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## NAAC Accreditation and Global Ranking of Indian Universities – Similarities and Differences

Kirti Sigtia<sup>1</sup> and Shiva Padme<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Accountancy

<sup>2</sup>Prahladrai Dalmia Lions College of Commerce and Economics, Malad, Mumbai, India

### ABSTRACT

A growing concern over the differences in academic assessment standards is approaching the thinkers of Indian education systems. Differences in curriculum pattern and structure, marking systems, assessment criteria etc. are often pointed out as some of the disadvantages for Indian students in the global academic scenario with highly competitive environment. These criteria of curriculum, structure, assessment etc. make some basic conditions for assessing the higher education institutions by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) – the government-authorized agency for the purpose. Despite having high certifications and accreditations, many higher education institutes fail to make it to the global ranking lists of universities published by widely acknowledged source like the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS). In this paper, the researcher has tried to reflect on the assessment methods of these two assessment agencies for higher education institutions and find out some advantages and disadvantages in both.

Keywords: NAAC Accreditation, Global Ranking, QS Ranking, Higher Education Curriculum.

### INTRODUCTION

Many believe that education system is the foundation of a nation's future. Performance of the educational institutions reflects the ongoing socio-political events and their impact on the nation's progress, as far as progress is related to research and development. Absence of funds and resources, compromised educational facilities for general students of all economic strata, lack of transparency in recruitment process etc. indicate toward the declining standards of education in a country. However, globalization has opened up many countries' education system to privately owned markets of the traders of institutional education. The situation has given rise to the need for a common standard across borders in assessing educational institutions as well as the students. However, in this paper, the researcher has focused only on institutional assessment criteria to find the differences and similarities between global ranking systems and national accreditation system. Some attempts to offer seemingly more effective criteria of assessment have been made as well.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Author Dawson (2017) has discussed about the impact of globalization on higher education sector in the light of innovations and extension. According to him, globalization has not only changed the parameters of performance for the institutions, it has also impacted the teaching method in many countries. New tools and equipments are being introduced for more collaborative learning environment.

Author Giroux (2015) has argued against this growing trend of introducing consumerist practices in the teaching-learning environment. He has also defied the need of validation from paid sources of ranking and assessment for global higher education institutes.

Author Fulford (2016) has been very strict to his point of determining the socio-economic background first before ranking universities under global parameters of success. His research and analysis indicate to the futility of same ranking parameters for institutions belonging to different economic systems.

Author Ikazoboh (2016) has pointed out to the importance of a balance in global policies of public education for an acceptable ranking pattern. Here again, the socio-economic context and the political mechanisms play differentiator for a common ranking system.

According to Gardner (2012), ranking of any agency, whether it is national or international, does not testify the learning environment of the institutions. Hence, the criteria of students' support and assistance in university ranking, is problematic.

### NAAC Accreditation Criteria

There are seven key considerations in NAAC's assessment guideline for higher education institutions as discussed below.

**Curricular Aspects:** NAAC puts emphasis on curriculum structure and revisions as a key condition for useful and progressive teaching-learning process. Starting from design and development, this criterion considers curriculum planning and implementation, flexibility of the plans, gradual advancements and feedback on the same. The numerical credits of the assessment vary, depending on the nature of ownership and control of each institution (Gish et. al., 2016). For instance, the performance in curriculum management for the affiliated institutions is weighed under a score of 100 and the same for the autonomous ones in 150.

**Teaching-learning & Evaluation:** This is a vast and complicated criterion of evaluation. While the curriculum pattern answers the ‘what’ in the learning environment, the teaching and evaluation process answers the ‘how’ of it. An appropriate curriculum may not deliver the desired outcome of a nation’s objectives behind its established education system (Gish et. al., 2016). Experts in these domains participate in the evaluation process of teaching-learning environment and evaluation system for students in a higher education institution. Credits for affiliated colleges in this criterion is set at 350 while for Autonomous institutions and Universities, it is 300 and 200 respectively.

