Retrospect and Prospects of Quality Enhancement of Higher Education Institutions with reference to NAAC Parameters

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Abstract

The quality measure, its sustenance and enhancement of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the form of Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) based on pre-determined parameters is one of the crucial elements of research in this article. This research paper is based on empirical data study of the NAAC accredited Central Universities in India in the Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF). The RAF has been designed and developed looking ahead of the National Education Policy 2020 (NPE, 2020) of the Government of India (GoI), Ministry of Education (MoE). NAAC as an External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) with its prime agenda in assessing and accrediting institutions of higher learning in India, has so far assessed about 13000 HEIs and in the last 26 years of its existence. The Performance analysis of NAAC accredited Central Universities in India in the RAF has been studied based on the seven criteria scores and the overall Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the HEIs. The study has been carried out state-wise and region-wise across the country with reference to Central Universities. The general observations and findings based on the region-wise average CGPA and the Peer Team Reports (PTRs) given by experts review as an assessment reports have also been qualitatively analysed along with the quantitative CGPA for understanding of the quality gaps in the regions across the country with special reference to seven criteria against the Central Universities in India.

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Source: **NAAC Statistical Unit**

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Introduction

Higher Education is critical for the development of any nation. The ultimate aim of Higher Education is Human Resource Development which is the crux of National Development. Higher Education promotes the development of a modern economy, right governance and leadership and a vibrant polity with right values. It equips young people with skills relevant for the labour market and the opportunity for changing career requirements. It prepares all to be responsible citizens who value a democratic and pluralistic society. Thus, the nation creates an intellectual repository of human capital to meet the country's future needs and shapes its future. Higher Education is the principal site at which our national goals, developmental priorities and civic values and be reviewed and reformed if necessary.

Higher Education in India is at the cross roads. The quantitative growth of Higher Education Institutions after Independence is enormous. But the quality of graduates coming out of these portals is questionable. India is likely to see some surplus of graduates in the coming years starting from 2020. Thus India could capture a higher share of global knowledge based work, by increasing its exports of knowledge-intensive goods and services if there is focus on higher education and its quality is globally benchmarked. The country cannot afford to lose time. Today, less than one fifth of the 120 million potential students are enrolled in Higher Education Institutions in India, well below the world average of 26%. Wide disparities exist in enrollment percentages among the States and between urban and rural areas while disadvantaged sections of the society and women have significantly lower enrolments than the national average although the women's enrollment has significantly improved in some areas. The pressure to increase access to affordable education is steadily increasing with the number of eligible students set to double by 2020-21.

India is realizing the need to expand higher education in order to compete with the international trend and to gain economic competitiveness and high productivity. Globalization has also contributed to the increasing demand for skilled and professional work force and improving the quality of higher education, research and training. The capacity to innovate is directly related to the quality of education, training and research and the method of teaching and learning. There is a gradual shift in the knowledge creation which caters to the production of goods and services for the consumers and creates more job opportunities. The employability of the graduates has become the major focus as stipulated by John Dewey. The role of the Universities is expanding from knowledge for the sake of knowledge to the development of knowledge and skills directly linked to market economy.

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established on 16th September 1994 with its single attention of assessing and accrediting Universities and Colleges in India. NAAC is headquartered at Bangalore, Karnataka, India. This is one of the national level External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) in India. It has been founded as an autonomous body of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act 1956 under section 12(CCC). The UGC comes under the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India (GoI) deriving NAAC as a government agency. It is an independent body working similar to the organizational structure of a Central University. NAAC is one of the early members of the International Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). NAAC also adopts the professional practices that INQAAHE believes should be embedded in all quality agencies which are set out in the Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance (commonly referred to as GGP). Thus the purpose of the GGP is to promote good practice for internal and/or external quality assurance. Specific goals include:

- Creating a framework to guide the creation of new EQAAs

- Providing criteria for use in the self and external evaluation of EQAAs
- Promoting professional development among EQAAs and their staff
- Promoting public accountability of EQAAs

NAAC as an EQA

NAAC is one of the EQAA instrumental in establishing Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) with its mission **"**To enhance the quality of higher education in Asia and the Pacific region through strengthening the work of quality assurance organizations and extending the cooperation between them."

Except couple of countries including United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) wherein EQAA may be more than 12 decades, NAAC is one of the EQAA which is nearing 3 decades with its rich expertise gained, share lot of its experiences within the region in particular and across the globe in general. Though NAAC has enriching experiences gathered from the USA, UK, Australia, Germany, other European Countries and some South American countries, its grown leap and bounds in the area of External Quality Assurance (EQA). NAAC has got its niche by itself by closely taking into consideration the ever changing global scenario and the Indian Higher Education shifts with reference to growth, teaching-learning and research into its parameters of measurement **b**y changing its methodology of Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) which is one of the important measures of EQA in the country.

The recent revision of NAAC's methodology of A&A launched during April 2017 with effect from 1st July 2017 in new form as Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF) which is robust, transparent, scalable and database has been well received across the country. Though, the processes of NAAC involves input-process-output and outcome based integrated model of A&A, the entire Self-Study Report (SSR) prepared by the HEI based on the respective Manual is divided into Quantitative Metrics (Q_nMs) and Qualitative Metrics (Q_lMs). About 70% quantitative data of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) is assessed by system generated score as per pre-set benchmarks (BMs) and the remaining 30% qualitative inputs from the HEI are based on onsite peer review. This is a paradigm shift in the processes of A&A and perhaps unique among EQAAs across the globe.

