CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In the present times, the importance of education, especially of higher education, is constantly growing as knowledge-based industries are now occupying the centre stage in the process of development. While school education is necessary for creating base while higher education is extremely important for providing the cutting edge. Higher education is a powerful tool to build knowledge based society. Higher educational institutions contribute to the growth of the nation by providing specialized knowledge and skilled manpower.

India has the third largest educational system in the world after the United Nations of America and China. During the XIth Plan, India moved from an "elite" system to higher education to a "mass" system when the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) crossed the threshold of 15%. This increase in GER has, naturally been accompanied by an increase in the number of higher education institutions serving the population. From 26 universities and 695 colleges at the time of independence, we have risen to 574 universities and 35,539 colleges today. This is a 20-fold and 46-fold increase in the number of universities and colleges, respectively. (GOI, 2013b).

Such an unprecedented expansion of higher education has been a response on the one hand to accommodate the large number of aspirants of higher education, and on the other to the political and social pressure to make higher education socially inclusive by making it accessible to all communities. Moreover, the question of GER and educating the youth has gained additional significance given the critical stage of development that our nation is going through. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates, by 2020 India will have 116 million workers in the age group of 20-24 years as against 94 million in China. To take advantage of this demographic dividend (indeed, to prevent socio-economic complications arising out of a large unemployable young population) India urgently needs to strengthen its
higher education systems, in order to prepare this massive workforce for productive employment (Ibid.).

But, the rapid expansion of higher education in India came at a cost in quality. It has been chaotic and unplanned. The drive to make higher education socially inclusive has led to a sudden increase in number of institutions without a proportionate increase in material and intellectual resources. As a result academic standards have been ignored (Beteille, 2010). Moreover, there has been a rapid growth of private professional institutions owing to increasing market demand for the professionals and the retreat of the state from financing higher education sector. But most of these institutions have been established with profit making as the underlying motive. As a result, the quality of education in these institutions does not seem to be a priority. So, unscrupulous rapid expansion of higher education system in the country and paucity of resources are mainly responsible for the deteriorated standards of higher education in the country (Singh and Sarkaria, 2007).

Further, over the last twenty years, a new paradigm of the function of higher education in society has emerged. While universities still maintain their role as the “conscience of society”, more pragmatic roles have been evolving over time. Universities no longer purse knowledge for its own sake, rather they provide qualified manpower and produce knowledge. With this new economically oriented paradigm, comes accountability. Higher education is to be judged in terms of outputs and the contributions it makes to national development (Brenon, 1997). The objectives of higher education have also changed the time as well as space. Together with the expectation and perceptions of the academic community, the functions of higher education system have changed today to be:

- providing education and training within a structure integrating research and instruction,
- providing professional training,
- carrying out research in a broad range of disciplines and training, qualified people for all fields of employment,
• playing art in regional development and developing international contacts, and
• fostering the intellectual and social development of society (Sanyal, 2003).

In this context, the employability of graduates and their suitability for different employment avenues have emerged as pertinent issues in higher education discourses especially in the one dealing with the quality of higher education.

1.1 CONCEPT OF ‘QUALITY’

‘Quality’ is a much-debated term. With a variety of meanings and connotations, ‘quality’ has been referred to as a ‘slippery concept’ (Pfeffer and Coot, 1991). To illustrate the elusive nature of quality and the confusion associated with it, many authors generally refer to the highly cited words of Pirsig (1974):

Quality ... you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about it. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes, it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist ... So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality?” What is it?

This implies that quality means different things to different people. The Oxford American Dictionary defines quality as ‘a mental or moral attribute, trait or characteristic, a feature of one’s characters a habit’. Quality may refer to the relative nature or kind or character, trait, faculty or skill, accomplishment or characteristic. This dictionary meaning highlights that quality is the nature, kind or character of something. In fact it refers to ‘a degree or level of excellence possessed by a person, thing, unit or system under consideration in relation to
the accepted norms or standards’. The official definition of quality by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) refers it to “totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy given needs.” In the context of education, quality can be defined in terms of satisfaction level of stakeholders viz, students, parents, teachers, government and the society at large for developing appropriate knowledge and skills. It may however be noted that quality of education is situation specific and it is dominated by subjective viewpoints as well as subject-specific notions.

Harvey and Green (1993) identified five different approaches to define quality viz. Quality as exceptional, Quality as perfection, Quality as fitness for purpose, Quality as value for money and Quality as transformation.

The notion of ‘quality as exceptional’ is related to the traditional and elitist academic view that perceives quality as something special, and distinctive. In educational terms it epitomizes excellence, high level performance, passing a minimum set of standards unattainable by most. In this view, quality is achieved if the standards are surpassed. Such focus on exceptionally high standards of academic achievements would normally drive higher education institutions to selective intake.

In ‘quality as perfection’ approach, quality is perceived as a consistent or flawless outcome. It focuses on the specifications of processes. It is also culminated by the interrelated ideas of zero defects and getting things right first time. This view is based on the assumption that if consistency can be achieved then quality would be attained as a matter of course. This dimension of quality is not always applicable to higher education, since no higher education institution could possibly and soberly aim at producing identical or defect-free graduates (Watty, 2003).

The perspective underlying the ‘quality as fitness for purpose’ is conformity with institutional missions as well as capacity to fulfilling customer’s requirements. The interpretation of quality as fitness of purpose is linked to the adequacy of the quality-related intentions of an
organization, which provides a check on fitness for purpose. This way of thinking is of paramount importance to external stakeholders interested in the utilitarian functions of higher education.

Quality as value for money approach perceives quality in terms of return on investment or expenditure. This view embodies efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. It focuses on how the inputs are efficiently used by the process in a manner that they produce the desired outputs. A simple instance could be an attempt to producing more graduates with less cost. This way of thinking seems to be of interest to those who fund higher education including government, administrators, parents and students.

Quality as transformation refers to the classic notion that views quality in terms of change of the learner from one state to another. In educational terms, transformation refers to the enhancement and empowerment of students or the development of new knowledge through the learning process. This notion of quality presupposes a fundamental purpose of higher education in terms of transforming the life experiences of students.

