CHAPTER THREE

ACCREDITATION AND ITS IMPACT ON

HIGHER EDUCATION IN GENERAL
Accreditation is a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programmes affiliated with these institutions for a level of performance, integrity, and quality which entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public they serve. In the United States of America, this recognition is extended primarily through non-governmental, voluntary institutional or professional associations. These groups establish criteria for recognition, arrange site visits and evaluate those institutions and professional programmes which desire recognition status; and approve for recognition those which meet their criteria.

According to Kent and Lancour, "Accreditation refers to approval or recognition of one party by another on the basis of some standard".

Further, we can say that the establishment of standards for professional education and evaluation of specific educational programme in the light of these standards are called 'accreditation'.

A: ACCREDITATION
A:1 Foundation of Accreditation:

First, the need of accreditation was felt in the USA due to the certain factors. The factors responsible were:  

1) Rapid growth;  
2) Many autonomous institutions;  
3) Absence of government control;  
4) Political philosophy of freedom;  
5) Insistence on non-interference in educational affairs, etc.

Keeping in view these factors, William K. Seldon, Executive Secretary of the National Commission on Accreditation states:

The singular combination of factors in this country which encouraged the development of accreditation were diverse. A wide geographical spread of population with slow communication and transportation supported the establishment of numerous colleges. Mostly funded by different protestant denominations and later by the Roman Catholics as well, none wished to be subject to standards established by any other denomination or even by governmental authorities. This attitude coincided with the political philosophy on which this nation was founded and with the latter laissez-faire attitude which permeated both the economic and the political life of this country for so many decades. As a result, institutions were founded to meet the desire of every denomination and
the pride of almost every country. With exceptions in a few states, governmental restrictions were seldom imposed. Shoddiness, even fraudulence in education became so widespread that some action became necessary. The federal government was not empowered to act and concerted state action was only a remote possibility.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the number of colleges and universities was increasing rapidly, different types of post-secondary schools were being created to meet the multiplying needs of society, more students were attending a large number of high schools, and programmes of study were being diversified... At that time, there were no commonly accepted standards for admission, courses of study, length of school year, or even definitions of what actually constitutes a college. It was during this period that the demands on the part of high schools for some uniformity in college admission requirements, and the needs of the better colleges for protection against the shoddy institutions, laid the basis for the organization of regional associations of colleges and secondary schools. In the meantime the maintenance and enforcement of standards by these organizations was carried out by membership requirements based upon accreditation.

At about the same time some of the professions were taking the initiative in demanding improvement in professional educational and the elimination of proprietary institutions. As a measure of protection for the public, as a means of improving professional schools, and as a method of attaining their own professional ambitions, these professional associations likewise adopted the
practice of accreditation. Here again non-government agencies were forced to do what government was not able or not permitted to do.

Accreditation took some shape by 1914 in USA after a series of on and off activity and after several decades of introspection there evolved a system which recommended definitions, having testing programmes for the college entrance and eventual nationalising of accreditation first at the secondary school level and then for colleges and Universities through the expansion and linking of regional accreditation associations. Various institutional and specialised accrediting bodies were formed over the years. The period between 1862 and 1914 during which the Land Grant Act was passed has been of immense importance to the American higher education. A second Land Grant Act providing for Black institutions (1890), creation of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1905), founding of Association of American Universities, Association of American Law Schools, College Entrance Examination Board (1900) and founding of the Association of American Colleges (1914) are some of the major developments. Accreditation not only was a product of this period but also shared the characteristics of the society. The term higher education (degree granting Colleges and Universities offering traditional academic programmes and mainly serving full time students)
has slowly been replaced by the term post-secondary education which includes the Universities, 4 year degree Colleges, two year degree Colleges and community Colleges. A variety of non-traditional institutions have started awarding degrees on the basis of credits and started offering a variety of non-credit education programs. All these had to be evaluated by the process of accreditation. Until World War II the accreditation community consisted of six regional associations and a few major professional associations.

