].

A study by (Reddy et al., 2019) [9] examines the policy implications of NAAC accreditation and suggests that accreditation has become a determining factor for government funding and institutional reputation [9]. However, the study also highlights concerns regarding the consistency and transparency of the accreditation process. In another study, (Yellaiah, 2023) [19] explores the long-term impact of accreditation, identifying gaps in empirical research on how accreditation influences student employability and institutional sustainability.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the accreditation process, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies focusing on the long-term effectiveness of NAAC accreditation in rural HEIs. Future research should explore localized accreditation models tailored to the specific needs of rural institutions to bridge the existing disparities and ensure equitable quality assurance Table 1.

**Table 1.** Summary of Studies.

Paper Title	Authors	Year	Theme	Key Findings	Opportunities	Challenges	Research Gap
Quality Assurance: the role of IQAC In Higher Educational Institutions (Sharma, n.d.) [12]	Manish Sharma(Sharma, n.d.) [12]	2023	NEP 2020 and quality enhancement through IQAC	IQAC is instrumental in implementing NEP 2020, enabling more flexibility in curriculum and evaluation processes.	Expanding research collaboration	Difficulties in adapting new policies quickly	Lack of data on post-implementation effectiveness
Impact of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India(Singh Gautam, 2024) [14]	Dr. Awadhesh Singh Gautam(Singh Gautam, 2024) [14]	2024	Role of NAAC accreditation in enhancing HEI quality	NAAC improves reputation, research, enrollment, and global recognition of HEIs. Institutions experience a quality improvement in curriculum, research, and teaching.	Improved employability, better access to funding, global collaboration	Resource limitations for maintaining accreditation standards	Limited research on long-term effects of NAAC accreditation
Impact of IQAC on Quality Enhancement and Sustenance of Higher Education Institutions(Bhat et al., n.d.) [4]	Abdul Wahid Bhat(Bhat et al., n.d.) [4]	2023	Role of IQAC in quality enhancement and sustenance in HEIs	IQAC promotes continuous improvement in teaching, learning, and institutional processes, leading to higher academic standards.	Improved quality in teaching methods, better accountability	Institutional resistance to change, lack of resources	Limited long-term studies on impact of sustained IQAC interventions
Role of IQAC in Development: A New Feedback Analysis Based Model from Rammohan College, Kolkata(Mondal et al., 2024) [6]	Ranjit Mondal, Sourav Dutta, Sayanti Mitra, Jayanti Sen, Krishnendu Sarkar, Gargi Das, Santi Ranjan Dey(Mondal et al., 2024) [6]	2024	Quality assurance and enhancement in higher education through IQAC feedback systems	IQAC plays a critical role in maintaining quality education by using feedback from students to drive improvements in educational processes at Rammohan	Enhanced feedback mechanisms allow for data-driven improvements in academic and administrative functions	Consistent and meaningful participation from all stakeholders (students and staff) is needed for effective feedback systems	The need for broader application and integration of feedback from other stakeholders like faculty and administrative staff