There is also an emerging argument in the literature on the view of quality as culture (NAAC, 2007; Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). Such perspective recognizes the importance of the organizational view of quality as a process of transformation, where each entity is concerned with and acknowledges the importance of quality. This way of conceptualization is related to the intrinsic traits of higher education in which quality is valued as a driving force behind what everyone does in an organization. In connection with this, quality culture is conceived as an organizational culture that involves: (1) a psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitments towards quality, and (2) a structural or managerial element with well-defined processes that enhance quality and coordinate efforts (EUA, 2006). Others perceived quality culture as organizational culture, which contributes to the development of effective and efficient care for quality (Berings et al., 2010). It is concerned more with the behaviour of the people
involved in the organization than the operation of a quality system. As Harvey and Stensaker (2008) argue that a quality culture is not likely to be constructed irrespective of the context in which it is located.

Vlasceanu et al. (2004) opined that enhancement is a definition of quality. Quality as enhancement or improvement: focusing on the continuous search for permanent improvement, stressing the responsibility of the higher education institution to make the best use of its institutional autonomy and freedom. Achieving quality is central to the academic ethos and to the idea that academics themselves know best quality is.

From the above discussion, it may be realized that the concept of quality is amorphous and contextual. Besides, quality is a never ending journey. It is a dynamic concept and process.

1.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In recent years, with the realization of significance of higher education in the emerging economy and also of the problems associated with its quality, there has been a wide range of discussions on the quality assurance in higher education. Different arguments pertaining to the espousal of quality assurance in higher education have been based on diverse perspectives regarding the nature of quality itself. Consequently, there seems to be no universally accepted conceptual framework of quality assurance in higher education. A perusal of a number of studies and individual viewpoints would testify this notion.

Chaffee and Sherr (1992) state that quality assurance is a system based on the premise that everyone in an organization has a responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the product or service. When put in the university context, quality assurance requires a whole-institution approach for a complete transformation to quality involving top-level commitment, followed by substantial and comprehensive re-education of all personal.

Barnett (1992) is of the view that quality assurance implies a determination to develop a culture of quality in an institution of higher
education, so that everyone is aware of his own part in sustaining and improving the quality of the institution.

Vroeijenstijn (1995) explains quality assurance as ‘a systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and improvement.’ Such a view of quality assurance is quite widely accepted.

UNESCO (2004) describes quality assurance as a systematic review of educational programs to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. Similarly, INQAAHE (2005) defines quality assurance as ‘all those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures, which through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each program’.

Bajaj (2006) argues that quality assurance is a by-product of ongoing efforts to define the objectives of the institution and have a work plan to achieve them and to specify the checks and balances and to evaluate the degree to which each of the tasks is fulfilled. It has to be ensured that whatever is done is done efficiently and effectively for education with standards that enhance the image of the contribution of the institution. There should be no leadership deficit in executing innovative interventions in teaching methods, support system, curricular enrichment and resource management.

In the opinion of Tulsi (2001) quality assurance gives accountability to the end users i.e. industry business concern and society at large and makes effective change in the organizational function by empowering individual staff members to affect quality enhancement initiatives in their own work in the context of collaborative culture. In general, quality assurance brings out the description of quality initiatives and identifies stages of improvement to be carried out. The assurance process now identifies different approaches from within (internal quality assurance) that need transformation in the institutions for better outcomes.
Gautam (2000) argues that an effective quality control, monitoring of academic performance to maintain the standards of education, examination and research in all the institutions should constantly be undertaken. The quality assurance is a key word which is to be seriously applied to the system of higher education. Accreditation, assessment and academic audit are its basic components and should be enforced on the institutions to provide the desired information and status of an institution.

Ponmudiraj, (2006) opines that in higher education quality assurance is a complex issue including a number of aspects as universities are expected to move to broaden the range of their knowledge missions. In the quality assurance processes which are now emerging, a much, wider range of factors is being considered.

Nigavekar (2001) states that "The measurement of quality embraces a good bit of work-selecting evidences, making provision for both acquisition and analysis of data, and setting an appropriate standard of performance and setting-up the mechanism to exercise judgements on performance."

Sharma (2004) gives five essential aspects of quality education namely, quality syllabus, quality faculty, quality teaching and evaluation, quality research, and quality character. According to him, quality faculty includes their academic and research eminence, intellectual competence as measured by command over the subject, ability to build an argument in a cogent and coherent manner, communicative competence as reflected in clarity of thought and expression and above all, their creative competence as signified reflected character of teaching. All teachers may not be alike as far as above mentioned characteristics are concerned. But one thing is true that everybody should strive to improve quality.

Pond (2010) argues that it is quite clear that education in the 21st century presents challenges to quality assurance that were unimaginable just a quarter century ago. And if we are to have viability and credibility in whatever quality measures we adopt in 21st century,
we must open ourselves to other stakeholders, the community, employers, professional organization, peer institutions and especially the students themselves.

Dubhashi (1994) suggests that the quality of a programme can be examined by analyzing (i) quality of input, (ii) quality of process and (iii) quality of output. In case of higher education it depends on (i) quality of content and technique of education, (ii) the quality of teachers (iii) the quality of infrastructure and (iv) the quality of students.

Biggs (2001) has been of the view that formal evaluations have accountability and compliance focuses rather than the encouragement of continuous quality improvement of the student experience. In most institutions where it occurs, improvement of the student experience is a function of internal review and monitoring processes, usually heavily reliant, nowadays, on student feedback, examiners reports, internal improvement audits, periodic revalidation of programmes of study and staff teams critically self-reflecting on their everyday practice.