By the year 1982 the Council of Post-Secondary Accreditation (COPA) had recognised fifty one accrediting bodies and also identified more than seventy additional organisations which were operating without recognition. There is a radical change in accreditation over the decades which obviously is in favour of the educational institutions. Some leaders in accreditation are trying to enable the institutions to state their educational objectives, and develop means for evaluating their achievements, a mechanism by which accrediting bodies can work in collaboration than as a completely independent unit. Accreditation began with the task of defining educational quality and developed into a process that advances educational quality. Essential elements in the accreditation process thus are (i) a clear statement by the institution of its educational intentions, (ii) The conduct of a direct self study focused on the achievements of these intentions, (iii) An onsite evaluation by a selected
group of peers, and (iv) A decision by the independent accrediting commission. The purposes of accreditation are to see that the educational institutions are adhering to the set out plan of academic programmes have proper infrastructural facilities, competent faculty and also to proper guidance and counselling facility wherever needed to the institution. The other purposes of the accreditation are:

i) To foster excellence in education to the development of uniform national criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness;

ii) To bring in the concept of accountability;

iii) To assist in improving to self-study and review;

iv) To gain confidence in the community that institution has appropriate objectives, maintains conditions which enable it to achieve them and is accomplishing them in a great measure.

Institutional accrediting bodies help an institution look at itself as a whole while specialised accrediting bodies generally will review institutional objectives and the relationship of the programme to the total institution but mainly focus on programmes and are more likely to have fairly specific standards. Accreditation focuses on educational quality and institutional integrity. Basic to the
accreditation process are the institutional self-study and external peer evaluation. The accrediting associations have adopted the view that the best qualified persons to make these value judgements are peer-educators and others who are involved in and devoted to post secondary education.

During the 1950s and 1960s after World War II, many new institutions of post secondary education were established mainly with the societal belief that only through education one can be provided opportunities for greater social and economic mobility. Due to rapid technological changes, number of new educational programmes have been developed. The decade of 1970s was one of the accountability and regulations due to the guarantees demanded by consumers. Beginning 1980s due to the decline in the traditional student enrolments, institutions have planned for stable enrolments and retraining in the faculty which resulted in the review of existing programmes with greater concern for qualitative outcomes and reaching out for non-traditional student clientele. These developments and other such factors have combined to impose severe burdens, constraints and demands on accrediting bodies, particularly institutional accrediting bodies.

As: Non-Governmental Process:

Even though accreditation is a process undertaken by Autonomous bodies, yet Federal and state governments,
professional organisations and certain educational institutions have tried to depart from the accepted principles of accreditation. In spite of the fact that many institutions of higher education in USA are privately maintained through endowments and high student fees they still manage to get federal and state funding through students fellowships and various research programmes. The federal government in turn tries to make use of the accreditation data to determine the eligibility of the institution for funds. This has led to a situation where every institution tries to get accredited even though it is voluntary and a large number of accrediting agencies have been floated sometimes solely with the idea of accrediting institutions of their own. Many industries and philanthropist organisations have also started considering the accreditation of the institutions and programmes as a tool for determining the eligibility for funding. Accreditation reports which are to be confidential were asked to be made public by the legislators and government agencies which obviously is not in the interest of the institutions. Even though many stages through their statutes authorise the education department to accredit colleges and Universities, the normal accreditation process is carried out by an autonomous agency. No government approval is necessary for the formation of an accrediting body except that they have to obtain a charter
to operate as a non-profit corporation or association from the concerned state. There is a community interest for the accrediting body and this body has a strong influence of cost-benefit balance. The most important part of the community interest are: The chief executive of the institutions, the faculty, the student groups, employers of the graduate students and various professional societies and also closely related accrediting bodies.

