Role Of NAAC In Promoting Institutional Accountability And Continuous Quality Enhancement In Teacher Education

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in promoting institutional accountability and continuous quality enhancement (CQE) in teacher education institutions (TEIs) in India. It contextualises NAAC within India's higher education quality assurance ecosystem, describes the NAAC assessment–accreditation processes and instruments (with specific emphasis on teacher education manuals and AQAR), analyses mechanisms through which NAAC influences governance, curriculum, teaching–learning, research and stakeholder engagement, and discusses challenges and recommendations for strengthening NAAC's impact on teacher education. Findings indicate that NAAC has catalysed institutional self-evaluation, internal quality assurance (IQAC) structures and data-driven improvements in TEIs, but gaps remain in capacity building, contextual assessment, and sustained post-accreditation follow-up.

Keywords: NAAC, Teacher Education, Quality Assurance, Institutional Accountability, Continuous Quality Enhancement, IQAC, AQAR, RAF.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Quality assurance in higher education has become a global policy priority as nations seek to ensure relevance, equity, and accountability of their tertiary systems. In India, rapid expansion of higher education and teacher education providers created both access opportunities and concerns about learning outcomes, employability of graduates, and institutional governance. NAAC was established (1994) as an autonomous body to assess and accredit higher education institutions (HEIs) and to promote a culture of quality within Indian higher education. Its core mandate includes periodic assessment and accreditation, stimulating institutional self-evaluation, encouraging incentives for quality improvements, and undertaking quality-related research and capacity building. These roles are operationalised through NAAC's assessment instruments, manuals, and frameworks specific to institutional types—including teacher education institutions (TEIs) (Mariamma *et al.*, 2019).

1.2 Why teacher education needs specialised QA attention

Teacher education occupies a critical position: it prepares professionals responsible for school learning outcomes and whole-child development. Poor quality in teacher preparation amplifies learning deficits downstream. Therefore, teacher education requires QA systems that examine not only generic institutional capacities but also domain-specific outcomes such as practicum quality, school partnerships, integration of pedagogy and subject knowledge, and alignment with national school curricula and policies (e.g., NCF, RTE, NEP). NAAC's teacher education manual and associated AQAR templates were designed to reflect these specific requirements and indicators, reinforcing a sector-sensitive approach to quality assessment (NAAC, 2025)

1.3 NAAC's instruments and evolution relevant to TEIs

NAAC's instruments evolved from qualitative peer reviews toward a mix of qualitative and quantitative metrics under its Revised Accreditation Framework (RAF). RAF emphasises measurable key indicators across seven criteria (Curricular Aspects; Teaching-Learning & Evaluation; Research, Innovations & Extension; Infrastructure; Student Support; Governance; Institutional Values), and NAAC has released teacher-education-specific manuals and AQAR formats to guide TEIs through self-study and periodic reporting. These resources introduce sector-specific metrics for practicum, school partnerships, mentor-teacher development, and classroom observation systems. (NAAC, 2025).

1.4 Purpose and research questions

This paper explores:

(1) How NAAC mechanisms promote institutional accountability in TEIs;

(2) How NAAC facilitates continuous quality enhancement (CQE) in teacher education;

(3) What evidence (policy texts, studies, institutional reports) shows about NAAC's effectiveness and limitations; and

(4) What policy/practice recommendations can strengthen NAAC's role.

2. Conceptual and theoretical framing

Quality assurance literature distinguishes between *external QA* (accreditation, external audits) and *internal QA* (IQACs, self-assessment, CQI cycles). Theoretical grounding for this study draws on *institutional isomorphism* (accreditation as driver of convergence toward quality standards), *organizational learning* (institutions learning from self-assessment and peers), and *accountability theory* (external actors demanding transparency and outputs). NAAC's model mixes external accountability (grades, public reports) with capacity building to stimulate internalization of quality practices. (NAAC manuals and RAF operationalise these theoretical links through criteria, metrics, and training.) (Mariamma *et al.*, 2019).