Varghese (2006) opines that Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in each of the educational institutions can keep a check on the quality sustenance and improvement processes. The goal of the entire operations is to impart quality education so as to ensure student satisfaction. Student satisfaction is satisfaction with the course quality, with instructor interaction and peer collaboration, and with support services. Student satisfaction will be seen from the student’s assessments of the services provided by the institutions. Student feedback could be used for improving higher education and enhancing the student learning experience in general and also as a managerial tool for adjusting an adopting higher education institution to a changing and tougher economic reality. Student learning, the ultimate measure of academic quality, would improve if students feel more secure about where they are headed and how the college is taking them there. Students expect to attain all a round development by acquiring the necessary academic inputs, leadership, qualities, honing communication and interpersonal skills and the knowledge of the latest
trends in technology. Institutions should provide experiences to the
students to have exposure to the professional life and to gain
confidence to face the challenges in the highly competitive and ever
changing world.

He further articulates that the responsibility of providing quality
education with a student focus, conducting the courses in a proper and
systematic manner through appointment of qualified experienced,
dedicated and caring faculty and creating congenial atmosphere for
academic growth and personality development and providing all the
campus facilities etc rests wholly with the top management. With there
optimum inputs of all types of resources and the managerial input, the
curriculum will be appropriate, effective and relevant and curriculum
transitions will take place effectively, resulting in student learning
which ultimately leads to student satisfaction.

However, Middlehurst (1997) opines that quality enhancement is
part of a wider framework in which quality control, quality assurance,
quality enhancement and transformation are states in the management
of quality. It is argued that the common belief that quality assurance
leads naturally to quality enhancement is not correct, as most quality
assurance efforts are by and large concentrated in accountability; and
accountability and enhancement are not necessarily connected and
sometimes are even in conflict with each other.

The different definitions given above illustrate that quality
assurance is a generic term open to many interpretations. However,
there seems to be a consistent thread that we could find across the
varied perspectives. Besides, some common elements are also
apparently highlighted. Accordingly, a quality assurance system in
higher education institutions may be described as the totality of the
policies, values/attitudes, procedures, structures, resources and
actions devoted to ensure continuous improvement of quality of the
educational processes. Quality assurance is also viewed as an all-
embracing term covering all the policies, processes and actions through
which quality of higher education is maintained and developed.
The definitions have also emphasised accountability and improvement independently or conjointly as central dimensions of quality of higher education. The advocates of quality assurance view accountability as a necessary precondition for improvement. There is also an argument that improvement arising from regular monitoring of the higher education should be at the heart of any quality assurance process. In fact, the renewed interest in quality of higher education since the 1980s centered on two questions: one is related to improvement; the extent to which graduates learn the knowledge and skills necessary for a changing economy. The second is related to accountability; the extent to which higher education institutions spending tax money in the right direction (Westerheijden et al., 2007). Such a situation of tension between improvement and accountability in quality assurance leads to the different approaches to quality assurance.

1.3 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Much of the discourse on quality and quality assurance dwells on issues of values and power relations between and among the different stakeholders in higher education institutions. Such ways of thinking determine the type of quality assurance adopted by a certain higher education institution. Brennan and Shah (2000) argue that as how quality assessment is organized and managed is importantly a question of power, therefore, the adoption of quality assurance approach is based on the conceptions of quality and values of a certain type. They identified four main forms of quality values that underlie different approaches to quality assurance. These values are academic, managerial, pedagogic and employment.

The academic criteria of quality stem from the characteristics of the subject. This type is associated with strong professional authority and academic values.

The managerial value is based on the assumption that good management can produce quality. Hence it is associated with
institutional focus of assessment. The institutional policies, procedures and structures are the spotlight of the assessment.

In the pedagogic category, teaching skills and classroom practices of the faculty are emphasized. This is strongly associated with staff training and development. In this approach, a lot of emphasis seems to be given to the delivery aspect than to the content.

In the employment-focused category, more attention is given to graduate output characteristics, standards and learning outcomes. This approach is normally associated to customer satisfaction in which employers of graduates are usually regarded as customers. It takes into account both elements of subject specific and core characteristics of high quality education.

1.3.1 Different Types of Quality Assurance

The above discussed four categories are elaborated further and applied by Luckett. He argues that quality assurance systems are replete with power tensions; and thus, the focus in analyzing any quality assurance system should not be so much on how quality is formally defined, as on in identifying whose interest is served. Accordingly, key questions such as ‘who is in control of the evaluation? Who initiates and owns it? Is the ownership internal or external to the academic community?’ should be asked in analyzing any quality assurance system.

While adopting the four quality values, Luckett proposed four ways of thinking to quality assurance in universities: ‘collegial rationality, managerial rationality, facilitative rationality, and bureaucratic rationality’ (Luckett (2006) as cited in Kahsay, 2012). Quality assurance in the collegial type is conducted within the norms and values of the academics since it presupposes that academics are in control of the conditions of their professional work. The purpose of this quality assurance is enlightenment of academics and improvement in which academics learn more about their teaching and determine how to improve. The models of quality assurance in this type are typically
controlled and owned internally and locally. The most utilized method in the collegial type is self-evaluation, wherein the academics themselves are the key agents of the evaluation. The academic staff would initiate and design the evaluation of their programs and determine the criteria for making context-specific judgments about quality. The academia owned the evaluation results and they are the primary audience of the findings. The results serve formative purpose never linked to any extrinsic reward or punishment. The effectiveness of this type is based on collegial agreement on improvements made. The conception of quality as excellence fits this type. This is praised for it is most likely to lead to genuine improvement of quality. On the other hand, the fad that the evaluation and peer reviews may lack critical distance; and hence, may become protectionist is a point of criticism against it.