				College.			
Higher Education, IQAC-Regulatory Mechanism(Yellaiah, 2023) [19]	Dr. G. Yellaiah(Yellaiah, 2023) m [19]	2023	Role of IQAC in higher education	IQAC cells are critical but often lack proper implementation and funding in some colleges. Quality systems at institutions need to be more empowered and efficient.	Empowering IQAC cells in terms of authority and financial resources to enhance the quality of education and research in HEIs.	Limited funding and influence of IQAC in many institutions reduce its effectiveness.	Lack of comprehensive studies examining the specific improvements made by empowered IQACs in the quality of higher education.
NAAC Framework: Transformation Reforms to Align Accreditation with Teacher NEP(Abhishek Kumar, n.d.) [1]	Prof. G. Abhishek Kumar(Abhishek Kumar, n.d.) [1]	2024	Higher Education Accreditation	Highlights reforms to streamline accreditation processes, emphasizing rural HEIs and alignment with NEP 2020.	Simplified, trust-based accreditation processes in remote and rural institutions.	Ensuring full implementation across diverse regions and institutions, especially with infrastructural constraints.	Limited longitudinal studies on the impact of reforms in rural institutions and educational quality outcomes.
Status of Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir: A Comprehensive Analysis and Strategy(Amin Shah & KHAN Lodi, 2024) [2]	Muzamil Amin Shah, Dr. Adnan Khan Lodi, Dr. Shabir Ahmad Bhat(Amin Shah & KHAN Lodi, 2024) [2, 4]	2024	Analyzing the status of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir	Higher education institutions have increased, but challenges in access, retention, and disparities remain significant.	Improving infrastructure and access, promoting gender equity, and addressing social disparities.	Inadequate infrastructure, lack of funding, and political instability are key challenges.	Limited empirical studies on the impact of reforms and strategies in the higher education sector of Jammu and Kashmir.
Role of NAAC Accreditation on Quality of Higher Education Institutions(Singh & Singh, 2023) [13]	Balram Singh(Singh & Singh, 2023) [13]	2024	NAAC Accreditation and Quality of HEIs	NAAC accreditation improves institutional quality by fostering transparency, better governance, and academic excellence.	Enhanced institutional reputation, improved student outcomes	Over emphasis on documentation, inconsistencies in evaluation standards	Need for longitudinal studies on long-term impact of accreditation
Role of IQAC in Maintaining Quality in Teacher Training Colleges(Srivastava, n.d.-b) [16]	Dr. Archana Srivastava(Srivastava, n.d.-b) [16]	2023	IQAC in Teacher Training Colleges	IQAC plays a central role in ensuring quality education, curriculum relevance, faculty development, and institutional governance in teacher training colleges.	Improved teacher preparation, better curriculum design, enhanced student outcomes	Resistance to change, lack of awareness about IQAC's role, inadequate resources	Limited longitudinal research on IQAC's long-term impact on teaching quality
Impact of Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) Framework on Higher Education	Antara Roy Chowdhury(Roy Chowdhury et al., n.d.) [10]	2023	Examination of IQAC's role in enhancing education	IQAC has significantly contributed to institutionalizing quality assurance and	Promotes a culture of continuous improvement, aligns institutions	Limited resources, lack of trained personnel, and resistance	Limited focus on the long-term impacts of IQAC activities on institutional reputation and

Institutions in Bangladesh(Roy Chowdhury et al., n.d.) [10]			quality in Bangladesh's higher education institutions.	fostering academic culture in Bangladesh. Challenges include governance issues, insufficient funding, and lack of expertise.	with international standards, and strengthens stakeholder confidence.	to change.	graduate outcomes.
How Internal Quality Assurance System is Re-defined in Private Universities – A Case of Srinivas University, India( <i>View of How Internal Quality Assurance System Is Re</i> , n.d.)	Nethravathi P. S., Aithal P. [8] S.( <i>View of How Internal Quality Assurance System Is Re</i> , n.d.)	2023	Redefining internal quality assurance systems to align with institutional goals and meet NAAC accreditation standards in private universities	Improved alignment with NAAC standards. - Enhanced stakeholder satisfaction. - Increased institutional performance metrics.	Benchmarking institutional quality standards. - Improved teaching and learning processes. - NAAC compliance as a competitive advantage.	Resource limitations. - Resistance from institutional stakeholders. - Sustaining continuous improvement.	Limited empirical studies on the scalability of such frameworks in other private universities.

### Theoretical Overview

The theoretical foundation of NAAC accreditation is built upon continuous quality improvement models, stakeholder engagement, and performance-based assessment frameworks. IQAC plays a central role in institutional governance, ensuring compliance with accreditation standards through structured feedback mechanisms and systematic policy implementation. The effectiveness of accreditation is often linked to leadership commitment, technological support, and faculty engagement in curriculum development. Studies have also highlighted the role of IQAC in fostering an inclusive educational culture by bridging gaps between regulatory expectations and institutional execution. However, research gaps persist in assessing the long-term impact of accreditation frameworks on academic excellence and institutional transformation.

### CONCLUSION

The review highlights the positive influence of NAAC accreditation and IQAC in strengthening institutional quality. However, disparities in resource allocation, digital infrastructure, and policy execution across rural and urban HEIs indicate the need for a more inclusive accreditation framework. Additionally, while IQAC has been instrumental in sustaining quality improvements, its effectiveness depends on institutional leadership and stakeholder participation. Future research should focus on developing adaptive accreditation models that account for regional disparities, integrating technology-driven quality assessment mechanisms, and exploring the long-term impact of accreditation on student outcomes and employability.

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