

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MOBILITY PROSPECTS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION*

ANIL SHUKLA
University of Lucknow

TRIPTA TRIVEDI
University of Lucknow

Higher Education in India is facing two major challenges: one is quality and the other is access. The Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education is around 9%, while in the 11th Five Year Plan (2007~2012) it is proposed to be 15%. This almost doubles the capacity of enrolment while per capita expenditure on students in Higher Education has fallen to 20~25%. For this situation, India has a three pronged strategy – increase in the number of Higher Education institutes; increased intake in existing institutes; and emphasis on Distance Education mode. The surge of students towards Higher Education makes the issue of Quality Assurance very pertinent so as to ensure the delivery of agreed standards. Now India's thrust is laid on 'quality with relevance' where excellence should be acquired by few institutions and quality be maintained by all. Thus the apex bodies of Indian Higher Education like University Grants Commission, Knowledge Commission, National Assessment and Accreditation Committee are looking for 'quality gaps' and design strategies to reduce these gaps. Whatever is proposed for maintaining quality in Higher Education in the 11th Five Year Plan and the current efforts being taken are analyzed threadbare in this paper, and the views of academicians, educational administrators, students and other stake-holders are also taken into consideration. The results show that quality assurance process is mostly 'output'- oriented, and effective measures for improvement in the 'process' part are still lagging due to different reasons. Also quality measures are focused on 'Within National Boundaries' and emphasis is laid merely on quality audit and accreditation. This paper critically appraises the pros and cons of quality assurance on the mobility of the students as the number of foreign students in India is dwindling and the interest of Indian students in foreign Institutes of Higher Education is rising. Findings of this study suggest that mere mechanical quality control and quality assurance cannot sustain the interest of the students in Indian Higher Education Institutes and the need is of launching quality enhancement programs in a quality culture environment.

Key Words: *Quality Assurance, Quality Control, Accreditation, Transnational Student Mobility.*

* Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Anil Shukla, Department of Education, University of Lucknow, Lucknow. Pin Code – 226007, U.P., India. E-mails may be sent to anil2000shukla@yahoo.com.

INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of a nation depends on the quality of its higher education. The emphatic fact is that the old sources of development like land, minerals, machinery are less important than the new sources, i.e. knowledge, skill and response born out of resourcefulness of people, which go to constitute their dynamism. The fast developing world has therefore given rightful political priorities to develop human capital through education. The students of developing countries understand well that quality higher education is the only way if they want to climb up to the developed status.

In the eyes of analysts, economists and world leaders, India is a promising country which may become one among the four most dominant economies of the world by the year 2050. A Goldman Sachs report (2003) says that BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) will become a much larger force in the world economy; and India could emerge as the world's 3rd largest economy over the next four decades. Noted economist Peter Drucker also commented that India's time for economic hegemony has come. For these predictions to be true, there is required a combination of vision and action, and assigning of a more active role to higher education.

The recognition of Indian scholars at the global level has led to rising aspirations among the masses in the country. Now students do not merely want education of Sciences or Engineering, but they want quality education which will give them an identity. They don't want to miss any opportunity because of their economic or social background or due to country's infrastructural problem, but they want to be a part of the new revolution which has given a place of pride to Indians globally.

Now, a pertinent question arises: 'How to get quality education?' In India, the number of quality institutes is limited and aspirants with much potential are too many. Thus, with increased economic capacities and liberal government policies, transnational movement in higher education has been steadily gaining ground here. This movement in the era of globalization, on one hand opens ample opportunities, yet on the other hand poses a more fundamental question over the nation's capacity building efforts for quality higher education.

With the WTO agreement education is now not only a service but it is a trade. It is like other commodities which can be sold and purchased. Now, in the export and import of higher education, there is a cut throat competition,

so the cost-benefit analysis has become an essential part of management of higher education of any country. From international mobility of students 'the globe as a village' concept will be closer to be true, but import system may also cause problems for indigenous culture, institutions, economy and to the over all value system. Thus balance in approach is the need of the hour so that basic infrastructure of any country does not collapse but continues to be world competitive in nature.