The managerial type is grounded in the belief that good management is the key factor in quality assurance. Corporate management procedures, planning and greater centralization and regulation by management are characteristics of this category. As a response to external pressures, monitoring of academic work through the establishment of institutional quality management systems is believed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of institutions as organizations. Quality assurance is viewed as a management tool to strengthen the institution and the central authority at the expense of professional power. The institution as a whole is the focus of evaluation in this type and the senior managers are the primary audiences as well as the owners of the model of quality assurance. The methods include self-evaluation, followed by validating findings by external peers and then using findings for summative purpose. The management in consultation with quality assurance experts determines the evaluation criteria. The methodological critique of this type is the assumption that human achievement of predetermined goals can be objectively measured against standardized criteria.
In the facilitative type, external authorities or agencies play a facilitative or supportive role in quality assurance. The quality assurance models are owned and controlled externally but are improvement oriented. The criteria used to measure quality would be internally owned. The typical method here is that quality assurance is external audit where the external agency validates the internal quality assurance system; but does not make judgments about quality as such. The evaluators are peer experts who operate on behalf of the external agency but their appointment is mostly approved by the evaluated. The results of evaluation are neither punitive nor linked to funding and the evaluation report is often confidential. This type of quality assurance is useful to stimulate systematic internal self-evaluation and improvement processes. It helps to make institutional quality assurance processes more explicit and institutionalized. One of the drawbacks of this type is that evaluations can be superficial and add little value to the institutional self-evaluation.

The bureaucratic type of quality assurance is based on norms and values that are external to the institutions on which they are imposed. These norms and values are those related to governance and control such as administrative efficiency and system building priorities that are grounded in the instrumental view of higher education. Quality assurance models have accountability and compliance purposes and are externally controlled and owned by a government funded and appointed agency with legal status. The government usually initiates quality assurance and reflects the interests of external quality agency.

The quality assurance methods employed in this type are institutional audit of quality assurance systems, the accreditation of institutions and programmes, evaluation of research and external examination of students. Standardized criteria provided by government are used to measure performance and accountability with a focus on input, output and outcomes. The results of evaluation are linked to sanctions in terms of running a program or institutions and funding. The strength of this type is that it asserts government control and
institutes a standardized model of accountability across the system and uses quality assurance to steer the higher education system towards state defined goals. It is, however, likely to be a reduction of diversity in the higher education system and the process dimension is usually ignored in the evaluation processes. This may drive the academics to a culture of compliance and conformity.

1.3.2 Internal and External Quality Assurance

The above discussed four types of quality assurance can be classified into two broad domains: internal and external. The collegial and managerial types go to the internal quality assurance, whereas the facilitative and bureaucratic types constitute external quality assurance.

The dichotomy between external (accountability-oriented) and internal (improvement-oriented) quality assurance gives rise to a continuous debate in the quality assurance literature that whether the emphasis of quality assurance should be on accountability or on improvement. Besides, whether an appropriate balance between these two may be possible?

Internal quality assurance refers to those policies and practices whereby academic institutions themselves monitor and improve the quality of their educational provision, while external quality assurance refers to supra-institutional policies and practices whereby external bodies assure the quality of higher education institutions and programs (Dill, 2007). It is argued that external quality assurance is in general more accountability-oriented, summative, and judgmental and that it provides only a snapshot of quality, while internal quality assurance is more formative in nature and likely to lead to continual quality improvement efforts and the development of quality culture in institutions (Barnett, 1994; Askling, 1997 and Wiclund et al., 2003). External quality assurance assumes the conceptions of quality as fitness for purpose and value for money, whereas the transformation view of quality is linked with internal quality assurance approach.
Van Vught (1994) argues that, on the one hand, quality assurance systems that only emphasize on collegial peer review without reference to the needs of outside stakeholders like professional organizations, employers and other training organizations risk isolating higher education institutions from the rest of the world. On the other hand, the academic experts of the institutions may not take quality assurance systems seriously and are limited to merely providing accountability to the state. This suggests the need for the right balance between the two. As Boyd and Fresen (2004) put it, the internal and external approaches are not mutually exclusive opposites but are both essential, in relative proportions, for a successful quality assurance system at the higher education institutions. In this regard, the equilibrium between the internal and external mechanisms, mediated by the institutional quality culture, is necessary for the effective implementation of quality assurance in higher education institutions (see Harvey, 2007).

There are, however, arguments that quality improvement is not easily achieved through external quality assurance whatever the official balance between quality improvement and accountability may be (Westerneijden et al., 2007). This suggests that external quality assurance cannot stand alone in effecting quality improvement in higher education institutions. In relation to this, Harvey (1996) argued that an external quality assurance approach in higher education has high probability of leading to a culture of compliance in the end. The academic staff may comply with external quality assurance mechanisms to minimize disruptions rather than to improving quality. External quality assurance is also criticized for its inadequacy to address issues related to actual student learning experience. Genuine improvement, according to Barnett (1999), comes through self-understanding. Other authors also had the opinion that academic quality best guaranteed when the responsibility for it is located as closely as possible to the processes of teaching and learning.
The arguments above suggest that externally controlled quality assurance mechanisms may not necessarily lead to quality improvement, but that they can complement internally controlled quality assurance mechanisms. In this sense, it can be argued that a formal quality assurance system leads to continuous quality improvement when it is internally owned and controlled and the external quality assurance system plays a supportive and facilitative role to the internal practices.

1.3.3 Business Management Approach to Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Some new approaches to quality assurance are gaining ground in education in general and higher education in particular with the intrusion of market in education sector and subsequent commercialisation of education. The standards and procedures of business are being introduced in the field of education for assuring its quality. As Williams (1993) notes that the occurrence of quality management approaches in higher education is a product of the market ideologies of the 1980s and the managerialism that accompanied it. Many higher education institutions adopted the quality management models originated in the world of business and industrial production such as TQM, ISO etc. An account of these management mechanisms is given below:

**Total Quality Management (TQM)**

The concept of Total Quality Management is derived from the Total Quality Control concept originated by Feigenbaum. TQM is a comprehensive philosophy that is grounded in implanting awareness of quality in all organizational processes. A variety of meanings and approaches to TQM have evolved over the past years. Harvey (1995) identified ten issues common in most Total Quality Management approaches and classified them into two categories. The first five issues: a clear customer focus; continuous improvement; quality assurance of internal processes; process orientation and prevention
instead of inspection to achieve quality are the underlying concepts of TQM. The other five issues: management and leadership commitment, involvement of all employees at all levels, teamwork, systematic problem solving, and focus on facts are operational principles of TQM. In this regard, quality assurance, as one of the underlying concepts, is an integral component of TQM and is linked to other components.