A: 1.2: Other Components:

In addition to the accreditation process the institutional evaluation in USA has many other components. Notable among them are:

i) State Institutional Licensing and Review: This is present in around 40 states in different degrees. In some states this is largely coordinated with the regional institutional accreditation process.

ii) Regional Institutional Accreditation: Virtually all non-profit and small number of degree granting state approved profit seeking institutions are evaluated every five years by the autonomous regional accreditation system. The institutions receive a major review every ten years and a review of minor changes made and plans for the future at the alternative five year term.
iii) **Institution - Initiated Evaluation and Planning System**

The processes are locally initiated and maintained and the inherent desire of the institution and the faculty to raise their own standards makes this system worth experimenting in other countries. Outside experts are called as consultants and evaluators. The programmes are also evaluated by different systems.

A:2. Accreditation in U.K.

There is a marked difference in the educational evaluation in USA and other countries. The major difference is that US higher education is mostly a non-governmental or autonomous enterprise whereas in most of the other countries education and essentially its funding is controlled by the government. In US and UK the terms University, College and Quality have different connotations. Sixty percent of the eligible go to higher education in US, even though fewer than two thirds graduate. The British system is highly selective, only 15% of the high school graduates being admitted to the institutes of higher education and all of them are full time students. Standards of degrees from British Universities have to be the same, with a very high academic level. In Britain an approximate parity exists between degrees and even their graduations. This adherence to an academic old standard is strictly guarded. Various organizations keep track of the academic quality. The Department
of Education and Science plays a major role. They have different funding councils which also keep an eye on the quality of education imparted. The polytechnics and Colleges funding council, the University Grants Committee and the recently created University Funding Council are some of the main sources of funding. The Advisory Board of Research Council, the Council of National Academic Awards (CNA) and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals also monitor the academic standards. External peer evaluation (External Examiners) is a major factor in the British educational system. The most effective guarantor of academic standards in UK happens to be the academic strength and the responsibility of the staff coupled with a system of external examinerships as practised by the University. The public sector institutions of higher education in the UK continue to place great emphasis on the collective maintenance of academic standards. Performing indicators (PIs) are gaining importance in UK even though there is some apprehension that it may cut into the autonomy of the institution. Application of non-profit performance evaluation techniques such as programme planning budget system (PPBS) and cost benefit analysis (CBA) to the institutions of higher education were not found to be feasible. Relevance, verifiability, freedom from bias and quantifiability must be part of PIS. Jarratt report in 1985 stated that Universities
make little attempts on a regular basis to appraise academic staff with a view to enhance their personal development and successful planning within the institution. It further added that a regular review procedure, handled with sensitivity would be of benefit to staff and to the university as a whole. In considering the form of staff appraisal system for a University the committee identified three objectives:

1) Recognition of the contribution made by individuals;

ii) Assistance for individuals to develop their full potential as quickly as possible; and

iii) Assistance of the University to make the most effective use of its academic staff.

The committee recommended an annual review on this basis as is the practice in the best staff development system used elsewhere. Jarratt report and the government concern about the preservation of academic quality made the committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) establish a committee and many of their points are incorporated in the CVCP/UGC (1986) list of performance indicators.

The contrast between the UK and USA helps to explain the delay in the development of PIS in UK. The American
The system is regarded as a mass system with open access in contrast to the elite system in the UK with its low age participation rate and high entry standards. The American post-secondary education is extremely large and has a highly diverse patchwork of institutions that differ greatly in quality, character, purpose, in size, complexity in fiscal stability and in sources of funding.

A.3. Accreditation in India:

Since the 1950s the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has been obliquely making references to the word accreditation as a substitute for what was prevalent in the country as a regulatory mechanism.

Some thought was entertained by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) in the 1970s, but the matter was shelved for the time being.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed formation of an Accreditation Council as a mechanism for maintaining standards.

After AICTE became a statutory body it has announced the formation of a National Board of Accreditation.
Some four years ago, the Department of Electronics (DOE) launched a scheme called Department of Electronics Accreditation Committee (DOEACC). The scheme is designed to take up the computer training programmes operated by the training industry in the country and extend governmental recognition for such of those in the Industry who fulfill the requirement prescribed by DOEACC. While going through the National English Daily Newspaper "The Times of India" June 17, 1994, the heading reads as "18 NIIT Branches Derogonised" and the contents are stated as:

The government has derecognised 18 branches of the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) and 28 other computer "teachings shops" across the country after their failure to adhere to certain minimum standards.