RAF of NAAC is one among many reforms of the Government of India with reference to Higher Education in India and its EQAA. With the current updates of the RAF, is intune with the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP, 2020) of the Government of India. The NEP 2020 has paved way for many new reforms based on the experiences and roadmap ahead driven by National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE, 1986) along with Programme of Action 1992 (PoA, 1992). Almost after 34 years with multi-pronged thrust to education to take India march ahead and forward. In particular the policy the Universities and Colleges in India to be taken up to global level of quality and services. Ever since the evolution of higher education system and its gigantic manifestation especially after globalized era, over the last few decades has been characterized by a particular attention i.e., 'Efficiency', which is defined as the ability to produce the maximum amount of educational service within a given budgetary allocation.

The prominent changes that are conspicuous at present is that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are under pressure proving their usefulness, objectives and methods adopted for achieving these objectives. Here, allocation of their resources and priorities are also considered to fulfill their social responsibilities, which is more relevant during this 'Era of

Crisis'. Everyone, from prospective students to the general public, now wants data and proof in favor of the effectiveness and inevitability of the HEIs. Due to this, HEIs are now more involved in the race of securing funds and win over potential customers.

Historically, Quality Assurance organizations have had two functions: Quality Assessment and Accreditation and Quality Improvement of the Institutions and programmes. One more function can be added, i.e. the accountability of the outcome of all the inputs with reference to teaching and learning, research and innovations, community engagements and student progression in education and career. The quality assessment function has to be done both internally and by external assessment agencies. The enhancement function has been executed primarily by the leadership and the team as well as by the participation of all stakeholders. As a general tendency, more and more attention will be focused on access and equity and the student experiences. Quality Assurance agencies will be expected to engage with these developments in the future. The data collected so far within a span of two and half decades has been analyzed according to the regions, states and also the types of Institutions like, Central Universities, State Universities, Deemed Universities, Private Universities, Autonomous Colleges and Affiliated colleges.

The differences among the different types of institutions also give enough insights into what Quality Enhancement Measures need to undertake for improvement of the Quality and Excellence of the Higher Education in the various sectors. Therefore, NAAC has taken up this exercise to identify the quality profiles of the institutions using a validated scale consisting of 7 Criteria, viz., Curricular Aspects, Teaching-learning and Evaluation, Research, Innovations and Extension, Infrastructure and Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression, Governance, Leadership and Management, and Institutional Values and Best Practices; and the Key indicators. This will have many Assessment indicators which are benchmarked for accurate measurement of quality for each institution. The sum total of the Quality score in terms of Cumulative Grade Point Average and Criterion Grade point averages are calculated. The overall score as well as the Criterion-wise score with the key aspects and assessment indicators will indicate the micro and macro deficit in the system. This will create a paradigm change in the way we can achieve the Higher Education goals in a most meaningful way.

The objectives (namely expansion, equity, and excellence) must guide the development of all three segments of higher education: Central Institutions, which account for 2.6 percent of the total; State Institutions which account for 38.5% of enrolment and private institutions that cater to the remaining students. All three segments have to be expanded to achieve enrolment target by creating additional capacity and ensuring equal access opportunities, while being supported to improve the quality of teaching-learning, attain excellence in research and contribute to economic development.

Objectives of the Performance Analysis of NAAC Accredited HEIs

Apart from Assessment and Accreditation of institutions, which is its primary role, NAAC as the Quality Assurance Agency of the UGC, is also expected to suggest post accreditation strategies for the sustenance and enhancement in the accredited institutions. For institutions that have not achieved a good quality score, NAAC can provide appropriate guidance for upgradation of the quality during the subsequent cycles of Assessment and Accreditation. Thus Internal Quality Assurance Cell(IQAC) of each institution can get the necessary guidance and direction to pursue the quality journey to improve upon their earlier accreditation performance. From this point of view, this meta-evaluation study based on the

NAAC seven criteria and overall Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of HEIs State-wise, Region-wise, category of HEI-wise have been carried out.

Scope of the Study

According to the Results published by AISHE 2017-18, there are 903 Universities, 39,050 Colleges, and 11,443 Stand alone institutions on the AISHE web portal. 285 Universities are Affiliating Universities.

- 334 Universities are privately managed
- 357 Universities are located in rural area
- 15 Universities are exclusively for women, 4 in Rajasthan 2 in Tamil Nadu, & 1 each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttrakhand and West Bengal.
- In addition to Central Open University, 14 State Open Universities and 1 State Private Open University, there are 110 Dual mode Universities, which offer education through distance mode also notably Tamil Nadu is the only state with the maximum of 16.

Types of HEIs State-wise

There are 500 General, 126 Technical, 70 Agriculture & Allied, 58 Medical, 22 Law, 13 Sanskrit and 10 Language Universities and rest 83 Universities belong to the other categories.