In India, education was never considered as a trade but it was conceptualized as a liberating force as well as an evolutionary force which enabled the individual to rise from mere materiality to superior planes of intellectual and spiritual consciousness (Joshi, 1998). Now, in the 21st century, socialism, formerly the favorite term of Indian politicians has been replaced by supply side, education market economy and job training. There is optimism in the air. Now, politicians, educators, guardians and students understand well the holistic impact of connectivity on world politics, peace, power, economic well being and the sharing of knowledge (Breck, 2004).

In UNESCO Report (2003) on Higher Education in Asia Pacific region, much emphasis has been given on the education of India, China and Korea and it is argued that this region is going through a period of rapid and far reaching economic and social change driven particularly by (a) globalization (b) economic growth/competition (c) shift from traditional to knowledge based economy.

STATE OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

India, which is home to 17% of the world total population, accommodated in an area which is 2.4% of the world's total area; its higher education system has undergone a remarkable transition from an elite system, having deep colonial roots to an egalitarian system striving to meet the aspiration of a vibrant democracy (Powar, 2000). The number of university level institutions has gone up from 18 in 1947 to more than 300 by 2005 comprising of 13,000 colleges, 350,000 teachers and about 8 million students (Venkatsubramanian, 2004) and is one of the biggest system of higher education in the world.

The number of aspirant youth is increasing day by day in India, thus the enrollment in Higher Education is also increasing. In 1999-2000 there were approximate 2,752,473 students enrolled in higher education, but by 2006, this number was estimated around 9,525,770. The projection of enrollment in Higher Education cautions the policy makers to rethink about their plans to make higher education available to all aspirants.

TABLE 1. GROWTH OF RECOGNIZED UNIVERSITIES FROM 1947 TO 2005

Year	Number of Universities
1947	18
1950~51	27
1960~61	45
1965~66	64
1970~71	82
1975~76	101
1980~81	110
1985~86	126
1990~91	184
1995~96	226
1999~2000	244
2002~2003	273
2004~2005	More than 300

Source: Ministry of Human Resource and Development 2005.

TABLE 2. PROJECTED ENROLLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Year	Number of Students
1999~2000	2,752,473
2006	9,525,770
2011	10,905,806
2016	12,285,842

Source: M. Parhar. 2002. "Enrollment Projection in Higher Education." *N. Delhi, Univ. News* (June).

Former Prime Minister of India Sri Atal Bihari Bajpai (2002) in a meeting of ASSOCHAM Summit stated that a knowledge based society will enable us to leap frog in finding new and innovative ways to meet the challenges of building a just and equitable social order and seek urgent solutions. He unveiled the five point agenda for 'India's Development as Knowledge Society.' This agenda was (1) Education for developing a Learning Society, (2) Global networking, (3) Vibrant Government-Industry-Academia interaction in policy making and implementation, (4) Leveraging of existing competencies in IT, Telecom, Bio- technology, Drug design, Financial services and Enterprise wide management, and (5) Economic and business strategic alliances built on capabilities and opportunities.

Country's vision for higher education is very impressive. Its system is very big and some institutions are world class, but still access to higher education is very poor. University Grant Commission (UGC) in its X Plan admits that:

- Access parameter (formal and informal) rose from 5.8% in 1992~93 to 6.9% in 1999~2000. It is hardly 7.5% in 2005~06.
- There is a lot of variation in the access to higher education between rural/urban area, male/female, different communities and age groups.
- Access parameter in the case of women students rose from 4.02% in 1992~93 to 5.34% in 1999~2000.
- Access parameter in the case of developed countries is around 40%.
- Even in Asia, the access rate to higher education in Philippines is 27.8%, Thailand 19.0%, Malaysia 10.1% and Japan 29%.
- There is higher access in the case of developed countries like 59% in US, 54% in Canada, 33% in Israel, 30% in Germany, 29% in Japan, 22% in UK.
- The Indian access parameter is approximately one sixth of that of the developed countries.

