

EDITORIAL

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The attitude and expectations towards higher education in general and technical education in particular of the Government and Society at large have undergone tremendous changes. These can be briefly mentioned as :

- i) It is expected that Technical Education should become more responsive to the needs of industry*
- ii) It should be less dependent on Government or public funding .*
- iii) Greater proportion of population should have access to technical education.*
- iv) It should be more cost effective.*
- v) Technical Education and Industry should work in collaboration for R & D.*

As a consequence of these changes, there is a demand for more careful evaluation of activities of every institution. This has given rise to the scheme of "Accreditation". All India Council of Technical Education has already set up the National Board of Accreditation (NBA - India) and at the initiative of UGC an autonomous body viz. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council has been formed (NACC)

The stated objectives of NBA (India) say that "Accreditation is a process of quality assurance whereby an approved institution or programme is critically appraised at intervals not exceeding six years as to whether an institution or a programme meets the norms and standards prescribed by the council from time to time."

Accreditation originated in USA as a mechanism of validation of education was built on the concept of self regulation through self evaluation and evaluation by a peer group constituted collectively by the institutions themselves without interference from Government NBA (India) should also keep this as a basic concept.

For such evaluation, reliable and consistent performance indicators will have to be evolved.

Evolving such indicators is neither easy nor impossible. A lot of data already available will have to be collected & worked upon. The indicators should have the following characteristics.

- i) They should relate to the objective of the institution.
- ii) They should be specific, quantifiable and standardized so that comparisons can be made within & between institutions.
- iii) They should be as simple as possible.
- iv) They should be acceptable, credible & free from bias.
- v) They should provide useful information about the operations and activities of institution and they should be expected to provoke questions about their operations and activities.

Three broad types of indicators can be identified.

- i) Internal indicators - These relate to variables such as degree results, completion rate, teaching quality, attraction of research funds etc.
- ii) External Indicators - Employability, research record, extension activities, reputation of staff outside the institution etc.
- iii) Operational Indicators - Cost per student, student/staff ratio, staff workload, availability of library & computing facilities, class sizes etc.

A range of such variables can be suggested. AICTE should involve all the institutions in finally evolving agreed performance indicators.

Last, but not the least, it has to be borne in mind that evaluation should involve much more than simply providing information about a set of variable, especially when, these indicators are used for comparison purpose. The main problem is that such indicators may not compare like for like. For instance it may not be reflected whether low unit cost is because of efficient management or because of not providing the facilities.

In short, for a variety of purposes, evolving performance indicators for assessment of Technical Institutes is the need of the day and AICTE and NBA (India) have to ensure the involvement of all concerned in this task.

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