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Quality assurance, assessment, and accreditation have common ingredients. We understand that there is an institutional framework under which assessment is conducted to confer a degree of satisfaction of primary criteria of assessment of formal degree programs in the field of library and information education, resulting in the acceptance and absorption of graduates across the board. Certification in North American context is restricted to a state-based examining and conferment process for the induction of school library or media resource center professionals. Using general professional perspective, it is the conduct of an entrance examination, beyond the minimum of a professional degree, by a competent professional body that awards certificates to those who are allowed to practice. In Pakistan this is not practiced in health, engineering, legal, business and education professions and there appears to be no such possibility for the profession of library and information education. Certification, as a process, is excluded from further discussion.



Library and information education in Pakistan is facing a serious issue of quality of its graduates, satisfying minimum criteria of professional credentials for their practice. ALA's accreditation criteria of six elements are universally recognized and different bodies in Europe and Australia are using criteria that have primary commonness. These may be summed up for our pragmatic reasons to include: curriculum, faculty, research, resources, students, ethics, and professionalism. Any exercise entailing a systematic examination of LIS education programs will cover these elements.

Now we discuss the possibilities of instituting a framework that we may use for establishing a mechanism for LIS education in Pakistan.

In North America, Europe and Australia, professional bodies are recognized as competent authorities for assessment or accreditation. An objective examination of the objectives, history, role, norms, profile of leadership, and constitution of PLA give little credence to this body that it may undertake this important role, which should be nationally accepted. Without delving further into any such prospect, it appears to be an improbable or impractical option. Likewise, a national leader of the profession such as National Library has not fulfilled some of the primary roles it is entrusted with. We also find no such case at the international level. Since higher education lies in provincial domain, any entity at the federal level may be unable to assume any regulatory role.

Since Higher Education Commission (HEC) has certain leverage on universities in the country, it may be considered as a viable option. HEC has also been an advisory body for the design of curricula and it has made major contribution to the development of faculty. In the field of LIS, it has played the role of an

advisory body for the structure and content of Master's degree. HEC has been active in maintaining quality assurance in Pakistani universities. One of its divisions has been responsible for accreditation, equivalence of degrees and evaluating academic aspects using certain broad criteria in order to secure quality assurance among universities. They have applied *institutional performance evaluation standards* in these universities. The HEC also conducted a meeting of professional/accreditation councils in the country. These are welcome initiatives, yet we need to explore if the same division is willing to exercise at the level of distinct professional education and degree programs such as ours.

It needs to be examined whether HEC can function as a statutory body for assessment and accreditation as ALA, CILIP, ALIA and IFLA have been contemplating for accreditation. The challenges for accepting any such option are related to so-called and so-assumed autonomy, absence of any mechanics or traditions for assessment, and sensitivities involved in pooling of experts who can apply accreditation criteria systematically. What adds to the complexity is that those bodies dealing with health, engineering and law have their legal grounds for registration and induction of professionals. LIS may find partners in business, education and some other professional fields. Library schools need to have a positive thrust to push through this option, as it sounds to be a pragmatic approach. HEC has the structure, legal frame, policies, and mechanics for ensuring quality assurance. If that is achieved, the real issue of mediocrity in professional education may be addressed.

IFLA has been very concerned with quality assurance and many other such causes of LIS education. If IFLA is pursued to institute a loose structure whereby primary criteria are accepted and they select regional or national bodies of experts. That may be an objective way of pursuing some level of international recognition.

There might be many more options. We need to be ingenuous and indigenous in our outlook and exploration.

In another editorial, I wish to discuss the need and mechanics of internal assessment, external assessment and self-study. These need to be done on a regular basis.