The institutes were given a three year government accreditation in 1990 to conduct basic computer courses as part of a scheme to meet the increasing shortage of computer professionals. The accreditation was given by the department of electronics (DOE) through the scheme DOEACC.

DOEACC sources said the accreditation was withdrawn because these institutes did not send their students to the tough national examinations to qualify for 'O' level certificates.

The DOEACC co-ordinator, Brig (retd.) V.M. Sundaram, said the accreditation was even extended by a year but the institutes failed to make use of the opportunity. The DOEACC had stipulated that each accredited branch should field at least 25 candidates and 40 per cent of whom must pass, on consecutive occasions to retain
the provisional accreditation granted in 1990.

Apart from 18 NIIT branches, the derecognised institutes include five of Datapro Information Technology, three each of Brilliant's computer centre and Apple computers.

Some of the other derecognised institutes are:
Marathe's radio electronic institute, Bombay; Information Vision, Madras, Utron branch, Lucknow; Span branches at Jayanagar and Rajaji Nagar, Bangalore; Priyadarshini institute for computer aided knowledge, Hyderabad.

The quality of training imparted at private institutes can be gauged from an analysis of the results of candidates fielded by 10 centres in an 'C' level examination. Not one institute qualified for accreditation even when the minimum number of candidates was lowered from the mandatory 25 to 20 or 15 or 10 with 40 percent marks. The result was no better even when the pass percentage was lowered to 35, 30, 25, 20 or 15.

Apart from the basic course, the DOEACC has granted accreditation to private coaching institutes to train students for higher level courses such as 'A' level (diploma), 'B' level (graduation) and 'C' level (postgraduate). The qualifying examinations are conducted jointly by the computer society of India and the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunications Engineers on DOEACC's behalf.

On the next day, i.e. on 13th June, 1994, there was a counter attack to the above news item in "The Times of India"
issued by the NIIT under the heading "Notice Issued in Public Interest". The contents of the notice read as:

This refers to the news item regarding "Derecognition" of certain branches of various computer training institutions. NIIT wishes to clarify the following:

1. The news item is factually incorrect and misleading.
2. All NIIT education centres are fully functional & operating as usual. The student admissions and registration process, the complete education delivery facility including Mind Rooms and computer rooms as well as all student services including the examination systems, placement services, American Council on Education accreditation facility, professional practice through industry collaborations etc., are fully operational.
3. NIIT remains committed to delivering state of Art quality computer Education.

From the above news items we can see the status of the Accreditation system and surely one may fall in confusion by going through these news items. One more interesting news item appears under the heading "Bar Council Rules flouted by Delhi University" in "The Times of India" 18th June, 1994 which states:

Large number of students of Delhi University's campus Law Centre (LC) are allowed to take their examinations even though it means flouting bar council regulations prescribing minimum attendance. This is largely due to the rather "understanding attitude adopted by the University authorities."
All students of three years courses are expected to have a minimum of 66.6 percent attendance in their class lectures each year. It is a requirement of the bar council that a student should attend at least two thirds of the lectures during a year.

Indian education system, secondary as well as post-secondary is inherited from the British system for obvious reasons. There are no regrets for having inherited the systems as one could see the higher education in UK is even now considered to be one of the best in the world. Both in UK and in India education is highly subsidised by the state whereas in USA there is abundant privatisation. The only private University in UK is the University of Buckingham. Universities in UK maintain almost a common standard and there is an approximate parity between degrees and even their graduation into firsts. The British system is highly selective, only 15% of the high school students find their way into Universities. In USA 60% of those eligible join the institutes of higher education. In India higher education is not selective and the majority of those eligible to join institutes of higher education do join. Post-Independent India has witnessed many reforms in secondary and post-secondary education. This involved changes in duration of secondary education from the initial eleven
years to the present twelve years and in the type of secondary education. Vocationalisation as part of secondary education was introduced with the main idea that this may lead to reduction in the enrolment at the colleges. This did not yield the expected results. Certain Universities during early 50s had a honours degree which made one eligible to go into teaching profession and also directly enter the Ph.D. programmes (Universities in the former Madras State). A gap of one year made the honours graduate eligible for the M.A. Degree and a research dissertation submitted during a period of one year yielded the M.A. degree. However, this system is now dispensed with.