TQM is a management philosophy that seeks to integrate all organizational functions (marketing, finance, design, engineering and production, customer service etc.) to focus on meeting customer needs and organizational objectives. TQM empowers the total organization, from employee to the CEO, with the responsibility of ensuring quality in their respective products and services, and management of their processes through the appropriate process improvement channels. The TQM approach emphasizes that in every organization there is considerable dormant potential in its personnel and that this should be given on opportunity to express itself.

TQM is not specific to one type of enterprise. It is a philosophy applied anywhere including educational institutions where quality is required. The concept of TQM, as applicable to academics, provides guiding principles for needed educational reform. There are four TQM principles that are believed to be must at the very basis of education reform, popularly known as "Four pillars of Total Quality Management":

I. Principle of Synergistic Relationships
II. Principle of Continuous Improvement and Self Evaluation
III. Principle of A system of ongoing process
IV. Principle of Leadership

According to the principle of Synergistic Relationships, an organization must focus, first and foremost, on its suppliers, and customers. The very application of the first pillar of TQM to education emphasizes the synergistic relationship between the "suppliers" and "customers". The concept of synergy suggests that performance and production is enhanced by pooling the talent and experience of individuals. This concept emphasizes "the systematic nature of the
work in which all are involved." In other words, teamwork and collaboration are essential.

In a classroom, teacher-student teams are the equivalent of industry’s front-line workers. The product of their successful working together is the development of the students’ capabilities, interests, and character. In one sense, the student is the teacher's customer, as the recipient of educational service provided for the student’s growth and improvement. Viewed in this way, the teacher and the school are suppliers of effective learning tools and environment to the student, who is the school’s primary customer. The school is responsible for providing for the long-term educational welfare of students by teaching them how to learn and communicate in high-quality ways, how to access quality in their own work and in that of others, and how to invest in their own life long and life-wide learning processes by maximizing opportunities for growth in every aspect of daily life. In another sense, the student is also a worker, whose product is essentially his or her own continuous improvement and personal growth.

The second pillar of TQM applied to education is the total dedication to continuous improvement, personally and collectively. Within a total quality school setting, administrators work collaboratively with their teachers and students. The basic premise of this principle is based on a conscious negation of a system of command control blemished with fear, intimidation and an adversarial approach to problem solving. According to this principle it is in our best interest to encourage everyone's potential by dedicating ourselves to the continual improvement of our own abilities and those of the people with whom we work and live. Total Quality is, essentially, a win-win approach which works to everyone's ultimate advantage. Besides, no human being should ever evaluate another human being. Rather self evaluation should be a part and parcel of continuous improvement process.

The third pillar of TQM as applied in academics is the recognition of the organization as a system and the work done within the
organization as an ongoing process. The primary implication of this principle is that individual students and teachers are less to blame than the system in which they work. Quality speaks to working on the system, which must be examined to identify and eliminate the flawed processes that allow its participants to fail. Since systems are made up of processes, the improvements made in the quality of those processes largely determine the quality of learning and the continuous improvement of learning processes would lead to better learning outcomes.

The fourth TQM principle applied to education is that the success of TQM is the responsibility of top management. The school teachers must establish the context in which students can best achieve their potential through the continuous improvement that results from teachers and students working together. Teachers who emphasize content area literacy and principle-centered teaching provide the leadership, framework, and tools necessary for continuous improvement in the learning process.

On the basis of these principles and also taking into consideration practical evidences, we can conclude that the adoption of TQM in educational situations would lead to:

- Redefine the role, purpose and responsibilities of schools.
- Plan comprehensive leadership training for educators at all levels.
- Design comprehensive child-development initiatives that cut across a variety of agencies and institutions.
- Create staff development that addresses the attitudes and beliefs of school staffs.
- Use research and practice-based information to guide both policy and practice.

**International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and its Quality Standards**

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies, at present comprising of 140 members, one in each country. The objective of ISO is to promote the development of standardization and related activities
in the world with a view to facilitate international exchange of goods and services and to develop cooperation in the spheres of intellectual, scientific, technological and economic activities. The results of ISO technical work are published as International Standards.

The ISO 9000 family of standards represents an international consensus on good management practices with the aim of ensuring that the organization can time and again deliver the products or services that meet the clients’ quality requirements. These good practices have been distilled into a set of standardized requirements for a quality management system, regardless of, what your organization does, its size, or whether it is in the private, or public sector. The ISO 9000 certificate for an educational or training organization provides assurance that it is well organized and the outcomes of programmes and courses meet the intended goals and needs of the users. However, it does not necessarily guarantee that the contents of these courses and programs meet particular educational standards. The different criteria of ISO 9000 such as management’s responsibility for setting quality policy, the quality system, contract review, design control, process control, control of non-conforming products, internal quality audits, quality records, corrective action, training etc. though have been evolved keeping in view the needs of the manufacturing sector but these have direct application to education system.

The ISO 9000 begins and ends with the commitment of management and the final part is review of the policy from time to time and applying corrective measures as and when required.

Similarly, ISO 9001 licensed in 1987 by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) refers to a series of standards for quality assurance within organizations. The series of the ISO 9001 standards are designed based on the concept that ‘certain minimum characteristics of a quality management system could be usefully standardized with a focus on process rather than product’ (Abraham, et al., 2000). ISO 9001 is an example of quality management systems; a
set of policies, processes and procedures required for planning and execution in the core business area of an organization.

As is natural to a family of norms, ISO 9001 originally contained five standards (ISO 9000: 1994 version). Later, three of them were revised (ISO 9001: 2000). From the revised standards (ISO 9001: 2000 and ISO 9001: 2008), ISO 9001: 2000 is more genetic and flexible standard that focuses on designing and establishing a quality management system. It also aims at meeting and enhancing the requirements of the customers, organizations and other concerned parties (Bokhari, 2006). ISO 9001:2000 is a process model that integrates the various internal processes within an organization such as management responsibility, resource management, product (and or service) realization; and measurement, analysis and improvement and intends to provide a process approach for project execution.

