

## **National Workshop on Quality Assurance and Accreditation 12-13 May 2013 Summary of deliberations**

UKIERI in partnership with National Board of Accreditation and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India brought together over 200 participants for a two day workshop on Quality Assurance and Accreditation on 12-13 May in New Delhi. The objective of the workshop was to discuss the prevalent accreditation practises followed by India and internationally with focus towards the model used by the UK.

The two day sessions covered best practises on the current accreditation models – both institutional and programmes related and the challenges that the state and centre need to address for quality enhancement in institutions.



Rob Lynes, Director- British Council India in his opening remarks highlighted the importance of quality assurance as one of the key indicators of an evolving and expanding Higher Education system. He mentioned the role of UKIERI which is providing a platform for joint learning and sharing of best practices and models across key areas identified by both India and the UK government. He also emphasised the need for a holistic approach towards addressing quality assurance and accreditation.

In the inaugural address, Shri Ashok Thakur – Secretary (Higher Education), MHRD commented that accreditation is a diagnostic tool for educational reform. He also shared the details of National Accreditation Regulatory Authority (NARA) which is currently under review by the parliament. He welcomed the timely efforts of UKIERI to bring together all relevant stakeholders like Planning Commission, University Grants Commission, National Accreditation and Assessment Council, All India Council for Technical Education, National Board of Accreditation and state Higher and Technical education representatives to contribute their thinking on the way forward.

Shri Thakur shared the government's plans on Quality Assessment and emphasized the need to create multiple agencies for quality assurance. He was also of the opinion that investigation and judgement by the same organisation is creating lack of credibility in accreditation. He mentioned that the reforms being recommended in the education system will hugely depend on creating capacities amongst institutions for accreditation leading to a Global Platform for Accreditation systems.



He hoped that the understanding of the national and international models will initiate discussion on the possible framework that needs to be developed in India to meet the needs of the thousands of institutions here.

Shri Pawan Agarwal, Adviser-Education, Planning Commission in his address spoke about the **current challenges** that India is facing towards implementing mandatory institutional accreditation. He listed these out in key 5 areas:

1. *Capacity*- Only 1/4<sup>th</sup> of Indian Universities and 15% of colleges are currently accredited. This means many more agencies for accreditation are required. It also means relooking at the current guidelines for affiliation which is in place for Universities.
2. *Compliance*- In the US education system, accreditation is voluntary and linked to government funding. Since majority colleges in the Indian education system are state approved/funded this would require state government intervention. He recommended linking scholarships, education loans etc to accreditation as one of the possible incentives.
3. *Value* – It is essential that accreditation reports should be looked at as a tool for improvement to build capacities of institutions. This is currently not in place.
4. *Disclosure* – It is critical that the summary of reports issued by accrediting agencies is available in public domain for parents and students for them to take informed decisions. This will ensure credibility.
5. *Methods* – The parameters for assessment should be relooked at. More emphasis should be given to research and teaching orientation. Infrastructure, recruitment, technology usage are some of the other areas that need to be carefully addressed.

He emphasized measuring of learning outcomes as an essential indicator for assessing the quality of the institution and the programme.

Andrew Jackson, Counsellor Knowledge Economy, British High Commission chaired the second session on Institutional accreditation models and systems of India and the UK. He stated that the UK is committed to sharing the best practices from the UK model and to support Indian systems.

Dr H Ranganath, Director- National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) explained the current system of institutional accreditation that NAAC follows. He explained the **seven criterion for assessment** currently being followed by NAAC:

- o Curricular aspects
- o Teaching-learning and evaluation
- o Research, consultancy and extension
- o Infrastructure and learning resources
- o Student support and progression
- o Governance, leadership and Management
- o Innovative and best practices



He mentioned that the increase in the demand for Higher Education has led to establishment of institutions of higher education of heterogeneous nature. The need for a dependable quality assurance mechanism has therefore gained importance. The competition among HEIs is reflected in the rising significance and popularity of accreditation that attempts to measure the talent catching capacity. He was of the opinion that since Higher Education is evolving; the diagnostic tools also need to be innovative. He advocated the need to institutionalise quality so that institutions self improve, reform and quality becomes self sustaining.