As in USA, there are a large number of institutes of higher education in India, which vary in character, course content and also academic standards. An added phenomenon in India is that in many institutes of higher education the medium of instruction is in the regional language. This has created a new dimension in the Indian higher education system, whereas in USA the accreditation councils accredit various institutes and grade them so as to enable the migrant students to choose their institutes, so far no such attempt is made in India. More than in USA and UK it is of utmost importance to have the accreditation system operate in India.
There is a mushroom growth of institutes of higher education in India partly due to the necessity to cater to the ever increasing secondary school leaving children and partly due to political considerations. The magnitude of the problem will be evident if one looks into the various types of institutions India has. As per the latest information of the University Grants Commission there are 152 Universities, three institutes established under the state legislative Act, 31 institutions deemed to be universities and 10 institutes of national importance which include the institutes of Technology, and all India Institute of Medical Sciences, as on 1st March 1993. As per the UGC annual report of 1991-92 there are 7513 Colleges which include university and affiliated colleges. There are 7764 professors, 15,392 readers, 34,573 lecturers and 2,426 tutors/demonstrators in the University departments and colleges of the Universities. Among the Universities there are nine central Universities (AMU, BHU, Delhi, Hyderabad, JNU, JMI, NEHU, Pondicherry and Viswa Bharti) funded cent percent by the Central government through UGC and the rest by the state governments. Among the Colleges, some of them are University Colleges (a very small number), Constituent colleges (majority of them with the University of Delhi), affiliated colleges and now the autonomous colleges. There are also a large number of
Polytechnics. In addition to the traditional Universities, the open Universities have come into existence. The first open University was started in Andhra Pradesh and then the Indira Gandhi National Open University was started in New Delhi. Now there are four open Universities in India. Over 30 Universities also have colleges institutes/directorates of correspondence courses which impart education through postal tuition and contact classes. Besides, these institutions of higher education there are a large number of private professional colleges especially in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu.

During 1991-92 under the non plan expenditure the UGC has paid 16,123.79 lakhs to the Central Universities, Rs. 3,441.93 lakhs to the deemed Universities and Rs. 753.52 lakhs to the state Universities out of which 193.60 lakhs is paid for specific purposes. Among the colleges, Delhi University Colleges are paid 5684.22, BHU 47.37 and the State Colleges 36.88 lakhs, under the plan expenditure, 4797.03 lakhs were paid to central Universities, 10.61.90 for the deemed Universities, 7298.11 for the state Universities. Central University colleges got 256.37 and state colleges 2055.33 lakhs. Overall the UGC has spent Rs. 26,626.81 lakhs for non plan expenditure and Rs. 16979.35 lakhs for plan expenditure during 1991-92.
One of the main aspects of accreditation is to see that the infrastructural facilities are available in any institution. In addition to the funding by the University Grants Commission, the state Universities and Colleges get funded by the State Governments. The UGC not only has the obligation to fund the institutes of higher learning but also in consultation with Universities and other bodies concerned would take all steps as it may think fit for the promotion and coordination of University education and for the determination of standards of teaching, examinations and research in Universities as per the UGC act of 1956.

It is relevant here to mention that the central and state Universities have a lot of autonomy in pursuing their academic goals. Whether or not all the Universities are doing justice to maintaining the academic standards with particular reference to international standards of higher education is doubtful. There is a general tendency to adhere to the principle of status quo without any commitment to the upliftment of the quality of education. Any proposed change always attracts an insurmountable opposition, most of the times on trivial unacademic issues. This is the price one pays for the higher degree of politicization of the education system. Unless academic standards
are maintained, academic content constantly reviewed, the higher education system will be fossilising very shortly. Accreditation process in a way can bring in parity in the University system and also can pave the way for better understanding of the elements of higher education.