The objective of the ISO 9001 series of standards is to provide an effective quality system reflecting a company’s practices for producing goods and services that confirm requirements (Halis and Oztas, 2002). It should be noted that this model focuses on enabling an organization to identify, measure, control and improve the various core business processes that will ultimately lead to improved business performance.

Essentially ISO 9000 and ISO 9001 contain a number of requirements, which should be met by a quality system. The certification awarded indicates that the organization is well able to meet the needs and demands of its customers in a planned and controlled way. But the label does not guarantee that the product or the output of the organization is of highest possible quality level.

1.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

A considerable number of studies have shown that the quality of education provided by Indian higher education institutions is subject to variation and only a small percentage of students receive quality education of international standards. The demand for quality education
is high, and with a burgeoning upper and upper-middle class population the universities of the developed world may find a good market for their degree programmes. At the same time fear is being expressed that the Indian higher education scene will, in the not too distant future, have an important western component. If an 'academic invasion' does materialize then Indian policy makers, administrators and educators will have to accept a share of the blame for they have not paid adequate attention to the crucial aspects of financing of higher education and the maintenance of its quality (Powar 2005).

Various committees and commissions on education over the years have emphasized directly or indirectly the need for improvement of quality in Indian higher education system. The concept of autonomous colleges as recommended by Kothari Commission (1964-66) has its roots in the concept of quality improvement. Since the adoption of the National Policy on Education (1968), there has been a tremendous expansion of educational opportunities at all levels, particularly in higher education. With the expansion of educational institutions, came the concern for quality. The constitutional amendment in 1976 brought education to the concurrent list making the central government more responsible for quality improvement (Stella and Gnanam, 2001). The New Education Policy (1986) emphasized on the recognition and reward of excellence in performance of institutions and checking of sub-standard institutions. Consequently, the Programme of Action (P0A) in 1992 stated, “As a part of its responsibility for the maintenance and promotion of standards of education, the UGC will, to begin with, take the initiative to establish an Accreditation and Assessment Council as an autonomous body”.

Further, the National Knowledge Commission observed that the quality of education at most universities leaves much to be desired. Therefore, it is just important to raise the average quality of higher education in every sphere. The time has come to create new institutions in the form of National Universities that would become role models as centres of academic excellence (NKC, 2007). Besides, in Commission’s
view, accountability of higher education system is a critical determinant of quality. But such accountability cannot be created by increasing the powers of government regulators. Institutional mechanisms, based on checks and balances, constitute the most effective system for this purpose. An expansion of higher education which provides students with choices and creates competition between institutions is also going to be vital in enhancing accountability (ibid.)

Furthermore, the Eleventh Five Year Plan with three focal themes of expansion, excellence and inclusion in higher education resolved to ensure a rapid improvement in quality throughout the higher and technical education system by enhancing public spending, encouraging private initiatives, and initiating the long overdue major institutional and policy reforms will form the core of the Eleventh Plan (GOI, 2008). Besides, it recommended that the higher education institutions must subject themselves to internal accountability to their stakeholders with respect to their performance and outcomes (Ibid.).

Similarly, the Twelfth Five Year Plan also asserts that India could capture a higher share of global knowledge-based work, for example by increasing its exports of knowledge-intensive goods and services, if there is focus on higher education and its quality is globally benchmarked (GOI, 2013b).

Thus, quality assurance has been accepted as an important dimension of development of higher education in the country and concerted efforts have been made in this direction especially by establishing and strengthening the regulatory mechanism.

1.4.1 Regulatory Bodies for Higher Education

The University Grants Commission (UGC) with its statutory powers is expected to maintain quality in Indian higher education institutions. Section 12 of the UGC Act of 1956 requires UGC to be responsible for “the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examinations and research in universities”. To fulfill this mandate, the UGC has been continuously developing mechanisms to
monitor quality in colleges and universities directly or indirectly. In order to improve quality, it has established national research facilities, and academic staff colleges to re-orient teachers and provide subject-specific refresher courses. The UGC also conducts the National Eligibility Test (NET) for setting high standards of teaching.

Besides UGC, there are other statutory bodies, established from time to time, which are working with the objective of ensuring quality in higher education in India. Some of these bodies have been strengthened in recent years. These bodies are:

- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)
- Medical Council of India (MCI)
- Dental Council of India (DCI)
- Indian Nursing Council (INC)
- Pharmacy Council of India (PCI)
- Bar Council of India (BCI)
- Council of Architecture (COA)
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)
- Distance Education Council (DEC)
- Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR)

These regulatory bodies prescribe minimum standards regarding infrastructural facilities, duration of programme and eligibility criteria for the higher education institutions and also undertake exercises to recognize/de-recognize the institutions on the basis of their quality audit.

Further, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) set up in 1994 as an autonomous institution under the University Grants Commission (UGC) is entrusted with the role of sustaining and enhancing quality in general higher education. The AICTE established the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) to accredit programmes offered by technical institutions.
1.4.2 Role of National Assessment and Accreditation Council

After eight years of continuous and serious deliberations, the UGC established NAAC at Bangalore as a registered autonomous body on 16th September 1994 under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. The milestones in the emergence of NAAC can be identified as follows (Stella, 2000):

1986 : UGC constituted a 15-member committee on Accreditation and Assessment Council under the Chairmanship of Dr. Vasant Gowarikar.

1987-1990: Nine regional seminars and a national seminar organised to debate Gowarikar Committee report.

1990 : Dr. Sukumaran Nair’s project report submitted to UGC that reflected a consensus to have an accreditation agency accountable to UGC.

1992 : The revised New Education Policy reiterated all round improvement of educational institutions.

1994 : Prof. G. Ram Reddy committee appointed to finalize the memorandum of association and rules and regulation of the accreditation board (July 1994).

1994 : National Assessment and Accreditation Council established at Bangalore (September 1994).