These comments of UGC clearly admit that India is far behind in access rate to higher education from not only developed countries, but from many small Asian countries too. Another important point is that with this poor access rate, it's about 88% of the students are enrolled in the liberal streams like Arts, Social Science, Science and Commerce. Enrollments in the faculties of Engineering and Technology and in Medicine are about 5% and 3.5% and in Agriculture and allied fields about 1.5%. Women constitute about 35% of the students' population (Powar, 2000).

World expectations from India are very high. Even in a report titled 'Global Scenario 2025' by a very famous group Royal Dutch Shell (2006) in Brussels, it is predicted that India will be very powerful by 2025 and it has more potential than even China, though its economy is 10 years behind China. The positive points of India, in this report, are predicted as (a) Indian youth (b) work force (c) IT and construction area (d) modernized agriculture while negative points are (a) complicated democracy (b) caste and religion based social structure.

EXPLORATION OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY PROSPECTS FOR INDIA

Indian youth and world market forces both understand the reality. Indian youth knows that India is recognized internationally as a nation which is providing value added trained human power at a premier level and world is looking for skilled persons in all basic fields with sound knowledge base in

their core discipline and with the ability to adapt to new demands (UGC, 2005~06). So from every corner now, Indian youths are looking for quality higher education which is in demand in the market. In India, the number of quality institutes is limited and in toto, the whole system of higher education is not capable to fulfill the need of all aspirants. With the fresh air of liberalization and booming economy, Indian youth, their parents, Government and even educational institutes are now looking for alternatives. Out of these alternatives 'Transnational Movement of Students' is one. Ilju Rha (2005) writes that China, Hong Kong (China), India, Malaysia, Korea and Singapore are the major importers of education. However among these importers, Hong Kong, India and Malaysia have also exported education to other countries.

Higher education in India is at the crossroads. The World Bank's significant task force on Higher Education and Society (2000) in its report *Higher Education in Developing Countries – Peril and Promise* underlines some challenges which are true in the case of India also. From last 30 years, there is least emphasis on higher education from government side. It is because of the misleading economic propaganda that public investment in higher education brings meager returns compared to investment in primary and secondary schools.¹ Funding, infrastructure, governance and curriculum development are major challenges to Higher Education in India but the most pressing challenge may be analyzed from quality and quantity perspective.

In India, access to higher education for common man is a dream which never comes true. Hardly, 12% population has their reach to higher education. Thus, expansion of higher education is a public demand as well as it is the demand of the time. Even to provide higher education to this 8% population there is a mushroom growth of colleges and universities without quality control. This lack of quality control may have some long term consequences such as unemployment, dislike for manual labour and frustration. In the fast emerging competitive knowledge economy, highly motivated specialists, with special training along with broadly educated mind will be on demand. Thus, quality assurance² along with quantitative expansion is a major challenge before Indian higher education system. This dimension has now started playing crucial role in the transnational mobility of the students.

As India started opening its market for world forces, foreign universities

¹ At individual level this may be true, but as a nation the return of higher education is much more than Primary Education.

² In India there is a lot of variation in quality from institute to institute and State to State. Thus equality in quality is a major challenge.

also tried to market their higher education programs in India. In 1999 about 20000 students went abroad for education; mostly to USA, Australia, U.K., Canada and France (Sharma, 1999). Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) reveals that in 1991~92 only 7353 students went abroad for study and in 1996~97 this number was more or less the same. But in 2005 this picture suddenly changed. Open Door, the Annual Report on International Education says that in USA there are 79736 students from India alone. It looks like there is some contradiction in the records of MHRD India and U.S. report. A reason may be that MHRD will be having the records of only those students, who were moving out through government agencies only. Besides USA, High Commission of Australia says that in 2004, there were nearly 18000 Indian students enrolled in Australia. The Deputy High Commissioner of New Zealand to India Mr. Michael Swain says that 2000 Indian students are studying there. British High Commissioner to India Sir Rob Young remarks that 10000 India students are pursuing Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs in U.K. Irish Ambassador Philip Mc Donough says that 1500 Indian students are studying in Ireland. The Counsellor for Culture, Science and Technology of France Mr. Theierry Audric says that around 800 Indian student are in France (*Education Times*, Dec. 30, 2002). Besides these major countries, many students are enrolled in other countries too. Thus there is no hesitation in saying that more than 10 million Indian students are enrolled in foreign countries.