Over this concern for urgent need of accreditation is also shown by National dailies and eminent academicians. Kanwaldeep Singh in his article "Move afoot to grade colleges, Universities" published in Times of India dated 3rd March, 1995 states as under:

"Some noted educationist administrators are working on a mechanism to rank colleges and universities countrywide on the basis of teaching research and infrastructure, among others.

Once in place, the mechanism will ensure students and employers have criteria more rigorous than just ‘reputation’ for comparing institutions.

'It is to be a quality assurance system, an AISI mark in tertiary education' says Prof. K.B. Powar, Secretary General of the autonomous Association of Indian Universities.

An autonomous body for assessment and accreditation was envisaged in the action plan of the national education policy in 1986. But it took a series of committee meetings and seminars, many conducted by UGC for the idea to take shape.
The concept borrows much from the US experience in tertiary education wherein a number of accreditation bodies have evolved norms for assessing the motley group of universities and sought to ensure 'self-regulation' and quality improvement over eight decades.

The educationist-administrators here got the process going by setting up a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), complete with a memorandum of association and rules and regulations. It envisages that a team of distinguished scholars will on the invitation of universities and colleges, inspect and evaluate.

The next stage — and this is challenge for any appraisal exercise in tertiary education — is evolving objective criteria for evaluation. This may be completed in six months.

The NAAC has outlined parameters for appraising institutions: curriculum design, objectives, student services, resources and so on. But if it were to get down to brass tacks, these would be too general to be pegs for evaluation. Even something like 'quality of teaching', a basic appraisal criterion in the NAAC theme paper, needs to be more focussed. Should a teacher be evaluated, for instance, on the basis of research publications? Or should more weightage be given to students' opinion? Should the appraisal be by existing students who might judge by 'non-academic' criteria, or by alumni who are likely to be more 'mature'?

Principal of Delhi University's Hindu College P.V. Verma suggests that in evaluating universities,
the extent of 'in-breeding' (recruiting local students) in faculty appointments could be a criterion. 'When outsiders do not have a chance of being appointed, decline sets in'.

His other idea - that colleges be ranked on the basis of quality of admissions and results, however, runs into a familiar problem. In assessing examination results, should quality of student intake also be considered? If so, what must be the weightage?

But problems with 'objective criteria' is not the only reason why the NAAC has a rough road ahead.

Says Vijender Sharma, a Left teacher representative on Delhi University's Academic Council: 'The aim is to maintain a few autonomous colleges, and phase out tertiary education for people at large'.

Seethalakshmi S, in his article "UGC Proposes to Accredit Varsities" published in Times of India dated 5th May, 1995 states as under:

"The method of admission, curriculum design, organisation and facilities are some of the criteria by which institutes of higher education will be assessed, the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) has decided.

NAAC, an autonomous body of the University Grants Commission (UGC) whose headquarters is in Bangalore, is set to begin an exercise of assessing such institutions across the country."
NAAC director Arun S. Nigavekar said the council would begin its assessment with the accreditation of deemed universities, autonomous colleges and a few central universities this year. The main stage of the assessment process would be an institutional self-study. 'This will bring about the total participation of the faculty, management, students and the support staff,' he said.

The views of students would form an important base for the accreditation, Prof Nigavekar said:

An inspection team comprising persons of high repute would then visit the institution to see if the self-assessment was accurate, Prof. Nivagekar added.

The inspection report would restrict itself to the analysis of facts and the identification of strengths and weaknesses. It would refrain from criticising individuals, he clarified.

He said the executive committee of NAAC would then review the results before taking a final decision on the accreditation.

There would be no grading as Yes or No was the rule for accreditation, he said.

According to Prof. Nigavekar, year and a half after the NAAC decision, the institution would be asked to state any corrective action it had taken. 'We are here to build the confidence and credibility of the institutions', he added.

But what remains to be seen is whether the institution comes forward to accredit and assess themselves since it is an entirely voluntary process.