The establishment of National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) in 1994 has been to make quality an essential element in higher education through a combination of internal and external quality assessment and accreditation criteria. During the Tenth Plan, NAAC was strengthened with the opening of four regional centers so as to speed up the accreditation process. The main objectives of NAAC as envisaged in the Memorandum of Association (MOA) are to:

- Grade institutions of higher education and their programmes;
- Stimulate the academic environment and quality of teaching and research in these institutions;
- Help institutions realize their academic objectives;
Promote necessary changes, innovations and reforms in all aspects of the institutions working for the above purpose; and

Encourage innovations, self-evaluation and accountability in higher education.

The procedure laid down by NAAC for assessment of institutions of higher education has also undergone a sea change over the last decade to objectively evaluate these institutions for being excellent and relevant in the globalizing economy (Stella and Gnanam, 2001). There are a number of quantitative indicators, classified into seven aspects that are in vogue to accredit an institution of higher education:

**Curricular Aspects** (Compatibility of the programmes with goals and objectives, Initiation, review and redesign of programme, feedback on programmes and interaction with academic peers and employers and programme options)

**Teaching-learning and Evaluation** (Judging students knowledge & bridge/remedial courses, teaching-learning process & use of new technology in teaching, co-curricular activities, examination process & innovative evaluation methods, recruitment of faculty & faculty development programmes, evaluation of teaching, research and work satisfaction of faculty & monitoring and rewarding successful teaching innovation and Access to national and/or international linkages)

**Research, Consultancy and Extension** (Promotion and sustenance of research culture and research output, freedom to publish in academic forum and publication, benefits of consultancy to the institution and society, faculty participation in extension programmes and the extension activities conducted so far and resources to conduct extension activities and service provided in the area of expertise)

**Infrastructure and Learning Resources** (Physical facilities, maintenance, optimal use of infrastructure, library, computer facilities, laboratories, health services & sports and physical education, hostel, canteen, guest house and others)

**Student Support and Progression** (Progression to employment and further study, pass and dropout rate and student achievement,
alumni association, its activities and alumni profile, financial aid to students, personnel and academic counselling and placement services).

**Organisation and Management** (Organisation structure and functions and powers of functionaries, human power requirement & recruitment to staff, performance appraisal & new technologies in communication, welfare schemes & grievance redressal mechanism, budgeting and auditing procedures and resource mobilisation and effective utilisation)

**Healthy Practices** (Complementary System like self-financing courses, need-based courses, national/international linkages for teaching and research, industry linkage, educational innovations such as credit system, examination reforms and modular curriculum, working with specific mission and goals, awards won by the faculty and others.

These seven criteria of NAAC are very exhaustive and take care only that the organization is well organized and the outcome of the programmes and courses meet the intended goals but also take care of the fact that education is meant to provide for overall development of the students and as such how is the institution performing in the field of sports and co-curricular activities. It also looks into the fact that the course contents are regularly updated to keep pace with the requirements of the society and these are in conformity with the vision of the institution.

In this regard, Sambrani (2009) comments that the NAAC agenda of quality assurance has made a profound impact on the institutional perception of quality. The past decade has witnessed a situation where colleges and universities are adopting innovative methodologies so that quality assurance mechanisms have become an integral part of the higher education. One such innovation is the establishment of internal quality assurance cell (IQAC). IQAC will open up new vistas for attaining the professional development among the stakeholders.

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* Now known as Governance and Leadership.
** Now known as Innovative Practices (Sometimes also called Best Practices).
One of the important functions of IQAC is to develop realistic and attainable quality benchmarks for each of the academic and administrative activities of the institution. IQAC also needs to identify areas where motivation and training is required. In this context NAAC has brought out a number of publications on quality related activities to help institutions understand the essence of quality.

Although NAAC claims to be ensuring self improvement, but institutions and other concerned feel it is still more or less external quality assurance in its nature and mechanism. The performance and possibilities of achieving quality indicators differ with local constraints. There is growing emphasis on internal quality assurance along with external quality assurance mechanism.

1.4.3 Quality Concerns in Indian Higher Education and Recent Policy Discourse

In recent years, the issue of quality of higher education has attracted much of the attention of the policy makers in our country. In the context of unprecedented expansion of higher educational institutions especially in the private sector and the predominating tendency of viewing higher education in the terms of needs of the employment market, the quality assurance in higher education has assumed greater significance. Besides, in the face of emergence of globalised knowledge economy, the quality of educational institutions and that of human capital produced by them has become a significant factor in deciding the competitiveness of any country at the global level.

But, despite the increased consciousness for quality and excellence in higher education sector, it has been a general realisation that except at a few top-level institutions, quality is serious concern. NAAC has so far completed accreditation of only 140 out the 378 universities and 3492 out of the 14000 colleges. The results of the accreditation process thus for indicate serious quality problems. Only 9% of the colleges and 31% of the universities are rated as ‘A’ grade and the rest fall in ‘B’ and ‘C’ categories (GOI, 2008).
Further, as per the Times Higher Education (THE) Rankings 2013-14, no Indian university or institution has found a place among the top 200 institutions.

Furthermore, according to the recent National Employability Report, 47% graduates not employable in any sector of the knowledge economy because of lack of requisite skills (Aspiring Minds, 2013).

On the other hand, a number of bodies/committees constituted by the Indian Government have criticised the functioning of different regulatory bodies and their inability to ensure quality higher education in the country.

The National Knowledge Commission (2007), in its *Report to Nation* contends that the multiplicity and the rigidity of the existing regulatory structure is not conducive to the expansion of higher education opportunities in India (NKC, 2007). Because in its view, the system as a whole is over-regulated but under-governed. Therefore, the Commission has emphasised the necessity to overhaul the entire regulatory structure governing higher education and has recommended the setting up of the Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE) as an independent regulator. The proposed IRAHE shall be responsible for setting the criteria and deciding on entry. It would be the only authorized agency to accord degree granting power to higher education institutions. It would also be responsible for monitoring standards and settling disputes. It would in addition, license agencies to take of accreditation. The role of the University Grants Commission (UGC) would be re-defined to focus on the disbursement of grants to, and maintenance of, public institutions in higher education. The entry regulatory functions of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the BCI would be performed by the IRAHE, so that their role would be limited to that of professional associations (ibid.).