Table 1: Distribution of HEIs accredited by NAAC

Central Universities	50
State Universities	409
Private universities	334
Deemed Universities	125
Institutions of National Importance	141
Affiliated Colleges	39,071
Autonomous Colleges	708

The number of HEIs volunteered for A&A are from the above 6 categories. All of them are not accredited. The number of valid accredited Institutions accredited, as on March 2020 out of the total number are presented below:

Table 2:

Types of Universities	Total Number of Universities	Number of Accreditation	Percentage of Accreditation
Central Universities	50	35	70
State Universities	409	131	32.03
Private universities	334	48	14.37
Deemed Universities	125	88	70.40
Institutions of National Importance	141	06	4.25
Autonomous Colleges(Under RAF*)	708	131	18.50
Affiliated Colleges (Under	39,071	1,300	3.32

RAF*)			
Total	**40,697**	**1,739**	**4.37**

**Revised Accreditation Framework*

The percentage of accredited institutions is more in the categories of Central Universities and Deemed Universities. State Universities accredited so far constitute only one third of the total number of State Universities in the country

Central Universities

Central Universities in India are established by an Act of Parliament. They are under the purview of the Department of Higher Education of the MoE. NAAC has accredited 35 Universities out of the 50 universities. This constitutes 70 % of the institutions. The data were analyzed region-wise and state-wise to identify the quality profile of the Central Universities across the country. The overall Quality Grade points for the institutions and criterion-wise grade points were also compared in this analysis. It is observed that when the institutions are reaccredited, they have improved their quality score significantly. There are regional variations and also state-wise variations for the overall score as well as for each of the Quality criteria. CGPA is arrived based on the seven criterion-wise GPA of NAAC, viz., C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, and C7.

North-eastern Region

The average CGPA for North-East is 2.89. Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram have a score of 3.01 and above. All the rest of the States have CGPA below 3. Criterion-wise, Infrastructure and Learning resources have the highest score which are the visible quality goals for an Institution. All the other criteria for this region scored less than 3.

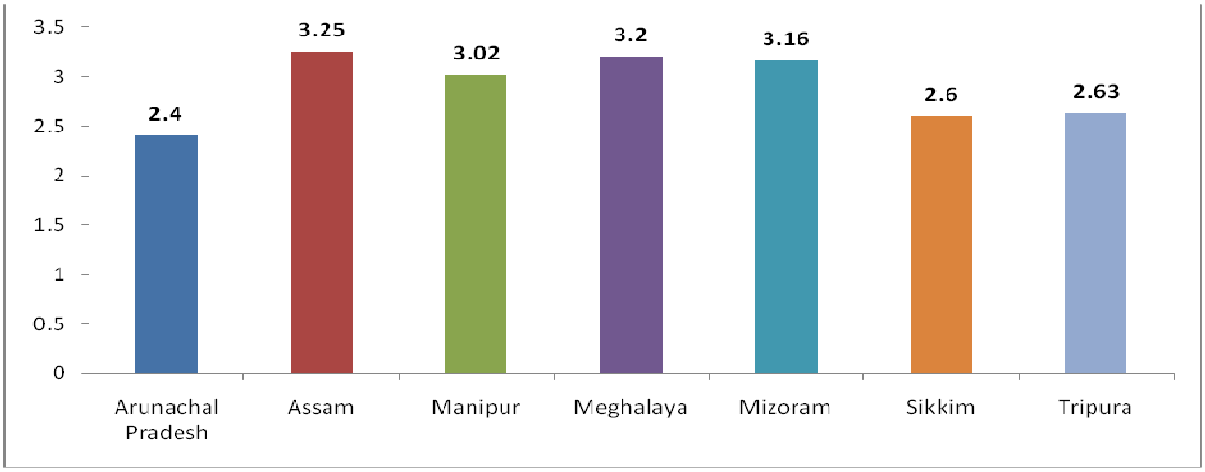

Fig 1: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities Accredited in North East Region

Going through the details of the Analysis, the North East had covered 7 States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura. Among the States Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram have a score of 3.16 and above. All the rest have CGPA below 3. Criterion-wise, Infrastructure has the highest score. All the other criteria in the region scored less than 3. There is a popular perception that if the resources are spent on infrastructure, it is more visible and tangent for the government as well as the stakeholders. Other quality criteria are more qualitative in nature and not quite visible to authorities and the public.

Within the region, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram have a score of 3.01 and above. Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Tripura had less than three grade point average. Criterion-wise, Infrastructure and Learning Resources scored high among the 7 criteria. The rest of the criteria scored less than 3 which is an average quality status. With adequate funding, from UGC, it was possible for this region to develop the infrastructure facilities, but as far as the learning outcome and the processes are concerned, the focuses on human resource development pose great challenges for this region. The grades obtained in the various cycles of assessment are not significantly different, which indicates the lack of effort on the part of the institutions to improve the quality of education imparted through the quality improvement processes.

Besides the employability, institutions need to focus on globalization demands. Considering the economic, social and technological development goals, institutions hardly follow the forward looking strategies.

Northern Region

Northern region comparatively performed better with an average cumulative point of 3.04. Curricular Aspects, Teaching Learning and Evaluation and Infrastructure and Student support and Progression scored above 3 CGPA. Research and Goverance has scored low. Among the States, Delhi scored the highest. HEIs in Delhi had performed good in all the criteria. This was followed by UttarPradesh, Uttarkhand and Haryana. Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab need to focus on all aspects of quality criteria.

Table 3: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities in the Northern Region

State	CGPA	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
DELHI	3.38	3.33	3.4	3.44	3.69	3.16	3.01	3.19
HARYANA	3.1	3.2	3.15	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.3
HIMACHAL PRADESH	2.78	3.33	2.95	2.72	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.3
JAMMU & KASHMIR	2.84	3.13	3.13	2.6	2.45	2.9	3.05	2.55
PUNJAB	2.87	2.87	3.2	3.0	3.4	3.4	2.9	2.7
RAJASTHAN	3.01	3.13	3.3	2.92	3.0	3.4	2.7	2.4
UTTARAKHAND	3.11	3.33	3.1	2.92	3.5	3.0	3.1	3.0
UTTAR PRADESH	3.26	3.13	3.27	3.11	3.3	3.13	2.83	3.47
AVERAGE	**3.04**	**3.18**	**3.19**	**2.96**	**3.11**	**3.07**	**2.92**	**2.86**

