INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION - A NEW FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has specified the norms for according approval to technical institutions. These norms mostly cover quantity and quality of physical, human, instructional, financial and other requirements. In addition to this, achievement of the institutions are seen for their relative grading. The criterion developed by AICTE does not provide a framework to the evaluators and institution developers for identifying and initiating action. For institution building Coalignment Model comprising of Domain, Mission, Credibility and Network can be used for performance appraisal framework for polytechnics. In this paper, critical factors related to these variables and related processes have been suggested. The above approach, if adopted by National Board of Accreditation, will help in determining status, weaknesses, corrective measures, and intervention and strategy to an institution progressing on the task of building up excellence in addition to approval of the institute.

(1) INTRODUCTION

Raju (1995), pointed out that technical institutions are to work towards improving their quality, increasing their effectiveness and continuously striving towards excellence. The process of appraisal will show the health of an institution and offer guidance for

(i) improvement of the performance of institution in quality and content of education (ii) developing new programmes (iii) stimulating improvements etc., continually in technical education in the country. For evaluation of the quality of technical education imparted by various technical institutions in the country, attention has to be focused on several aspects. Balu (1981), identified the following critical success factors related to performance of technical institutions such as (i) Social Tune (ii) cost effectiveness (iii) Course development and implementation (iv) corporate reputation (v) Investment in human capital (vi) Development of Physical facilities (vii) Student relation (viii) Employers relations and (ix) Public responsibility. The relative importance of each of these factors will vary from institution to institution, depending on the stage of development. Yet, each one of these is considered critical, as failure in one will gradually lower the institu-

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tional performance in many other factors, in course of time.

Pareek (1994), has identified stages of the life cycle of development of an institution, namely; birth, Identity Seeking, Growth, Maturity and Development. At each stage of development an institution experiences a crisis. The resolution of this crisis, at each stage, through creative solution, helps in building institutions. Institution Building as a self-renewal process can be achieved through special efforts to improve process effectiveness of an institution. Report of Planning commission (1993), has pin-pointed strategic actions to achieve the set mission and goals and strive for building excellence in polytechnic education such as Technical manpower planning, Curriculum Development. Building relevance and quality of curricula, Improving instructional effectiveness. Evaluation and certification, Optimisation of resources. Accountability, accreditation and quality assurance, industry as equal partner. Management structure, Building strong work culture etc. Rajamony (1967), in a study of Profile of Polytechnic, considered Student input, Student output, Financial Resources, Faculty and Instructional processes, Management and Environment, as elements responsible for the excellence of an institution.

From the above, it can be inferred that different experts on technical education have different perspectives regarding achieving excellence in institutions. Therefore, there is a need to develop a new framework of institution building, leading to excellence by having a wholistic view of the health of an institution.

2. PRESENT SYSTEM OF INSTITUTION EVALUATION FOR ACCREDITATION

AICTE has been vested with statutory authority for planning, formulation and maintenance of norms and standards and accreditation of technical and management education. AICTE has set up a National Board of Accreditation to periodically conduct evaluation of technical institutions or programmes on the basis of guidelines, norms and standards specified by it to make recommendations to the council regarding recognition or derecognition of the institution or the programme. At present, accreditation is intended to accomplish the following objectives : (i) to provide guidance for the improvement of existing institutions and programmes and (ii) to stimulate the process of bringing about continuous improvement in technical education in the country. Main factors considered in assessment of institutions for accreditation are : (i) Administration (ii) Objectives (iii) academic information (iv) Admission and Calender (v) Examinations and Evaluation (vi) Teaching faculty information (vii) Staff qualifications (viii) Infrastructure facilities (ix) accommodation and (x) Finance and fee structure.

Besides the performance profiles on the major factors (Criteria) the evaluation Committee during its visit, collects information on the general atmosphere; enthusiasm and dynamism of the faculty, students and staff; quality of work. The committee also examines, and verifies in detail the written information complied and supplied by the institution.

The six year accreditation is graded as 'A', 'B', 'c' and 'No accreditation' based on the cumulative index.

The above system of accreditation does not provide a wholistic framework of the institution and sufficient guidelines for its overall improvement/development.

National Conference on accreditation in Madras (Feb. 10-11, 1995) and kurukeshtra (Feb. 13-14, 1995), organised by NBA (National Board of Accreditation) also emphasised the need for accreditation as a means of quality assurance and quality control for improvement of the quality of technical education in the country. It recommended the need for establishing some bench mark by considering some selected reputed institutions.

(3) FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTION BUILDING

Institution building has been defined by different experts (Hill et.al (1973), Selznick (1975), in a variety of ways. Pareek (1994) synthesized these ideas and defined institution building "as the process of establishing or transferring an organisation into an integrated and organic part of a community in a way that will help the organisation play a proactive role in projecting new values and becoming an agent of change in the community."

In the institution building research some models of institution building have been proposed. The inter University Research Programme in Institution Building (1966) identified aspects of institution building such as leadership, institute doctrine, resources, internal structure and the actions related to performance of functions; institute's linkages with other institutions and social groups and institutionality to gauge achievement. In another model, Perlmutter (1965) indicated seven elements for development of "social architecture" (i) Concepts (variables) concerned with the human dimensions of institution building (ii) concepts concerned with the objective reaching process (iii) Concepts relating to creation of environment (iv) Concepts relating to creation of essential organisation structure (v) Concepts that concern the realisation of positive value (vi) Concepts regarding change of feeling, anxiety and emotion and (vii) Concepts relating to general systems models of the organisation.

