

AICTE AND ISTE : NEED FOR GREATER LINKAGES

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1. PREAMBLE

The AICTE Act came into force in December 1987. This was enacted by the Parliament with a view to proper planning and coordinated development of technical education system throughout the country, the promotion of quality and the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the system. In performing these functions, the Council has to undertake various activities such as survey in the various fields of technical education, collect data on all related matters, make forecast of the needed growth and development in technical education, formulate and implement schemes for the initial and inservice training of teachers, lay down norms and standards for courses, curricula, physical and infrastructural facilities, staff pattern, staff qualifications, quality instruction, assessment and evaluation, promote linkage between technical institutions and R & D organizations, industry and community, monitor the progress and

assess the impact of various schemes initiated by the Council, evolve performance appraisal systems for technical institutions, provide financial support for modernization and developing facilities in new and emerging areas and prescribe guidelines to institutions for getting autonomy and accreditation.

Since its inception in 1967, the Indian Society for Technical Education (ISTE has been very closely associated with the Ministry of Human Resource Development) and the non-statutory AICTE in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of most of the activities listed above as coming under the purview of the AICTE. When Q.I.P. was introduced by the MHRD in 1972, ISTE was entrusted with the task of conducting Summer / Winter school programmes for the faculty of degree and diploma level technical institutions. For this, a Programme Unit was established at the ISTE with necessary staff positions and

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budget allotment. In 1988, when the Continuing Education Programme (CEP) for working professionals was initiated by the MHRD, the implementation of this programme was also entrusted to the ISTE. Later, in 1994, AICTE took over this programme from the ISTE. Other activities entrusted to ISTE include the preparation and publication of model syllabi for various degree courses, publication of teacher manuals for various subjects, review of projects sanctioned under modernization and thrust areas, preparation, publication and dissemination of norms and standards for various degree and diploma level institutions, conduct of seminars and workshops on topics relating to technical education, study and survey pertaining to new and existing schemes and information dissemination through News letter, Journal and Handbook. In addition, ISTE was made a major partner in the implementation of Canada- India Institutional Cooperation Project. ISTE was thus functioning as a working wing of MHRD and non-statutory AICTE. This partnership boosted the image and acceptance of ISTE among the technical institutions in the country as well as among the State Governments and other organizations connected with the technical education system.

However, when AICTE became a statutory body in 1987, many of the earlier functions entrusted to ISTE by the MHRD were either terminated or taken over directly by the AICTE. The experience and expertise gained by the

ISTE for nearly 25 years in various areas relating to technical education are thus not being fully utilized now.

II. MAJOR STRENGTHS OF ISTE

The major strengths of the ISTE include the following:

- The large institutional and individual membership encompassing the majority of technical institutions, their faculty and their students.
- Easy access to the expertise and facilities available in the technical education system throughout the country.
- Patronage and support extended by the MHRD, AICTE and State governments.
- Existing goodwill and rapport with state governments, Directorates of Technical Education, Technological Universities and major industries in the country.
- Capacity to communicate and disseminate information through a number of publications and other activities.
- Autonomous status of the Society and its inherent independence in decision making.
- Accepted quality and standards maintained in all programmes undertaken.
- Well structured organizational set-up with state level Sections and institutional level Chapters.

- Linkage with a number of international organizations.
- Vast experience in planning, formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a large number and variety of national and international projects and programmes.
- No effort to commercialize its services.

III. EXISTING LINKAGE BETWEEN AICTE AND ISTE

As pointed out earlier, when AICTE was a non-statutory body and was functioning as a division of the MHRD, ISTE was involved in a number of programmes and activities coming under its purview. However, when AICTE Act came into force in 1987, many of the functions like curriculum revision, monitoring of projects, development of norms and standards etc were directly taken over by the AICTE and ISTE is now not being involved in any way in these activities.

3.1. The Programme Unit

The Programme Unit is still maintained in the ISTE headquarters and under this Unit around 150 short-term training programmes for teachers are conducted every year. The full expenditure incurred by the Programme Unit including salary of staff and cost of arranging the short-term training programmes are borne by the AICTE. The Programme Unit arranges nearly 75% of the short-term training programmes conducted for engineering teachers in the country.