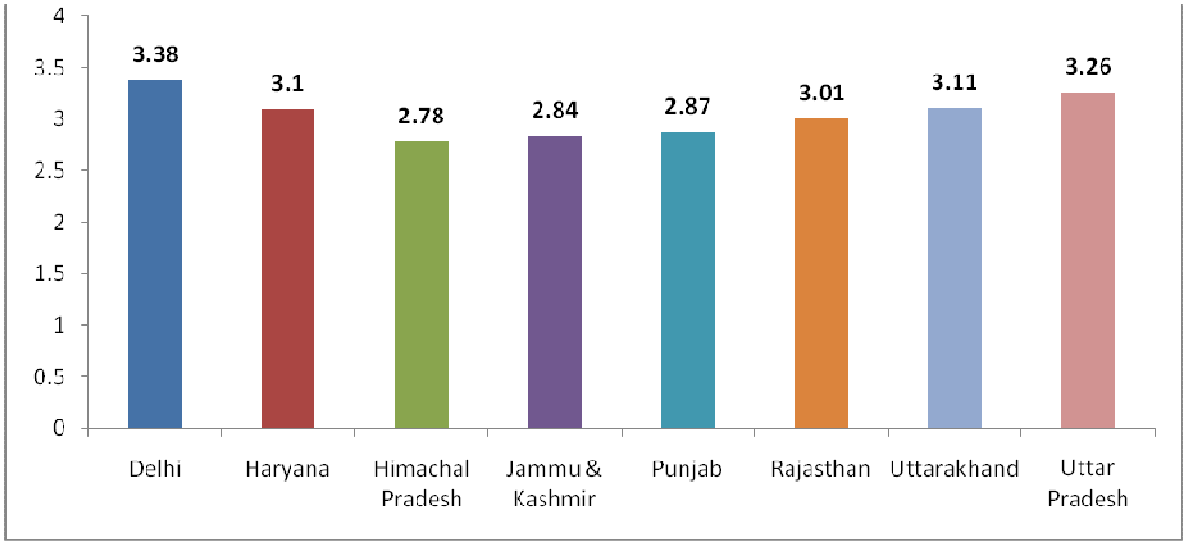

Fig 2: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities Accredited in Northern Region

Eastern Region

For the total Eastern Region, the CGPA was only 2.69. Bihar had the highest score while Jharkhand and Odisha had scored the lowest. The criterion curricular aspects scored high, while all the rest of the criteria scored much lower scores which means the significant gap need to be rectified for all other criteria to achieve a desirable level of quality.

Criterion 1 scored 3.33, Teaching, learning, Evaluation and the Innovative practices scored lower scores.

Table 4: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities-Eastern Region

State	CGPA	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
BIHAR	3.01	3.33	3	2.84	3.2	3	2.8	3
JHARKHAND	2.34	3.08	2.63	1.55	3.02	2	1.97	2.77
ODISHA	2.59	3.13	2.5	2.24	2.7	3	2.6	2.3
WEST BENGAL	2.82	2.87	2.75	2.92	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.3
AVERAGE	**2.69**	**3.1**	**2.72**	**2.39**	**2.83**	**2.65**	**2.54**	**2.84**

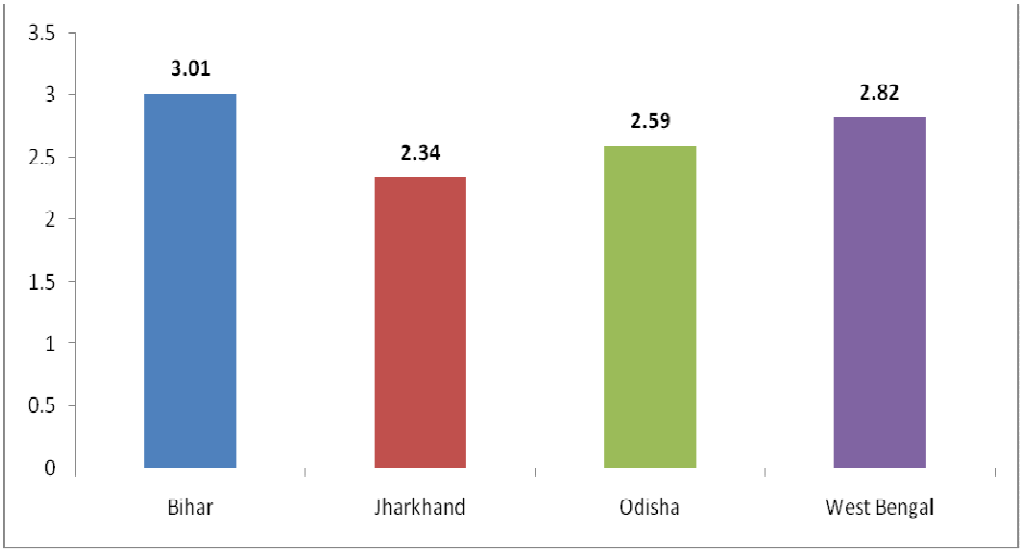

Fig 3: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities Accredited in Eastern Region

Western Region

Western region had an average of 2.92. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh got the top score. On an overage, curricular aspects and infrastructure facilities got a score above 3 and the rest are scoring less than 3. Here again, Teaching, Learning and Evaluation, Student support and Progression, Governance and Leadership has to be improved. Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra scored high in curricular aspects. In case of Infrastructure facilities all the states scored well, including the 7th criteria- Institutional Values and Best Practices.