For Trade of Education, The WTO has identified four main modes (1) Cross Border supply (2) Consumption abroad (3) Commercial presence (4) Presence of natural person. The transnational movement comes under mode 2, i.e. consumption abroad. For all the countries, which are in the export market of education, India is a point of attraction on the name of globalization and looking at the good future of Indian economy foreign universities are trying to attract Indian students through aggressive marketing. But, the spirit of trade should be reciprocal. Analysis must be made about the number of foreign students studying in India and the trend of foreign students in coming to India and study.

A study of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU, 2004) reports that the number of foreign students in India is decreasing year by year. In 1992~93, the number of foreign students in India was 12,765, which shrunk to 7,745 in 2003~04. The number of Indian students going abroad has increased many hundred times, but the number of students coming to India is declining terribly. Why? India has excellent academic credentials. Some institutions here are possessed with world class curriculum and standards, but what we lack is proper vision of the government to take education as a

trade. Government still considers it a matter of social sector.

For attracting foreign students, different India universities and institutions are adopting different approaches (mode 1, 2 and 3, i.e. short terms courses, campus abroad, tele-courses, centre abroad and creating some world class universities/private universities etc.), but the result is not good. Government is not yet clear on the fate of private universities though some of them are doing quite well in this direction. In 2004, maximum enrollment of foreign students was in a private university Manipal (2,031), followed by Pune University (1,416) and Delhi University (1,077). An institute, Dayanand Sagar Educational Institution of Bangalore, admitted 500 Chinese students from Hunan province in 2005.

This supposition is not true that India does not have world class academic institutes. According to the report of Higher Education Supplement in *Times* (Oct. 10, 2005), the IITs of India have been ranked the third best technology universities in the world for the year 2005. Among the science universities the rank of these IITs is 36. No doubt in the list of 101 institutions, twenty six are from USA. Management institutes (IIMs) have their own credentials here. But even then the number of foreign students has declined sharply. In 1993~94, the number of Kenyan students was 3,980, it is now 442 only. In 1995~96 the number of students from Bangladesh was 1,244 but in 2005 it was 319 only. The number of foreign students studying in India in 2005 is reported in table 3.

Prof. A.K. Narang of Delhi University says that in Asian countries foreign students are taking more interest in China, Japan, Singapore, Korea and Taiwan. In 1995, the number of foreign students in China and Japan was around 22,755 and 53,511 respectively but in 2003, it was around 40,000 in China and 100,000 in Japan.

TABLE 3. FOREIGN STUDENTS IN INDIA IN 2004~05

Country	Number
Malaysia	806
Nepal	681
Iran	472
Kenya	442
Bangladesh	319
UAE	232
Yemen	222
Syria	25

Source: AIU, New Delhi (2005).

In India, two modes, i.e. Indian institutes operating abroad, and foreign students joining Indian universities in India, are more effective. Institutes like IGNOU, Manipal university, BITS Pilani, NIIT India, Pune, Delhi, SNDT University, Bombay, Mysore and Madras Universities are making their presence felt abroad. IGNOU has its centers in Gulf countries and African countries and has started looking at South East Asian and some European countries too. BITS Pilani opened its Dubai campus in Sept. 2000. IIM Bangalore is all set to open its branch in Singapore in 2008. Bharti Vidya Bhawan has its many off campuses. Manipal University has students from at least 49 countries and its medical course is very popular.

Economic Times (Aug. 15, 2004) gives some interesting facts about the export of Indian Higher Education:

- About 2% of the students at the Indian School of Business in Management course at Hyderabad are international students.
- Today one in five doctors in Malaysia is a Manipal University alumnus.
- NIIT is present in 33 countries.
- APTECH has global operations in 52 countries with 260 centers abroad.
- The government has set up a committee on 'Promotion of Indian Higher Education Abroad (PIHEAD) under the UGC to act as facilitator and catalyst to empower Indian institutions for the future needs of an internationalized education system.