3.2. The Learning Materials Project

The AICTE is a major partner in the Learning Materials Project of the ISTE funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, AICTE and ISTE. The project objective is to develop and market learning materials in Electronics and Computer Science for degree and diploma level technical institutions. The project is for 5 years from 1999 and is expected to become self-supporting at the end of the project period. Initially the materials will be produced in print form, but subsequently they will be converted to suitable electronic form also.

IV. PROPOSED NEW LINKAGES BETWEEN AICTE AND ISTE

The objectives of AICTE and ISTE have many things in common. Over the years, ISTE have been associated with and actively involved in many programmes implemented by the MHRD and AICTE and in this process, ISTE have developed considerable expertise and experience in many areas which come under the purview of AICTE. The outreach of ISTE to various technical institutions and their faculty and students through membership and other activities is quite extensive and AICTE will benefit considerably by making use of ISTE in many of their activities aimed at institutions, their faculty and students. Already AICTE have a Programme Unit in ISTE with over 10 staff and this Unit is essentially a part of AICTE. Also AICTE is a partner in the ISTE LM Project. Listed below are a few areas

where ISTE have considerable expertise and AICTE can make use of this expertise for the benefit of the technical education system.

4.1. Curriculum Development

In the 80s, ISTE have developed and published model curricula for a number of courses at degree level. The task of revising existing curriculum at regular intervals and developing curriculum for new programmes can be entrusted to ISTE who will appoint necessary committees in consultation with AICTE and carry out the work under the supervision of AICTE. This process will be more fast, efficient and economical than that directly undertaken by AICTE now.

4.2. National Centre for LM Development

The present LM project in the ISTE sponsored by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the AICTE produces only learning materials in Electronics and Computer Science. With the expertise gained through the Project, ISTE can undertake LM development in other areas of engineering also. AICTE can support such a scheme, thereby developing a National Centre for LM development at ISTE under AICTE.

4.3. National Centre for Continuing Education

The Continuing Education Programme for Working Professionals was functioning under ISTE till it was taken over by the AICTE in 1994. With the expertise being gained under the LM Project, ISTE will be in a better position

to develop course materials for Continuing Education Programmes, print and market them. In this context the question of linking CEP with ISTE and developing a National Centre for Continuing Education may be given due consideration.

4.4. National Centre for Educational Research and Information Dissemination

MHRD has sanctioned a new project to ISTE under the 9th Five-Year-Plan to set up a National Centre for Educational Research and Information Dissemination. Under this Project, regular research work and study on various aspects of technical education will be undertaken through various agencies.. Also an up-to-date database on technical education facilities will be developed and disseminated. It will be desirable that AICTE cosponsors this project so that the activities can be further enhanced. The outcome from the research and study will greatly help the planning process in the AICTE.

4.5. National Centre for Student Development and Guidance

Another new project sanctioned by MHRD to ISTE is for developing a National Centre for Student Development and Guidance. Under this project a number of programmes will be organized at national and regional levels to develop the personal and learning skills of students. A number of competitions will be arranged and best talents will be rewarded and recognized. The overall quality and standards of the output from technical institutions will

greatly improve. It will be highly desirable that AICTE becomes a cosponsor to this project so that the activities under this project can be greatly enhanced.

4.6. Training Programmes for Educational Administrators

There are very few training programmes for educational administrators like Principals, Directors of Technical Education, Deans, Hostel Wardens, Professor of Placement and Training and Student Counsellors. It will be desirable that AICTE develop a few training programmes in this area jointly with the ISTE and entrust the delivery of these programmes to ISTE as is done for Summer / Winter schools. This will help the building up of efficient educational administrators in the system.

4.7. Monitoring of Projects

Under MHRD, ISTE was organizing the review and monitoring of projects and financial assistance given to institutions under modernization and thrust area schemes. ISTE used to arrange review meetings at different regions in the country where experts selected by MHRD will interact with the beneficiary institutions and evaluate their performance. Such an arrangement was more cost-effective and efficient. The issue of involving ISTE in the review of AICTE projects can be considered in the above context.

