



The Washington Accord, AICTE, NBA & the Quality of Engineering Education

India is trying to get the permanent membership of the Washington accord. For this, the AICTE has taken two steps in recent months:

- i) The NBA which was so far a part of the AICTE has been separated and given an autonomous status. Now, the NBA will be the final authority to decide on the granting of the accreditation status to programs at technical institutions, without referring to the AICTE, which was the practice, so far.
- ii) The NBA has made the accreditation *criteria* more in line with international practices, so as to meet the requirements of the Washington Accord.

With these two steps taken, we have carried out, only a part of the solution. What about the response of the Indian technical institutions to these revised *criteria*? Even when the *criteria* were not revised, the response was far from satisfactory as only about 36 % of the eligible programs were assessed and accredited. That was the position at the end of 2007. This gives only a part of the picture. The NBA needs to publish this position regularly, at least at the end of every six months, so that the total number of institutions and programs available, those eligible for assessment and accreditation and those having valid accreditation status are made known to everyone. That will present a total picture.

The AICTE has indeed taken the above two steps, rightly. Now, it is the turn of the technical institutions to come out and seek accreditation of their programs. But why should they do it? As is widely known, nearly 90 % of the technical institutions in India are managed by the private sector and so far, this sector does not seem to have shown much eagerness to seek *accreditation* of their programs. We have the tendency and the mind set not to act, unless we are compelled to do so, even though the action may bring in some advantages and benefits. Hence, two more steps, as follows, need to be given serious consideration.

- 1) To educate and persuade the Managements of the private sector technical institutions to seek accreditation by convincing them on the benefits, not only for the institutions, but also for their stake holders, in general.

2) To prevail upon the Principals of technical institutions to get accreditation of their programs. They are mostly busy persons, totally immersed in their routines. Rarely, do they come out of the confines of their institutional boundaries and look at others. Many of them even are not aware that there are some major items awaiting to be taken care of by them, which will help them in strengthening their institutions by enhancing the quality of their programs.

If the Managements are silent and the Principals are not aware of the situation, what is the way out? Who should undertake the task of enhancing the quality of the programs at the technical institutions in the country?

Perhaps, it is for the Policy Planners and Administrators involved in the technical education system to take upon them, this task. The State Directors of Technical Education, the Vice Chancellors of the general and technical Universities, the technical Professional Societies funded by the Government, like the ISTE and the small NGOs, like the Engineering Education Foundation, Pune and those in other States as well, would be ideally suited to take up this task of ushering in an era of quality, standard and excellence in technical education in the country as a whole. This will be of great benefit to the country not merely to get into the Washington Accord; That is only a small station on the journey; but beyond that, as well, till world class standards are reached in the technical education system. The war on quality has to be fought all over the country, on the battle-field of technical institutions by the Principals and in the classrooms by the Faculty/Staff.

If this is realized by one and all and the necessary steps taken, we shall not only get the membership of the Washington Accord, but also become a major partner in this Accord & continue our march on the unending path of quality, standard and excellence.

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