3. Methodology (Conceptual / Document Analysis)

This is a policy-analytic, document-based study drawing on NAAC manuals (Teacher Education manuals 2019–2022), RAF documentation, AQAR guidelines, and empirical studies on NAAC's impact in HEIs and TEIs. Sources were reviewed to map NAAC's formal mechanisms and to synthesise reported institutional outcomes. Where empirical studies were available, their findings about NAAC's impact on governance, curriculum, and quality practices were summarised.

4. NAAC mechanisms that promote accountability and CQE in TEIs

4.1 Self-Study Report (SSR) and Data-driven self-assessment

The SSR compels institutions to collect, present and reflect on quantitative and qualitative evidence across criteria (student outcomes, faculty qualifications, research, infrastructure). This process incentivises institutions to establish robust data systems and routine self-monitoring—key preconditions for accountability. For TEIs the SSR specifically requires documentation of practicum arrangements, mentor

teacher training, school collaborations, and evidence of student teaching outcomes. (Mariamma *et al.*, 2019).

4.2 Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and AQAR cycle

NAAC requires accredited institutions to establish an IQAC to institutionalise CQE practices—preparing Annual Quality Assurance Reports (AQARs), monitoring quality indicators, and leading improvement projects. In TEIs, IQACs play a role in curriculum revision cycles, organizing school-based practicum improvements, faculty development, and research promotion. AQAR templates for TEIs make these roles explicit and standardise reporting (NAAC, 2024).

4.3 Peer review and external validation

The external peer team verifies the SSR claims through site visits (or online review), stakeholder interviews, and documentation checks, offering an external accountability mechanism and recommendations for enhancement. Peer review helps identify gaps not visible internally and provides credible, comparative perspectives (Mariamma *et al.*, 2019).

4.4 Criteria & Key Indicators focused on teacher education outcomes

NAAC's criteria include indicators that target teacher-education-specific outcomes: integration of subject/pedagogy, school partnerships, practicum quality, mentor training, and community engagement. These indicators push TEIs to operationalise praxis-oriented training and evidence student teaching competencies. Manuals and key performance benchmarks help institutions align processes accordingly (Kumar *et al*., 2021).

4.5 Capacity building, best practices repository and guidance

NAAC publishes manuals, toolkits, best practices and organises training & workshops for peer teams and HEIs. For TEIs, such capacity building supports adoption of contemporary pedagogy, ICT integration in practicum, and research orientation. This supportive role complements the accountability mechanisms. naac.gov.in+1

5. Evidence of NAAC's influence on TEIs (select findings from literature)

Multiple studies and institutional reports indicate that NAAC accreditation has led to improvements in documentation, governance practices, IQAC activation, and curricular review processes in HEIs, including TEIs. Empirical studies typically report that accreditation triggers investments in infrastructure, teacher training programs, and enhanced record-keeping—though the extent of sustained CQE varies across institutions. Several authors emphasise that accreditation leads to an initial 'push' for improvements—its longer-term transformative effect depends on internal leadership, resources, and follow-through (Kumar *et al*., 2021).

6. Discussion

6.1 Institutional accountability — mechanisms, strengths and limits

Mechanisms: NAAC's SSR, peer review, publicised grades, and AQAR mandates create multiple accountability channels—internal (IQAC), external (NAAC peer teams), and social (public access to accreditation status). For TEIs, this multi-pronged approach ensures that teacher preparation programs are answerable for practicum quality, teacher competency measures, and alignment with school needs. naac.gov.in+1

Strengths:

- *Systematisation of evidence*: SSR and AQAR force TEIs to maintain data systems (student progress, placement, practicum logs).

- *Sector specificity*: Teacher-education manuals embed practicum and school linkage indicators, making assessment relevant to this sector. naac.gov.in+1

Limits / Challenges:

- *Compliance vs transformation*: Some institutions undertake cosmetic documentation primarily to meet accreditation checklists, without deep pedagogical change. Several studies note the risk of accreditation becoming a compliance ritual rather than a driver of sustained pedagogical reform (Verma, 2018).

- *Resource asymmetry*: Smaller TEIs, particularly in rural areas, may find it difficult to implement recommended changes due to limited human and financial resources; accreditation may then widen disparities if supports are not provided (Pathak, 2023).