Dr Carolyn Campbell, Head of Networks and Partnerships from Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK (QAA) shared the UK model of institutional accreditation. She explained that the UK Higher education providers are only recognised but not owned by the government and have a lot of autonomy. However, all UK higher education, irrespective of how it is funded, is underpinned by the same quality assurance framework.

Dr Campbell detailed out the QAA process of accreditation. QAA reviews at institutional level, the quality and standard of higher education provision and not at subject level or research. Dr Campbell explained that the QAA works with students who are increasingly involved in both internal and external reviews. She also compared the US and the UK system of accreditation and also the recent policy changes being introduced for Quality assurance in the UK.

Dr Melinda Drowley, Head of Standards, Quality and Enhancement from Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK (QAA) shared the UK Quality code for Higher Education. The Quality code can be bifurcated into- Setting and maintaining threshold academic standard, Assuring and enhancing academic quality and information about HE provision. She explained the components of Quality code and how it is being constantly developed based on stakeholder consultations and group discussions.

The third session deliberated on the models and systems currently prevalent for programme accreditation. The session was chaired by Prof Ashok Saxena- Director ABET and Vice Chancellor Galgotia University. He shared the ABET experience with Outcome based education and how it has impacted the US education system. He also explained how outcome based education can become an enabler of change if implemented effectively.

Dr Dinesh K Paliwal- Member Secretary, National Board of Accreditation (NBA) described the process followed by NBA for programme accreditation and the significance of accreditation at national and international level. Dr Paliwal explained the different parameters of accreditation which have been set for each discipline and for each level. The parameters of accreditation are the set of individually assessable outcomes (Graduate Attributes) that are the components indicative of the graduate's potential to acquire competence to practice at the appropriate level.

Dr Raj Agrawal- Director, All India Management Association (AIMA) focused on the need for linking accreditation to institutional mission and vision. He also pointed out the right kind of accreditation is required for sectoral development.

The fourth session brought together the key stakeholders of Indian education system from various regulatory bodies and educational institutions to highlight the importance of accreditation for Quality Assurance. The session was chaired by Dr D K Bandyopadhyay- Vice Chancellor, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.

Dr A S Pant- Vice Chairman, All India Council for Technical Education spoke about the exponential growth of technical education since 1990 and the increasing participation of the private sector. He pointed out that this expansion has resulted in disparity- geographically, private/public funding and in academic parameters of assessment. He also focussed on the challenges in technical education in India like poor student/faculty ratio, less number of PhDs, publications, citations and patents, lack of industry institution partnership and employability of graduates which needs major improvement. He then detailed out various Quality Improvement schemes introduced by AICTE to push the Quality assurance agenda.

The other panellists in the session included Dr R K Khandal, Vice Chancellor- Gautam Buddha Technical University, Prof K Lal Kishore, Vice Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Anantapur, Prof Rameshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor- JNTU Hyderabad and Prof P Jayaprakash Rao, Chairman- Andhra Pradesh State Council for Technical Education.

Prof Rao spoke about the importance of a better strategy for accreditation which will focus less on penalising and more on incentivising. He also provided details of how accreditation is being implemented in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the issues around affiliation and accreditation.

Day two of the workshop began with the session on the need for outcome based education and how it is being currently implemented. Dr D K Paliwal shared details of how NBA is facilitating outcome based education. He explained that the outcomes are developed in line with programme specific criterion and



the assessment happens at multi level. Dr Paliwal highlighted that NBA has been organising multiple faculty development and management development programmes, evaluators orientation programme etc to help institutions understand the process of evaluating outcome based education.



Prof Dinesh Singh, Vice Chancellor- University of Delhi spoke about the importance of hands-on approach to education which is more practical and less theoretical. He emphasised on the need to differentiate between skills and knowledge, encouraging openness of mind. Prof Singh focussed on the development of analytical and quantitative skills for knowledge enhancement and facilitating outcome based education.