4.8. Revision and updating of Norms and Standards

The first set of norms and standards for courses, physical infrastructure, staff pattern and staff qualifications prescribed by the AICTE was prepared by the ISTE in 1989 with the help of committees nominated by AICTE. These norms were later printed and distributed by the ISTE to interested agencies and the proceeds from the sale was remitted to AICTE. It is noted that subsequent revisions were done directly by the AICTE. To ensure revision of norms and standards at regular intervals and to free the AICTE from the routine work of organizing a number of meetings of the revision committees, it would be desirable to entrust the organization of such meetings and workshops to ISTE as was done earlier. By this arrangement, proper control of AICTE is ensured while at the same time, the expertise and organizational ability of ISTE is made full use of

4.9. Promotion of Industry Partnership

ISTE has developed considerable expertise in promoting industry-institute partnership through the Canada-India Project. The models of industry-institute partnership developed by this Canadian Project have been very successful in the Project Polytechnics in the South. Therefore, it will be advantageous if the AICTE make use of the ISTE expertise to the extent possible in their industry-institute linkage activities.

4.10. Training and Guidance in getting autonomy and accreditation

Most of the institutions are not aware of the importance of getting autonomy and accreditation and the procedure and preparation needed to acquire them. AICTE may consider a scheme for training the faculty and staff of various institutions in the process of acquiring autonomy and accreditation and prepare them for getting these. Considering the rapport and access of ISTE with the technical institutions in the country, the implementation of the scheme can be entrusted to ISTE.

4.11. National Centre for Educational Consultancy

With the expertise of its staff and its access to the expertise available in all technical institutions across the country, ISTE is planning to set up a National Centre for Educational Consultancy. This Centre will take up international consultancy work also. It will be highly desirable if AICTE cosponsor this scheme with necessary control over the functioning of the Centre.

4.12. Special Surveys and Studies

AICTE needs special studies and surveys to collect information and data before planning new schemes and activities. Studies / survey of training needs of teachers, effectiveness of summer / winter schools, employment chances for various branches of study, status of industry- institute interaction etc are always essential for planning activities of AICTE. These studies can be entrusted to ISTE which can carry them out most effectively with minimum effort and cost.

4.13. Management Information System

ISTE has already a collection of up-to-date data on technical education system. With support from AICTE, ISTE can further develop it into a full fledged management information system for technical education. Such a MIS will quicken the decision making process in the AICTE and thereby increase its efficiency.

4.14. Information Dissemination

For the average teacher in the technical education system the major source of getting information about the system is the ISTE publications like the Newsletter, Indian Journal of Technical Education and the ISTE Handbook. By virtue of its membership activities and summer / winter school programmes, information collection is quite easy for ISTE. AICTE may consider strengthening these publications and also introduce new publications such as:

- (i) Indian Journal of Continuing Education.
- (ii) Journal of Industry- Institute Partnership.

4.15. Grant to Professional Societies

AICTE has a budget provision to provide financial assistance to professional societies. Since ISTE activities are directly linked to the technical education system, a fixed percentage of the budget provision may be reserved for ISTE. Such a grant can support ISTE activities like seminars and workshops at national and

international levels.

5. SUMMARY

There are many areas where the objectives of AICTE overlap with those of ISTE. While AICTE's main concern is the coordinated development of technical education facilities, ISTE's priority is the development of the teachers and students in the system thereby contributing to the quality and relevance of various processes in the system. ISTE is already associated with AICTE in teacher training, learning materials development and information dissemination. A number of specific areas where linkages can be further developed between the AICTE and ISTE have been indicated. It will greatly benefit the technical education system

if AICTE make use of the organizational strength and expertise of the ISTE in as many activities as possible. Details of such linkages can be worked out jointly by the AICTE and ISTE.

REFERENCES

1. The All India Council for Technical Education Act, 1987.
2. Memorandum of Association and Rules of ISTE.
3. Dr. P. J. George, " Role of ISTE as a National Professional Society in the promotion of Technical Education Indian Journal of Technical Education, April - June, 1993.

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