Foreign students like studying in Indian universities as here medium of instruction is English, academic curriculum is competitive and cost is very cheap. Now, emerging institutes are focusing on quality, reputation and low price. For example IGNOU charges US \$250 for its well reputed management course, for which any developed country would charge at least US \$2,500. Now, not only developing countries but even developed countries students are very much interested here. *Education Times* of Dec. 30, 2002 reports that in 2002 India was the second most preferred destination after Germany for US scholars applying for Fulbright Fellowship.

EFFORTS BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO BOOST IMPORT-EXPORT OF EDUCATION

Indian policy makers are working hand to deal with the issue of import and export of education. WTO has now clearly declared that education is an

internationally tradable commodity, so we must make our commodity saleable. As a result now UGC has identified 10 universities in the country to make them strong enough to come forward for the promotion of India Higher Education abroad. These universities have to showcase their academic programs and superior infrastructure facilities during series of education fairs to be held in different countries. These universities are called 'Ambassadors of Indian Education' by the UGC.

In last 15 years, India has undergone massive transformation on economic, educational, political and cultural fronts. Now, these changes can be easily

TABLE 4. POTENTIAL SURPLUS POPULATION IN WORKING AGE GROUP (2020)

US	- 17	India	+ 47
Germany	- 3	Pakistan	+ 19
UK	- 2	Mexico	+ 5
France	- 3	Brazil	+ 3
Spain	- 3	Indonesia	+ 5
Italy	- 2	Philippines	+ 5
Czech	- 1	Vietnam	+ 4
Russia	- 6	Bangladesh	+7
China	- 10	Malaysia	+ 1
Japan	- 9	Turkey	+ 2
Australia	- 0.5		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; BCG Analysis.

Note: Potential surplus is calculated keeping the ratio of working population (age group 15-59) to total population constant.

TABLE 5. PARTICIPATION IN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION (% OF RELEVANT AGE GROUP IN 2001)

Country	Gross Enrolment Ratio ³		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
China	114	68	13
Philippines	112	82	30
Indonesia	111	58	15
India	99	48	11
Thailand	98	83	37
Malaysia	95	70	26

Source: World Development Indicators (2004).

³ Gross enrolment ratio (GER) is the ratio of total enrolment regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. This is why the ratio can be higher than 100.

felt in the field of education, in the creation and nature of jobs and in the level of disposable income of common people. India's success lies in human capital. US Census Bureau reports that by 2020, not only developed countries but even developing countries like China and Russia will face the problem of work force shortage.

Now, jobs will not be restricted within one country, so it is a priority of the government to use its surplus manpower in world job market by providing quality higher education. In India access to education is far from satisfaction even when compared with South East Asian developing countries.

So now, government is considering alternative ways to make the access of quality higher education to at least 20% of its population, says Sam Pitroda, the Chairman of Knowledge Commission constituted by Government of India in 2005. Prof. Murli Manohar Joshi (2003) the then MHRD Minister remarked in his speech in the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the UGC, that the development of higher education in 21st century features among the highest national policies throughout the world. It is changing radically by becoming organizationally flexible in diversity of programs, in its structure, in its curricula and its delivery system.

Though in the era of liberalization, educational experts are taking transnational movement of education as 'Brain Circulation' instead of calling it 'Brain Drain,' but they are much aware that now higher education is not the basket of 'Social Sector' and if India wants to be strong it has to open it's field of education to all. Now, government looks all set to make domestic higher education system strong so that the needs of not only this country, but the requirements of foreign students could also be fulfilled.

India's transnational student movement is not as planned as of China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan etc. Mostly it is the intrinsic motivation of the students and parents that this number is increasing day by day. However the following types of support are given by government to study abroad:

- Indian Government has made many agreements with different countries to invite students from India to study there.
- The number of scholarships supported by foreign countries and facilitated by Indian government is quite good as far as the case of USA, UK, Germany, France and other European countries is concerned
- Now, Government is planning to provide all help to students who are going abroad for study on one window.
- Bank loans on easy installments for higher study in foreign lands are available in India.