The next session brought together the policy makers who detailed out the road map for ensuring Quality Assurance in higher and technical education. Prof Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairman- Indian Council for Social Science Research chaired the session.

Shri Amit Shukla, Deputy Secretary- Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development presented the current framework of quality in India and also in the backdrop of the 12th Five Year plan. He stated that Quality assurance in Indian Higher Educational Institutions is centered around the concept of “fitness for purpose”. He also detailed out the rationale behind the RUSA scheme (Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan) which is being launched to address the need for expansion, up gradation and quality improvement of higher education system. He detailed the components of National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010, (NARAHEI Bill) which has been introduced in Lok Sabha. Shri Shukla also encouraged the state representatives to disseminate amongst the State HEIs, the need to undergo assessment, accreditation and familiarize them with the processes required. He also stated that state governments should adopt mandatory accreditation as one of the norms for deciding state funding / intervention in a particular State Higher Educational Institution.



Dr Renu Batra, Joint Secretary- University Grants Commission (UGC) highlighted the UGC mechanism for Quality Assurance and the new regulation for mandatory accreditation for all HEIs. She detailed the rationale behind bringing in mandatory accreditation which is necessary for making all HEIs fully quality compliant. Dr Batra remarked that quality assessments need to be linked to a system of rewards and disincentives and quality in higher education



be treated holistically. She stressed that both teaching and research must be viewed as key determinants, particularly for universities.

Session six focussed on views from the state representatives on the current accreditation mechanisms being implemented amongst states. The panellists included Shri P Vaiphei, Commissioner-Higher & Technical Education, SCERT &

Adult Education, Manipur, Smt Megono Ligeise, Joint Director- Higher Education, Nagaland, Dr. S. Dasgupta, Director of Technical Education, West Bengal, Prof. A. Balasubramanian representing Karnataka, Prof. T. Thyagarajan representing Tamil Nadu and Prof S Kak, Vice Chancellor, Mahamaya Technical University.

Some of the **key points** which emerged from this session include:

- There are already set mechanisms in some states to ensure quality assurance and accreditation. These need to be highlighted, encouraged and best practises shared with other states.
- Some states have set up Councils for assessment of Higher Education which can be further strengthened and made independent like Tamil Nadu.
- North Eastern states require more attention for assessment and accreditation due to geographical and access restrains.
- To effectively implement the accreditation, more flexibility should be provided to institutions to choose various accreditation agencies.
- Infrastructure and capacity building initiatives should be encouraged for state accrediting and quality assurance agencies.
- Some states have adopted ERP system to manage the heavy workflow and to ensure timely resolutions to the queries around accreditation which could be further replicated.
- Language, medium of instruction and assessment, faculty capacity etc needs to be emphasized for ensuring quality.
- Accreditation and assessment for Higher and Technical education will require separate framework and methodology. However, a common framework should be adopted for having uniformity in state level Quality Assurance and Accreditation.

It was encouraging to see that there was unanimity from all state representatives on the emerging and urgent need for mandatory accreditation to ensure quality in education.

In his Valedictory note, Shri Ashok Thakur- Secretary (Higher Education), MHRD reiterated the need for a robust accreditation system which will help improve the quality of education in years to come. He clearly stated that the Indian system needs force multiplier to improve capacities of current accreditation agencies. The Secretary remarked that there is a need to reform the affiliation system which is will guard the institutions from unnecessary interference. He welcomed the support that UKIERI, QAA and NBA has provided in creating awareness around Quality Assurance and the right platform for connecting all stakeholders.

As a follow up to these discussions, Shri Thakur recommended a delegation visit of key stakeholders from India to Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) under UKIERI. This visit could help in better understanding of the Quality Code established in the UK for Higher Education that sets out the expectations that all providers of UK Higher Education are required to meet. A similar Quality Code could then be looked by the Indian regulatory agencies.

He also invited representatives of QAA to undertake a candid review of the current accreditation processes undertaken by various Indian regulatory agencies and provide recommendations based on their understanding and expertise.

