

Chapter 24

Internalizing Quality Culture: Professionalizing University Education

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ABSTRACT

The Indian higher education system is witnessing a myriad of changes and challenges through the years, i.e., from ancient Gurukul system to the modern technology based learning system. India is a land of diverse cultures, religions, and communities. It has a unique geography and the absorption of customs, traditions, and ideas. Every region of the country portrays different customs and traditions. 'Unity in Diversity' has been the distinctive feature of Indian culture. Diversity in India can be seen in terms of religious practices, languages, society, family, customs, festivals, cuisine, clothing, literature, poetry, music and dance, paintings, sculptures, architecture, recreation and traditional sports, and plurality in terms of many religions, beliefs, and institutions. India has 122-languages and 234-mother tongues and numerous festivals come in every month for celebrations. From ancient period to modern times, higher education has always occupied a place of prominence in Indian history. Lord Macaulay, in 1835, advocated the need to train natives of the country thoroughly in good English language. Subsequently, the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay (now Mumbai), and Madras were set up in 1857, followed by the University of Allahabad in 1887 (Kuldeep Kaur, 2003). India has 634 University level institutions and 33,023 colleges (UGC, 2012). Higher Education Institutions demonstrate a high commitment to develop and embed quality through various programmes and activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality begins on the inside... and then works its way out.
-Bob Moawad

Many external environmental pressures such as competition, globalization, market forces and limited autonomy impose on the capacity and capabilities of the institutions. In many of the state funded universities limited autonomy, inadequate or decreased funding, intrusion in governance come in the way of ensuring quality. Despite these constraints, Higher Education Institutions aspire to improve their quality and try to establish and ensure their accountability. Responsibility of ensuring their accountability and quality primarily lies with the Institutions of higher education themselves, shouldered by the staff and the students. Therefore, it is imperative that each institution has to develop efficient Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system to professionalise the education. There is no single model that fits all. It is up to the institution to decide what model fits it best. Some good practices could be borrowed and some could be adapted according to the situation. Experiences at other institutions may also be used in developing an IQA system. In order to assist the higher education institutes the government of India established an autonomous body called National assessment and accreditation council. Before discussing the IQA system, for the sake of clarity and understanding, we will briefly review the Assessment and Accreditation System in India.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

The University Grants Commission (UGC) established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 with headquarters at Bangalore. The vision and mission statements of NAAC clearly specify its functioning, highlighting

quality assurance mechanism in higher education institutions with the combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion & sustenance activities and initiatives. The prime agenda of NAAC is to *Assess and Accredite* institutions of higher learning with an objective of helping them to work continuously to improve the quality of education. *Assessment* is a performance evaluation of an institution and/or its units and is accomplished through a process based on *self-study* and *peer review* using defined *criteria*. *Accreditation* refers to the certification *by NAAC*, valid for a period of five Years. It grades the Institutions on a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of four point scale¹. The process of Assessment followed by NAAC is in accordance with internationally accepted practice with modifications to suit the Indian context. The philosophy of NAAC is ameliorative and enabling rather than punitive or judgmental, so that all constituencies of institutions of higher learning are empowered to maximize their resources, opportunities and capabilities.

NAAC is not the only accrediting agency in India. National Board of Accreditation (NBA) is another agency, constituted by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), as an Autonomous Body, under Section 10(u) of the AICTE Act, 1987. The main objective of this agency is to periodically conduct evaluation of technical Institutions or Programmes on the basis of guidelines, norms and standards specified by it and to make recommendations to AICTE or to the Council, or to the commission or to other bodies, regarding recognition or de-recognition of the institution or programme.

Accreditation signifies different things to different stakeholders. Accreditation in general means recognition and guarantee of minimum quality. For the NBA it means a process of quality assurance, giving credit where it is due. For parents, it signifies good, quality education. For students, it signifies that the institution of his choice has the essential and desirable features of

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