Table 5: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities-Western Region

State	CGPA	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
GUJARAT	2.76	3.27	3.1	2.28	3.2	2.6	2.3	2.7
MADHYA PRADESH	3.04	3.2	3.0	3.16	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.0
MAHARASHTRA	3.06	3.07	2.85	3.44	3.3	3.0	2.4	3.0
AVERAGE	**2.92**	**3.10**	**2.93**	**2.91**	**3.20**	**2.75**	**2.50**	**2.93**

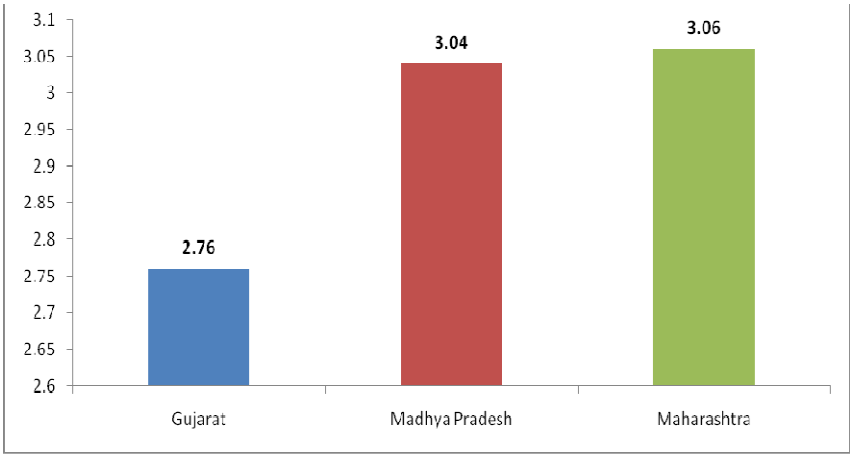

Fig 4: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities Accredited in Southern Region

Maharashtra had the highest score followed by Madhya Pradesh. Gujarat scored lower score. This is mainly due to the deficit in Research, Student Support and Progression and Governance and Leadership.

Southern Region

Southern region had a fairly good quality score. Telangana scored the highest with almost all scores of the seven criteria in the A grade category. This was followed by Puducherry.

Table 6: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities in Southern Region

State	CGPA	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
KARNATAKA	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.56	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.6
KERALA	2.76	2.73	3.3	2.4	3.0	3.2	2.3	2.4
PUDUCHERRY	3.1	3.47	3.53	2.35	3.8	3.15	2.53	3.31
TAMIL NADU	2.78	2.8	3.3	2.6	2.5	3.0	2.9	2.7
TELANGANA	3.36	3.6	3.4	3.44	3.37	3.07	3.0	3.33
AVERAGE	**3.07**	**3.23**	**3.33**	**2.89**	**3.20**	**3.05**	**2.82**	**3.00**

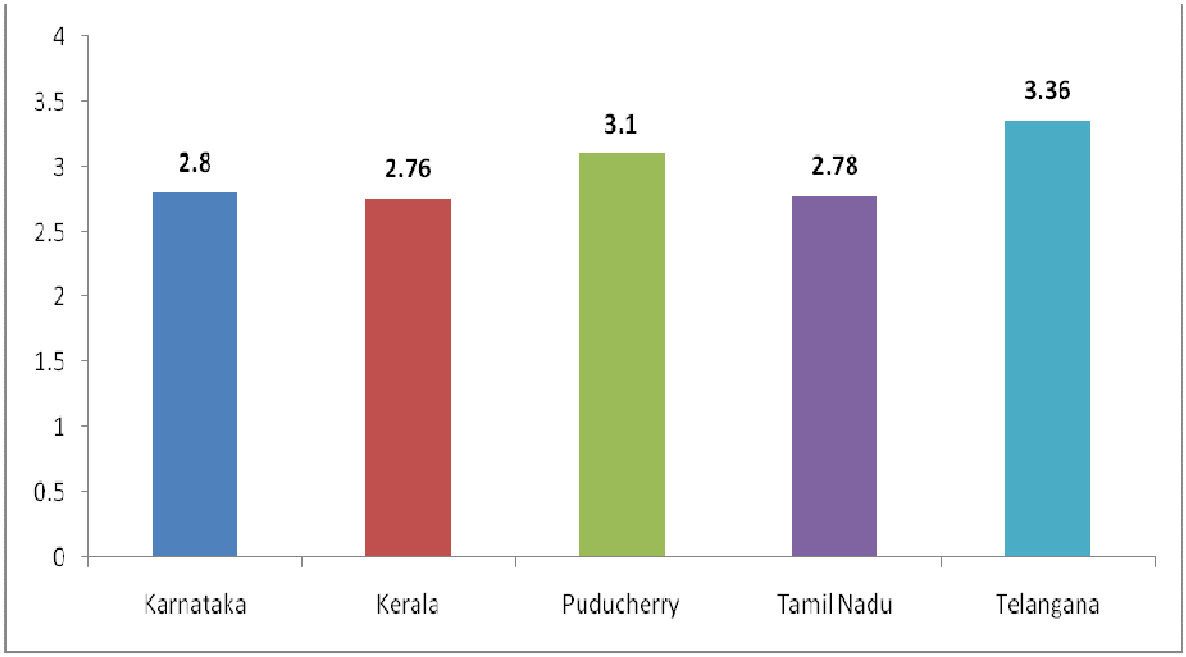

Fig 5: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities Accredited in Southern Region