Similarly the *Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education* constituted by the Government of India in February 2008 under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal recommended that the
multiple regulatory bodies including the UGC in higher education sector should be replaced with a National Commission of Higher Education and Research (NCHER). Committee was of the view that the multiplicity of regulatory mechanisms has fragmented the higher education sector from a policy perspective.

Such recommendations found their expression in the Eleventh Plan document which envisaged that higher education institutions must subject themselves to internal accountability to their stakeholders with respect to their performance and outcomes. They need to set their own goals and targets to assess their achievements and subject themselves to peer review. They should be subject to an apex regulatory institutional mechanism that must be at an arm’s-length from the government and independent of all stakeholders. The main function of the regulatory mechanism would be of setting and maintenance of standards as also to evaluate performance and outcomes. The regulatory framework must be conducive to innovation, creativity, and excellence in higher education (GOI, 2008).

However, at the same time this document while recognising the important role played by different regulatory bodies in laying down a strong foundation of higher, professional, and technical education and expanding its base throughout the country contends that consequent upon the major structural changes that have taken place during the last 25 years or so in the domestic education system and its growing linkages and involvement with the international education providers, the context of higher, professional, and technical education has undergone a paradigm shift. It is, therefore, imperative to review the changing role that these organizations are expected to perform in the context of global changes, with a view to enabling them to reach out, regulate and maintain standards, and meet the challenges of diversification to enhance access and maintain the quality and standards of higher, professional, and technical education (ibid.).

The Twelfth Five Year Plan envisages that accreditation will play a central role in the regulatory arrangements for higher education.
Accreditation will be mandatory with clear incentives and consequences. In order to handle large-volume accreditation, multiple accreditation bodies (in addition to NAAC for institutional accreditation and NBA for programme accreditation) would be established. In order to facilitate student mobility and academic articulation, it is important to develop easily comparable, comprehensible and consistent qualifications throughout the system. A new accreditation law that provides for accreditation by independent non-profit agencies registered with a national accreditation authority is currently under consideration. While, the proper institutional structure would only emerge once the new law is enacted, capacities of existing agencies, NAAC and NBA should be enhanced in the interim. Indian institutions would also be encouraged to obtain programmatic accreditation from a select group of credible international accrediting bodies (GOI, 2013a). Thus, there has been a policy discourse in our country to reform the regulatory mechanism in order to ensure quality of higher education. Such a discourse has persistently argued for the development of a higher education which can compete at global level through the production of knowledge-intensive goods and services.

Such an argument has also been finding its expression in recent speeches to academia by the President of India Sh. Pranab Mukherji, who time and again lamented the poor quality of Indian institutions vis-à-vis higher educational institutions of developed as well as some of the developing countries like China, Brazil, Malaysia etc. Recently, while addressing to the conference of Directors of National Institutes of Technology Mr. Mukherjee said: “It is not difficult to see where our institutions stand today vis-à-vis the best in the world. In two reputed international rankings of universities – the QS ranking and Times Higher Education ranking – not a single Indian university or institution finds place in the top 200 ” (The Hindu, 2013). In order to deal with such a situation he called for a revision and upgradation of curricula, examination reforms and promotion of a culture of excellence.
2.1 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The need of quality in higher education is increasing to cater to the ever increasing demands of market, within the country and at international level. The issue of quality assurance--external and internal--has sought the attention of national level institutions such as UGC, NAAC, AICTE, NCTE etc. The criteria adopted by NAAC since its inception has also changed to incorporate the emerging realities and needs of market on the one hand and of student community on the other hand. Hence the findings of the study, based on views and perception of students and teachers, will be of immense use for (i) looking into the relevance of the parameters of quality in higher education; (ii) redefining of existing parameters; and (iii) evolving new parameters in the mechanism of quality assurance in higher education.

2.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The perusal of review of related literature reveals that higher education system needs a change to be more oriented towards market needs in globalising economy, while maintaining a commitment to existing value pattern of a society and keeping a high level of quality maintenance. It is matter of concern that institutions of higher education have restricted themselves to teaching and other two components research and extension-- have not been taken care of the desired level.

The rapid expansion of higher education to meet the need for mass higher education, without corresponding provision of infrastructure facilities and resources, has affected excellence of the system in both developed and developing countries, Evaluation procedures, being adopted by assessment and accreditation councils have helped to assess the level of excellence and maintain it in a particular system and provide a lead to move towards quality assurance in higher education which is a continuous process. In the light of these observations, it is proposed to undertake the research problem entitled:

Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An Evaluative Study
2.3 OBJECTIVES

1. To study performance of university system with special reference to Punjabi University on identified parameters of quality assurance in higher education.

2. To study views and perceptions of college and university teachers on their role performance in terms of identified parameters of:
   i). Teaching
   ii). Research
   iii). Extension

3. To study views and perceptions of university students with regard to quality of higher education and its relevance in the era of globalization in terms of certain identified parameters of quality assurance in higher education.

2.4 DELIMITATIONS

The proposed study was confined to:

(i) Only to three state universities of Punjab providing post graduate courses of study.

(ii) Mechanisms being evolved in quality assurance in terms of annual reports of university system.

(iii) Views and perception of teachers with regard to three major functions i.e. teaching, research and extension.

(iv) Views and perceptions of university students with regard to quality and relevance of higher education in globalizing economic order.

2.5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Quality assurance in higher education connotes commitment on the part of institutions of higher education to ensure a continuous improvement in physical and human resources in the university system to strengthen teaching-learning process to enable the recipients to be skilled to be productive members in market and good citizenship.

Evaluation is the systematic investigation into the process of outcomes of the implementation of a particular educational program,
also synonymous with "program evaluation": such investigations answer calls for accountability, assist in decision making, aid program development and planning, and serve research. ‘Evaluative study’ in the present study connotes compressive analysis and interpretation of progress (based on documentary evidence) in higher education institutions over the previous 10 years of accreditation along with judgmental aspects of teachers and students on excellence/quality and relevance of higher education in socio-economic development of Indian society.