Both these models identify the variables/ concepts that are of importance in understanding the process of institution building. Hill et al (1973), suggested a frame-work of strategic planning of institutions. Pareek (1994) proposed a cyclic model of institution building with several cycles and each cycle consisting of six phases viz, idea formation, preparation, innovation, consolidation, multiplication and review.

Though, these models have been used for institution building in educational and research institutions, they lack wholistic framework. Thus, there is a need to synthesise these models and suggest a comprehensive framework to be used in institution evaluation for building excellence.

In order to develop a new framework, it is important to identify the context (culture) in which an institution operates. Further, an understanding of defining variables related to this context

and their interlinkage, are essential for developing a model for institution building.

Ahmad's (1982). Coalignment model of a training institute reported in Sharma (1992) can be used for conceptualising polytechnics in Indian context as shown in Fig. 1. It comprises four defining variables namely mission, domain, network and credibility and organisational processes of agenda setting, network building, and task accomplishing, within the context of these variables.

Mission, here refers to the institutions's intent i.e. what it wants to achieve in the long run. Domain defines its influence territory that the institute intends to make an impact upon, network would include linkages with the members of the institute's constituency and Credibility refers to the faith the client system and society has on the institution.
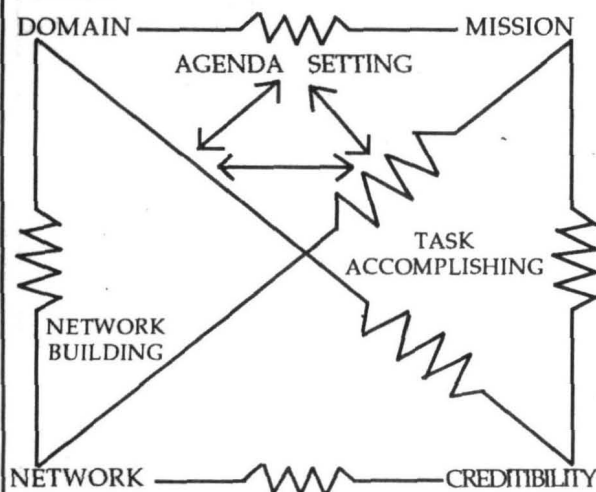

FIG. 1 : A CO-ALIGNMENT MODEL OF AN ACADEMIC AND TRAINING INSTITUTE (AHMAD 1982)

Credibility is of great importance for educational institutions. It would include a number of determinants such as faculty academic achievement, higher standard of students and client system's faith in the advice and wisdom of faculty. The credibility also leads to raising reputation of the institution and helping to obtain finance, good faculty and competent students.

The Model in figure 1 explains the institution's behaviour in terms of the efforts made to achieve alignment between the various defining variables and organisational processes of agenda setting, network building and task accomplishing.

There are six relationships which are to be identified for determining the level of institution building/development :

1. Mission - Domain Alignment
2. Mission - Network Alignment
3. Mission - Credibility Alignment
4. Domain - Credibility Alignment
5. Domain - Network Alignment
6. Network - Credibility Alignment

Depending upon the degree of alignment, it is possible to determine the relationship that which is of low level and needs improvement. Once this is known, the reasons for it can be determined by probing in detail and action can be initiated for increasing alignment of these different variables leading to institution building/development.

In an excellent institution objectives satisfy client needs; faculty is known for the competence in the areas of work and achievements, structure and system meet the requirement of objectives and work in unisom etc.

(4) CRITICAL FACTORS IN INSTITUTION BUILDING

On the basis of co-alignment model presented in Figure 1 and various studies conducted that contribute to building excellence in institutions, the critical factors related to variables and processes have been identified and given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF INSTITUTION BUILDING

DIMENSION	FACTORS/KEY ISSUES
Mission/Goal	- Clarity of mission
Agenda Setting	- Identification of strategic thrust areas for achieving mission - Development of norms for infrastructural organisation in institution for achieving mission
Network/ Constituency	- Proper identification of constituency; Resource; Human, Physical and Equipment and Finance - Inter-institutional linkages
Independence in Operations	- Minimum interference from Government - Autonomy : financial and academic - Freedom with accountability - Financial discipline
Task Accomplishing	- Non-hierarchical organisation structure - Clearly understood personnel policies - Institute's social fabric and organisational culture - Maintenance and monitoring mechanism - Managing by contracting out to industry and others
Credibility Building	- Mission achievement orientation - Output orientation including income generating activities - Target achievement orientation - Internal core group's leadership - Faculty development - Client evaluation and social thrust.

The policy formulators, institution developers and builders, evaluators and accreditators may keep in mind the co-alignment model/framework and various factors relating to variables and processes. This will help in gradual building of institution and ultimately leading to excellence. The instruments/ tools for getting information from different sources and method of collection of information can be decided by all those concerned with building of institution or evaluation. The reporting of outcome can be given on 3 point scale

i.e. below expectation, as per expectation above expectation.

(5) CONCLUSION

The paper discusses the approach adopted for accreditation of an institution and comes out with a model for supplementing it. This coalignment model comprising of four variables and three processes, provides a framework for seeing institutions in totality, determining area of the deficiency and actions needed for institution building.

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