Analysing the peer team reports, some observations were made according to the qualitative aspects

- Vision, Mission and goals are not spelled out clearly by many institutions
- More traditional areas are covered in the curriculum
- Social relevance and courses which help National Development through Economic and Social development need to be addressed.
- Employability of graduates needs consideration while framing the syllabus
- Choice-based credit system and semester system need to be introduced to make the system more rigorous.
- Some emerging areas suggested by UGC are incorporated, while many more could be introduced.
- Systematic approach to curriculum design and development are not followed.
- ICT enabled teaching, experiential learning yet to be initiated
- Research focus is not addressed
- Student support and progression are areas of concern.
- Innovative practices need to be initiated

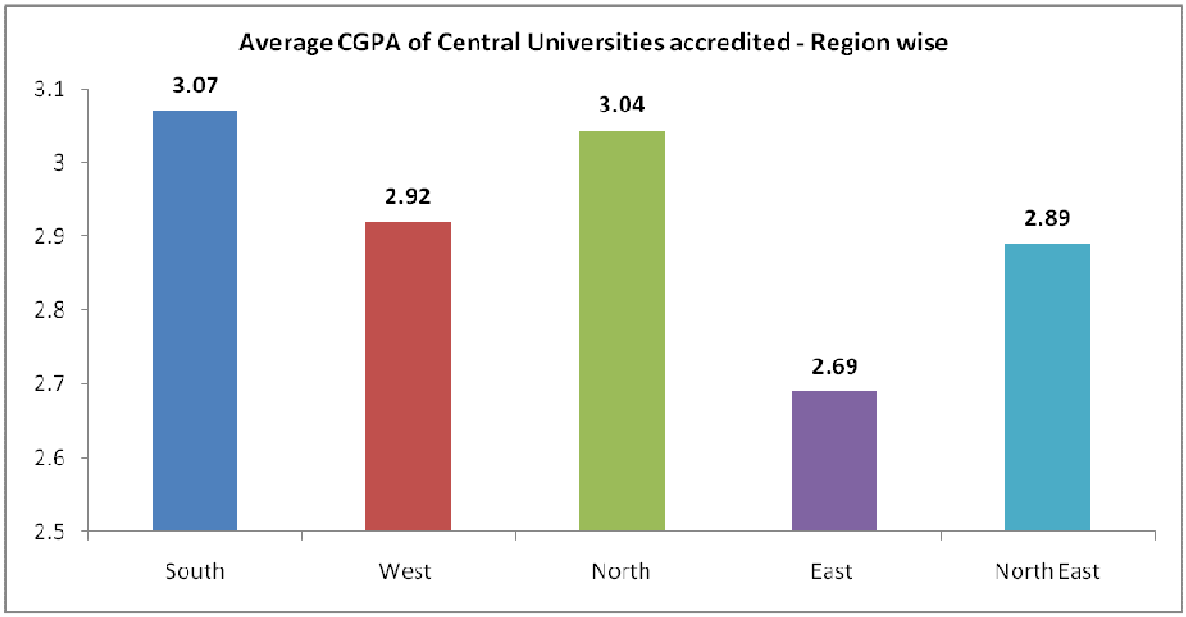

Fig 6: Average Criteria wise CGPA of Central Universities Accredited – Region wise

The ratings of the States for the Central Universities according to the CGPA are as follows: For Delhi, the central Universities have scored 3.69 for infrastructure, which is the strong point among the criteria. For Telangana, the Central Universities scored 3.36. Here, all criteria got above 3. Next is U.P which scored 3.26 which also scored above 3 for infrastructure. Next was Assam which scored 3.25 where their strong points were Research and Infrastructure which had a score of 3.68 each. Meghalaya was next in the list scoring 3.20, where the state scored 3.80 for infrastructure. The lowest CGPA was for Jharkhand. The CGPA for each State and the strong point in terms of criterion measures are given in the following table.

Table 8: State-wise CGPA and Strength point in terms of criterion measures

Sl.No	STATE	CGPA	STRENGTH
1.	Delhi	3.38	Infrastructure
2.	Telengana	3.36	All Criteria
3.	Uttar Pradesh	3.26	Institutional Values and Best practices
4.	Assam	3.25	Research & Infrastructure
5.	Meghalaya	3.20	Infrastructure
6.	Mizoram	3.16	Infrastructure
7.	Uttarkhand	3.11	Curricular Aspects
8.	Haryana	3.10	Innovation & Best Practices
9.	Puducherry	3.10	Curricular Aspects &Teaching
10.	Maharashtra	3.06	Infrastructure
11.	Madhya Pradesh	3.04	Infrastructure
12.	Bihar	3.01	Curricular Aspects
13.	Rajasthan	3.01	Infrastructure
14.	Punjab	2.87	Infrastructure, Student Support
15.	Jammu & Kashmir	2.84	Curricular Aspects, Teaching & Learning
16.	West Bengal	2.82	Research, Innovation

Table 8: State-wise CGPA and Strength point in terms of criterion measures

Sl.No	STATE	CGPA	STRENGTH
17.	Himachal Pradesh	2.78	Curricular Aspects
18.	Gujarat	2.76	Curricular Aspects
19.	Tripura	2.63	Teaching Learning
20.	Sikkim	2.60	Curricular Aspects
21.	Odhisha	2.59	Curricular Aspects
22.	Arunachal Pradesh	2.50	Infrastructure
23.	Jharkhand	2.34	Curricular Aspects

Region-wise, Southern region scored the highest and the other regions are in the second level of B grade. Research, Innovation and Extension scored less than 3 which indicates the lacunae in this criteria in terms of research productivity. Another dip in the quality criterion is in governance and leadership. Invariably across the country this gap is very conspicuous.