UGC chairperson Armaity Desai had hinted at the inauguration of the NAAC that it might end up like the
UGC - without teeth. There was to be a push factor for institutions to offer themselves for accreditation, she said.

However, many experts were in support of the process being voluntary, at least in the initial stages, considering the wide range of higher education in the country.

Prof. Nigavekar felt the evaluation would help the state government and other funding agencies to decide on the budget for these institutions. All higher educational institutions except medical, engineering and dental colleges would come under its purview, he added.

In 1992, UGC had been asked to set up a mechanism to assess and accredit institutes of higher education. Following deliberations at nine regional seminars it was decided to establish the NAAC at Bangalore.

The representatives at NAAC are from UGC, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), central and state universities, professional bodies and senior academicians and educational administrators, it is headed by a senior academician with the status of a Vice-Chancellor of a central university."

Eminent academicians M.Viz. M. Gopalakrishna Reddy and K.S. Chalam in their article "Mechanism for Accreditation" published in University News dated 12th June, 1995 state as under:

"The concepts of accreditation and assessment have been in use in the Indian context for quite sometimes. However, the initiative to make the concepts operational
began with the National Policy of Education 1906 Programme of Action document that mentioned the setting up of an autonomous council on Accreditation and Assessment. The Programme of Action 1906 recommended that, 'Excellence of institutions of higher education is a function of many aspects: self evaluation and self improvement are important among them. If a mechanism is set up which will encourage self-assessment in institutions and also assessment and accreditation by a Council of which these institutions are corporate members, the quality of process, participation, achievements etc, will be constantly monitored and improved.

It is proposed to develop a mechanism for accreditation and assessment for maintaining and raising the quality of institutions of higher education. 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 accreditation and assessment and Council as autonomous body. It will evolve its own criteria and methodology for accreditation and assessment. Its main function will be catalytic, it will not be enforcing any given norms and standards. It will analyse and evaluate institutions and their performance to facilitate self-improvement. This Council will be supported by a professional Secretariat in the performance of its functions' (POA, P 46).

Accordingly the UGC appointed a committee to recommend the mechanism to set up the Accreditation and Assessment Council (AAO) in 1987 with Dr. Vasant Gowarikar as the Chairman. The Committee gave its report in 1988 and it was put up for discussion at four regional workshops in the country. The first workshop was held at Andhra University during 27-28 October, 1988.
In the meanwhile the Parliament had passed the Act No. 1987 to establish the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). One of the important mandates of the Act was to set up a National Board of Accreditation (NBA). The Council under the dynamic leadership of Prof. S.K. Khanna constituted the NBA last year. Even before the establishment of the NBA, the AICTE and the Department of Electronics had initiated some kind of accreditation of computer training institutes that came up in the private sector. It is reported that around 500 institutions out of 600 who have applied for accreditation have been 'accredited' under 'O' level or the foundation level.

Affiliation, Recognition, Accreditation:

The experience of accreditation gained through these exercises brought out some confusion in the use of concepts like 'affiliation', 'recognition', 'Accreditation', 'regulation' and so on. The concept of affiliation is more than 100 years old in our country as it came to us along with the university education. The university system has developed a mechanism to affiliate institutions on the basis of certain criteria. In fact all the higher educational institutions in the country have been functioning under this set up till the computer boom developed the so called training institutes in the private sector. These institutes have also been trying to legitimise their courses by getting some kind of 'recognition' from government or a statutory body to market their courses. The concept of 'recognition' used by these institutes is different from 'affiliation'. The affiliated institutes in the university system are a part and parcel of the university while 'recognition'
institutes are independent units with different curricula. The concept of accreditation, an American concept, came to us through the concepts of autonomy, accountability and liberalisation. The concept of accreditation was evolved in USA in a different context. The functions of the accreditation organisations are similar to the 'affiliating' functions performed by the universities in India. As the concept of affiliation was not popular in USA, they invented accreditation. Therefore, the popularity of the concept and its wider use depends upon the extent in which we impinge upon the affiliation functions of the universities as most of the technical institutions and the courses are a part of the university system now. The success of the NBA or AAC depends upon the popularity of autonomous colleges. It is only these colleges that go in for independent status and ultimately crave for accreditation for legitimacy and approval by the user community.