**Research, Innovations & Extension:** Unlike the two criteria mentioned, which belongs to technical aspects of education system, in this criterion, the agency has considered the social perspectives of the outcome in a learning environment. Research refers to the input in the curriculum system by finding new avenue of education and learning. Innovation refers to the usefulness of the research on practical fields of operations with relevant contexts. Extension is the co-curricular presence of the institution in the forms of social development through representation or direct engagement. Research facilities, resource mobilization, publications and awards for social causes are some of the identifiers in this regard.

**Infrastructure & Learning Resources:** Good learning environment, according to the NAAC, includes physical facilities of institutions for a secure and convenient learning practice. Library system, hostels, playgrounds, modern technological solutions, emergency management systems, grievance management, building and interior infrastructure etc. are some key indicators of this assessment criterion (Fulford, 2016).

**Student Support and Progression:** This criterion reflects on support and assistance offered to each student for their complete development. Mentoring, assistance leading to more active participation of students in all curricular and co-curricular activities are considered in this regard (Fulford, 2016). This criterion also shows the degree of active engagement of the faculty members in the growth of each student according to their unique capacities.

**Governance, Leadership and Management:** In this criterion, the agency checks the institution’s leadership practices with developmental strategies and visions, employee welfare rules, management of finance and other resources, and internal cultural environment. All institutions including affiliated colleges, autonomous institutions and universities are evaluated under the same score of 100 in this criterion.

**Institutional Values & Best Practices:** In this category, some advanced practices like green campus, energy conservation, innovation and safety of socially weaker sections of students are considered.

The following table represents the credit marking system for the assessment:

Criteria	National Universities	Autonomous universities	Affiliated UG Colleges
Curricular Aspects	150	150	100
Teaching-learning & Evaluation	200	300	350
Research, Innovations & Extension	250	150	110
Infrastructure & Learning Resources	100	100	100
Student Support & Progression	100	100	140
Governance, Leadership and Management	100	100	100
Institutional Values & Best Practices	100	100	100

### CRITICISM

NAAC’s assessment criteria have often been subject to criticism from various sections of scholars and educationists. The key problem is absence of clear measurement guidelines or scores to define the requirements more precisely. For instance, there is no clear parameters to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching-learning outcome of an institution. Impact on society is also a subjective concept (Elshawa et. al., 2016). However, other conditions of administration, socio-economic conditions and management structure also determine the efficacy of the assessment criteria as presented in the following table.

Causes	Influences	Environmental factors
Organizational Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hierarchical Structures</li> <li>Different student backgrounds</li> <li>Resource scarcity</li> <li>Inadequate planning</li> <li>Unreal societal and administrative expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unhealthy social conditioning</li> <li>Misleading parameters of success</li> <li>Administrative unwillingness</li> <li>Unfair recruitment process</li> <li>Lack of organizational interest</li> </ul>
Performance Evaluation Issues of Faculties and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of necessary resources</li> <li>Lack of training and service quality assurance</li> <li>Power-politics in education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical outcomes do not ensure practical roles</li> <li>Parameters are subjective for different kinds of institutions and students (Elshawa et. al., 2016).</li> </ul>
Student Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-way interaction</li> <li>Master-follower environment instead of teaching-learning</li> <li>Power-play in grievance management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undecided parameters of students' assistance</li> <li>Inability to mark progress in quantitative measures</li> <li>Socio-economic discriminations</li> </ul>

As of the recent data, NAAC credited 206 universities and 1650 colleges in both private and affiliated markets, with grade A. (Appendix A).

### Global Ranking

Most popular global university ranking agency is the QS University Ranking. The agency issues list of universities based on their various measures of performance under different domains and in different continents. Here, the researcher has taken the Asian University Ranking by QS for reference and analysis.

### Parameters of QS Ranking

QS global ranking parameters follow six key criteria as described below:

**Academic Reputation from Global Survey:** It is one of the heaviest parts in the methodology of QS global ranking. It depends on survey from reputed academicians across the nations. Mailing, application surveys, suggestions etc. are the common methods of conducting the research. Each participant can suggest names of 30 universities but cannot suggest the one he or she is affiliated with. It contributes 40% of the total weight in the evaluation system (Hall, 2016).