- If the employees of Government/Semi-Government/Autonomous Institutes apply through proper channel to go abroad to study then extra ordinary leave and leave with full pay type provisions are available here.
- Government helps foreign countries to open their offices here and to market their higher education to attract Indian students.
- Government gives space, permission and other facilities if any country wants to organize street shows, education fare or any other mode to attract students.
- Government facilitates foreign currency exchange and instructs embassies to take care of these students in the matters of work permits, health etc.

The Government of India does not run a drive like China to send its students in the pre-designated countries. Here, students' choice, their capacity to pay (in most of the cases) and government's supportive attitude are the key points to enhance the transnational movement of students. India is working hard to export higher education too. In this context following efforts are noticeable:

- The main concerns of the Government in higher education are (a) economic role of higher education (b) expanding access (c) quality and diverse education (d) controlling public expenditure (e) Ensuring international competitiveness.
- Government wants to prepare manpower through universities at par with global standards.
- In India, around 50% of Indians would be in their twenties in 2010 (highest work force in the world). Government wants to make these youths confident, flexible and knowledgeable to effectively confront the challenges of this new century.
- To attract foreign students and to provide quality education 'Special Educational Zones' are proposed with flexible autonomous operative structure (Prof. A. Nigvekar, UGC Head)
- UGC chief further proposes that concept of merit based on student's performance in qualifying exams be replaced by the process which tests the student's ability and interest to undergo particular teaching learning program.
- Opening up private universities, increased international marketing of curricula and programs, establishment of branch campuses, development of international mechanism for education and

- co-operation between academic institutions across countries are some efforts taken by the government in this direction.
- For quality improvement, establishment of 'ERNET' which is exclusively dedicated for education to bring all the UGC funded universities and colleges under a single information domain, is a good beginning. UGC 'INFONET' is also dedicated for quality research.
 - New proposal for establishing few national level institutes to work in collaboration with national research establishments like DAE, ISRO, DBT, DRDO and CSIR etc. for doing five years integrated learning programs blended with research plan, reflect the concern of the government for quality education.
 - Creation of 'e-courseware' to export education is an ambitious approach to get a good share in education business.
 - Establishment of Inter University Centre for International Studies at Hyderabad is a good platform to share different educational issues amongst the SAARC, South and Central Asian countries.
 - To check the quality of education at internal level NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) and NAB (National Accreditation Board) have been made stronger.
 - Government declared its five point agenda for India's development as knowledge society in 'ASSOCHAM' summit, out of which global networking, and vibrant government-industry- academic interaction are very important.
 - UGC has short listed some universities to make them world class, as China promised in its country.
 - For foreign investment in higher education, shape of private universities and opening of campuses in foreign countries are some issues of concern in the report to be submitted by the Knowledge Commission.
 - 'Virtual University Grid' is an ambitious plan of the President of India to bring students of different countries closer.
 - For all this, 31.5% budget of Education was enhanced (Rs. 241150,000 thousand) for the year 2006-07.

Former President of India, Dr. APJ Kalam said in a lecture in Yonsei University on Feb. 6, 2006 that he wants students to be 'Global Knowledge Leaders.' He emphasized that in new education the capacities which are required to be built are (a) research and inquiry (20th century knowledge generation, 21st century knowledge management and value education,

impart skills to students to mine through the sea of knowledge, create life long contributors) (b) creativity and innovation (teach ourselves by teaching others, management of knowledge must move from individual to society, networking island of knowledge to create and innovate) (c) use of high technology, (d) Entrepreneurial (calculated risks for the sake of larger gain but within the ethos of good business) and moral leadership. He proposed a 'Virtual University Grid' to provide the best of education to its member countries based on their core competencies. The proposed university will serve the following task:

- Act as a hub of all the universities of its member countries.
- Ensure collaborative learning and live interaction among the students and teachers.
- Provide the services of international eminence in specialized areas.
- Import education based on its core competence and any student will be able to get quality education at his desktop.
- Network all the teachers' enrichment program.
- Digitalize all the university libraries and make it available for seamless access.

APPRAISAL OF QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES ADOPTED BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT

Government of India does not want to be only the supplier of students to foreign countries but wants to play a significant role in this education business. So on one hand, Government is facilitating in transnational students as 'brain circulation' and provide them quality education with shortest route yet on the other hand it looks that government is affirm to make internal education system strong so that not only deficit could be controlled but a new source of revenue could be opened; and for this India has strong potential.