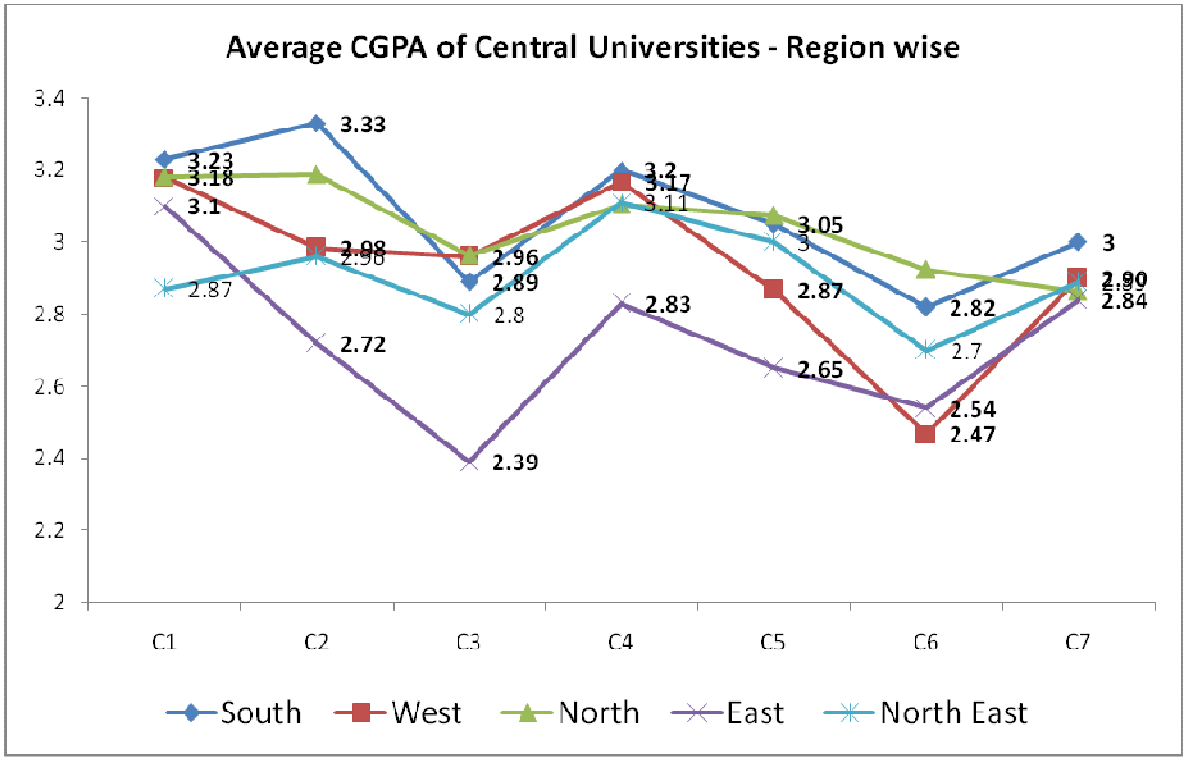

Fig 7: Average CGPA of Central Universities – Region wise

The spread of the accredited institutions spans a wide range in geographical terms, indicating among other things the variations in response levels to the need for quality assurance. A good deal of effort at all levels become necessary to help triumph over the misplaced notion and to bring the institution to understand that the quality assessment process was neither redundant nor meant to be ministered and the changeover of mindset from apprehension to acceptance to appreciation was gradual as seen.

Region-wise Quality Status

The share of university accreditation in the total number accounts for 12% while for college sector, it is about 5.7%. However, region wise, the percentage of accreditation (according to

university wise is lowest for Eastern Region i.e. 36% with 64% need to be accredited yet. Highest is for North Eastern Region with 54% percent accredited and 46% yet to be accredited. Southern Region comes next with 52 percent accredited and 48 percent yet to be accredited. In the college sector 7% of the colleges are accredited from the Eastern Region with 93% yet to be accredited. The highest is from Western Region constituting 57% and next is from North Eastern region 43%. The largest share of accredited institution is from Western and North Eastern region.

In general, the response from the university sector is better compared to that from the college sector. With the exception of Eastern region, the other regions, about 50% of the universities have submitted to accreditation process. Eastern region lags behind with respect to both the sectors. On examining the trends further, it is seen that university-wise 1 (10%) University in Bihar is accredited; 1 from Chhattisgarh, 1 from Jharkhand and 3 from Odisha and 7 from West Bengal. West Bengal leading the figures in College sector; Bihar only 5 colleges are accredited (1.3%), Chhattisgarh 9 (29%), Jharkhand 4 (5.7%), Odisha 3 (1.13%) and West Bengal 45 (12%) and from Andaman Nicobar no colleges were accredited.

A lot of interventions are required to bring the other states of the region, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand & Odisha significantly into the fold of the accreditation. The two states, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand both newly formed in the year 2000, may also have to grapple with the independent higher education systems and may be to an extent be held back by the factors incidental to their newly coming into being. There is hope that the recent promotional effort by the NAAC in these states would help to generate an enhanced response. But then, without continuous effort from local stake holding section, sustaining the response may not be easy.

A study of the regional educational disparities and the possible underlying causes reveals a range of factors like the successive budget allocation for education, educational environments, state policies, socio-economic and political factors and indeed the recent history of educational development of the states of the different regions are responsible for the widely varying response level to quality needs.

