

A I C T E

ASPECTS & PROSPECTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

AICTE was established in 1945 as a special national expert body to advise the Centre and States on matters relating to technical education. In the three decades after its formation, the work performed by it was laudable. But later on a situation came about, wherein the states and institutions started violating the regulations and directions set by AICTE. In some states particularly, a large number of engineering colleges & polytechnics mushroomed rapidly. On one side, these institutions lacked facilities for a sound education and on the other they charged heavy capitation fees commercialising the education. AICTE which was once a powerful body lost its effect & control. This led to make the AICTE a statutory body which would plan, coordinate and promote qualitative development in relation to quantitative growth in technical education.

In this article it is proposed to review what AICTE has done after AICTE act 1987, what evil practices continue to be followed, hood winking

AICTE, the probable reasons for the same and what is expected of AICTE in the present changing scenario

2. AICTE Activities

Out of the various functions defined by clause 10 of the AICTE Act, during the last thirteen years or so, AICTE seems to have major activities in the areas of regulation of new and old institutions; financial assistance to the institutions for R & D, career development of staff; laying down standards for courses, curricula, physical and institutional facilities, staff assessment and examination. Some new programmes in new areas are on the anvil. These activities, many of which the Council was pursuing even before 1987, have to a great extent, changed for better, the situation, which had led to making AICTE a statutory body. Setting up a National Board of Accreditation by AICTE is also a step in the right direction. However inspite of these activities, the presence of AICTE is not felt by all concerned to the extent it should have been. The standards set,

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seem to get diluted in actual practice.

3. The Malpractices

The malpractices which had crept in the technical institutions prior to 1987, continue to be followed even now. But the more sinister part of it is that these institutions go with a label of AICTE approved. Some of these malpractices are :

i) Starting new institutions without even the minimum of facilities. Recently it appeared in news papers, that in one important state, institutions were opened without the approval of AICTE.

ii) Making admissions more than the sanctioned intake.

iii) Demanding donations for admission.

iv) Recruiting only about 25% teaching staff on regular basis. 25% or so is appointed on yearly basis against the vacancies reserved for backward class & remaining work load is shared by staff appointed on clock hours basis. The provision of reservation for backward class is skillfully used to avoid recruitment of staff on regular basis.

v) Very poor staff service conditions with no security.

vi) At many places there are institutions which claim to award engineering degrees & diplomas but neither affiliated to universities nor approved by AICTE.

Under such conditions one wonders what kind of engineers & technicians would be turned out.

4. Expectations from AICTE

There are other important areas where AICTE should give a lead.

a) New Perspective - Under the clause 10 of AICTE act specifying functions of AICTE as per the sub clause 'a'. "AICTE should undertake survey in the various fields of technical education, collect data on all related matters and make forecast of the needed growth and development in technical education."

This function has assumed a prime importance in view of the radical changes in the economy demanding a new imaginative approach to the technical education system based on the following :

i) New skills use needed. Engineers would need to innovate; to be more flexible and adaptable; to take responsibility for quality, to co-operate in multidisciplinary team, to manage and conserve resources.

ii) Because of the revolution in IT a new literacy which will make one able to read, select, evaluate, interpret and use information effectively.

iii) Massive increase in general process skills, planning & decision making, effective interaction and problem solving.

iv) The curriculum should change from descriptions of knowledge and skills needed, to descriptions of what engineers need to achieve, what competencies should be developed.

v) Working 'smart' will take greater significance than working 'long'.

now, to learn.

On this basis AICTE should come out with a picture of the shape of things to come in next ten to fifteen years and the necessary changes that would be required in the courses, curriculum new disciplines, teaching strategies etc.

b) Industry-Institute partnership : AICTE has formulated a scheme Industry-Institute Partnership Cell (IIPC), which aims at establishment of a cell in each university, AICTE approved Institutions and colleges to act as a focal point for promoting Industry Institute interaction leading to Industrial consultancy, research and development AICTE leaves everything to the institution level except providing one time seed money for such a cell.

To say the least, AICTE has dealt with this subject in a lighter manner.

Much is being talked about I.I., even at highest level but very little is coming out of it, barring perhaps the I.I.T.'s and few other institutions which could successfully interact with industries. It is not possible to deal with industries individually by a single institution especially for those situated in remote rural areas.

Time has come to make the Industry & Business sector aware of the fact that at the root of its success, lie the human endeavour which in its turn depends upon the knowledge, skills, competencies, developed in human-being by the education system and hence Industry, Business & Education are mutually dependent and closely intertwined strands of development of a society.

AICTE along with other parallel bodies in general education should impress upon the Govt. to make it compulsory for the Industry & Business sector to share responsibility for development of Education in general & Technical Education in particular. Once, such policy decision is taken, AICTE with Industry Associations should form a central body which will prepare a blue print for Industry- Institute interaction and this pattern will be followed at local levels.

c) R & D Activities : Quality of education improves with research activities. Very few engineering colleges have research activities.

It has to be appreciated that research activities can be undertaken better in a group, with a frequent exchange of information, thinking, adequate facilities and conducive environment. Many institutions, individually, are not in a position to provide all these things together. Hence networking of institutions by a Central Body like AICTE, promoting applied research activities as a group will give individual institution opportunities to take part in research.

d) Teacher's Training : Unfortunately, in the field of higher education, Teacher Training is not considered necessary. This view has to be changed and AICTE should consider, Teachers Training consisting of psychological background, theories of learning, teaching strategies, education technology, classroom-management, assesment etc. necessary for every teacher.

e) **Staff Pool** : AICTE should suggest to government to create a central pool of teachers from which only recruitment of teachers by individual institutes should be made. This will attract better qualified individuals. The recruited teachers will get better service conditions & would be free from the influence of the local management.

5) **AICTE Structure** : AICTE structure needs to be reviewed as it is felt that some of the actions & inactions of AICTE are inherent in this structure.

Some of the important points which require consideration are :

a) There is a large number of ex-officio members, members representing various ministries of central govt. and state govt. appointed on this council which puts limitation to their contribution because of their preoccupation.

b) All members except two members of parliament even those representing professional bodies, other bodies, organisations representing industry & commerce are 'appointed' by the Central govt. & not elected by these bodies. A member of parliament while discussing this bill commented that he was 'disappointed' to read the word "appointed" in case of all members.

c) Every professional body of engineering profession should have a representation.

d) Engineering Teachers have no representation.

e) Every action of AICTE has to be approved by the Central Govt.

f) The council is bound by the direction, on question of policies, given by the Central Govt. As a matter of fact such bodies should have autonomous status.

g) These deficiencies make AICTE as an extended arm of govt. department working in a bureaucratic manner; nobody prepared to take decision & responsibility for it. That is why, many of the malpractices mentioned earlier still continue even though AICTE has been provided with "teeth". There is no will or capacity to use the "teeth" and AICTE is concentrating only on activities of regulation & allocating grants etc & little has come out as a vision of technical education in the next decade.

h) "Technical Education" has been defined very broadly and includes management, pharmacy, applied arts and craft and vocational education. This crowding make justice to none. As a matter of fact these subjects deserve separate bodies.

i) The Regional Committees have little role and work as post offices only.

6) **Conclusion** : In short, inspite of some inherent drawbacks in the structure of AICTE, it has tried to regulate and co-ordinate technical education to a great extent. That is necessary but not sufficient. It has done little to give a face lift in view of the current changes. It is also expected that it should deal with firm hand with the managements who try to hood-wink AICTE.

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