This trade oriented approach of education has changed the fixed mindsets of educational institutes. This change is caused because of two way interaction between the actions (expectations) of the students and those of the universities. Higher education process not only shapes students expectations but the education process is itself influenced by the character of these expectations (James, 2002). Now institutions are working hard to make themselves presentable, marketable and responsive to the students' expectations. These expectations pertaining to both quality (Am I getting value for money?) and personal relevance (Is this course really right for me?)

are highly diverse and individual in character. Thus the higher education institutes now offer lots of variety. Central and State, both governments in India have given clear signals to the universities that they are not going to help higher education generously. Another point made clear to them is that those institutions will get more help which are accredited in higher side by NAAC and NAB.

India's premier higher education quality assurance agency, NAAC is an autonomous body established by the UGC in 1994. It is designed to meet the needs of 17,967 institutions having nearly 5 million students and which are categorized according to the nature of their college affiliations and jurisdictions (affiliating vs. unitary), their funding (state vs. central) and their specializations (deemed universities and institutes of national importance). There is also great variety within the college system where schools can exist as affiliated, constituent and autonomous institutions. With such a diverse variety of institutional type, the NAAC has had to make a concerted effort to develop generic formats and standards of assessment that are applicable across the board. The instruments of assessment and accreditation adopted by the NAAC are based on internationally compatible models and have so far received general acceptance in the Indian higher education community. Assessment tools such as the institutional self-study report, on-site visits, and the strengths/weaknesses descriptive reports have been recognized to offer a fair degree of transparency in the accreditation process.

In conducting the assessment process, the NAAC follows a four-stage process. First is developing the national criteria of assessment, which varies by institution type; second is preparation and submission of a self-study report by the institution; third stage includes site visit by an external peer team, which includes the validation of the self-study report and the drafting of recommendations for the assessment outcome (the report is shared with the head of the institution at the end of visit and is reported to the NAAC along with a confidential recommendation on grading). At fourth stage final decision by the Executive Committee of the NAAC is made.

NAAC distributes manuals that prepare higher education institutions with detailed guidelines on the preparation of the self-study report and the specifications of the assessment and accreditation process. Seven criteria are identified to serve as the basis for its assessment procedure i.e. Curricular Aspects; Teaching, Learning and Evaluation; Research, Consultancy and Extension; Infrastructure and Learning Resources; Student Support and Progression; Organization and Management; and Healthy Practices. In completing the self-study report, an institution is expected to detail its operational performance with reference to these criteria. These criteria are

assigned different significance for different types of institutions. They are further subdivided with core indicators or criterion statements which provide assessors a complete breakdown of the assessment requirements. After the self-study report and external visits are completed, criterion scores are issued with a detailed assessment report. The criterion scores are used to arrive at the overall institutional score and if it is more than 55 percent, the institution is awarded "Accredited Status" and assigned an institutional grade on a nine-point scale.

Institutions that do not attain the minimum 55 percent score are notified that they were 'Assessed and Found Not Qualified for Accreditation.' Provisions within the NAAC assessment framework for institutions that do not meet the 55 percent threshold require that they be reassessed after three years or face the rare possibility of closure. The particular consequences of a negative assessment, however, are left to the key stakeholders – management, government, funding agencies and the public at large. To date, just 13 institutions (0.5%) have been found not qualified for accreditation. This low figure is partly explained by the voluntary nature of the accreditation process, and that colleges applying for accreditation must have a university affiliation plus five years of operational experience. A successful accreditation outcome is valid for a period of five years after which the institution is expected to volunteer for re-accreditation.

To achieve the goal of making quality assurance an ongoing focus and priority integral to the functioning of Indian institutions of higher education, a number of post-accreditation activities have been developed. The NAAC has for the last two years been promoting the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) at all higher education institutions as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure. IQACs are composed of administrators, academics and community stakeholders, and they are responsible for a range of activities designed to promote and develop internal cultures of quality control. With its belief that qualitative changes should come from within, the existence of an IQAC is now required by the NAAC as pre-requisite for re-accreditation.