New Controversies:

The accreditation organisations, we are afraid, will bring new controversies and dual operations in the system of higher education in future. The problem of legal status of degrees awarded by universities, but not accredited, and certificates awarded by accredited institutions but not authorised to award degrees become an issue to be resolved by the government. Further, the state universities are established under the Act of a Legislative Assembly to offer courses and award degrees while the accreditation organisations established by central government impinge upon the autonomy of the university by asking the universities to get their courses accredited by the Council. Though the legal
authority of the Central Act is much wider than the State Act, the finances of the universities and colleges come from the state budget. Therefore the state university has the authority and legal status to offer courses and award degrees. But with the establishment of NBA and AAC, the state universities are in a dilemma. In fact, the philosophy behind the accreditation is to certify and inform the public and government that the minimum standards of independent private institutions are ensured. The universities have academic bodies to conduct examinations, organise on-site visits, and to certify the standards of institutions affiliated to them. Now, this function becomes redundant. This does not mean that we should not encourage accreditation of institutions. But, the institutions that should come under accreditation be different from the ones which are under the control of established universities. There are several hundreds and thousands of independent institutions that are coming up in private sector and without any 'regulation' by any legal body. They need to be accredited by the NBA and AAC. It can further strengthen its operations by encouraging autonomous colleges and institutions. Unfortunately accreditation has come into this country much before the autonomous colleges becoming popular. The success of the accreditation bodies depend upon the success of these autonomous colleges. This is exactly what the committee on Accreditation and Assessment Council mentioned in its report. It said that 'While the central motive to the accreditation system has come from the requirements of college autonomy, it also answers the need for a systematic and regular means
for assuring that colleges and universities are functioning effectively. This is different from the U.K. experiment of assessing the performance indicators of universities in providing grants to the universities.

**Mechanism for Accreditation:**

Now coming to the questions of developing a mechanism to accredit the institutions of technical education, it is already mentioned in the preamble of NBA that certain norms and standards will be provided to certify the quality of the institutions and programmes. The committee on Accreditation and Assessment Council of the UGC has already indicated 12 qualitative criteria relating to the institutions’ activity and responsibility. It is mentioned that a provisional two year ‘candidature’ status can be given to institutions after satisfying certain criteria which can be extended up to six years. The accrediting associations can be supported by annual fees from the candidates’ organisations.

The process of management of the NBA should remain to be democratic in nature. It is suggested that a sixteen member commission can be elected at the annual meeting for a staggered three year term, with one third of the positions being vacated each year. The member institutions will be represented by the administrative head of the institution in the annual meeting to elect the commissioners. The Chairman of the Commission and Associate Chairman will be elected for one year term by the association representatives. To begin with the Chairman will be appointed by the AICTE. The NBA with the consent of the AICTE will appoint a Director of Evaluation to conduct the day to day affairs of NBA. His term of office will be for 5 years and could be
terminated by the Commission for valid reasons. The NBA will be made to function on zonal basis in course of time. The initial expenditure for the functioning of the NBA will be provided by the AICTE. Similarly, the initial impetus will come from AICTE by selecting 20 good autonomous institutions as members of Accreditation Board.

Central government funding of institutions will be possible to those which are accredited. However, the state governments are free to fund, recognise and charter institutions but they will not be given central funds if they are not accredited. The Accreditation Board will in course of time develop linkages and positive influence on the standards of school level technical institutions and also other professional institutions in the country. The democratic process of the Board should provide opportunities to students, parents, professionals and the user industries to take part in the deliberations to decide the criteria of accreditation. This will ultimately make the concept of accountability operational through accreditation. It is also necessary to involve representatives and experts from international organisations to standardise the quality of technical education to reach international standards. It is hoped that this accreditation mechanism will promote independence and scholarship in and among the educational institutions in the country."
REFERENCES