On examining the trends, some of the questions that arise are:
1. What are the factors responsible to bring about generally better response from University sector and what can be done to raise the response level in the college sector in all the regions particularly the Eastern region?
2. What are the reasons for the Eastern region lagging behind in quality assessment?

Impact of Subsequent Cycles of Accreditation

NAAC was established with the objective of assessing the quality of HEIs and its programs so that it can be comparable to the top ranking HEIs in the country and those who are enjoying the high ranking in the world. After independence, India has expanded its HEIs at a rapid rate, but the quality has not improved in general except in a few institutions which are islands of excellence. Since one of the objectives of NAAC is to enable institutions to improve its quality status through the efforts of an IQAC of each Institution, an attempt was made to assess the impact of A&A of institutions in the different cycles of Assessment. The following table presents the analysis of the same for Central Universities.

Table 9: Cycle-wise Average CGPA

Cycle	Number	CGPA
#1	22	2.89
#2	9	3.09
#3	5	3.26

The table shows a gradual increase in the quality grade point average, which is an encouraging signal for Indian HEIs. The data were analyzed to see whether Universities in general have made quality improvements during the successive assessment cycle. Each institution is provided funding from the UGC to set up an IQAC which is supposed to ensure quality improvement of the institution on a continuous basis. In looking at the trend, it is seen that there is no significant difference between different cycles of Assessment. One of the reasons may be the same institution is not followed up for analysis during the next assessment cycle. Since the averages of second cycle, third cycle and the fourth cycles were taken for calculation.

General Findings of the Study

A higher education institution's vision is to create a stimulating, challenging and rewarding academic experience in a world-class learning community, through sharing a unique fusion of education, research and professional practice that inspires students and staff to enrich the world. Excellence in Higher Education can only be attained through quality assurance which focuses on what the HEI does, or could do, to provide an excellent service to its customers and other stakeholders. There are some enablers who make the opportunities happen for the students.

In the total analysis of the data, it was found that the islands of excellence we find in our Higher education system point to the commitment of the providers. It is not only the top leader's commitment, but also, commitment and enthusiasm at the different layers of leadership like the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, Director of the Academic Board of the University, Controller of Examination, Principals and the staff. The commitment of all these layers of leadership and the dedicated team members who work towards the goals of the institution and the higher education system as a whole, particularly the students whom we serve matters the most.

Leadership

It was observed in the high-ranking institutions, they invariably have excellent leaders. They develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission and vision. They develop organizational values and systems required for sustainable success and implement them through their actions. They are role models for the entire organization.

Policy and Strategies

Excellent institutions implement their goals by developing a student-focused strategy that takes into account the employability and overall personality development of the students. The policies, plans, objectives and processes are developed and deployed to deliver the strategy. The student support system wherever is implemented through proper mentoring, guiding and counseling result in better outcome.

Human Relations Management

Excellent HEIs manage, develop and release the full potential of their staff and students at an individual, team based and organizational level. They promote fairness and equality, involve and empower their staff and students. They care for, communicate, reward and recognize in a manner which motivates staff and builds commitment to using their skills and knowledge for their benefit and for the organization as a whole.

Innovations

Innovation in teaching, learning and research are essential parameters which make significant differences among institutions. This criterion scored the lowest among institutions in general. However, those who are committed to this mission exercise all options to promote innovation whether in experiential learning, ICT integrated learning or research in frontier areas or even in evaluation, administration or extra-curricular activities.

Partnerships and Resources

Industry-institution partnership is an often talked about theme, but very few venture to enter into such collaborations. Excellent Institutions plan and manage external partnerships, external and internal resources in order to support policy and strategy and effective operation of processes. During planning and while managing partnerships and resources, they balance the current and future needs of the organization, the community and the environment. In the ultimate analysis, the employability of graduates, the development of innovative research proposals and their implementation and teaching resources and professional expertise from other organizations will enhance the graduates and ultimately contribute to the society and community and ultimately to the nation's development.

Process Management

Excellent HEIs design, manage and improve the processes in order to fully satisfy and generate increasing value for the students and other stakeholders. All these activities should be coordinated and implemented through the staff and students. The ownership should be shared by all. Everyone should feel proud of belonging to the institution where they are working.

Conclusion

Altbach has stated rightly that HEIs should have the following features to call it a high quality institution:

- Excellent in research
- Top quality professors
- Favorable working conditions
- Job security and good salary benefits
- Adequate Facilities
- Adequate funding including predictability from year to year
- Academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement
- Faculty self governance
- Passion for Excellence at all levels

Quality of higher education in a region has a direct and strong bearing on the quality of life in general of that region. Eastern region cannot afford to compare unfavorably with the rest of the country in taking interest in quality aspects, given that it once patronized some of the most celebrated seats of higher learning. In general, wherever Autonomy of the institutions in academic as well as administrative freedom prevailed, they scored better in all the quality parameters. Winds of globalization are blowing across the country and beginning to unleash

new forces in all sectors. If India is a signatory to General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) principles on higher education services, increasingly more emphasis will be on quality higher education. In these circumstances, it would be rationale to expect that all statutes should be modified to remove the constraining factors and initiate enabling measures to motivate HEIs to go for NAAC accreditation. From the retrospect and prospects as seen in the above study with special reference to Central Universities of India in relation to the seven criteria of NAAC and the overall CGPA, one could clearly visualize the quality sustenance and enhancement strategies these HEIs adopt in order to maintain and improve quality provisions for the benefit of the stakeholders.

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