- *Context sensitivity*: National indicators may not fully capture local contextual needs (regional languages, local school ecosystems). While NAAC manuals attempt sector specificity, further contextualisation remains necessary. (Pathak, 2023).

6.2 Continuous Quality Enhancement — processes and evidence

NAAC's CQE emphasis is operationalised through IQACs, action plans, outcome monitoring, and follow-up on peer recommendations. Good practices reported by institutions include: structured practicum reforms (clear mentor guidelines, rubrics for classroom observation), faculty development linked to identified weaknesses in SSR, and curriculum changes to incorporate ICT and inclusive pedagogy. However, sustained CQE often requires internal ownership beyond the accreditation cycle—successful TEIs institutionalise feedback loops (school feedback on student teachers, alumni tracking) and align resource allocation with identified priorities (Pathak, 2023).

6.3 Role of IQACs in teacher education CQE

IQACs act as the engine of CQE: they coordinate data collection, prepare AQARs, conduct internal audits of practicum quality, and organise CPD for teacher educators. Effective IQACs in TEIs integrate school partners in quality processes and run pilot innovations that are later scaled. NAAC guidance elevates IQACs from administrative units to change agents, but capacity building and role clarity are essential for effectiveness. naac.gov.in+1

6.4 External peer review as reflective mirror and catalyst

Peer teams provide comparative insights, identify blind spots, and recommend priority actions. For teacher education, suggestions often include strengthening school–college partnerships, improving micro-teaching labs, and better alignment with school curriculum changes. Peer feedback is most effective when institutions treat recommendations as actionable improvement plans and publicly report progress in subsequent AQARs (Sheikh & Jahan 2013).

6.5 Emerging developments and future directions

NAAC's evolving RAF, recent manual revisions and ICT-enabled AQAR systems indicate a shift toward data-driven, continuous and more objective assessment. Newer frameworks emphasise measurable learning outcomes, digital dashboards, and maturity-based accreditation models (announced changes and pilot proposals). For TEIs, integrating technology in practicum supervision (video observation, e-portfolios) and outcome measurement (teacher competency frameworks) will likely become more prominent. Institutions should prepare by building robust learning analytics and stronger school collaborations. naac.gov.in+1

7. Recommendations

1. **Strengthen capacity building and hand-holding for smaller TEIs** — NAAC, in partnership with state education departments and universities, should prioritise training that addresses resource constraints and offers staged improvement roadmaps (Chavan, 2019).

2. **Make peer recommendations actionable** — NAAC could require a short-term action plan submission and an intermediate progress report (beyond annual AQAR) to drive follow-through. naac.gov.in

3. **Enhance contextual indicators** — Incorporate regionally relevant metrics (language, school ecosystem) into teacher-education assessments and allow weighted flexibility (Gupta, 2018).

4. **Promote technology-enabled practicum assessment** — Encourage adoption of e-portfolios, recorded microteaching review, and digital evidence in SSRs/AQARs to improve transparency and feedback cycles (Kumar, 2016).

5. **Foster community of practice among TEIs** — Create NAAC-supported regional clusters for TEIs to exchange best practices, share resources and mentor each other. naac.gov.in

8. Conclusion

NAAC plays a central role in promoting institutional accountability and continuous quality enhancement in teacher education through structured self-study, IQAC mandates, peer review, and sector-specific manuals and AQARs. Evidence suggests NAAC has catalysed improvements in documentation, governance, and quality practices in many TEIs. However, the depth and sustainability of reforms depend on internal leadership, resources, contextual adaptation, and follow-up mechanisms. Strengthening capacity building, contextual indicators, and technology use in practicum assessment will enhance NAAC's contribution to high-quality teacher preparation across diverse Indian contexts.

9. Limitations of the present paper and future research directions

This study is limited to document-based synthesis and secondary literature; it does not present primary empirical fieldwork. Future empirical studies should use mixed methods to assess the causal impact of NAAC accreditation on teacher graduates' classroom effectiveness and long-term institutional changes, including longitudinal case studies of TEIs across regions.

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