**Faculty-Student Ratio:** QS considers the student-faculty ratio of an institution to gauge its performance. It is a traditional measure with subjective utility. This criterion contributes 20% of the whole assessment.

**Citation per Faculty from Scopus:** The number of faculties' original work cited in globally reputed journals of both physical and digital publication contributes another 20% of the global ranking index by QS. The criterion is slightly compromised for subjects that tend to grow faster than usual. 'Publish or Perish' is the cultural concept taken up by the agency for such issues (Hall, 2016).

**Employer Reputation from Global Survey:** Employers' review of employee conditions contributes 10% of the credit system. Again, surveys are used for data collection regarding employment conditions and criteria.

**Proportion of International Students and Faculties:** International orientation refers to the presence of foreign students and faculty staff whether permanent or visiting, in an institution. This condition makes total ten percent of the assessment criteria. This condition is supposedly added for encouraging diversity.

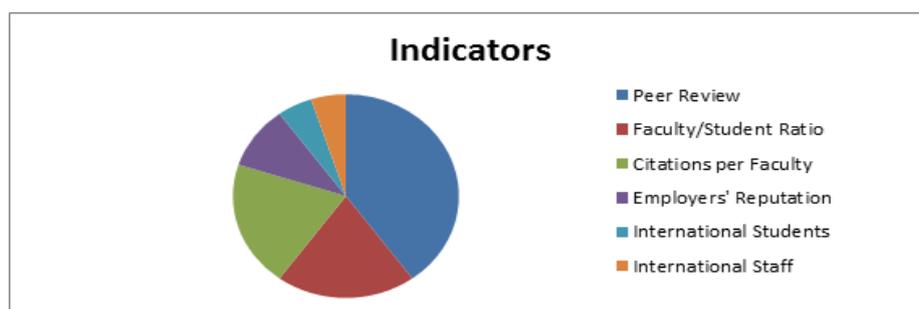


Fig. 1. A Pie Chart on the Criteria and Ratio of indicators adopted by QS Ranking

## CRITICISM

The QS Asian University Ranking Criteria also face myriad criticisms from different sections of academicians and researchers on the field. The agency itself has also expressed concerns over their evaluation criteria in some cases, but nevertheless, they could not find any suggestion for its betterment till now. The following are key concerns about the criteria.

- The criteria of credit are mostly quantitative. No consideration of social contribution and performance based on the existing socio-economic condition is there in the list. Numeric data may not suffice in depicting the true picture of success as an academic institution (Dawson, 2017).
- The whole decision depends on survey results. Surveys always come with the natural limitation of sample size and kind.
- Peer review by selected academicians often goes biased and manipulated under various conditions.
- Ratio of international students and faculties does not necessarily indicate the quality of education, especially in this age of open market for education as a commodity (Dawson, 2017).
- Employers' reputation is again, a subjective consideration based on the labour markets of different nations and the governmental policies for labour law and economic regulations.
- Faculty's citation does not ensure a rich teaching-learning environment as far as transferring their knowledge successfully to the students is concerned.

In the recent QS ranking of World Universities, India has received only 3 positions among the first 200 names. These three Universities are IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi and Indian Institute of Science. These institutions managed the 177<sup>th</sup>, 185<sup>th</sup> and 186<sup>th</sup> ranks respectively. Unfortunately, despite having hundreds of higher education institutions credited with 'A' by NAAC, only 35 institutions could make it to the global ranking list of 1300 universities. (Appendix B)

### Similarities between the Two Accreditation Method of NAAC and QS

The conditions and criteria reveal that there are the following similarities between the two ranking process.

**Management:** Both the ranking systems emphasise on management through their process of evaluating employees' feedback and assessing employers' performance.

**Innovation and Extension:** Both the agencies assess the progress in the institution's contribution to the society through research and development (Brown, & Carasso, 2013). While NAAC's criteria are more abstract, QS's criterion for this is very specific with citation per faculty as a measure.

### Differences between NAAC and QS ranking

The ranking and accreditation systems are significantly different from many aspects as discussed below.