NAAC efforts to promote the use of the assessment outcome for decision-making purposes can be witnessed in the UGC's decision to link the outcome of assessment and accreditation to the award of a portion of its institutional development grants. Furthermore, NAAC accreditation with a suitable grade (B++ and above) is now linked to the granting and continuation of 'autonomous' status and 'deemed-to-be' university status. Different organizations are now using the NAAC grading system for a variety of regulatory purposes. The National Council for Teacher Education

(NCTE), for example, has made it mandatory for all teacher-training institutes to secure a minimum of a B+ grade before they are allowed to expand or implement new courses. In the state of Karnataka the government requires all its aided colleges to secure a minimum of a B grade in order to receive state subsidies, while in the state of Maharashtra, institutions must have undergone accreditation (with a positive assessment of 55%+) in order to continue operations. Thus the perspectives vary according to the stakeholder, and more decisive efforts are expected in this direction.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

With just 12 percent of the tertiary student-age population enrolled in higher education, India is seen from abroad as a tertiary education market with great untapped potential. The Indian government is yet to declare a policy position on the entry of foreign operators into the country as the draft legislation based on the recommendations of the CNR Rao Committee established by MHRD is currently in the consultation process. According to the findings of a recent study by the NAAC and the National Institute of Educational Planning, there are currently just a few dozen foreign institutions of education operating in India through various arrangements such as twining, mutual recognition and study center modes. Considering the stand taken by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) to oppose the entry of foreign providers, many stakeholders, including potential foreign operators and their Indian counterparts, and students wishing to earn a foreign degree without having to leave India, are waiting for the union policy declaration with crossed fingers.

Preempting the possible entry of greater numbers of foreign education providers into India, the NAAC established a committee two years ago with representatives from the UGC and the MHRD to advise on a proposed quality assurance framework for international accreditation. In transnational student movement for higher education everything is not rosy. Many fake universities which are even not recognized in their own country are luring the students. So, introducing a system of registration of foreign educational institutions and their accreditation to ensure quality is urgently needed. Government is worried about this problem. On March 6, 2006, Deputy MHRD Minister Mohammad Ali Asharaf Fatmi gave a statement in Parliament that outgoing students should be sure about the validity of foreign degrees and for help they can go to the website (www.aiu.web.org).

There will be difficulty to government in balancing common population interest and market considerations in the framing of domestic regulations.

So, India should be well prepared to have proper safe guards and to look for other alternatives. A lesson in this regard may be taken from USA, China, Hong Kong and Philippines. China says that, foreign institutions must have Chinese partnership and profit should not be the sole motive. Even in governing body more than half will be Chinese citizen and fee may not be raised without China's approval (Garrett, 2004). Philippines also have regulatory bodies like Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and Commissions on Higher Education (CHED) to save national interest. In India UGC, AICT, NAAC like bodies should act more strongly, so all foreign education providers, though they follow any mode, should be registered, controlled and accredited for recognition of degrees and further continuance.

CONCLUSION

No country can afford one way flow of students to go outside. For this, one strategy may be to invite foreign institutes in India, as Singapore is doing. From this approach the outflow of students may be stopped and the cost of degree may be substantially lowered. Another approach may be to facilitate Indian institutes to attract foreign students or open its branches in foreign lands. Though, Government is making efforts but there are many contradictions. For example, Manipal University medical degree is recognized in Malaysia, but Medical Council of India does not recognize it till date. If quality institutions are given due recognition and appreciation and also encouragement to continue developing quality culture then Indian higher education can sustain all the challenges and bring an influx of transnational movement of students which will benefit not just India but the whole world.

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Dr. ANIL SHUKLA is Associate Professor at Department of Education, University of Lucknow, India. Area of specialization is Educational Research and Distance Education.

Dr. TRIPTA TRIVEDI is Associate Professor at Department of Education, University of Lucknow, India, currently on International Scholar Exchange Fellowship at Seoul National University, Seoul. The area of specialization is English Language Education and Education Technology.