**Quantity vs. Quality:** NAAC ranking depends more on qualitative analysis no matter how biased it can be in some cases. QS ranking is more quantitative with specific statistical reference collected from surveys (Collini, 2012). This process can also be inadequate based on the different socio-economic contexts in which the institutions operate and the number and kind of samples collected.

**Student Assistance:** QS does not consider a student's overall growth as a criterion for institutional success. It takes the provisions of physical infrastructure and environment helpful for students' growth as a default condition (Watts & Blessinger, 2017). Hence, only the international students' and faculties' ratio matter in this process.

**Resource Allocation and Utilization:** Resource plays a vital role in the performance of education sector. While NAAC has some criteria for the measurement, QS does not consider it.

## CONCLUSION

The study indicates to a common factor of disadvantage in both the ranking and accreditation system. This factor is subjectivity. The QS global ranking does not consider the socio-economic background, which questions the credibility of their assessment. The NAAC does not follow a clear statistical method in their data collection process, which again, can be highly manipulated and misguided. However, unless a basic common system of economic stability is established across the borders, thoughts of establishing common assessment criteria and evaluation methods equal to day-dreams. In the present case, a common global criterion can only be applicable for private education business.

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### Appendix A

Sr. No.	Name of College/ Institution	State	NAAC Score	NAAC Grade
1	Government Mohindra College, Patiala	Punjab	3.86	A++
2	Jyoti Nivas College, Bangalore	Karnataka	3.76	A++
3	Cotton College, Guwahati	Assam	3.76	A++
4	M. S. P. Mandal's Deogiri College, Aurangabad	Maharashtra	3.75	A+
5	S.S. Jain Suboth PG College, Jaipur	Rajasthan	3.72	A+
6	Loyola College of Social Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram	Kerala	3.72	A+
7	Stella Maris College (Autonomous), Chennai	Tamil Nadu	3.68	A+
8	Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada	Andhra Pradesh	3.65	A+
9	St. Agnes College, Mangalore	Karnataka	3.65	A+
10	Miranda House (DU North Campus), Delhi	Delhi	3.61	A+
11	Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi	Delhi	3.61	A+
12	Midnapore College, Midnapore	West Bengal	3.58	A+
13	Patna Women's College, Patna	Bihar	3.58	A+
14	Post Graduate Government College for Girls, Sector 11, Chandigarh	Chandigarh	3.52	A+
15	St. Joseph's Degree & PG College (Autonomous), Hyderabad	Telangana	3.49	A
16	Sanatan Dharma College (Lahore), Ambala Cantt.	Haryana	3.48	A
17	Parvatibai Chowgule College of Arts and Science, Gogol-Margo	Goa	3.41	A
18	St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad	Gujarat	3.41	A
19	Janta Vedic College, Baraut	Uttar Pradesh	3.39	A
20	Government College for Women, Jammu	Jammu & Kashmir	3.32	A
21	Government College for Women, Srinagar	Jammu & Kashmir	3.31	A
22	Gangadhar Meher College (Autonomous), Sambalpur	Odisha	3.26	A
23	Jamshedpur Women's College, Jamshedpur	Jharkhand	3.26	A
24	Kanchi Mamunivar Centre for Post Graduate Studies Puducherry,	Pondicherry	3.19	A
25	Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat	Arunachal Pradesh	3.13	A
26	Lady Keane College	Meghalaya	3.09	A
27	Patkai Christian College, Patkai, Dinapur	Nagaland	3.06	A
28	Government College, Dharmashala	Himachal Pradesh	3.06	A
29	Shri Guru Ram Rai (PG) College, Dehradun	Uttarakhand	3.04	A
30	Government Bilasa Girls P.G. College (Autonomous), Bilaspur	Chhattisgarh	3.04	A

### Appendix B

**Top varsities** | JNU, featuring for the first time in the QS World Universities Ranking list, is among the top-600 in the world = indicates shared ranking

2022 global rank	Name
177=	Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
185	Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
186=	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
255=	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
277=	Indian Insititute of Technology, Kanpur
280	Indian Insititute of Technology, Kharagpur
395=	Indian Insititute of Technology, Guwahati
400=	Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
501-510 (ranking band)	University of Delhi
561-570 (ranking band)	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi