

**Accountability and Autonomy in
Higher Education**

Selections from University News - 2

Accountability and Autonomy in Higher Education

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Association of Indian Universities

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Foreword

'University News', the weekly journal published by the Association of Indian Universities, carries a variety of articles covering the entire spectrum of higher education. The topics that have been included range from autonomy of educational institutions to their national and social responsibilities; from the provision of access and equity in higher education to ensuring its quality; and from financing and managing higher education to the latest developments in information technology.

Many of these articles, not only provide factual information of local interest, but also delineate current national and global thinking. Some are conceptual or seminal and of significance to policy makers and students of higher education. A proper appreciation of the role of education in national development requires that different views articulated on a theme be read together. Hence, it was thought that it would be beneficial to bring articles on specific themes together in a single volume. The Association of Indian Universities therefore introduced, earlier this year, a new series "Selections from University News". The present volume on 'Accountability and Autonomy in Higher Education', is the second of this series, and follows up the introductory volume on 'Society, Education and Development'. The papers included in this volume were published in the University News over a period of five years and some of the data may have become, outdated. However, no attempt has been made to update the information.

The articles for this volume were selected by an editorial team headed by Dr. Santosh Panda, formerly Director (Research) at AIU, and including Dr. Veena Bhalla and Dr. Usha Rai Negi. The editing was done by Dr. Veena Bhalla and Dr. Usha Rai Negi. Mr. V.S. Rathaur assisted in preparing the format. The manuscript was typed and put into Camera Ready Copy form by Mr. V.K. Chugh and Mr. Surender Singh.

New Delhi
July, 1998

K.B. Powar
Secretary General
Association of Indian Universities

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1

Accountability in Higher Education

A GNANAM

Introduction

The rapid growth of higher education system in the recent decades has undoubtedly created a boom in educational opportunities and high expectations from the society. However, this proliferation has unfortunately resulted in progressive dilution of quality of education so much so that today the system appears to be moving towards a grinding halt. The growing divorce between education, economy and society as evidenced by the lack of quality in educational and massive unemployment among the highly educated manpower, have virtually created cynicism, disenchantment and distrust about the very system of higher education. Frequent disruption of academic activities in the campuses, callous attitude of students and other functionaries of the Universities, undue political interference, have further contributed to the deteriorating faith in the systems. In a situation of alternative demand for financial resources and the impending crunch, many tend to believe that the allocation of scarce resources to this gigantic monolithic higher education structure is a waste and that the Government should adopt a cautious approach to financing higher education. A multitude of organisational, administrative, academic and financial deficiencies tend to plague the higher education system. Among them, mention may be made to the following factors of prominence:

- The system has failed to achieve its adumbrated goals of excellence, efficiency and quality.
- There is glaring disfunctionality in the relation between higher education and the economy as a result of which we have ended up in a paradoxical situation of scarcity of manpower in certain sectors

in the midst of a large ocean of unemployables resulting in heavy brain drain.

- Although the number of institutions have multiplied by leaps and bounds, the system is yet unable to cope with the increasing population as evidenced by the fact that only about 5 percent of the relevant age group of the country's population is enrolled in higher education.
- The system is haunted by recurrent financial crisis and its heavy dependence on the government has eroded its functional freedom. Consequently most of the institutions are starved of basic infrastructure which has aggravated the deteriorating quality of education. In a situation of inadequate resources devoted to higher education, it becomes more difficult to equalise educational opportunities to all the sections of the community. The unfortunate vicious circle of low resources, low quality and low equity continue to remain unshattered by the educational efforts of the nations.
- The management of higher education system has become static and complex characterised by over centralisation of powers, bureaucratisation and lack of autonomy.

Rationale of Accountability

This constellation of factors has debilitated the vitality and efficiency of the higher education system. Its sincerity of performance is doubted and its functioning is questions at all levels of the society now. The society has come to demand that the system of higher education should account for the vast resources-physical, financial and human invested in them. This disquieting but unexpected development has brought the issue of accountability into limelight and everywhere the social concern is mounting now. Fortunately, the current educational reforms have duly acknowledged and endorsed this social demand for accountability in higher education. Besides the economic pressures, accountability is advocated as a part of the contemplated management package and practice. The University Grants Commission's Committee (1990) on New Educational Management underlines the rationale of accountability from a management perspective, when it said: *'The deficiency of the present system of management is the absence of any systematic method of reporting and evaluation of the University. The society has invested precious resources in building up the great institutions of higher learning. It is entitled to demand that the members of the academic*

community individually and collectively be made accountable in concrete visible terms'.

The document 'Challenge of Education' (Government of India, 1985) also advocated accountability in an environment of autonomy to the institution of higher learning. It underscored the fact that the universities can discharge their functions effectively if only they are freed from the shackles of external forces and this can be ensured only in an atmosphere of autonomy, decentralisation and democratisation of power. But granting autonomy, without ensuring accountability will lead to disastrous conditions leading to anarchy. The document 'Challenge of Education' has summed up this rationale thus: '*There is a widespread feeling that the present stage of higher education is largely the result of the overt and covert interference by external agencies. Universities, it is argued, should be truly autonomous and accountable*'.

Concept and Utility of Accountability

Accountability in higher education means an accounting of its performance with respect to the responsibilities assigned to it. It implies the actual measurement of the responsibility fulfilled or performed by an institution. The degree of accountability can be perceived only when the functions and duties assigned to the agencies in the system are properly evaluated. In other words, performance evaluation becomes an integral component of the concept of accountability. In fact, accountability, responsibility and performance evaluation are mutually related. They are considered to be the acid tests for measuring efficiency and proficiency of the system of higher education.

A foolproof system of accountability can improve the higher education scenario in India by contributing to the following aspects:

- Evaluation and accountability would provide a social balance sheet of the University which would give a feedback to the University about the extent of the society's satisfaction regarding the performance of the University. Further, the problems faced by the Universities can be better informed to the public through such evaluation and this can ensure a better perception of the University in the eyes of the public.

Accountability and performance evaluation will also help the Government and the society to understand the extent to which the policies of the Government are earnestly implemented by the Universities. Such as an assessment, if it is positive can help the

Universities to bargain for more grants and funds from the Governmental and other funding agencies.

- Since accountability is to be measured against specified targets and goals, the objectives of the University can be unambiguously framed and the institution may be goaded to attain them within the specified time. This will help the teachers in the higher education stream to understand their role and responsibility in concrete and precise term.
- Since the accountability will percolate down to various layers of the University, periodical evaluation and analysis of the working of the various units will help the various departments and schools of the University to understand their relative strengths and weaknesses periodically.
- Accountability can enhance the competitive power of Universities and this will help to attract clientele to its portals.
- Since the performance of teachers is linked to the academic accomplishments of their students, teachers would be obliged to devote greater attention on improving their knowledge, skill and competency.
- Teachers' effort to promote the performance of their students would also motivate them to evolve new methods of teaching and suitable strategies which would form the basis of innovations in teaching.
- Teachers would render justice not only in teaching but also in evaluation of their students. Students' achievement can be objectively and scientifically evaluated and this can ensure increased learning.

In all these and other respects, accountability in higher education can create a climate congenial to deep learning, scholarship, knowledge and wisdom which is the crying need of the hour. It can help the society to satisfy itself for the amount of resource invested and will also create a working environment for teachers, students and administrators.

Forms and Types of Accountability

In recent times various types of accountability in higher education have come to be discussed. But from a broader and analytical perspective, accountability in higher education may be considered in two forms, namely, Macro Accountability and Micro Accountability.

Macro Accountability: Macro accountability (otherwise called social accountability) refers to the responsibilities of the University system to the society represented by the students, parents and the Government. It is normally measured with respect to its objectives. This is, what exactly the system of higher education is expected to do and what is exactly achieved and why there occurs a gap in the expectation. Macro accountability, therefore, presupposes the formulation of clear cut goals and objectives which should be made known to the society well in advance. Macro accountability is difficult to measure and achieve as it involves normative judgement and connotation. The present objectives of the higher education system are framed in normative context and are not expressed in quantitative terms. For instance, the Indian Education Commission (Government of India, 1966) has formulated the objectives of the Indian higher education system in the following words; *'Education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernisation and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values'*.

We need not labour to indicate that it is very difficult for any system of higher education to translate the above objectives into reality. Therefore, the objectives should be expressed in some concrete form, usually in terms of quantitative performance indicators, so that the achievement of the University during a period of time can be easily compared with the objectives and the gap between expectation and performance can be analysed and responsibilities can be fixed for any shortfall or lapse. The objectives of the University may be formulated on the basis of the following considerations:

- The objectives of the University can be spelt out in terms of manpower that would be turned out by the University every year. The target of manpower to be created by the University should be based on the assessment of manpower requirements of the different sectors of the economy based on a manpower survey to be conducted by the University periodically.
- The courses to be offered by the University and their relevance to meet the societal and national needs may also influence the objectives of the University.
- The number of students to be admitted in each year, course-wise, sex-wise and caste-wise should be another component. This would help the University to achieve the equity aspect of higher educational objective.

- The special facilities and opportunities to be offered by the University to the weaker sections of the society both in the matter of admission and appointment should also influence the objectives of the University.
- The objectives of the University should also take into account the type and number of industry and institution linkages expected to be forged during the particular year.
- The objectives of the University should also take into account the manpower needs indicated in the regional and national plans.

Micro Accountability: Micro accountability is concerned with the responsibility and performance of each one of the functionaries within the system—academics, administrators and the various bodies of the University to the management board as to what they have accomplished towards the overall objective of University during the given point of time. In other words, micro accountability can be conceived in three forms: Administrative Accountability, Academic Accountability and Financial Accountability.

Administrative Accountability: The Vice Chancellor of the University is both the academic and administrative head of the University and he presides over the meetings of all the important bodies of the University like academic council and the executive committee. The administrative officers and staff of the University assist him in the discharge of his functions. Among other things, the administration of the University should be specifically assigned certain vital functions and its accountability should be measured on the basis of the extent of the discharge of these functions by the administrators. These vital functions are:

Formulation of both the long term and short term objectives of the University: As noted earlier, the first step in the functioning of the University should be to clearly spell out the objectives. The University can lay down the objectives both for the society and for the University based on its past performance and future expectations. The physical, financial and human resource constraints may be kept in mind while framing the objectives.

Preparation of an academic plan: The second function of the administration is to prepare the annual academic plan incorporating the schedule of activities designed to achieve the objectives of the University. This plan should be announced before-hand which would

help every functionary in the administration to perform its task according to specified dates and time. The academic plan of the University should be a collection of the action plans of various departments constituting the University.

Preparation of annual academic calendar: The Administration should draw up an academic calendar and publicise the same before the commencement of any academic session, with details relating to the last date for admission, the commencement and closure of examinations, number of teaching days proposed, date of declaration of results, issue of mark list, award of degree/certificates etc.

Collection of statistics: In a system of evaluation, quantitative data render immense service. The administration, therefore, should shoulder the responsibility of collecting, maintaining and updating the data base relating to the alumni performance, faculty achievements, general image of the University and so on.

The strengthening of infrastructure: The academic activities of the University can be organised smoothly only when the basic infrastructure is created and strengthened. It is the duty of the administration to plan for the creation of additional infrastructure in accordance with the academic requirements.

Fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the above functions of the administration should be taken as the yardstick for measuring the administrative responsibility. The University Grants Commission's Committee on New Educational Management has suggested that the following dimensions may be kept in views while assessing the activities of the University administration:

- Accomplishments of the existing courses of studies.
- Introduction of new courses of study.
- Number of teaching days devoted by each department, college and recognised institutions.
- Number of teaching hours devoted for each of the subject in every discipline.
- Number of research studies (doctors, projects and individual) undertaken in each discipline.
- Number of such research studies completed in each discipline.

- Number of graduates, post-graduates, doctoral fellows, produced classified by divisions/grades and percentages of total number appeared.
- New teaching programmes introduced.
- Extension activities carried out, in application areas, and user-wise, like agriculture, rural areas, industries, national laboratories etc.
- Extension activities carried out, in the areas of extension of education such as Adult Education, Continuing Education, Population Education, Environmental Education etc.
- Information about autonomy granted to colleges, departments etc.
- Activities to encourage education of women, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, minorities, physically handicapped etc.
- Financial budget and financial statements.
- Innovations, including development of new teaching methods, new courses etc.
- Preparation of teaching materials like case studies, hand outs etc.
- Research and Development efforts in academic development and in development of new technologies.

In addition to the above aspects, the following may also be considered while evaluating the performance of University administration:

- The creation of additional essential infrastructure including library and laboratories during the year.
- Publication of books of the faculty by the University
- Facilities for co-curricular activities
- Regularity in the conduct of examination and declaration of results and absence of malpractices.

The administrative accountability should also encompass the executive authorities of the University such as the Court, the Executive Committee, Academic Council and the Finance Committee. These authorities frame the policy guidelines - academic, administrative and finance. Therefore, it is incumbent, upon these agencies to review the extent to which the guidelines and decisions have been implemented and if so, whether they are implemented properly or not. This annual review will help to determine the accountability of these authorities.

Academic Accountability: Academicians from the fulcrum of the University and their role and responsibility determine the quality of higher education to a large extent. Their whole-hearted participation in the management and administration of the University is an essential prerequisite for the success of the University. Among other things, academicians are expected to help the University in preparing an action plan indicating the priority areas of activities for the academic year in the background of the academic plan prepared by the University, besides preparing the budget for the Department. Faculty should teach the assigned courses effectively and involve in research and extension activities and perform such other incidental functions which would contribute to achieve the objectives of the University. The accountability of academicians should be measured in the light of their performance in these areas.

The teaching functions of the academicians, in recent times, has come under close and critical review of the society. Teaching is the heart of University's performance and in fact teaching responsibility is equated to the accountability of University in many cases. However, the existing state of teaching and the behaviour of teachers in the Universities and Colleges leave much to be desired. As the Challenge of Education document observes, : *"Many under-graduate teachers working in the affiliated colleges work for few hours a day, a few days in a week and a few months in a year. Many teachers spend their time in taking private tuitions or teaching in coaching classes"*.

Under this dismal situation, the accountability of teachers should be insisted and ensured. The teachers must be made accountable to the students and through them to the society. Each University should frame the norms for assessing the performance of the teachers. The following criteria may be considered for assessing the teachers.

- Regularity and punctuality of the teachers in taking his classes and his availability in the department for the guidance of students;
- Classes and periods taught and the degree of the effectiveness of teaching as measured by the interest generated in the students and self-thinking process created in them;
- The number and level of courses taught by a teacher over a period of time;
- The quality of the books used for teaching and reference and the quality of assignments given to the students;

- The courses developed and innovative methods of teaching adopted;
- The integrity and impartiality with which the students are evaluated by the teacher and the whole-hearted participation of the teacher in all the evaluation processes of the University;
- Contribution of the teacher to the design of curriculum, teaching methods, lab experiments, evaluation methods, preparation of resource materials, student counselling and remedial teaching;
- Participation of the teachers in refresher/orientation courses, summer schools, workshops, seminars, symposia etc.;
- Number of research papers published and research projects undertaken and PhDs guided;
- Seminar, Conferences and Symposia organised;
- Membership of professional bodies, editorship of journals etc.;
- Awards and recognitions received;
- Higher positions secured outside the University;
- Offices held in national or regional organisations;
- Contribution to community work and national literacy mission;
- Participation in extension services;
- Contribution to the growth of the University, co-curricular activities, enrichment of campus life, students welfare etc.;
- The position of teachers as revealed by students' evaluation of teachers;
- The extent to which the teacher follows the code of professional ethics for University and College teachers as prepared by the Task Force set up by the University Grants Commission. The performance of the teachers should be reviewed in the light of the above criteria by a Committee of Senior Professors and incentives should be given for better performance and disincentives for bad performance.

Financial Accountability: Finance is the life blood of the functioning of the University and its mobilisation, allocation and spending should be monitored cautiously. The financial responsibility of the University can be judged by the following criteria:

- The extent of mobilisation of resources from UGC and other State Governments and the funds raised by it in the form of Chair,

endowments, donations for prize and medals, scholarships, etc. research grants, external funded projects and consultancy assignments.

- Ability of the University to allocate the resources judiciously to various departments and administrative wings, the actual allocation being determined by activities proposed by the various departments in their annual action plan and the overall academic plan of the University.
- The extent to which the University is able to curb unproductive spending.
- Ability of Heads of Departments to prepare the Annual Budgets in time and their ability to present a quarterly report on the expenditure incurred by their departments.
- The timely preparation of annual budget by the Finance Officer and its approval by the Finance Committee.
- The ability of the Finance Officer to present a quarterly consolidated report on the amount of expenditure incurred by the University to the Finance Committee/Executive Council.
- The impact created by the spending of the University in terms of the achievement of the activities and objectives proposed by the University.

Conclusion

The above narration provides objective criteria for measuring the accountability of higher education system. These consideration may appear rather utopian or idealistic under the present imperfect scenario of higher education system, where every constituent of the University wants to evade its responsibility. But if the Universities can create certain pre-conditions, it may not be difficult to instill the sense of accountability among the participants of the system. Among other things, these pre-conditions include; fair admission of students, meritorious appointments of teachers, a system of rewards and punishments, strengthening of the infrastructure in the University, revamping of entire evaluation system, decentralisation of powers to the teachers, promotion of welfare activities for the teaching, non-teaching staff and students, openness and flexibility in the administration and management.

Every organ of the University should work towards the common goal of the University suppressing its individual pursuit of objectives which

may some time conflict with the overall objectives of the system. Everyone should realise that the time has come for deep introspection about the accountability to the society.

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2

Accountability in Higher Education

K.B. POWAR

Introduction

Traditionally a university has had a special place in society, commanding respect and enjoying a considerable measure of freedom. This is especially true for India where learning is held in high esteem and a teacher accorded reverential treatment. Until a few decades ago a very small proportion of youth, mainly from privileged families, entered the portals of a university, and the money contributed for its maintenance by the public exchequer was relatively inconspicuous. Society did not expect much in terms of returns and the universities led an 'ivory tower' existence being largely unconcerned about their surroundings. The situation has, however, changed. The common man has realised that the professional skills and knowledge gained through university education provide means for possible upward economic and social mobility. Moreover, the government is acutely conscious of the fact that it provides the bulk of the finance required by the universities and has hence started exerting controls and making demands. We now have a situation wherein the actions and performances of universities are being closely scrutinised both by the government and the people. The academic community has (grudgingly) accepted the fact that the people have a right to know and judge its performance. The Gnanam Committee Report (UGC, 1990, p.224) acknowledges that "*It (society) is entitled to demand that the members of the academic community individually and collectively be made accountable in concrete, visible terms*". However, mere acceptance of the concept of accountability does not mean much. Ways and means will have to be found by which the system of accountability can be implemented effectively and fairly.

What is Accountability?

In the simplest form accountability means the requirement to demonstrate reasonable actions to some external constituency or agency (Berdahl, 1990). In the case of the universities this external constituency is, broadly speaking 'society', and more specifically 'government'. In view of the (usually) complex relationship between governments and universities the process of demonstrating and judging accountability can be both difficult and frustrating. It is necessary to appreciate the fact that the main purpose of an accountability system is not to demonstrate that things are being done (or not being done) but to facilitate the process of improvement of performance. The accountability system should not result in a feeling of failure but should generate a sense of responsibility.

Accountability has two aspects - moral and legal or contractual (Wagner, 1989). Moral accountability is based upon a sense of responsibility- a feeling that one is responsible to ones clients (students and parents), to colleagues and to oneself. Legal accountability is being responsible to ones employer in terms of fulfilment of terms of employment. It is possible to satisfy legal responsibility yet not live upto moral responsibility. A teacher may take his classes according to schedule, but in a disinterested manner fulfilling the requirements of legal accountability, but not of moral accountability. An official may likewise, 'work' eight hours a day, merely forwarding files to his superior without contributing to decision-making. An accountability-evaluation system must be able to shift the emphasis from legal accountability to moral accountability.

In view of the practical implications it is necessary to analyse the meaning (and concept) of accountability. Wagner (1989) discusses two alternatives. Firstly, accountability may be taken as an obligation to give an account (of ones performance) in the form of a report or some other form of exposition. Secondly, it may mean being answerable for ones actions. Governments would probably prefer the later alternative. In fact both forms of accountability are being practiced in our universities to a limited extent. Annual reports and budgets are presented to senates and courts for their approval. And university managements are often grilled on actions and decisions during 'interpellation' in the 'question-hour' of senate meetings.

If the main purpose of an accountability system is to ensure 'minimum performance' and enhance the quality of higher education

then accountability-assessment procedures will have to be more rigorous, and the report will have to include recommendations on corrective action.

Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Accountability

Autonomy may be described as the power to act without external control. It is to be viewed as an organisational or managerial requirement for the fulfilment of responsibilities (Sarup, 1993). Autonomy and accountability are mutually complementary. An individual or an institution cannot be held responsible for (lack of) performance if it has not been given the requisite freedom to act. If a university is to be held accountable for the quality of its education, or the preparedness of its product (students), then it has to be given autonomy regarding essential matters like selection of staff, content of curricula, minimum standards to be achieved, and apportioning and utilisation of funds allotted to it. It is necessary to attain a balance between accountability and autonomy for, as Berdahl (1990) points out, *“too much autonomy might lead to universities unresponsive to society; too much accountability might destroy the necessary academic ethos”*.

A related issue that is often raised while discussing the performance of teachers is that of ‘academic freedom’. As Tight (1988) points out *“academic freedom refers to the freedom of individual academics to study, teach, research and publish without being subject to or causing undue interference”*. It does not confer upon the academic community unfettered rights of action and behaviour. The concept of academic freedom enjoins that the teacher be allowed to express his views freely and openly, even though they may be at variance with the ‘official’ view, without fear of being penalised. However, the academic freedom does not extend to, for example, neglecting teaching assignments in favour of research interest. Academic freedom is a privilege that carries with it the responsibility of ensuring that it is used only for the welfare of the academic community and the good of the parent institution.

Autonomy of Indian Universities

About fifty years ago the Indian universities enjoyed considerable autonomy and the authority of the Vice Chancellor was not questioned. Over the years the autonomy has been considerably eroded largely because of financial restrictions and political interference in matters which should be normally considered to be the internal concern of the universities. To that extent the right of the government and society to

hold the authorities of the universities responsible for happenings in the universities is reduced.

The concept of university autonomy has long been debated. Ashby (1966, p 293) points out that *“the question as to what constitutes autonomy in universities is anything but unambiguous, and the patterns of autonomy which satisfy academics in different countries are very diverse”*. The Gajendragadkar Committee Report (UGC, 1971, p. 9-10) states *“The concept of University autonomy is often misunderstood. It is not a ‘legal concept’, not even a ‘constitutional concept’. It is an ethical concept and an academic concept. This concept does not question that, in a democratic society like ours, legislatures are ultimately sovereign, and have a right to discuss and determine the question of policy relating to education, including higher education..... The concept of university autonomy, however, means that it would be appropriate on the part of democratic legislatures not to interfere with the administration of university life, both academic and non-academic. The claim for autonomy is made by the universities not as a matter of privilege, but on the ground that such an autonomy is a condition precedent if the universities are to discharge their duties and obligations effectively and efficiently..”*

Berdahl (1990) differentiates between two types of autonomy - substantive and procedural. Substantive autonomy is the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programmes (the ‘what’ of academe). Procedural autonomy is the power of the university in its corporate form to determine the means by which its goals and programmes will be pursued (the ‘how’ of academe). It may be argued that government has the right, in consultation with academe, to impinge upon substantive autonomy in the interest of the people. The procedural autonomy of universities must, however, be safe-guarded. A sharing of concerns by the universities and governments and a mutual understanding as to who will make which kinds of decisions is essential.

The erosion of autonomy of universities is due to two types of actions. First the deliberate assumption of powers by the government through acts of legislature and even ordinances, and second the extremely conservative interpretation of rules and guidelines by the bureaucracy or the liberal use by it of provisions in Acts that have been provided for use in exceptional cases. Thus Acts have been passed that enable the government to give directives to the university, ordinances promulgated to provide that a Vice Chancellor shall hold office at the

pleasure of the Chancellor or to curtail his term of appointment, guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission have been treated by bureaucracy as directions with the strictest interpretations, and permissions for starting new colleges given indiscriminately without consulting the universities. It must, however, be admitted that Vice Chancellors and university bodies have, on occasions, given the government a reason to intervene by taking actions that placed a liability on the government. The crux of the matter is that accountability is inextricably linked with autonomy and if the universities are to be held accountable for happenings in the area of higher education then they must be given a reasonable amount of autonomy and a conducive environment in which to perform. .

The Domains of Accountability

The accountability of a university can be discussed with respect to its administrative, academic and finance-related actions. Corresponding to these we have three types of accountability - administrative, academic and financial. Administrative accountability relates to the managerial functions that are necessary for the smooth functioning of the university and its various sub-systems. Academic accountability is concerned with the implementation of academic programmes and the achieving of minimum standards of education. Financial accountability deals with the procurement of funds and efficient utilisation of resources. In all these domains of accountability it should be possible to identify expected levels of attainment. A University should be able to achieve the following:

1. In Administrative matters

- adhere to reasonable norms of administrative efficiency as regards correspondence, movement of files and solving of routine problems;
- take timely decisions at appropriate levels;
- adhere to a pre-determined schedules of meetings of various bodies and committees;
- conduct examinations and declare results according to pre-determined and pre-announced schedule;
- provide adequate student-support services like students hostels, canteens, and sports facilities;
- adequately maintain the university campus and provide basic facilities to residents; and

- strictly adhere to norms while making appointments to faculty positions or admitting students.

2. In Academic matters

- start academic terms on time, conduct regular teaching activities, and complete pre-determined, minimum days of actual teaching;
- monitor quality assurance activities including updating and revision of curricula;
- provide adequate laboratory and library facilities;
- provide basic research facilities to faculty members and research scholars; and,
- promote human resource development programmes such as the orientation and training of teachers and preparation of students for various competitive examinations.

3. In Financial matters

- prepare in time budget estimates on the basis of a careful evaluation of essential and developmental requirements of various departments and units;
- monitor income and expenditure and ensure that expenditure is phased out over the entire year;
- ensure that orders are placed and expenditure incurred according to set procedures and norms;
- ensure that expenditure statements are presented and audited in time;
- ensure that external audit is conducted annually and the suggestions/observations acted upon;
- ensure that mandatory deductions such as those of provident fund and income tax are made regularly and the deducted amounts remitted to the designated fund or authority; and
- ensure that surplus funds or endowment funds are invested according to sanctioned norms and procedures in order to get maximum returns.

Conclusion

In keeping with the demands of the times, and the mood of the government, the universities will have to face the question of accountability squarely. There are areas and these segments in which improvements are urgently required, and these are possible. In others

the shortcomings are a part of the national malaise. It is necessary to analyse and determine what can be done under the prevailing conditions. Norms of determining minimum performance in essential areas need to be drawn up. The performance of a university, however, cannot be judged only on the basis of attainment or non-fulfilment of minimum norms. A university is a highly complex organisation charged with a variety of responsibilities, many of them not well defined. Its contribution to social, economic, scientific and technological development through research, to national integration through cultural activities, to development of sportsmanship and camaraderie through sporting activities, and to moral development and character building through value-education programmes cannot be measured in tangible terms. A holistic approach may ultimately prove to be the most realistic.

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Educational Accountability: The Concept and its Implications

M. S. BAWA

Introduction

Concern with continuously falling standards of education led to a search of causes as well as remedial measures not only to stem this trend but also to reverse it. This led to the emergence of the concept of Educational Accountability. In India this concept gained currency after the publication of National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1986). Some of the educational institutions like IITs have adopted it in some form while other institutions are sitting on the threshold unable to take a decision whether or not to adopt it. In this article it is proposed, at first, to describe the history and the forces that gave fillip to accountability movement in education and then, examine critically diverse ideas on educational accountability with a view to identifying its important characteristic features. At the end, we propose to discuss the implications of the application of the concept of educational accountability.

History of Accountability Movement

Historically, the accountability movement started in the USA during the sixties in business/commercial/industrial sectors. It was later extended to educational sector because of the inability of the teachers to register impressive results. It was increasingly felt that 'there are children who cannot read satisfactorily, cannot reason properly, don't care for learning in general and are pretty well alienated from adult society'. Such a state of affairs resulted at first in the enactment of a law in 1971 by California legislature requiring each K-12 teacher in the State to be evaluated (probationary teachers annually, all others bi-annually) on locally determined criteria. Of these criteria, the learner result-oriented criterion was the most important. Taking a cue from California,

the other states of the USA also enacted such laws. The accountability movement has now spread to other countries of the world. For example, in England, Education Reforms Act was passed in 1988 (quoted in Dean Joan, 1991: p3), *'which places the responsibility for education much more clearly on schools and their head teachers and governors and emphasises also the idea of competition between schools'*.

Forces Giving Fillip to Accountability Movement

The emergence of the educational accountability movement into prominence in the last two decades is the result of some inter-related factors. It has been felt by and large that standards of education have been falling even though both public and private expenditure on education has been rising. This has led to dissatisfaction with the performance of education sector which got reflected in public's demand for demonstrative evidence that education and educators were giving their money's worth.

Besides, with the advancement of science and technology, new management technologies have been evolved for use in business and industry. These techniques make possible not only efficient and effective use of resources but also development of new practices and inculcation of progressive attitudes amongst workers to undertake new challenging jobs. Progressive educationists felt that if such management techniques were transposed into education, efficiency and effectiveness of education and educators would significantly increase.

Concept of Accountability in Education

Before examining critically the concept of accountability in education, let us at first trace etymological meanings of the term accountability. According to Robert B. Wagner (1989), *'accountability'* and the adjective *'accountable'* are derived from the verb *'account'* which in its earliest usage literally meant *'to reckon, to count up or calculate'*. By 1614 the verb *'account'* came to mean a report, relation or description, such as providing an account of one's visit to an institution. Now *'account'* has come to mean as quoted in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary *"a statement of explanation of one's conduct; a statement or exposition of reasons causes, grounds or motives"* and, as a verb *'to furnish a justifying analysis'*. By implication the term *'accountable'* acquired the meaning *'obligated to give an account'* or being *'subject'* to doing so.

Having examined etymological meanings, let us now examine critically some of the definitions of the term 'accountability' as applied in education or educational accountability so as to identify those critical features which are related to education.

According to Neave (1967) "*Accountability is a process which involves the duty of both the individual and the organizations of which they are part to render periodically accounts for tasks performed, to a body having both the power and the authority to modify that performance*".

This definition regards accountability as a process by which a body having both power and authority obtains desirable performance from individuals/organisations. It envisages evaluation of the performance of individuals/organisations and corrective action in the event of their being found below the mark.

This definition seems to suffer from the following shortcomings:

- While it holds individuals/organisations accountable to a body having power and authority, it says nothing about the accountability of the body itself;
- It gives weightage to extrinsic motivational measures of behaviour modification like rewards and punishment to the total exclusion of the intrinsic ones. The second feature of the concept of accountability makes for limited applications to the field of education on account of the fact that the dedicated teachers are not motivated by extrinsic factors of the expectations of being rewarded or punished by the controlling authority. It is the intrinsic motives like the sense of their mission, the emotional satisfaction they get out of a job well done in a spirit of service to the society, etc. that impel them to make their best and selfless contribution. As these qualities defy measurement, an educational accounting body needs to be cautioned not to ignore them while appraising the performance of the teachers. The fear is that the concept of accountability based on behaviourism may attack the very basis of higher ideas that urge the dedicated teachers to give their best and thereby deprive them of much of the nobility of their profession.

Lessinger *et al* looks at the concept of accountability in the following three different ways:

- i) 'Accountability is responsibility for something to someone with predictable consequences for the desirable and undesirable

performance of the responsibility'. This definition stresses one's answerability to certain responsibilities to someone with a rider that desirable performances are to be rewarded and undesirable ones are to be punished.

This definition like Neave's has business/commercial orientation wherein each subordinate is answerable to his superior for the discharge of responsibility entrusted to him and where stick and carrot policy is followed to ensure desirable behaviour. In the context of education, this definition has limited application as the milieu in which educational activities are transacted is quite different from that of industry.

Some of the commendable features of this definition are:

Holding of individuals such as teachers responsible for the results, and

Providing awareness about various factors of accountability viz. what one is accountable for, to whom one is accountable, methods to be used for establishing accountability and consequences of successful and unsuccessful results.

- ii) 'Accountability means the continuing assessment of the educational achievement of pupils in a school system; the relating of levels of achievement to the state and community's goals and expectations, to the parents', teachers', taxpayers' and members of the community'. Borich (1977) also concurs with this definition of accountability.

The distinctive features of this definition are:

It holds institutions such as school responsible for the performance of the students and

It gives importance to summative evaluation which is concerned with evaluation of products/outcomes, that is, student's achievement on the standards determined by various constituencies. Even though this definition seems to emphasize end product of evaluation and therefore, summative evaluation, the phrase 'continuing assessment' relates to formative evaluation thereby providing due place to this process.

This definition is criticized on the ground that it restricts itself to school system. The modern concept of accountability is applicable to all the institutions irrespective of the level at which they function. Apart from this, it is silent about the consequences of successful or unsuccessful results.

iii) **Accountability**—a system concept: Usually a system is defined as ‘a dynamic, complex, integrated whole consisting of self-regulating pattern on interrelated and interdependent elements organized to achieve the predetermined or specified objectives. Every system is a part of a larger system and is coordinated with other systems. Each constituent of a bigger system is known as its sub system.

Lessinger (*op cit*) an example of an accountable learning system which is composed of many accountable subsystems. Some of the sub-systems of this system are:

- i) **Personal accountability:** It is the commitment observed in action, a willingness to deal with the tough problems.
- ii) **Professional accountability:** It refers to knowledge and application in standard practice of those attitudes, skills and techniques that are revealed through research or state of the art to be reliable and valid in getting results.
- iii) **System Accountability:** It is described as ‘*an integrated set of instructional systems, management systems and public support systems performing the functions required to accomplish the goals of the enterprise*’ (Lessinger 1971 : p10).

Of the three types of sub-systems of an accountable learning system proposed by Lessinger, System Accountability seems to be relevant in the context of educational institutions. An attempt has therefore, been made to describe the three components of System Accountability in greater detail.

a) *Instructional System*

An instructional system generally involves the following six steps:

(i) Formulation of objectives, (ii) Pre-assessment of entry behaviour, (iii) Designing learning experiences, (iv) Implementation of the system of instruction, (v) Evaluation of the outcomes, and (vi) Improvement of the system.

It may be pointed out that generally the objectives are stated in measurable terms. Such objectives are called ‘performance Objectives’. These objectives are evaluated at the end of the instructional process so as to provide feedback to the system about its performance. In the system of accountability, it is the system which is held responsible for the results.

b) *Management Systems*

Management systems are designed for achieving organizational purposes efficiently and effectively. For doing so management performs functions such as the following:

Planning educational programme; organizing; staffing; implementing; evaluating and re-designing educational programmes. One of the critical features of management system the systematic identification and analysis of alternative ways of achieving educational objectives and determination of cost and benefit ratio of each educational programme/strategy for taking sound decision/(s) according to the availability of resources.

There are several management systems available which can be incorporated into an educational system. Some of them are Management by Objectives (MBO), Management by Futures (MBF), Programmes Planning Budgeting Evaluation System (PPBE) etc. Whatever may be the management system, evaluation of the performance of the system for achieving set educational objectives and modification of the system in the light of such a feedback form critical features of each system.

c) *Public Support System*

It refers to the study of interaction and interconnection of educational system with other social systems such as economic system, political system, etc. In other words, it related to the study of how the educational system receives support from other systems and in turn how it serves/supports them.

System view of accountability is important as it makes the system, rather than the individuals, accountable for the results. For example, following systems approach, one can examine critically the functioning of various components of the educational system, for diagnosing as well as taking corrective measures, the causes of poor performance of government and government aided schools.

It may be observed that Lessinger's concept of accountability is comprehensive. It embodies accountability of individuals, institutions and systems.

Armstrong (1981) defines 'accountability' as '*.... an expression of public demand that evidence be provided for demonstrating that educators are giving tax payers their money's worth*'. He further states

that subject matter of accountability for teacher, Principal and management is distinct.

The strength of this definition lies in inclusion in its preview education and educators comprising not only teachers but also the Principals and management of an institute who influence educational activities directly or indirectly. With the improvement in the pay scales and service conditions of schools and university teachers, this definition has assumed greater relevance. Ever increasing expenditure on education requires that education system as well as the education provide proof to the society that they are providing services to the society whose worth, if not more, is at least commensurate with the expenditure being incurred. The most glaring weakness of this definition is that it is silent about the nature of proof that the society requires to judge the performance of education and educators.

According to Gordon et al (1984) educational accountability is a metaphor imported from business and commerce into education during 1960s, especially in the USA. Accountability reflects increased public concern over educational issues such as curriculum and not simply large sums involved.

The description of the concept of educational accountability given above has two parts: The first part relates to genesis of accountability movements; the second part to its main concern viz. educational issues.

It needs to be pointed out that even though the concept of accountability has been brought into education from business and commerce, it cannot be used in education in the form in which it is being used there. This is so because of distinct nature of education. For example, in case of a business enterprise, there can be almost unanimity with regard to objectives of the enterprise. This is not so in case of education where people hold conflicting objectives. The areas of conflicting objectives are cognitive vs affective, imparting of knowledge vs development of creative and critical abilities, content vs context, quantity vs quality, etc. Thus while determining objectives, some have to be compromised. Just as in the case of objectives, distinct differences persist in other areas like processes, evaluation etc. Such differences clearly show that concept of accountability in the context of education differs markedly from that of business and commercial enterprises. Still again in a business enterprise a person is clear as to whom he is accountable. This is not so in case of education. For Example, in education a teacher is accountable not only to his superior (Principal) as

in a business/commercial enterprise, but also to the management, the parents, the community and the students. The analogy therefore cannot be stretched too far to explain the concept of educational accountability.

As regards the second part of the statement, it is true that educational accountability reflects increased public concern over educational issues and that curriculum constitutes one of the most important issues. Under curriculum, educationists are concerned with an examination of goals of the society, determining the aims of education, setting out general objectives of the teaching of various disciplines, choice of content, methodology of teaching and evaluation of outcomes at various levels and stages of education. In a dynamic society, needs of the society go on changing, which cause chain reaction all through the curricular network. Other educational issues are structure of education system, internal and external efficiency of educational institutions, equity in education, professional preparation and development of teachers, etc.

It may be stated that the public is as much interested in the issues concerned with financing of educational projects as in the curricular issues. Accountability demands that the financial resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Characteristic Features of Concept of Educational Accountability

From the numerous definitions surveyed above, it is evident that each definition stresses different features of accountability and none of these definitions is comprehensive enough to encompass its numerous and varied features. It is therefore desirable to identify certain characteristic features of this concept.

i) Accountability is a *multi-dimensional concept*. It is not limited to an individual, institution or a system but embraces a whole gamut of interconnected institutions or systems. For example, the performance of a teacher is affected by the support he receives from the Principal, administrative staff and other supporting services (such as library, media etc.) and students. It is also affected by the policy of the government with regard to service conditions, pay scales, promotional avenues, etc. In the same way the performance of an educational institutions is affected by the policies of the management, and funding bodies like UGC, etc; community support, the performance of feeder institutes as reflected in the achievement of their students. Likewise, the performance of an educational system depends not only on the performance of its sub-components but also on the policies of the central and state governments with regard to provision of finances for

maintenance and development of various sectors of education, management and administration of educational institutions and universities, service conditions of teachers, motivational schemes, etc.

ii) Educational accountability is a *goal-directed activity*. Some of the educational goals have been universally acknowledged. These relate to development of all-round intellectual, moral, physical and aesthetic capabilities of students and contribution of education to the improvement of society, economically, politically and socially. Different stages of education - elementary, secondary and higher - too set for themselves certain other goals. For example goals for higher education as envisaged by NPE (1986) are equity and excellence with social justice. These goals in turn can be broken down into institutional and individual objectives, and general objectives for each discipline. These objectives are realised by the individuals and the institutions through curricular and co-curricular activities spread over one or more academic year/s.

iii) Accountability is a *growth and development oriented concept*. It requires various constituencies involved in the accountability process to grow and change for the better. For example it expects of individual teachers to acquire progressively more and more knowledge, skills, capacities and better attitudes. As for educational institutions, it demands that they would grow and develop their capacities to set progressively higher and more challenging objectives and strive to achieve them. Because of intimate association of the concept of accountability with growth and development, educational reformers recommend that introduction of accountability should be accompanied by institutional planning.

iv) Accountability is a *normative concept* as the performance of an individual or an educational institution or a system is judged against set norms or standards. To be realistic, norms/standards are determined at the beginning of the accountability process by taking into account technological, economic and social realities in which an individual, an institution or a system is to function.

v) *Evaluation* forms an integral part of the educational accountability. According to Stufflebeam (1971), four types of evaluation are used in the accountability process.

Context Evaluation: It provides information about needs, problems and opportunities in order to identify objectives. It answers the question - What objectives should be accomplished?

Input Evaluation: It provides information about the strengths and weaknesses of alternative strategies for achieving given objectives. It answers the question - What procedures should be followed?

Process Evaluation: It provides information about strengths and weaknesses of strategies during implementation. It answers the question - Are the procedures working properly?

Product Evaluation: It provides information for determining whether the procedures employed to achieve the objectives should be continued, modified or terminated. It answers the questions - Are the objectives being achieved?

According to Borich (1977), product evaluation makes possible discrepancy analysis, in which 'what is' is compared to 'what should be.' With discrepancies made apparent an individual/institution/system can take corrective steps to effect improvements.

It may be pointed out that purpose for which evaluation is undertaken may vary among and within the constituents. For example, a teacher may evaluate his performance over a year with a view to effect improvements in his educational activities; an institution may evaluate a teacher to decide whether he be promoted, be made permanent, be given an annual increment, be punished for sub-standard performance, and a system/ an institution may be evaluated to find out whether it is meeting the goals for which it was set up, is meeting the accredited standards, etc. Depending on the purpose, evaluation may be conducted by an internal agency or an external one. For example, for effecting improvement in the internal efficiency of the institution, evaluation by internal agency is preferred; however, for accrediting purpose or for rating an institute in relation to others, evaluation by an external agency is preferred.

It won't be out of place to mention here that in case of institutional accountability, the following criteria are set for evaluation:

- a) Given the extent of resources, whether the results achieved match with the intended results; and
 - b) extent of growth and development of the faculty, students, etc. in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, experiences and commitments.
- vi) Allocation of rewards or punishments to institutions or individuals on the basis of their performance forms a critical feature of accountability. This characteristic distinguishes accountability from evaluation. Becher *et al* (1992, p 168) observe "*Although evaluation and accountability are*

closely interrelated, the relationship is not symmetrical. That is to say, accountability presupposes evaluation but evaluation does not imply accountability”.

The rewards or punishments may be of monetary or non-monetary nature. Giving an annual or an advance increment to an individual, sanctioning of the entire grant asked for or giving extra development grant to an institution are some of the examples of monetary rewards. Giving merit certificates to individuals, acknowledging their contribution in the staff council meetings or in annual reports as also acknowledging contribution of an institution in the university's annual report, etc. constitute non-monetary rewards. With holding annual increments in case of individuals and curtailing or stopping/cutting off grant to an institution are some of the examples of inflicting monetary punishment. Examples of non-monetary punishment are disapproval of activities/behaviour of individuals, blacklisting of institutions, withdrawal of recognition by the university, etc.

Implications of Educational Accountability

Educational accountability can be used to bring about continuous improvement in the performance of teachers and educational institutions. To make this possible, the following steps need to be taken.

i) Setting of Objectives

Each individual - Teacher, member of the non-teaching staff, student - and institution must set objectives to be attained over a period of time, preferably one year. These objectives are to be set after taking into account the quality and quantity of inputs. Thus each unit would set different objectives/goals from the other unit. Those individuals/institutes which are better placed with regard to inputs would set higher goals and those who are not so well placed in terms of capability would set rather lower attainable goals. In this way everyone irrespective of variations in inputs would strive to grow and develop over a period of time.

ii) Determining Criteria for Appraisal

Evaluation forms an important component of educational accountability. It is therefore essential that criteria for process as well as product evaluation is laid down beforehand for assessing individual/institutional performance. The criteria should be open and known to all the constituents. On the basis of these criteria, reliable and valid scales for appraising the performance of individuals/units/institutions should be developed.

iii) Determine the Person/Body to whom one is Accountable

To determine the person/body to whom an individual/institution, etc. is accountable has been very controversial. The author feels that it is on account of indecision in this regard that accountability in education at different levels has not been widely adopted. The principle as given in Neave's definition is that the body to which one is accountable must have both the power and authority to modify the performance. In recent years the powers and authority of the Principals of public educational institutions have been on the wane so much so that they are unable in most of the cases to call for explanation for low performance and much less take corrective actions. This in turn has resulted in fall in the level of accountability of all the constituents of educational institutions - teachers, non-teaching staff, students, etc.

Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) has proposed that various constituents of an educational institution should be made accountable to Staff Council which should be made a statutory body. The Principals of colleges should serve as Principals in Council. In other words, the Principal of a college should enjoy the same status as the other teachers do in the staff council. Whether the staff council will be able to exercise authority and power to bring the non-performers to book is questionable. It is, therefore, felt by and large that level of accountability of various constituents under the arrangement proposed by DUTA, would be low.

Some educationists have suggested that until we are able to resolve the issue of 'To whom accountable', we should go in for self appraisal. Along with self-appraisal, the teachers should go in for 'Students' Appraisal of the Teacher's Performance'. It is envisaged that the feedback provided by the students about their performance would help teachers to effect improvement in the performance of their functions in a non-threatening environment.

It may be pointed out that IIT, Delhi has developed its own model of accountability. Each member of the staff has to assess his own performance on a self-appraisal scale at the end of an academic session. It is submitted to Professor Incharge/Head of the Department/Centre for certification and onward transmission to Evaluation Committee for remarks. The Evaluation Committee gives remarks on the basis of pre-determined criteria. The self-appraisal scale is finally sent to the Director for remarks and, if need be, for initiation of action.

It is suggested that university departments, educational institutions, etc. should critically examine various models that are in vogue and develop a model for adoption that suits their circumstances.

iv) Determining Appropriate Rewards and Punishment

One of the critical features of educational accountability is to reward or punish individuals and institutions on the basis of their performance. Merit Promotion Scheme (MPS) in case of university teachers and Selection Grade Scheme (SGS) in case of school teachers were introduced for rewarding teachers for their consistent good performance over a period of time. However, while implementing the schemes, the dimension of 'performance' was given a back seat and the dimension of number of years of service put in by a teacher became the most important criterion. The author feels that promotion to higher posts under schemes be linked to both the number of years of service put in by the teacher and to his/her consistent good performance under prevailing conditions over a period of time. At the time of promotion under the schemes, the teachers should be interviewed properly by a statutory board on the basis of self-assessment reports submitted by them. The board should provide the teachers with an opportunity to give an account of their performance over the years. Those teachers whose performance is found to be below the mark, should not be promoted. They should, however, be given another opportunity to appear before the board again after a specified period of time so as to give an account of their improved performance. If the MPS and the SGS are implemented properly, they would motivate the teachers to maintain high standards of performance.

As regard institutions, they should be rewarded for their good performance. There have been various suggestions in this regard : recognition of the performance of an institute in a particular field by a higher body, assigning a higher rating on the basis of performance criteria in comparison to other similar institutes in the field, sanctioning special developmental grant, etc. All these measures are commendable and should be used to motivate the institutions not only to keep up their performance but also to improve it.

v) Formulate Appropriate Policies for Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation of Teachers

The success of any educational endeavour depends to greater degree on intrinsic motivation of teachers rather than on sources of extrinsic motivation viz rewards and punishment. Intrinsic motivation to put in

one's best depends on the policies of the government, university and other bodies to enhance the status of the teachers and that of their profession. The government should therefore pay its teachers well so that they are able to enjoy a reasonable standards of living in relation to their counterparts in other professions. Filling up vacant posts in time, provision of hostels and housing facilities for teachers, provision of equipment like personal computers, research facilities, etc. are the other measures that go to enhance the status of the profession. The present policies of the government of India to cut down non-plan allocations and to promote private universities would certainly adversely affect maintenance of institutions and service conditions of teachers. By degrading the status of teachers, the teaching profession would lose rather than attract talent. Thus by demotivating teachers through its new policies, the government has little to gain but the country has much to lose.

vi) Establish Accountability at all Levels

When the concept of accountability in education was in its infancy, the application of the concept was confined to the teacher's performance. Under 'Performance Contracting' a teacher is paid on the basis of students' performance. This is a typical example of it. With the advancement of knowledge, it became clear that apart from teachers, other constituents of an education system affect students' performance and that, there exists interdependence amongst all the constituents. This development has necessitated establishing of accountability at all levels. For example to enable higher education system to function efficiently and effectively, it is essential to establish accountability of all the constituents : Government, the UGC, the Vice Chancellor, the Governing bodies of Colleges, the Heads of University Departments, the teachers, the non-teaching staff, the students, etc. Unless accountability is introduced at all the levels, there won't be any significant improvement in the performance of an education system.

In short the concept of accountability can be effectively operational when: i) adequate incentives and disincentives are linked with good and poor performance respectively without creating any threatening atmosphere; ii) it is introduced at all levels of educational organisation; iii) an appropriate system of evaluation is worked out in which the criteria of evaluation are observable, determined keeping in view the resources available, and the evaluating body is so constituted that undesirable influences and pressures may not influence its assessment.

If accountability becomes operational in its true sense, the standard of education is bound to go up.

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Accountability in Education

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The Gnanam Committee report, "*Towards New Educational Management*" advocates accountability for university and college teachers, department heads and Vice-Chancellors through performance appraisal. Apparently this idea seems to be radical. But no idea is radical unless it has its functional value.

Everybody has to play a role behaving the status he/she occupies. In fact status is the positional aspect of role and role is the behavioural aspect of the status one holds. However, 'Role' is social and based on the interactions. The interactions, intraface and interface, are to be viewed in the context of social change.

In reference to the change perception everyone in the University has, in general, an attitude of 'No change'. In the scale of change we pass through slow down to indifference. We never accept the change and participate. Teachers, as community, Vice-Chancellors and administrators in their roles, it appears, have never gone beyond 'indifference'. The role of acceptance and cooperation is yet to be seen. This scenario is because of the pressure of pathological aspects of the system itself. We are not functioning as a system. In fact educational management and administration consist of rules, regulations and procedures. The hierarchical approach adopted by the universities in general have adopted mini-bureaucratic administration. The administration has no positive incentive. Lack of motivation plus factors affecting motivation adversely are responsible for 'No change' attitude. The union- role in the system, if we call it a system, adopts the role of resistance to new change. Innovation resistance has become the main trend. In such a context what is the accountability of accountability?

We are in the midst of challenges and crisis. We fail to analyse these changes and crisis. We look upon this change as a threat. We have to

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bear in mind that new conditions and new knowledge have set us at sixes and sevens; and at sixes and sevens we are doomed to remain until we are able to achieve new synthesis. We do not perceive this synthesis because the system in which we are functioning has given us myopic view. The entire professionalism in education is missing. Vice-Chancellor has yet to prove that he belongs to a profession and has to give a direction to the profession.

Administratively we are under non-innovative milieu. The bureaucratic style of law and order maintenance is still dominating educational management at all levels.

What role do we expect of such a system? In absence of active role, what is accountability?

- a) Does the system of education work?
- b) Do we manage and deliver benefits to the society as a whole?
- c) Do we seek freedom or protection?

In seeking their security teacher community as a whole has mortgaged their freedom.

We have to seek for the new system wherein the management in all its behaviour is management oriented to achieve new attitudes of work, new visions of performance. We have to be first socialised and oriented so that later on our behaviour is institutionalised. At present any innovation introduced and backed by liberal financial assistance by the UGC results in an isolated project instead of characteristics institutionalised of the project. This scenario has to be changed by analysing the infrastructure and removing the change-resisting components.

The accountability has its roots in the responsibility one is entrusted with. In what way the teacher community is given the responsibility of handling educational programmes and procedures? Teachers including those in departments of the university are not free to evolve their own curriculum, their own evaluation procedures. Teachers at every stage have remained as employees in the entire structure. Even the vice-chancellors in the respective pay scale have become mere employees of a larger employment system.

The new self appraisal system hardly goes beyond the ritual. How does it reflect a teacher's functional experience, his involvement or participation in the process of education in general and in the teaching learning continuum? How does the appraisal proforma reflect the

developmental aspect of a teacher's professional personality? The self appraisal is to be viewed in the context of a system organisation and also in the context of programme execution. The routinised programme in higher education has itself become a change-resisting factor.

The university roles are statutory instead of creative because of its change-resisting bureaucracy. Various boards of studies and academic councils have been reduced to a replica of hierarchical bureaucracy. This type of affair never gives an opportunity to a teacher to introspect and thus unfold for his self-appraisal.

During the process of introspection a teacher is able to look within, examine his own potential, study his goals, motives and even motivation. In this respect the university administration requires flexibility to unlock the motivation.

Professional code is not to be devised by an outsider. It has to be developed internally by everyone occupied in the educational programme. Vice-Chancellor is not an exception. If the administrative flexibility is feasible, teacher community will be able to identify their professional credentials. These professionals in their new style of work would help the organisation, the system and the academic behaviour since it would provide the real creative basis to function.

The performance-audit of teachers, teacher unions and institutions is feasible only if the existing bureaucratic framework of the system is totally revamped. The management structure of universities requires reframing. Mere granting autonomy is no solution since autonomy cannot be given. It has to be evolved institutionally.

The basic concepts of autonomy, accountability, decentralization, etc. are not perceived in this context. These concepts remain at the dictionary level if the existing system of pattern maintenance continues. It is ridiculous to think of university autonomy till it is interpreted in terms of financial allocation and quantitative expansion.

The entire education has to be viewed in terms of larger social movement. Decentralisation does not mean privatisation to profit.

Teacher community is not only to be secured but to be safeguarded professionally.

Accountability of Collegiate Education

M.R. KURUP

The collegiate education in India has undergone far reaching changes since independence. It has taken a quantum leap forward in terms of sheer numbers—of institutions and enrolment. One of the projections showed that, given the trend in the gross and incremental enrolment ratios, the rate of growth of income and of the relevant age group population, the demand for seats for higher education in Maharashtra would be 15.16 lakhs by 2001, as per the lowest of four alternate estimates. At present it appears to be the policy to permit colleges such that there would be at least one in every taluka, against one in district, say, 25 years ago.

Another important aspect is the degree of diversification attained particularly during the last two decades. Besides the general stream of Arts, Science and Commerce, the rate of growth of professional education such as engineering, medicine, education, to mention a few, has no parallel. For instance, as against just two engineering colleges under Bombay University in 1982, the number rose to 18 in 1992. This is true of all universities in Maharashtra.

Yet another aspect relates to the motives of those setting up the colleges. In the past, institutions came up as a result of efforts of philanthropists, but many of those which have come up in recent times appear more to be “ventures” than pure charitable efforts. From renowned social thinkers and philanthropists, who have helped to establish colleges with a missionary zeal, to the present day ‘educational entrepreneurs’, the goals of institutions have changed from pure service to the society, to offering education at the cost of the beneficiary. It indicates a shift from education for social change to education as a private investment.

In the process of transition, the education system has suffered a severe decline in quality and credibility. All those who promote educational institutions need not share visionary ideals or social welfare philosophy. Most of them also lack the desire and ability to improve the level of discipline and inculcate a sense of purpose in their institutions. Reports of variety of unethical and antisocial activities taking place in colleges have become very common. It is also known that hardly anyone is brought to book for these offences. Who is to be punished, since it is difficult to hold anyone directly responsible for whatever is happening in an institution?

Management and Government

Broadly, the collegiate system consists of the government, university, management, faculty and the students. The government is partly to blame for the present sorry state of affairs. It went back on the time tested grant in aid policy in 1973 with the introduction of salary payment scheme and again in 1983 with granting of permission to unaided colleges without any forethought. It need not be pointed out to the government that higher education is costly and that the receipts by way of the subsidized fees will not be enough to meet even 1/5th of the revenue expenditure. Who will put the 4/5th resources to smoothly run the organization, besides investing on infrastructure? Even those who have given all sorts of assurances to the University regarding the functioning of the institutions, succeed in abdicating their responsibility. This is the result of a supreme lapse on the part of the government, which has been instrumental in relegating the role and effectiveness of the college management. The managements, who have put a lot into their institutions, have unwittingly accepted a secondary role in view of the enormous and recurring resource crunch.

The Management is in a position to shift the incidence of resource crunch to the staff in the form of low or irregular wages and poor conditions of work, and to the students in the form of poor and inadequate infrastructure and other critical inputs like journals, books, equipment, teaching aids and so on. Many a Management are forced to have a feeling that they are doing a thankless job. They are not free to innovate, for every act is measured in terms of 'money' by the Government. The Management can do only what an outdated and rigid system of grant-in-aid rules permit. Good work does not receive public and activists' notice, but a small lapse could become a point of public debate and agitation. Hence, the Managements find it prudent to

withdraw from the centre stage, and quietly serve their private interest, if any.

Another reason for lack of accountability of the Management is the grant-in-aid policy of the State Government; which treats grant as “reimbursement” of expenditure. This was a clever play of the government to keep itself away from direct accountability. Under the reimbursement scheme, the Management too could escape from the responsibility, blaming the government for all the ills. Collegiate education has become an orphan. Otherwise, how could one explain an attempt made to blame the State Bank of India, Pune Branch, for the undue delay in the payment of salary for the month of March 1993 to the college staff! It was a sheer mockery of accountability. Why should the private Management play the role of a ‘Welfare State’, is equally an important question worth pondering about? An urgent review of the grant-in-aid policy and the fees structure is needed to make the government and the Management effectively accountable.

Though colleges have become very large and work for nearly 12 hours a day in cities, they do not have an administrative hierarchy for closer and continuous supervision. The principal is the only legal authority, who falls an easy prey for somebody else’s mischief. We saw the transfer of a Principal in a government college and forced retirement in a private college for certain untoward incidents, over which they had hardly any direct control. The sheer size and complexity of work in the college have made the Principal a mere administrator, forcing him out of academics. It is time to seriously think whether the Principal should be teaching at all, to give him time to fully take up administration without any divided responsibility, as in the United States.

The government’s treatment of higher education is mere financial and is inadequate and inappropriate to attain the objectives enshrined in the State Policy. There is no relationship between grant and performance. Two identical colleges in terms of size, but with extremely different levels of performance, say at the examination - one with 95 percent and the other with a mere 15 percent results - will receive the same aid from the government. An achievement linked incentive system of grant is absent in the collegiate education.

The private institutions are often let down with unilateral decisions by the university and government without any interface whatsoever with colleges which are expected to implement them. Everyone was taken by surprise when colleges received only 50 percent of the non-salary

expenditure at the fag end of the year, without taking the Management into confidence. Today if the Managements of a large number of colleges fail to meet the aspirations of students, staff and the society at large, the government and the university would be forced to remain silent spectators, unable to take over and run the embolden the gullible amongst the Managements to do whatever they want to with impunity.

University

The accountability of the university is bizarre. Most of the universities in India follow the system of affiliation. Colleges ought to have been permitted by the university, but are found approaching it with permission directly obtained from the state government. What can the university do with these colleges, when it is known that they can always undermine its authority?

The University works through the system of committees. Therefore, an important issue may go under the carpet, if the convenor of the committee sleeps over the matter. A case in point is the committee constituted by the Academic Council of the Bombay University a few years ago, to explore the possibility of starting a major course in International Trade. This was done suo moto based on a newspaper report of a statement made by the then President of India at a function in Bombay. The committee met once, took certain positive decisions in respect of introduction of the course, and decided to meet later on with due notice. Subsequently with the convenor developing cold feet for whatever reason, no meeting was convened and a worthwhile proposal met with a premature death, without anybody to account for it. Preoccupied with hundreds of items on the agenda, and in the absence of any feedback system of progress report on earlier decisions, such lapses may go unnoticed in the university bodies.

Policy decision by the university and government are general in nature. Rules which are framed to regulate and discourage malpractices are so rigid that they often come in the way of reputed institutions than the culprits, who normally do not bother about such regulations.

Affiliation application lie with the university unattended for years together. The colleges send students for annual examinations, after which they are conferred degrees and diplomas at the convocation, though they have no valid affiliation on record. While in states like Tamil Nadu, the affiliation system is so prompt that even a one year old college finds a place in the List maintained by the University Grants

Commission under section 2 (f), not a single college started since 1980 and affiliated to the University of Bombay, is listed by the UGC, due to the lethargy in the affiliation mechanism. When misinterpretation of section 2(f) of the UGC Act for year together was brought to the notice of the then Registrar, he pretended ignorance and said that it was done by someone who is no more with the university. This is sheer killing of the affiliation system and nobody has seriously studied the implications of such situations. The accountability appears to be one way; the colleges are accountable to the university and not vice-versa.

The transfer of examinations to colleges, though ideal and consistent with the spirit of the Kothari Report, was effected by the Bombay University, without an indepth study of the problems which might emerge out of it. In many institutions, unfair and unethical practices, including wanton gracing of marks, went on unnoticed. If found, the college authorities could escape under the cover of some lacunae in the rules. In case of a dispute, the benefit of doubt is likely to be in favour of the students, in view of the inordinate lag effect in decision making at the university. The authorities also did not visualise a situation that a certificate issued by a college to a student migrating after passing the First/Second Year degree may not be recognised by universities elsewhere.

A classic case of lack of accountability on the part of the university and the government, is the issue of vacation for the Principals of non-government colleges. Every employee in the college enjoys either a vacation or earned leave, but not the Principal. He is being persecuted by convenient interpretations by the university and the government. He cannot go on vacation, because the university says it is non-vacation post, and he cannot take leave, because the Administrative Officer will not pay his wage for the period. This is going on for years together, despite strong Associations of Principals.

Most of the decisions that the university ought to have taken to maintain its autonomy are now being taken by the government. The decision-implementation lag in the university and the government is too long. It took nearly 9 months for an Academic Council decision to be communicated to the Chancellor for interpretation of the term "standing of six years" contained in section 45 of the Act. It was just laying there unattended, till someone interested was after it. The decision process is not responsive, automatic, and self-sustaining. The situation today is that someone has to be after everything for a prompt decision from the university and the government.

There is no manpower planning and a positive process of human resources development in universities. Senior officers are overburdened and major departments are highly understaffed. The government grant to university is a major impediment. Permission to recruit necessary staff is not granted by the government. The university coffers are not rich enough to self-finance such recruitment. It will not surprise many, if it is revealed here that a large number of affiliation reports could not be presented to the university bodies during the last few months for want of typists!

The UGC has very little control over universities, except where finance comes from the apex body. For instance, it could do very little when the state government went back on an earlier assurance and refused to continue the College Development Council and the University Leadership Programme once the tenure of the UGC was over. Recommendations of UGC are also not found to be implemented by some of the universities, which erode the standing of the national body in the minds of the academic community.

It is time for the universities to identify their limitations, given the size, resources and the system of affiliation. With over 250 institutions each major universities in Maharashtra simply cannot manage their own affairs efficiently. What is needed is delegation and decentralisation with authority and accountability.

Faculty

Let us now come to the critical component of the collegiate system, the faculty members. Their terms of employment and other rules and regulations are laid down by the university or the government. The employer has no role to play here, which has eroded the effectiveness of the college Management, including the Principal. The difference between the Head of Department and a teacher in a college is merely 2 lecture remission per week to the former, i.e. 15 minutes per day! why should the Head labour to effectively monitor the work of the teachers and take them to task, when he has nothing to gain, except displeasure of colleagues, is a highly relevant question in the context of administration and accountability.

The faculty members in the colleges have a specific duty of teaching and evaluation, and an unspecified duty of assisting the administration of certain activities. Since the latter is nonspecific, most of the teachers take it lightly. Even the teaching and evaluation work too are taken for

granted by many a faculty member in some of the colleges. Since the university has not evolved and implemented any code of conduct, large number of teachers are found to be actively engaged in private tuitions, managing and participating in coaching classes, trade and commerce, and a lot of assorted activities. When such teachers work as examination invigilators, use of unfair means and other malpractices would go unnoticed. Their evaluation of answer scripts may be casual and always generous to avoid any criticism. Even when a large majority of the students fail at the examination conducted by the University or Board, no introspection takes place amongst the members of the faculty. The erosion in the value system has led to corrupt and unfair practices which are now omnipresent. 'Networking' of people who try to manipulate for partisan gains, may defeat even a very alert administration. This has led to loss of credibility of the higher education system in the country.

The whole collegiate system is degenerating to the level of coaching shops. The teachers are found to be not in favour of any system of feedback, including an evaluation by the students, since many are unsure of themselves. Thus, the single most important factor which is contributing to the decline in the quality of higher education is lack of accountability on the part of a large segment of faculty members. It is tantamount to an identity crisis among those who are called "social engineers".

Students

Let us now come to the students, for whom the whole system is meant for. By and large, they have taken the colleges and the system of higher education, for granted. They appear to equate education with a degree or diploma, and therefore, concentrate more on examinations than on learning and unlearning. In cities like Bombay, every student who is appearing for the Board or University examination, takes recourse to private tuition or coaching classes, which provide tailor-made materials for examinations. The college has become a place for fun and socialising. Very few students attend lectures in the college, since they have already done the topics in the coaching class. The serious among the college teachers may have a different, holistic and comprehensive, approach than the question-answer method of private classes. Students will keep away from such lectures merely to avoid confusion and spend time with peer groups wherever they prefer. Schooling is also not time bound in the sense that there is no rule that a three-year degree be completed within that span of time, except on

legitimate grounds. There are students who take even ten years to complete a three year degree programmes. The cost borne by the society is enormous, since not even half of the students enrolled for a degree course complete it. The leadership of the student community, is found to be more politically inclined than academically. There were occasions, when called, the parents too were found to evade the responsibility on one pretext or the other.

Goals and Accountability

The government, university, Management, teacher, student and the parents, do not appear to be very keen on improving the quality and relevance of higher education. Though the committees on education and the government documents would speak volumes about objectives of higher education, and present them elegantly in terms of 3 Hs (Heart, Hand and Head) or 3 Es (Equity, Excellence and Efficiency), no effort has ever been made to transmit them to colleges for implementation. Given the state policy and other apparent constraints, the macro goals appear to be non-realizable, with the result, they remain mere quotable quotes.

Colleges have been conceived merely to provide opportunities to students seeking higher studies, but are Seldom found formulating specific attainable targets. Non-realizable macro goals and non-existent micro goals, provide a barren ground for non-achievement and non-accountability. Lack of accountability of individuals, institutions and the system as a whole, is the single most critical factor responsible for the rapid erosion in the standard of higher education in the country. It is a sheer waste of productive resources. No one is bothered when colleges affiliated to a university consistently record 80 percent failure at a degree examination, year after year. No committee of teachers, students, Management, or of the university, has ever inquired into such a colossal waste of society's precious resources - both money and manpower. In their private conversation, the teachers would blame the students and the managements; the students would spread it on the teachers, Managements and university examination system, and so on. The Management may not bother since it can do very little, for its wings have been clipped long ago. The society at large too do not react against such an abysmal performance of institutions, even when they are tax financed.

The colleges do not have the resource support to achieve the macro goals of equity, excellence and efficiency. Here, the government grant-

in-aid scheme is anything but positive. The goals have also not been explicitly stated in the government policy on education. Similarly, no institution has been found to have laid down even a certain minimum standard of passing at the examinations as a primary goal. The internal inputs and the environmental dynamics are inadequate, and at times hostile, to build “around personality of students”. If an institution or a student achieves any credit, it would largely be due to private and personal efforts, than contributed by the system.

The lukewarm attitude of the society at large has also contributed to the “anarchy” in educational institutions. A strike in hospitals, transport and communication, financial sector like banks, government, municipality, or industry, may force members of the public to react for immediate solution. Such a reaction is hardly found when higher educational institutions are not working. Once a Chief Minister was reported to have said that nothing will happen if colleges are closed for a few years! This is sheer ignorance and lack of accountability at its paramount peak.

It is felt that education today contributes very little to the career development of a student. He has no specific reason for doing a particular degree course since there is hardly any link between career opportunities and the subjects studied. Further, institutions of higher learning are becoming increasingly irrelevant since the degree which they offer can now be had by post. It is even found that the study material supplied by the Indira Gandhi National Open University is superior to the conventional textbooks used in colleges. Time will not be far away when colleges may be forced to become post offices, accepting and forwarding examination forms, the actual teaching being shifted to coaching classes. The future generation and therefore the nation will pay dearly for the present state of missing institutional priorities, goals and accountability.

Conclusion

To sum up, accountability is a major missing link in whole spectrum of collegiate education. There are too many loose-ends in the collegiate system, so that no component is directly accountable for what is happening. Both macro and micro goals of higher education are not attainable without a certain degree of accountability within the system. A better integration of the various segments of higher education is needed to make the system efficient, productive and responsible.

6

Accountability in Higher Education Institutions in India

V. KRISHNA MOORTHY

Accountability is a complicated process and cannot be discussed in isolation. To understand and implement accountability it is necessary to look into various organizations and institutes of higher education and their powers, functions and responsibilities. The apex body for higher educational institutes in India is the University Grants Commission.

By an act of Parliament (the University Grants Commission Act 3 of 1956) the University Grants Commission (UGC) came into existence on 5th November, 1956. The act has been amended in 1972, 1984 and 1985. The UGC, in addition to funding the institutes of higher education also has the responsibility in consultation with universities and other institutions to take all steps for the promotion and coordination of university education, maintenance of standards of teaching, examinations and research in the above institutions. It has the power to withhold funding to institutions which violate the UGC norms. The commission follows the policy decisions taken by the central government and in any dispute between the UGC and the central government the decision of the latter 'shall be final'.

Institutes of higher education, notably the universities, have come into existence by an act of parliament in case of central universities and by an act of state legislatures in case of state universities. Each of these universities have their territorial jurisdiction and they function within that jurisdiction with the help of appropriate statutes and ordinances. The University of Delhi is taken as a typical example while discussing accountability. The University of Delhi came into existence by an act of parliament (Act No. VIII of 1922) which received the assent of the Governor General of India on the 5th March 1922. This act has been amended in 1943, 1952, 1961, 1970, 1972 and 1981. Amendments of

the act of 1952 and onwards have got the assent by the President of India who is also the Visitor of the University. The University of Delhi has a student population of more than 1.5 lakhs and it consists of constituent colleges, some partly autonomous institutions. It has also got different types of colleges e.g., the university maintained colleges, Delhi administration maintained colleges, and private trust colleges. In addition it has a School of Correspondence and Continuing Education and also has a Non-collegiate Women's Education Cell and an External Candidates Cell. The act through its statutes and ordinances clearly defines the powers and functions of the University and its constituent units. The powers of the University include:

- to provide instructions in various courses, organize research, take steps for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
- to confer degrees, diplomas, etc.;
- to institute teaching posts, to appoint or recognize persons for various teaching posts;
- to maintain colleges and to admit to its privileges, colleges not maintained by it or to withdraw privileges; and
- to declare, with the consent of the colleges concerned, in the manner specified by the Academic Council, colleges conducting courses of study in the faculties of medicine, technology music or fine arts as autonomous colleges. The Court, the Executive Council, the Academic Council and the Finance Committee are the main authorities of the University. The Court is the supreme authority of the University, Academic Council 'shall be academic body of the University and shall have the right' to advise the Executive Council on all academic matters and the Finance Committee's decisions are most important for the maintenance of financial discipline of the University. The Vice-Chancellor is the chief executive authority of the University and is assisted by a team consisting of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Director (South Campus), Dean of Colleges and the Registrar. Recently the Registrar's post has been made a tenure post with enhanced academic component.

The details of the act, the statutes, ordinances, powers and functions of the University are published by the University of Delhi, vide their Calendar, Vol. I (the acts, statutes and ordinances) in 1988 and Calendar, Vol. II (Appendices and regulation) in 1989. All the colleges maintained by the University are governed by ordinance XX and the colleges other than those maintained by Government of India by

ordinance XVIII. University appointed teachers are governed by ordinance XI and the college appointed teachers by ordinance XII. The University of Delhi is unique in that the service conditions, pay scales of the university and college teachers and non teaching staff are identical but for some minor differences. Each college has its own governing body which elects its chairman and appoints its treasurer. The Principal is the member-secretary of the governing body and also is the chief executive authority of the college. Each college has a staff council which takes decisions with regard to

- preparation of college time table;
- allocation of extra-curricular work of teachers not involving payment of remuneration;
- organizing extra-curricular activities of students, sports, games, NSS and academic societies;
- laying down guidelines for purchase of library books and laboratory equipment in consultation with appropriate departments; and
- organizing admissions.

The staff council shall also make recommendation in respect of

- introduction of new teaching posts in the departments and expansion of the existing departments;
- formulation of admission policy within the framework of the policy laid down by the university;
- formulation of guidelines regarding arrangements for the residence and welfare of students in consultation with appropriate students organization;
- formulation of guidelines regarding discipline of the students; and
- formulation of policies for recommending names of teachers for participation in seminars and conferences and financial assistance to teachers.

The staff council 'shall function through its committees' and the convener of each committee is elected by the staff council. Each college has a Joint Consultation Committee (JCC) and students and the staff. The University has a set of norms for the pattern of non-teaching and technical staff. Thus the Delhi University system is well organized.

As has been stated earlier, the UGC has the responsibility to see that academic standards are maintained by the institutes of higher learning. In pursuance of this the UGC vide its letter No. F-1-28/84 (CPP)/Vol. III dated November 18/26, 1988 has sent guidelines, to the Registrars,

regarding minimum number of actual teaching days in an academic year, workload of teacher in universities and colleges and examination reforms. The salient features of these guidelines are:

- to have a minimum of 180 actual teaching days with a suggestion that it should be raised to 200;
- admissions to be completed before the last day of the long vacation and examination results to be compiled and declared during the long vacation to enable smooth admissions;
- that the university should see to it that a working day in a department or faculty doesn't become just a few hours of the forenoon and the time table should be spread to give an eight hours a day working schedule;
- while suggesting that each and every topic listed in the syllabus need not be taught in the class, emphasizes that it will be counter productive to hold examinations on reduced number of courses;
- no examination should be held without fulfilling the requisite numbers of lectures/tutorials as laid down by the university and the examinations should be conducted in a fair and impartial manner;
- a teacher should not have to teach or lecture for more than three hours a day and in postgraduate teaching no teacher should have more than two courses to teach.

The maximum workload should be the same in all departments and for all teachers. Their schedule of 40 working hours per teacher per week is given below.

Undergraduate Classes

(a) Workload of Lectures in Non-Laboratory/ Field work subjects

	Activity	Average No. of hours per week
i	Teaching	16
ii	Testing/Exams	2
iii	Tutorials	4
iv	Preparation of Teaching	10
v	Supervision of extra-curricular work	4
vi	Administrative work	4
	Total	40

Where extra-curricular work or administrative work is not assigned or unfortunately tutorials do not take place, teaching work may be slightly increased, but as far as possible a teacher should not have to teach or lecture more than three hours per day.

(b) Workload of Lecturers in Science Subjects of where field work is necessary

Activity	Average No. of hours per week
i Teaching	16
ii Lab work	4
iii Testing/examinations	2
iv Teaching preparation and lab-setting	12
v Administrative activities	4
vi Extra-curricular activities	2
Total	40

Postgraduate Classes

(a) Workload of Lecturers in non-laboratory/
Field work subjects

Activity	Average No. of hours per week
i Teaching	10
ii Testing/exams	1
iii. Tutorials	4
iv Preparation for Teaching	10
v Research	10
vi Own Reading/Studies	5
Total	40

(b) Workload of Lecturers in Science Subjects or where field work is involved

Activity	Average No. of hours per week
i Teaching	10
ii Testing	1
iii Laboratory work	4
iv Teaching preparation and lab-setting	10
v Research	10
vi Own Reading/Admin	5
Total	40

The UGC also has taken steps to improve standards of teaching by arranging various seminars, symposia and refresher courses to teachers through the academic staff colleges.

A committee was appointed to formulate the Code of Professional Ethics for University and college Teachers; the report of the task force was accepted by the commission on 27th December 1988 and circulated to all the universities and colleges (DO No. F1-4/87 (PS-CELL) dated 17th February (1989) by the Chairman. It stipulates the goals of higher education, teachers and their rights, teachers and their responsibilities, the relationship between teachers and students, teachers and other teachers and authorities, teachers and non-teaching staff, teachers and guardians and teachers and society. The task force rightly attached great importance to the role of a teacher in the building up of a country. The task force had on it the leading office bearers of AIFUCTO.

A committee under the chairmanship of Prof. A. Gnamam, the then Vice-Chancellor, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli, appointed by the UGC, submitted a comprehensive report entitled 'Towards New Educational Management' on 24th January 1990. The committee has dealt in detail the latest techniques of educational management, the concept of greater autonomy both in academic matters and financial management to the universities and accountability of the institutes of higher education to society on whose funding the institutes have come up. Some of the important recommendations are:

- the nomenclature of non-teaching staff is not at all conducive to educational administration and teachers or administrators in an educational system must be first and foremost educational personnel;
- the management of the universities should be based on the principles of participation, decentralization, autonomy and accountability;
- the autonomy pleaded for the university should percolate down to the various organs of the university system;
- the ultimate objective of management of higher education system should be that every university department becomes autonomous and every college is able to exercise meaningful autonomy;
- autonomy means the freedom to do what universities are expected to do and not what they like to do and certainly not to do what they are not expected to do; and
- the society is entitled to demand that the members of the academic community individually and collectively be made accountable in concrete visible terms.

For the purpose of accountability the Committee has suggested academic, administrative and financial auditing. Thus UGC is trying to do its best as is laid down under the act.

Let us now concentrate on how the University and its colleges are functioning vis-a-vis the accountability to the society. Democratic decentralization of the university system is operating for over 20 years now. All signs indicate that the concept has not been understood properly leading to a large scale inaction and indifference. It is presumed, and rightly so, that if the Vice-Chancellor is a brilliant academician he will be able to bring round the university into a unit which can look after the social responsibilities. The University of Delhi can boast of a string of brilliant academicians as their Vice-Chancellors. To what extent the decline of the University of Delhi is halted? Is it really manageable? A detailed look at the present state of affairs of the University of Delhi clearly shows that the only way for the university to survive is to bring in the concept of accountability in all its seriousness. Accountability as a topic was never discussed so seriously in the mid-fifties and sixties in the University of Delhi as is being done now. Those were the "Golden days" not only for the University of Delhi but for the entire country in terms of standards of higher education. Only those who were interested in higher education used to join the university system, those for whom teaching was the ultimate goal used to join the teaching profession. All around there used to be an academic discipline not on paper or in the rules book but in actual practice. Eminent people like Prof. D.S. Kothari, Prof. T.R. Seshadri, Prof. P. Maheswari, Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao used to occupy the university positions. There used to be mutual trust and mutual respect for each other. This does not mean that there used to be unanimity. They did differ on issues purely on academic basis, that too with dignity. When I used to narrate my experiences of the University of Delhi when we were students, one of my colleagues labeled them as grandmother's stories. This is one word explains the difference between mid-fifties and now. In earlier days there was no necessity for someone to talk about accountability as the university community used to look after the societal educational needs and the society never doubted it, whereas now there is mutual mistrust and disrespect and hence accountability has become the most higher education. Probably it is more necessary now that one puts everything on paper and try to follow and adhere to the guidelines strictly. Someone can as well ask what if in spite of all the efforts if one tries to violate the system?

Accountability, whenever it is discussed brings to the fore the teaching community and as a teacher I do understand the significance of this. Teacher is the one who teaches not merely from the syllabus but who tries to impart knowledge to the students so as to enable them to take on their shoulders the responsibility to lead the country to a brighter future. If one visits the continent of Africa people there respect the teachers from India. Once Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia commented that 'the teachers from India are doing proud to their own country by their sincerity and honesty in teaching the locals?'

Teacher's role has been the most important in the Delhi University system since its inception. In spite of whatever is said about our teaching profession, the University of Delhi is surviving under tremendous odds only due to the efforts of sincere and honest teachers who form a large majority of the Delhi University teaching fraternity. As has been said earlier, the University of Delhi is well organized. The Academic Council lays down the guidelines for the workload, paper wise, of all the courses including the number of tutorials and preceptorials that have to be taken. The tutorial scheme had started in 1958 in the University of Delhi and had been found to be extremely useful in those years but is not taken seriously these days. What is the accountability the society expects from the teachers? They expect the teachers to do justice to their wards as per the guidelines given by the Academic Council. The question is to what extent in the university system the guidelines of the academic council are implemented? One can even ask at this stage whether the teaching community is following the code of professional ethics for university and college teachers as prepared by the task force set up by the UGC which had on it the office bearers of the AIFUCTO? Did our own association (Delhi University Teachers Association), of which till recently I happened to be a member, and a proud one at that, ever prepare its own code of conduct? It did try a number of times but unfortunately could not come out with any concrete suggestions and steps. Each and everyone in the teaching community of the university system now wants to have a code of conduct of their own and everyone wants accountability to be enforced in principle. Is it not better that we prepare our own code of conduct? First of all whom are we accountable to? Obvious answer is our own students. They are joining the Delhi University system hoping that their academic future is safe in the hands of the teaching community. Why not we start with an assessment of our performance by our own students? A few of my colleagues in Sri Venkateswara (S.V.) College

(University of Delhi) on their own have started this and their findings are highly encouraging. In the Sociology Department in S.V. College, in a departmental meeting they had discussed the student assessments of their teachers and have taken adequate steps to rectify the shortcomings. This made a tremendous difference in the results of these students at the university examinations. Some colleagues may say that the students are not mature enough to evaluate their teachers. Obviously this argument is without any justification. A group of us were teaching at Asmara University in Ethiopia (Presently Asmara is the capital of Eritrea, a new country). I had personally seen the assessment of teachers by the I year students. It is really surprising that they had evaluated the teachers so well. This evaluation is irrespective of the grades they were given by the concerned teachers. One of my colleagues there, who is presently a senior reader in a college of the University of Delhi, gave some of them 'D' grades but all of them gave him 'excellent' when they evaluated him. The second assessment of the teacher can be from his colleagues in the department and also the head of the department and the head of the institution. I am sure many of the teachers will have unjustified apprehensions of these assessments. In an underdeveloped country like Ethiopia if these could be done, why not in our own country? In a college system each teacher also should assess his/her other colleagues, the teacher in charge and also the Head of the institution. Obviously a notable feature of this exercise demands selection of competent teachers at various levels, either as a lecturer, reader, professor or as a principal. It is certainly more important when filling up the senior positions. To get the maximum advantage from a teacher, it is the responsibility of the concerned seniors to see that teachers have proper incentives, like housing, emoluments and professional independence within the over all policy guidelines of the University. Someone can always ask, is it taken for granted that if teachers stay on the campus they will spend more time attending to their students and the college? Well, my answer is 'Yes' with a remark that exceptions are always there.

Accountability, as I said, brings to the fore the teaching community; who else are accountable in the institutes of higher learning? It should start from the top i.e. the Vice-Chancellor and his team, the Court, the Executive Council, the Finance Committee, the non-teaching and technical staff, the students, and finally, the society itself.

As the institutes of higher education are accountable to the society, so also the society is equally accountable to the institutes of higher learning. The society is responsible to see

- that the institutes of higher education are not politicized;
- they should not make use of the university community to settle their scores; and
- they should see that the universities are funded properly.

In USA each tax payer pays a particular amount for education. Public contributions are the main sources of income for many important institutes of higher learning in USA. A surprising thing in Delhi is that a parent doesn't mind paying Rs. 500-600 p.m. to get his ward educated in a good school. When it comes to the college what does he pay? Rupees fifteen as tuition fees, which is probably being charged from the forties. Is there any justification in charging such a low tuition fee? For the transport they pay Rs. 12.50 when the student joins the University, while probably they were paying around Rs. 150/- to Rs. 200/- p.m. at the school level. This sudden decrease in expenditure when the ward enters the college from school makes the parent more complacent. The student will have more pocket money, so a situation is created where a student is no more a financial burden on the parent and the parent suddenly loses count of what his ward is doing in the college. Many a time parents do not respond to communications from the colleges. If the tuition fee, for example, was the same as in the public school and the bus pass also of the same value, could a parent be silent to what was happening? Could a student enjoy the absence of a teacher in the classroom? Could the teacher take the liberty of abstaining from the classroom? I am not suggesting privatisation of higher education. What I am afraid is if we do not take appropriate steps to check the deteriorating situation in the institutes of higher learning, privatisation is bound to come in.

Is it not necessary for the executive authorities in the colleges and the university to be accountable? Are the Court, Executive Council, Academic Council and the Finance Committee not accountable? They are framing policy guidelines - academic, administrative and financial. Is it not necessary for these bodies to review what is happening to their decisions? Are they implemented, and if implemented properly or not? One can accuse the outside agencies because it is very easy to do so, self criticism needs courage.

What is the role of the University Departments in the maintenance of academic excellence? As per the rules of the Delhi University, it is the University Head of the department who suggests to the college the list of candidates to be called for interviews for selecting teachers in the colleges. Of course, they have to follow the guidelines laid down by the

Academic Council. Neither the Chairman of the college Governing body nor the Principal of the college can call anyone for interview other than those short listed by the Head of the department. During my tenure as the Principal I had seen that most of the University Heads of the departments were highly cooperative and academic in nature. But there were exceptions. The departments kept the file sent by the college for months, and many a time one could easily guess who was going to be appointed. Unfortunately there is a strong politicalization of university departments especially in the humanities. What can the principal or the chairman of the college governing body do? The only consolations that no one has a vetoing right at the selection committee. But if both the University Head of the department and university expert don't agree on a candidate, however brilliant the candidate may be, he/she cannot be appointed. If anything happens in the selection, the university Head of the department and the university expert should be made accountable. But is it done normally? The Principal of the college is the villain of the peace on each and everything that happens. The workload of the college departments is more or less decided by the university department, sometimes ignoring the role of the Academic Council. The university department and the faculty consists of essentially university professors and readers and a few of the college teachers. Each department is anxious to place their Ph.D./M.Phil/M.A. students in colleges. How can one do that? Revise the syllabus, restructure the syllabus and try to increase the number of papers and try to split one paper into two or three. The university guidelines are for a paper of 100 marks you can have five or six periods and for paper of 50 marks two or three periods, it always turns out to be six periods for a paper of 100 marks and three periods for a paper of 50 marks. Then we have the tutorials, probably the 9th wonder of the world. I had seen some departments taking it very seriously but unfortunately in many a 'department it is an exercise on paper, even that can't be done taking into account the Academic Council guidelines regarding tutorials and preceptorials (for the pass course each group, paper wise). If a college has 2-3 thousand students, and has 20 different departments, is it possible to frame a time table to accommodate, tutorials, especially when a large number of teachers would like to come at 10 a.m. to the college and be off by 12 noon? When a colleague was given a class at 10.30 a.m. by his department, his comment was that he has been placed in the evening college. The former Principal of a reputed campus college once said that irrespective of what the time table is, his college starts functioning after the

university specials arrive and the classes are over by the time the university specials leave (9.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.). If one goes round the colleges of the University of Delhi after 1 p.m., leaving the science block, one can see empty classrooms; the same is true with some departments in the Arts faculty in the main university. Is it not astonishing that this is happening in a central university, that too in the capital city of the country? It is interesting to go through Amrik Singh's article "*Can we afford part-time colleges*" (The Hindustan Times, Oct. 3, 1993, page 4 Sunday Magazine). One of my colleagues in S.V. College once wrote a very lengthy letter narrating the decline in the standards of education and absenteeism of the teachers to the then Vice-Chancellor and marked a copy to me. I had informed my colleague that no reply can be expected since the Vice-Chancellor will not be having time to go through his letter and surely, the reply never came. I could understand my colleague's agony, probably, we belonged to the past. It becomes frustrating for a genuine teacher. As I have stated, a large majority of them are genuine teachers in the Delhi University system, and when he/she loses his/her patience either he/she surrenders to the anarchical situation or says good bye to the profession. Democratization and decentralization without accountability will lead to disastrous conditions leading to anarchy. In adhoc appointments of teachers in colleges, the Principal has to get a panel of names from the university head of the department and then select one of them. Certain departments try to give the order of preference. But a majority of the departments send a panel. The principal can appoint one them them. Well the principal requests the teacher-in-charge to consult their senior most colleague and decide the candidate most suitable from the panel; at least some in-charges feel bad when asked to consult their senior most colleague. Democratization and decentralization is only when it concerns the Vice-Chancellor or the Principal. It doesn't apply to the teacher-in-charge who is on rotation for a year or two! Is it not funny? All these can be put into their right places provided those who are with the university system are made accountable. Did the Finance Committee visit any college or university finance departments or the examination branch to find out whether everything was going on as stipulated by them?

What about the examination system of University of Delhi where several thousands of questions papers are set every year; the number of reevaluation applications are increasing, sometimes marks are revised upwards abnormally. The confidentiality of the examination branch is

under a cloud. Why not make them accountable. Any leakage of question paper, any abnormal increase of marks during reevaluation, someone has to be made accountable. In the university system the examiner A gave say X marks, during reevaluation it goes to the examiner B and if there is a difference of more than 5% in marks given by A and B it goes to examiner C. Thus there are 3 (A,B,C) examiners involved, one of them is correct. Why not at least debar the other two from examinership for gross negligence of duty? I doubt whether any such action had ever been taken.

The only solution to bring back the university to its earlier glory is:

- to see that everyone is accountable in the university system;
- to have smaller autonomous campuses, each headed by the rank of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor;
- to make all the colleges autonomous and allow them to survive by their own academic excellence: (and I am sure they can do it); and
- to give proper incentives to teachers and the other staff who are more sincere and honest. One of the ways is to have varied increments e.g. 4.15%, as is done in USA, depending on the performance.

The teachers, students, the non-teaching staff, the authorities and the society have to put their heads together to bring back the glory of the institutes of higher learning in India.

On Cost-effectiveness and Accountability: Revised Programme of Action 1992

K.K. BAJAJ

Soon after adoption of National Policy on Education by the Parliament during its budget session of 1986, twenty three task forces were constituted on subjects ranging from early school to college education and research needs of diverse socio-cultural patterns and regions of the country, to suggest implementation strategies and financial implications for evolving a programme of action. These committees had on them eminent educational thinkers, social scientists, bureaucrats and economic experts to give the benefit of expert advice towards the formulation of a programme of action which *inter alia* could make the system of education dynamic as never before. The recommendations of different task forces were consolidated and considered by Central Advisory Board of Education on 1st and 2nd August, 1986 whereafter the document called Programme of Action was approved by the Parliament in its monsoon session. This expressed the national resolve with broad strategies to implement National Policy on Education over a period of time even beyond the Eighth Plan. It was required to be followed with sensitivity and commitment because the National Policy on Education, as never before, had been aimed to address the total educational needs of the country right from the pre-school requirements to the college and research level planning. It aimed to address and eradicate social illiteracy and go beyond scientific and technological education towards establishment of relevance in priorities through vocationalisation and removal of social gaps. To meet the challenge of obsolescence and ignorance, total reorientation of the content and process of school and college education was envisaged. Among the defined prerequisites, guiding principles and priorities for implementation strategies in higher education, consolidation and expansion of institutions, development of autonomous colleges,

restructuring of course, training and orientation of teachers, strengthening of research, mobility, creation of linkages between state and national levels, etc. were emphasised. But except in the matter of expansion of educational institutions, it has been the teacher who has remained as the most important functionary in the entire "Programme of Action". It has been through him that the total social change has been visualised.

Recently the National Policy on Education (1986) was reviewed by Shri N. Janardhan Reddy Committee (NPERC) and its recommendations were considered by the Central Advisory Board of Education at its 47th meeting held on May 5-6, 1992. Reddy committee *inter alia* recommended revision of Programme of Action although it suggested that very little of policy required 'reformulation'. Prior to this, Perspective Paper on Education towards an enlightened and human society by Acharya Ramamurti committee was submitted with its focus on as many as 26 issues with a deep concern for the principle of equity and social justice. It held that an integrated and holistic view of education be taken and the dichotomies such as of formal, nonformal and vocational education be removed. It focused on the school as the base of the educational pyramid for achieving universalisation of education, besides other measures to remove social disparities and ensure mass functional literacy. But now under the revised Programme of Action as recommended by Reddy Committee which was tabled in the Parliament on August 19, 1992, it has been emphasised that there is need for cost effectiveness and accountability at all levels of educational planning and administration in view of the resource constraints. Lack of availability of resources is evident from the AIU study based on the analysis of income and expenditure of eighty universities for the period 1984-85 to 1988-89 which has shown that over 98 percent of the universities suffered from financial deficits in different years; 45 percent of them had deficits for one to two years; 40 percent of them experienced budgetary deficits for three to four years and 12 percent of them suffered from perpetual deficits during all the five years of analysis. So, bad financial health is the common story of most of the universities. It is in this context that the present rethinking has become relevant. In fact both cost effectiveness and accountability are the basic issues in the system if it is to attain any degree of success in the context of our socio-economic milieu. Cost effectiveness is not merely an economic urgency to emphasise the optimal use of allocations and cutting down of infructuous expenditure on nonfunctional buildings and

unsustainable inputs in non-viable institutions and activities. It is something more than that. Cost of education may not have absolute economic considerations as it is a social input which aims at creation of social base. At the same time cost factor has to be provided for the creation and consolidation of human resources. From the viewpoint of socio-economic analysis, education, which is merely a social responsibility function not directly linked to other improvement of social base and quality of life, cannot be sustained as a meaningful state exercise. Education is at best a function to improve the quality of life. The qualitative improvement of life is coterminous function of education. From pre-primary level to post-doctoral standards, the aim of education is improvement of the self and thereby social behaviour even in a diverse society best with iniquitous pattern of opportunities for getting education. Needless to add that all educational institutions are sites for expansion of consciousness, thought, scientific outlook and national renewal. So their role is crucial to development. In this context the relevance of cost as an economic function cannot be ignored as no formal system without supporting economic base can survive. Without appropriate financial inputs no institution with howsoever ennobling a function to perform, can survive. In fact, in the university financial set up, it is only less than 2 percent of the total cost which is realised from tuition fee. Income from endowments varies from 0.07 to 0.28 percent and all else comes from central or state government funds. Even the research and industry linkages are negligible from this viewpoint. It is only in this context that there has been a near unanimous political and social consensus that education should have a committed expenditure to the extent of 6 percent of national income so as to bring it within the reach of one and all, irrespective of location and socio-economic barriers even though presently it continues to be felt "*that absence of effective decentralization, failure to evolve priorities and ineffective coordination, have adversely affected the performance of the education system*".

A Management Function

While debate on the question of clarity on educational priorities, programmes and strategies continues, ensuring cost effectiveness is a management function. It entails deployment of fiscal inputs in coordination with available human material for optimum results. It aims at ensuring the acceptability and relevance of its products. In other words, if the costs are high and the products and neither acceptable nor relevant, the whole exercise goes awry and the system becomes

questionable. Education is human investment with multiple social functions and possibilities. If its costs are only of the type of an investment in the shape of a subsidy in a social system it is bound to become counter-productive. It is therefore, imperative that the cost factor in the system is seriously taken into account and its different features analysed in terms of their net absorption rate and return. Even otherwise spending on education faces greater competition from other social security claims. Today it is highly subsidised yet the poorest have the least access to it. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of our primary schools and institutions of higher education from 1950-51 onwards. Currently (in 1992) we have 5.58 lakh primary schools, over 7000 colleges, 199 universities including 27 deemed universities, 10 institutes of national importance, 5 IITs, and over 300 engineering and medical colleges. In the number of students seeking admission to higher education the increase has been on an average, at the rate of about 10 percent over the last three decades, yet only about 6 percent over the last three decades, yet only about 6 percent of the country's population in the relevant age group is in higher education which is much less than that of many other developing countries. But with all this expansion Indian education system is catering only to about 8 percent of the youth population of the eligible age group, and leaving a vast 48 percent of our total population beyond its reach even though the number of students and teachers has also gone up phenomenally. National expenditure on education has also shown a distinct upward trend in our investment both by the centre and the state governments in this sector. Percentage of GNP spent on education has also increased from 1.2 in 1950-51 and 3.9 in 1986-87 to 3.5 in 1991-92. Intersectorally the share of elementary education has decreased from 56 percent in I plan to 29 percent in VII Plan where as share of university and general education has increased from 18 percent to 44 percent during this period. But the basic issue which has caused concern is whether the system has the desired social impact, and if not, why has it drawn a flak and as to what are the weak points in its planning and implementation. If there are schools, colleges and universities where there neither exists proper infrastructure such as classrooms, laboratories and playgrounds nor do they have teachers and these have not shown results, yet there are a significant number of other schools, colleges and universities in the country which have well built classrooms and other required infrastructure with teachers and research facilities and they too have not shown results. While the lack of performance on the part of the

former could be explained there does not seem to be any reason why the inputs that have been available in the latter have also gone waste through results such as mass failures, organised copying, lack of excellence in sports, lack of research correlated to feasibility and inadequate teaching and lack luster performance of teachers. It is here that the accountability factor comes to the fore. It is in this context that the cost factor becomes prominent as its effectiveness is in doubt. There are schools, colleges and universities which have earned notoriety for their consistently poor or low performance and for a large number of areas of non-performance available in them. It is here that the costs and accountability factors become a matter of social audit. Non-performing institutions deserve to be given a show cause for remedial action including nonperforming teachers. Serious undervaluation of teaching mandate has to be checked.

Non Performance of Teachers

Accountability means responsibility with preparedness to justify the action. Education is a sub system of the vast social system of the country. Its components are heterogeneous; its areas are uneven; its institutions are diverse; its clientele is culturally asymmetrical. So in our multi-layered social pyramid we have area specific disparities and demands which make the uniform application of accountability code difficult. But by and large accountability of the system is correlated to the performance of teachers and other whose products are required to establish their identity and relevance in society. There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of teachers in the system along with a codification of their qualifications, recruitment and training patterns. Whenever there has been a commission set up on education, right from Radhakrishnan commission onwards, the conditions of school, college and university teachers have been favourably recommended to be improved. They have been granted service benefits and security with proper scales and enhancement in social esteem. They deserved it all along. The present issue of accountability is a pointer towards the nagging non-performance of many of them which has failed to stem the rot and which indirectly has contributed to the pervading decline in the efficacy of the system. There have been repeated reports where at different levels the teachers have become indifferent and perhaps oversecure in the system to the extent of non-performance through lack of professional competition. While there have been internal checks and counter-check in the primary and high schools run by local bodies, minority managements and private groups, in the colleges and the

universities the teachers are governed by the guidelines circulated by the UGC which has the statutory function to determine, coordinate and maintain standards of higher education. The UGC has brought out a number of such guidelines on affiliation, autonomous colleges, teachers' qualification, teacher fellowships, minor and major research projects, faculty improvement, curriculum development, college development council, Academic Staff Colleges, State Council of higher education, seminars participation in academic conferences, Schemes for SC/STs, etc. and more particularly to ensure availability of minimum number of 180 teaching days both in colleges and universities through an academic calendar but because of a strong inbuilt security system for the teachers, compelling local factors, presence of peer groups and growth of formidable unionism both among teachers and students, week cyclic examination system, karamcharis, etc. such a stipulated performance requirement is nowhere being fulfilled. For institutinalising the scheme of professional enhancement of inservice college and university teachers, the UGC has set up 46 Academic Staff Colleges. While many of these colleges have boldly undertaken the challenge of innovative work and responsibility and have inspired improvement in teaching, there are instances where stints in these colleges are undertaken by the teachers as only obligatory requirements to earn professional enhancement and which are no better than academic picnics and outings for them. Teaching, in fact now has to be a meaningful input and not merely an attention grabbing tactic or a routine function. The teachers have to imbibe the urge for learning rather than show seasonal concern towards students and scholarship. They all require to be sensitised towards this end and take their role seriously towards maintaining their relevance in the system of formal education. "Education for all" may be a democratic slogan but its relevance has to be correlated to excellence. To aim at this, the teachers have to be made accountable because it is through their accountability alone that the system will acquire legitimacy; otherwise the fatal circularity of the argument will continue to sap the success of the system with concentric groups of students, teachers and politicians holding each other responsible for its decline and failure all through.

Remedial Measures

In all government run or aided institutions of higher education and universities while there have to be a code of professional ethics and self appraisal scheme strictly to be followed by the teachers, performance indicators have also to be evolved and standardised so as to judge their

performance objectively. It is high time their role in the system was understood more realistically and evaluated critically. The system which is over-protective to the extent of promoting indiscipline, lack of purpose, interest and relevance, calls for a review. Such social security measures as have made teachers or students subsidy-prone are required to be revamped, as in the context of the present resource crunch and year-on-year cuts these can no longer be allowed indefinitely. While the less interested students and those who want to learn at their own pace and convenience may be diverted to the non-formal stream of Distance Education, which too has to enlarge its area of operations despite its grudging acceptability, the teachers be also offered a great deal of contractual assignments and appointments in future along with pruning of inverted pyramids of administrative support system. Through better student support services, mobility between conventional and open university system, and use of educational technology, the reach of Distance Education has to be extended to all sections of society particularly those who have missed the advantages of formal education and are even otherwise economically handicapped or socially not well placed to afford joining colleges and universities. Since Distance Education is less expensive, the present number of 5 Open Universities, 37 universities and 4 Deemed Universities offering education through correspondence should be increased substantially to cope with the emerging demand to accommodate the overflow of students in formal education. Distance Education should have special area specific academic packages and centres in each of the ten educationally backward states. It should offer more viable alternative modules to ease pressure on formal courses in colleges and universities. For all this a strong network of open universities in the country is required to be set up. There is no justification for opening of nonviable colleges which have inadequate enrollment year after year and which stammer for survival and are a drag on the system. Their existence damages the total credibility of the system as they are no better than parking places for idle youth and have simply the dubious distinction of being called academic institutions. They breed frustration and indiscipline. At the university level where teaching should be assigned high priority, indiscipline both among students and teachers has to be curbed. With these new watchwords, it should be a period of consolidation through funding for quality and efficiency with yearly assessment of teaching and research effort to promote teaching and scholarly leadership to affirm academic standards. Education is a serious activity. Its goals are distinct so its

inputs cannot be half-hearted, vague and hazy. If the human resource development is important as a social responsibility function of the government with limited resources it is equally important that these limited resources are not wasted in a system which may promote profligacy and where there is neither cost effectiveness nor accountability. In fact a viable financial base alone is capable of building modern higher education system which would be both efficient and equitable. This strength will be possible only through cost effectiveness of our sparse resources ploughed in education and through the accountability which it will evoke in the exercise. This alone will make the colleges and universities centres of academic excellence rather than costly outfits of youth in indiscipline and forums of teachers who rarely perform the functions of nation building. So if the present crisis and decline in education is to be checked the system has to be given a fresh lease of life through making it work more effectively and through cultivation of an ethos of accountability with quiet efficiency in our educational institutions. Despite the working Group on Resources for Education (including Art and Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports) for Eighth Five Year Plan having recommended that Eighth Plan (1990-95) outlays should be Rs. 45,000 crores along with several measures, to mobilise additional resources for education through non-budgetary sources also, the resource crunch is obvious and acute. For aided institutions the element of competition may come to be introduced whereby better performing education institutions may draw better grants on improved terms. So the emphasis on cost effectiveness and accountability gets more prominent and plausible in the system to sustain it in the days to come. Even a mandatory mechanism for periodic evaluation through duly constituted Accreditation Council at the national level to assure standards of performance may be required. This is necessary also to enforce discipline and accountability in the system.

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8

Courts and Accountability of Universities: Some Recent Developments

S.K. AGRAWALA

I

In 1986 was passed The Consumer Protection Act with a view to provide for better protection of the interests of the consumers. The general feeling may have been that the reach of this Act is only with respect to commodities of daily consumption. The Act, however, provides that it shall apply to 'All goods and Services'. The consumer has been defined, inter alia, as a 'person who hires any services for a consideration...'. An occasion for a complaint arises 'if the services mentioned in the complaint suffer from any deficiency in any respect'. 'Deficiency' means any fault, imperfection, shortcoming or inadequacy in the quality, nature and manner of performance which is required to be maintained by or under any law or in pursuance of a contract, etc.

The complaint can be made by a person aggrieved, in writing, to a Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum (District Forum). The District Forum is presided over by a person who is or has been or is qualified to be a District Judge and consists of two other persons, namely, a person of eminence in the field of education, trade or commerce and a Lady Social Worker. Above the District Forum is the State Commission and above the State Commission is the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

It is extremely easy for a consumer of goods or services to file a complaint before a District Forum through a written letter addressed to its President. No court fees or appearance through an advocate is necessary.

In a case [O.P 11 of 1991 dated 10.5.91] before the District Forum at Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, the complainant was a young member of the

bar at Tirunelveli. He studied law in the Law College at Madurai which is affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University. He appeared in the BL degree examination in April 1989 after paying the necessary examination fees. In the result published on 23.11.89, he was declared as having passed the examination and a provisional certificate dated 7.12.89 was also issued to him. On the strength of this certificate he got himself enrolled as an advocate with the Tamil Nadu Bar Council on 10.1.90 and he started practice. On 6.3.90 the Madurai Kamaraj University asked complainant to return the provisional certificate for verification. The request was complied with. The University sent a mark list to the complainant dated 23.11.89 which disclosed that the complainant had failed in BL II degree examination. It was received by the complainant on 2.4.90. He informed the Bar Council of Tamil Nadu, suspended his practice and returned the enrolment certificate as required by the Bar Council. He applied for revaluation to the University and paid the prescribed fees in April 1990. He was informed that he had passed in the revaluation. A new provisional certificate was issued to him on payment. He informed the Bar Council accordingly and resumed practice in July 1990.

He filed a complaint before the District Forum, Tirunelveli that due to carelessness, recklessness and negligence on the part of the University authorities, he was put to pain, financial loss and suffered mental agony and loss of reputation. He claimed a sum of Rs. 88,870/- for loss sustained on various heads but confined his claim to Rs. 25,000/- only. He also sought a direction from the District Forum to the University to correct the date of provisional certificate issued by them subsequently as 7.12.89 instead of as 18.6.90.

The University took the position that the complainant was not a consumer within the meaning of Section 2(1) (d) (ii) of the Act and the services rendered by the University do not come within the ambit of services as defined in the Act. The University also contended that provisional certificate is only a temporary document and is not a final record or proof and that the complainant ought not to have enrolled himself on the basis of the provisional certificate. It was further added by the University that it was due to a computer error that he was declared pass in the results published on 21.11.89 though he had not secured the minimum marks essential for passing the BL II Course. The mistake was subsequently detected and the provisional certificate was withdrawn. It was found, however, that in revaluation he secured more than minimum marks and was declared pass. There was thus no

deficiency of service or carelessness on the part of University authorities and the complainant was not, therefore, entitled to any claim.

The District Forum, however, held that there was deficiency of service and directed the University to correct the date of provisional certificate as 7.12.89. It also directed the University to pay compensation of Rs. 5,000/- in lump sum without specifying the heads and awarded cost in the sum of Rs. 250/-. Against this order, the University filed an appeal; and at the same time the complainant also filed an appeal against the quantum of compensation awarded, before the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Madurai. The Commission delivered its judgement on September 30, 1991. [A.P. No. 92 of 91 and A.P. No. 122. of 91].

The points canvassed before the State Commission, *inter alia*, were:

- Whether the complaint was maintainable?
- Whether there was any deficiency of service or negligence on the part of the University authorities?
- What was the compensation, if any, to which the complainant was entitled?

On the first point, the main argument on behalf of the University was that it is a statutory body imparting education as part of the sovereign functions of the State and is not rendering any service within the meaning of Section 2(1) (O) of the Act. It defines services as:

“Service of any description which is made available to potential users and includes the provision of facilities in connection with banking, financing, insurance, transport, processing, supply of electrical or other energy, board or lodging or both, entertainment, amusement, or purveying a news or other information, but does not include the rendering of any service free of charge or under the contract of personal service”.

Section 1 (4) lays down that the Act applied to ‘all goods and services’, save as otherwise provided by the Central Government by notification. The State Commission pithily observed that:

“Universities are the centres of education and they provide one of the most essential and important services to the citizens of the country namely education. They prescribe several courses of study, conduct examinations and award degrees. They collect fees for allowing the students to sit for examinations, for issuing provisional certificates and final degrees at the time of

convocation. The fact that the universities are statutory bodies does not in the least render their services, any the less 'services' as defined in the Act... A student who sits for the university examination and pays the necessary fees therefor certainly hires the services of the University for consideration and is a consumer within the meaning of section 2(1) (d) (ii) of the Act".

On the second point, the State Commission observed that the facts of the case did not admit of any doubt or dispute. The University explained its mistake thus. The BL degree examination consists of four Divisions and a candidate has to secure a minimum in each Division and a total minimum of 320 marks. On the first valuation the complainant had secured 96 marks in the II Division, that is in BL II, while the minimum is 105. He was given 8 grace marks as per rules which took his total in the II Division to 104, still falling short by one mark, but the total of 312 marks which he had secured got raised to 320, which was the total minimum. It was averred by the University that computer, taking into consideration the aggregate total of 320 marks, declared him pass without reference to his failure to secure the minimum in the II Division of the BL course. The State Commission held that this is clearly a deficiency and amounts to negligence. The persons incharge of computers have to check the figures and the results given by the computer and the failure to do so had resulted in declaring the candidate as pass in the results announced on 23.11.89. There was the further question of improper valuation at the first instance. On revaluation he got 9 marks more than the original valuation and therefore passed the degree examination without even the need of any grace marks. The fact that in the revaluation he secured more marks postulates that the original valuation was erroneous. Obviously the original valuation had been done in a haphazard manner and it was the revaluation which set the matter right. The contention on behalf of the University that the complainant had passed only in the revaluation and that it cannot be said that there was any deficiency on the part of the university authorities, had no substance whatsoever. Had the original valuation been done properly, none of the subsequent steps that became necessary would have been required. This is, therefore, a clear case of gross deficiency of service and negligence on the part of the examiners of the University for which the University is liable.

As regards, the quantum of compensation, the complainant had suffered a loss to the tune of Rs. 88,870 on various heads but had confined his claim to Rs. 25,000 only. The argument that the

complainant should not have acted on the provisional certificate and got himself enrolled and practice, observed the State Commission, came with ill grace. The provisional certificate is as good as the final degree certificate and it is issued to obviate the delay in the issue of the final degree certificate. It is done only at the time of convocation. The District Forum has found that the complainant had suffered loss of reputation, mental pain and agony and had spent several sums of money for rectifying the mistakes and awarded him a sum of Rs. 5,000, and cost to the tune of Rs. 250. The State Commission considered the amounts to be rather meagre. The complainant had claimed Rs. 1800 as expenses for journey, fees etc. The State Commission awarded him Rs. 1,000 as compensation on this count which they thought would be fair and just. The Commission also observed that the complainant had suspended his practice from April to July, that is for a period of four months. Complainant claimed Rs. 6,000 as loss of earning. the State Commission awarded Rs. 500 p.m., that is Rs. 2000 on this count. By way of legal proceedings, cost of Advocate, notice and postal and typing charges, since no records were kept, nothing was awarded by the Commission on this count. Thus an amount of Rs. 11,145 was ordered to be paid by the State Commission instead of Rs. 5,000 as ordered by the District Forum. The date of provisional certificate was directed to be changed to 7.12.89, that is the original date of issue of certificate.

It may thus be seen that through such a simple procedure as filing a written complaint to the District Forum, without any stamp duty, the University authorities can be made to account for their lapses and be made to pay substantial compensation for change of marks in a single case of revaluation. For loss of reputation, mental pain and agony (to which every candidate is exposed in a case of revaluation), the State Commission in the instant case, has awarded Rs. 7,500 as compensation. That the University rendered 'services' within the meaning of the Act e.g., in examining and re-examining candidates, issuing degree certificates etc., has been well brought out in the judgement of the State Commission. The universities cannot hide behind the veil of being a statutory entity performing sovereign functions. When the universities are taking to computers and the examination results are being increasingly computerised by more and more universities, the candidate cannot be taken for a ride on the ground that there has been genuine computer mistake. This is an obvious deficiency in the services rendered.

In universities where the marks change in a large percentage of cases on revaluation, or the award list supplied to the students carries wrong entries, to the discomfiture of the students and to their great loss, anxiety and pain, it can be well comprehended what the total compensation could be that they can be called upon to pay in case they were hauled up before a District Forum.

It may be noticed that the setting up of a District Forum in each district is mandatory for each state, Late last year (in October, 1991) the Supreme Court issued contempt notices to the Secretaries responsible for consumer affairs in eight State Governments for not complying with its orders specifying a time limit for constituting consumer disputes redress fora in all districts. According to official statistics, 27 State/Union Territory level Commissions and 325 district fora, besides the National Commission, are functioning presently.

The judgement, thus, is a landmark, opening up possibilities for impleading the universities and colleges through extremely easy procedures and for holding them financially accountable in cases where there are deficiencies in the services rendered by them. It is like a writing on the wall for the universities and colleges to streamline their procedures and improve the quality of services which they render to the students and the community, to perfection or else be prepared to account for the same, to the fora set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, and pay through their nose, as if.

In another case, (see *The Hindu*, Madras, 11 Nov. 1991) the Coimbatore District Forum, in November, 1991, awarded damages to a correspondence course student to the tune of Rs. 28,000 against the Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Madras, and also directed the institute to publish the result of the student and issue him marksheet before November 20, 1991. The complaint was that though the student M.K. Sivakumar, had successfully completed his first year course in MA Economics between June 1989 and May, 1990 and had paid the entire tuition fee, he was served with a notice on July 30, 1990 by the Deputy Director for MA mentioning that his statement of marks was withheld because of tuition fee dues. The candidate wrote to the Institute explaining that he had paid the entire fees, but there was no response to the letters written by him between August 20, 1990 and March 27, 1991. He sent a notice to the Institute holding it liable for the loss caused to him because of the withholding of the MA final result. That also did not evoke any response. He then preferred a complaint before the District Forum and requested for compensation of Rs. one

lakh as damages and seeking direction to the Institute to release the result. The Institute did not respond to the notice of the Forum even. The District Forum recorded the absence and the case proceeded ex-part. The Forum considered the contention of the complainant that the Institute had caused a set back to his career and loss of earning, to be well founded and felt that the Institute should not play with the life of a youngster like this. The Forum considered compensation at the rate of Rs. 2,000/- per month for the last 14 months, as reasonable and directed the Institute of the University of Madras to pay Rs. 28,000 as damages to the student and Rs. 300 towards the costs. It also directed the Institute to publish the result of the complainant and issue him the marksheet by November 20, 1991. The Forum also warned that if the Institute failed to carry out the above orders, it would result in suitable penal action.

It may be noted that the District Forum has been empowered under the Act, as regards deficiency in services, to issue an order to the opposite party directing him to pay such amount as may be awarded by it as compensation to the consumer for any loss or injury suffered by the consumer due to the negligence of the opposite party [see. 14(1) (d)]. If a trader or person fails or omits to comply with any order made by the District Forum etc., such trader or person shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one month but which may extend to 3 years or with a fine which shall not be less than Rs. 2,000 but which may extend to Rs. 10,000, or with both (Sec. 27).

It may thus be seen that the District Forum can make the universities and its institutes or colleges accountable for negligence in not replying to correspondence by consumers of its services, in sending letters demanding payment of fees and dues when they have already been paid, and thus causing a set back to the career of the candidate and loss of his earning capacity. The District Forum can also proceed ex-parte in case the university or its institute disregards the notice issued to it. The order of the District Forum can be enforced through penal action which may extend to imprisonment upto 3 years or fine up Rs. 10,000, or both.

There would certainly be several decisions of this genre against the universities and colleges delivered by the District fora, State Commissions and National Commission, which are required to be researched and brought to public knowledge.

II

A still more significant development has occurred in which the Calcutta High Court in *Tripura Sankar Chell v. University of Calcutta*

[C.O. No. 6469(W) of 1990] directed the University of Calcutta, on October 9, 1991 to pay Rs. 25,000 as damages to a candidate who had appeared in the final LL.B. examination for the year 1987 held in 1988, for the "criminal negligence" in not assessing some of his answers in one of his answerbooks and declaring him fail.

When the result was announced the petitioner got a total of 268 marks, 2 marks short of the required aggregate of 270 marks in order to pass. The candidate applied for re-examination of his answer scripts in two papers and paid the requisite fee. Had the candidate got 269 marks (instead of 268), then automatically one mark would have been allotted as grace mark and he would have been declared pass. On 15th November, 1990, he was informed by the University that on re-examination, there had been no change in his result. On a representation being made by the petitioner's advocate, he too was informed on 2nd April, 1991 by the University authorities that no marks were enhanced on re-examination.

On the High Court being moved in this regard, on 24th July, 1991 the High Court passed an order directing the Controller of Examinations to produce the two papers before the Court to enable it to satisfy itself as to the fairness and reasonableness of the re-examination of the answer scripts. On 21st August, 1991, the Court perused one of the papers and it was prima facie found that certain questions were not at all given marks though the answers were contained in the answer script. The court directed the Vice-Chancellor to appoint an expert of the subject to examine that paper and see whether any question-answer had been left un-marked and if that was the case, the appropriate marks be allotted to the answer(s) and calculation made accordingly. The University was directed to produce the report of the Vice-Chancellor alongwith the notes of the expert as also the answer-script of that paper, thereafter.

The revised mark sheet allotted 42 marks out of 100 in the paper concerned instead of 36 marks earlier given when the petitioner was plucked. The matter came up for hearing before the High Court on 26th September, 1991. The Court was informed that a retired judge of the Calcutta High Court, who was appointed by the University to re-examine the answer-book, had reported that marks were not allotted to certain questions which the candidate had answered in full and he revised the aggregate to 42 marks. The Vice-Chancellor, while ordering the recalculation of marks and issuing the revised marksheet, had also noted that action be taken against the concerned examiner, head examiner, re-examiner and the scrutineers.

The High Court noted with emphasis that on two different occasions the Assistant Controller of Examinations of the University had reiterated that no marks were enhanced and that there was no change in the result. But when the Court directed the Vice-Chancellor to appoint an expert for the examination of one of the papers of the petitioner, the examiner who was a retired judge of the Calcutta High Court squarely held the examiner responsible for his failure to sincerely, correctly and rightly examine the paper concerned. The Court also held that the candidate had suffered mental anxiety, depression and insult of being an unworthy student since the declaration of his result. Had he been declared successful, he would have put in about 2-1/2 years of legal practice before a subordinate court or in the High Court, he could have appeared at the WBCS (Judicial) Examination for selection as a Munsif and might have succeeded; he could have appeared at the other competitive examinations or might have got an employment in any multi-national organisation or other good establishment, which would have made his career a prosperous one. He had been deprived of the aforesaid chances by the “*sheer negligence and deliberate insincerity*” on the part of the authorities of the Calcutta University. The Court also observed:

“The High Court in its writ jurisdiction has ample-extraordinary powers to serve the needs of the people as well as the needs of the society. The Court must keep pace with the heartbeats of the people and their needs and aspirations. It is for the judiciary to uphold justice and to implement it properly so that the victims must feel that justice has been done, not symbolically but practically”.

The Court, therefore, thought that the damages must be paid to the petitioner for the way the Calcutta University behaved with him in examining one of his papers with utter negligence. The court awarded compensatory damages amounting to a sum of Rs. 25,000 and directed that they be paid by 31st December, 1991, and that the time limit be maintained strictly. The Court also directed the Vice-Chancellor to take appropriate action against the concerned erring examiner, head examiner, re-examiner, scrutineers and those who were in any way responsible in connection with this matter.

The Court also passed strictures against the University and observed:

“The Court strongly deprecates the conduct of the authorities of the University of Calcutta and the method they have adopted in not redressing the grievances of the examinee even after repeated

requests and prayers. Once the Calcutta University was the premier University in India but today, one is sorry to say, it has lost that premier status and has come down considerably. This weakness in the administration of the University indicates inherent lack of control by the top officials of the University over their subordinates who are comfortably slipping out of their control because of inadequate vigilance and rampant indiscipline”.

This judgement is significant for several reasons, namely:

- The Calcutta High Court has reiterated that the writ jurisdiction of the High Courts is much too wide in its amplitude and in the exercise of that jurisdiction it has ample extraordinary powers to provide justice to the parties as demanded by the circumstances of the case;
- On this principle, the Court virtually sat in judgement over the valuation of the answer-scripts by the University, which it does not normally do;
- The Court awarded damages to the petitioner which the High Court does not normally do in exercise of its writ jurisdiction;
- The High Court directed the University to take appropriate action against the erring persons who were associated with the examination, re-examination, scrutinizing the answer-scripts and the declaration of the result, etc. etc.;
- It passed strictures against the University of Calcutta as regards the redressal of grievances of students by it.

The judgement goes to highlight, as nothing else, that the High Courts would exercise their powers and jurisdiction to the maximum and provide relief to the complainants in the shape of compensatory damages in case the universities did not respond to the complaints and grievances of the students and others conscientiously, diligently and with due care. For being able to do this, it is absolutely necessary that the universities first lay down detailed rules and procedures on all matters including examinations, re-examinations etc. It is also necessary that proper machinery be set up by the universities for going into the complaints and grievances of students and others ensuring the observance of the principles of natural justice. A model for the same has been suggested earlier in an article “*Dispute Settlement Machinery in Universities and Colleges*” published in *University News*, dated, June 17, 1991.

Besides paying compensatory damages, the University of Calcutta had been directed by the High Court to take appropriate action against the erring persons involved in the case. From this it is only a small step forward, for the Court to say that the action taken by the University authorities be reported to them by a specific date. The High Court would be within its rights to do so in order to ensure that its order is properly implemented. It has done so in a number of cases relating to public (social) interest litigation.

A still further short step is possible; and the Court could direct that the compensatory damages awarded by it should be the liability of the erring individuals themselves which may be apportioned by the University amongst them according to their share of negligence in the matter involved. After all university is an amorphous entity; it could only function through its officials and other functionaries. The action in compliance with that order could again be directed by the Court to be reported to it by a specific date. These possibilities of interpretation, application and extension of the law by a conscientious court, in an environment wherein nothing seems to work, have to be taken seriously and with urgency by all those concerned with the administration of universities. It would be sad indeed if instead of the universities and its functionaries evolving their own models and machineries of accountability, monitoring and assessment, they are compelled to act on the directions of the Courts.

Measuring Accountability of Higher Education

N.D. MATHUR

Once a young oxford student in the First World War returning from the trenches to his college asked his teacher: 'And what did you do while we were fighting for civilisation?' And the teacher replied 'I am the civilisation that you were fighting for'. This might be a very extreme example of the view that academics at that time took of their societal accountability, but they took it for granted for a long period that society will also support them as it was getting value for its money.

When we talk about accountability of higher education, on the one hand, it is concerned with accountability of the institutions imparting higher education; on the other hand accountability in higher education is concerned with accountability of individuals/teachers engaged in imparting higher education. For the purpose of this paper both types of accountability have been discussed.

The image of higher educational institutions in our country is on the decline as there is wide gap between expectations and visible achievements. There is a need for a closer examination of the performance of institutions of higher education holding them to account for the investment being made in them both in terms of economic input and human resources.

Objectives of Higher Education Institutions

Accountability is a normative concept in the sense it is established against a target, an objective, an expectation. Therefore it assumes a user orientation of the process or product whose accountability is being investigated. Hence to some extent accountability provides the process or product, a conception of a system with purpose, a mission, a goal and a firm commitment. Objectives of higher education have generally been formulated in very broad and philosophical terms. Such formulations can be called mission statements. For example Clarke *et al.* (1984) write

that “*over the centuries of evolution of the university system the fundamental role has not changed, that is to preserve, transmit and extend knowledge*”. In England and Robbins Report (1963) postulated a number of goals for the university system: “*firstly instruction in skills suitable to play part in the general division of labour, secondly what is taught should be taught in such a way as to promote the general powers of the mind thirdly the advancement of learning, and finally the transmission of a common culture and common standard of citizenship*”.

In US, the Carnegie Commission in 1973 identified the objectives of higher education as follows:

- The provision of opportunities for the intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and skill development of individual students and the provision of campus environments which can constructively assist students in their more general growth;
- The advancement of human capability in society at large;
- The enlargement of educational justice for the post secondary age group;
- The transmission and advancement of learning and wisdom;
- The critical evaluation of society through individual thought and persuasion for the sake of the society's self renewal.

As an example of third world, the objectives of the Indian higher education system as stated by the Indian Education Commission are as follows:

“... education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernisation and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values”.

All the statements mentioned above are mission statements of higher education system.

Dangers of Accountability

For an institution which is publicly accountable it is necessary to submit an appraisal so that achievement can be compared with agreed objectives. If these objectives are expressed with some precision, usually in terms of quantitative performance indicators then appraisal can be carried out with corresponding precision. Unfortunately we have to pay a price for getting this advantage. We would not be in a disadvantageous position if quantitative performance indicators could be devised that correlated strongly with quality, but usually the case is

opposite. For example if number of publications is kept as one of the performance indicator the quality of the research paper will deteriorate and there is a fear of loss of excellence. Researchers will tend to write more trivial papers, publish the same paper in various journals. They will publish same work in small instalments as number of published papers is increased. Further, when we start appraising research then teaching gets neglected. UGC's shift from teaching to research has resulted in deterioration in quality of teaching and most of the colleges now are starved of committed teachers. In many colleges the faculty is full and classrooms are empty. Whether this has in any way contributed to an improvement in the quality research is doubtful. What is necessary here is to temper quantitative statistics with judgment.

Performance Indicators

Which are the appropriate indicators of performance in higher education? The green paper (HMSO London, 1985) provides an appendix on performance measures. These relate to the goal of producing highly qualified manpower. Romney *et al* (1979) also discuss some of the potential liabilities in developing and using performance indicators. Ball and Halwachi (1987) as follows:

a) *Internal performance indicators:*

- Market share of undergraduate affiliation (by subjects)
- Graduation rates and classes of degrees
- attraction of masters and doctoral students
- success rates of higher degrees (and time taken)
- attraction of research funds
- teaching quality

b) *External performance indicators:*

- acceptability of graduates (postgraduates) in employment
- first destination of graduates (postgraduates)
- publications by staff and citations
- patents, inventions, consultancies
- membership, prizes, medals of learned societies
- papers at conferences

c) *Operating performance indicators:*

- unit costs
- staff/students ratios
- class sizes
- course options available
- staff workload
- library stock availability
- computing availability

In addition to these indicators suggested by Jarrat Report, alumni ratings have also been used as a source of evaluative information in institutions of higher education in several different ways. First, alumni ratings of teaching performance for individual professors have been compared with ratings of currently enrolled students. Second, alumni have provided their assessments of the skills needed for success in their current profession.

Summing Up

Realisation of accountability expectation becomes doubtful where there is a conflict between individual goals and the institutional goals. If the institution feels that institutional goals are the end and individuals working in the institutions are the means to get that end then it is a wrong concept. Similarly, if the individual feels that his goals are the end and institution is only a means to realise his individual ends, then it is equally wrong. There should not be any conflict between individual goals and institutional goals. There must be compatibility between institutional and individual goals. The purpose of accountability will be best served when individual fulfills his ends through his institution and institutional ends are fulfilled through individuals. Accountability will be explicit when both are means as well as ends. Accountability is reciprocal or mutual. It is teacher versus institution, institution versus society and then it is in the reverse order i.e. how much these components or bodies given to each other. A university is both a public institution and a community of scholars. As a public institution it provides a vital service to society and at the request of the society as a community of scholars it engages—either for its own sake or in the belief that it will in due course lead to a service—in the pursuit of learning. As a public institutions, the govt. of the day has every right to make universities accountable. As community of scholars the

government must be held accountable to society for making available all means required by universities to carry out their academic endeavour. Obviously, even in its pursuit of learning, a university must give post factor account to government of the way it has, used the funds allocated to it.

Acknowledgment

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10

Accountability of Teaching Profession: The role of Academic Staff Colleges

I. RAMABRAHMAM

Every time there is a pay commission, it invariably tries to tag the enhanced salary to certain conditions. This is done with an intention to ensure better qualitative changes in the educational scenario. The minute details of implementing the enhanced scales of pay are worked out carefully, checked and rechecked both by the authorities and the recipient teachers both taking utmost care in very possible detail. However, neither of these two lay an equal importance on the other side of it - the demand for quality assurance. Importance, if any, is narrowed in the apprehensive examination of the conditions laid by the committee, to be criticised and objected to by the associations.

It is true that teaching is considered a noble profession and is unique in self accountability. But a combination of over romanticisation of the profession and self accountability as a sole measure of evaluation may sometime give rise to delusions of grandeur among teaching community.

Increasing resistance to all attempts at evaluation of the teachers is noticed especially in the past two decades. The democratic and the most practical way of teachers' evaluation by students (in the anonymous secret feedback box), and the practice of the Principal/Head of the department attending and assessing the class of a junior colleague has almost become extinct yielding to the resistance from teachers' associations. The only assessment that prevails at present is the ritual called the Confidential Report - CR as is popularly known. Even this, acquired sufficient taboo as it either remained just a formality or is condemned to be used as a "*stick*" by the management. Thus, taking a full turn we realise that the teaching profession is left without any meaningful evaluation.

In countries like Poland radical trials like allowing the choice of lecturers to students are being experimented as a measure of quick quality enhancement. Though it is too early for India to chew such ideas, serious thinking has to go into finding the means of filling the great void in accountability. But the very concept of accountability in the profession has, in phases, completely evaporated into the thin air not leaving behind even a faint fragrance. Given such conditions, it is rather difficult to decide the pivotal point of its revival. Nevertheless, reviving it is more or less the only saving device to protect the quality of higher education from further slide which may be devastating.

One immediate source to initiate and motivate the accountability campaign for teachers is Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs). There are 45 ASCs actively functioning in the country. The UGC is spending about Rs. 25-30 lakhs (approx.) per annum on each college. Though these colleges are doing a good job in conducting Orientation and Refresher Courses, assigning them the responsibility of inculcating professional accountability in teachers may provide a definite direction to the professional development programmes organised by them. Unlike many other professions, where success rests on performance evaluation through formal and informal assessment procedures, in teaching advancement is unrelated to the individual's performance. Unless this is restored through accountability, teachers will not feel a sense of professionalism. The ASCs being centres of professional development must accept the challenge of developing the sense of professionalism among teachers, and initiate necessary steps towards it.

Following are few suggestions for ASCs to optimise professional development through Orientation and Refresher Courses:

1. It should be made mandatory for every college teacher to attend one Orientation/Refresher course every two years.
 - The responsibility of deputing teachers for the course must rest on the management/state government. The TA and DA for these courses should continue to be paid by the UGC.
 - For every individual the ASC must charge a token fee of Rs. 400/- to 500/-. This may be borne by the management or the individual. This income may be utilised in bringing out a newsletter/journal.
2. The ASCs must conduct 4 weeks' complete residential courses with good lodging facilities to enable rigorous training in pedagogical skills, personality development, and motivate the teachers sufficiently for intellectual/professional pursuits.

3. Every course must be backed by a long term meticulous planning, to make it meaningful and challenging.
 - The ASCs must prepare and despatch to the prospective participants the course contents, and course material with a note specifying expectations from teachers clearly spelt out, well in advance.
 - Every teacher trainee should be asked to do prior homework that calls for deep thinking, planning and preferably experimented by himself/herself in the classroom. This could relate either to the method of teaching, administrative capability or an interesting innovation in one's own subject.
 - The above experience may be shared with others through presentation in a seminar, or post-lunch/post-dinner discussions depending upon the nature of the work.
 - The course must be very tightly scheduled so as to keep the teachers completely immersed in it. Only then can we expect any attitudinal change in the short duration of 4 weeks.
 - The course must emphasise research methodology/laboratory experiment in order to motivate, orient and provide the teacher a strong footing in research activities. For this the course must not only conduct classes in methodology but also ask every teacher to conduct one new laboratory experiment or a field study and submit the project report as a partial fulfilment of the course.
4. The responsibility of ASCs must not end with training. They must also assume the charge of dissemination of information as well following training.
 - The ASCs must necessarily have a publication wing. newsletters/journal must be brought out regularly utilising the income generated by the participant fee. The best project reports and classroom innovations of the teacher trainees must find place in it, apart from the innovations, if any, of the ASC itself in organising the courses.
 - The UGC must encourage-rather insist on follow-up studies on the teachers who attended the Orientation/Refresher courses. These follow-ups must necessarily involve the management, teacher participants and also the students so as to get a reliable picture of the effect of training in classroom teaching. This will not only measure the impact of training in quality of teaching, but

also enable the ASCs to continuously modify/improve their programmes in the light of the feedback received from the ex-trainees.

5. ASCs must organise preferably two short courses in a year for the management/principals. These principals must preferably be from those colleges from where large number of teachers seek admission into the courses of that ASC. The purpose of these short courses must be to provide training in effective administration of academic institutions with the sole emphasis on ensuring accountability. No doubt that principal's conferences are already being conducted by the ASCs as a practice but the only change and a significant one too is the stress on the meaningful direction to it through specific training.
6. The management of colleges which sponsor their teachers for the course must insist that every teacher, on return from the ASC's course for the benefit of rest of the faculty.
7. Every ASC in turn must be accountable to the UGC for the productivity, creativity and uniqueness of its training input into the programmes. This can be assessed by
 - the results of the following up, which may be continuously monitored either by the regional centres of UGC or NIEPA, or assigned to any third party private agency as a project work; and
 - the quality of project reports and classroom innovations experimented and contributed by the teachers in the newsletter/journal published by ASCs.

Thus, the final goal of the training programmes conducted by the ASCs must be to '*professionalise*' teaching by promoting

- meaningful innovations in the classroom,
- research interest among teachers,
- optimised participation of teachers in matters related to academics,
- uninhibited expression by teachers in matters related to administrative reforms of educational institutions, and
- commitment, challenge and control among teachers that reinforce accountability and are reinforced by autonomy.

The seven steps suggested here are only broad outlines - to stimulate thinking in all those committed to reviving the quality in higher education. This pace and line of functioning calls for mobilising more

resources both in terms of finance and manpower. But certainly in view of the cost-effectiveness an attempt on this line may be worth making.

The National Commission on Teachers' Pay Scales set up by the UGC and headed by Prof. Rastogi must be working on the accountability aspects of teaching profession. It is gathered that the Rastogi Committee is already initiating moves to ascertain the National and State Level teachers associations' point of view on not only pay scales but also service conditions. People in general and others interested in quality of higher education would appreciate if teachers associations themselves evolve suitable accountability package and present it before the Rastogi Committee for its incorporation in the final report.

It is high time the esteemed Directors and faculty of ASCs initiate and involve themselves in the discussion relevant to strengthening the minute aspects of training. Nothing will be more welcome for the UGC than the collective decision of the Directors of ASCs to assume the responsibility of reintroducing accountability in teaching profession. Nothing will be more respectable than the teachers' associations taking necessary initiative in this regard.

The ASCs can perhaps start with a spirit of optimism that their initiative would not meet any resentment from teachers. Because even the teachers realise that with the emerging trend for privatisation, the society has already started an informal audit of the professional caliber of teachers in higher education. They must realise that they should not give an impression that they resist positive change through accountability. After all accountability does not bring humiliation but adds respect to the profession, and of course teaching is a profession that commands respect.

Ethics and Accountability in the Teaching Profession

A.N. TRIPATHI

Teaching - A Noble Profession

Belonging to a profession implies acceptance of the ideals, values and ethical norms of the profession. The learned professions like those of engineering, medicine and law have evolved and articulated their professional ideals which form the basis of written codes of their professional ethics. These codes demand that the specialised knowledge and skills of the professions be used for the service of society with a high degree of competence as well as with a high degree of moral responsibility. It is this moral obligation of upholding professional ideals which sets apart the higher professions from trade, commerce or other means of earning livelihood. A profession is of course a vocation and the professional man is entitled to adequate returns for his services, respect and status in the society. What is implied in the professional ideal is that the call of professional duty takes precedence over expectations of monetary rewards; that the knowledge, skills, authority and the trust reposed in the profession are not misused for purely personal gains or as tools of exploitation.

The ethical demands on the academic profession have always been higher in all the civilised societies. This is rightly so because the society has entrusted its most precious resource - the youth - to this profession for imparting a high level of intellectual training in specialised areas of knowledge and for developing the social and moral personality of its future citizens. This important - almost sacred - task of education demands a higher level of ethical commitment and conduct from academics in their professional, personal and social conducts. This is why teaching has been called a noble profession.

The need for a serious examination of the ethical dimensions of the teaching profession, alongwith those of other professions, has assumed

special significance and urgency in the present day socio-economic culture of society. Otherwise, in spite of techno-economic material progress, we may fail to create a good society, a just society and a happy society. The twofold objective of such an examination ought to be,

- arousing the ethical consciousness of the modern professional man, and
- delineating procedures for demanding proper accountability of different professional groups towards their professional ideals and towards the rest of the society.

The Ethical Dimensions

A teacher interacts with an owes moral responsibility towards a number of different groups:

1. the students,
2. colleagues in the teaching profession, and
3. the society at large.

In addition he also has his commitment and loyalty to the general ethos of the academic discipline and to the particular institution which employs him. In relation to the students he performs a variety of functional roles, like an instructor in the classroom, a supervisor for project/dissertation work, an examiner, an organiser of co-curricular activities, an administrator like warden, Head of Department, Dean etc. In all these roles he commands a high degree of trust and authority over students. This relationship of trust and authority can be sustained, only if the teacher unconditionally accepts his moral obligation to perform these job roles to the best of his ability, and to the best interest of his students.

As a member of a work group he has obligations towards his colleagues and co-workers. The descriptive terms for healthy interpersonal relationships in a successful work group would be friendliness, cooperation, tolerance of diverging viewpoints, encouragement, help and guidance from seniors and due respect and courtesy from juniors. It is these qualities of work life which make a supportive work environment. The responsibility for creating this work environment and for upholding the dignity and prestige of the teaching profession lies on every individual member of the profession.

A teacher is also an employee of an institution and belongs to an organisational hierarchy. He is assigned different organisational tasks, responsibilities and powers with the expectation of high level of performance. The moral obligation of giving out one's best in performance of all the organisational tasks which are part of conditions of one's employment is termed 'work ethics'. The descriptive terms for desirable ethical conduct in this context will be, acceptance of and commitment to organisational objectives, enthusiasm in accepting organisational responsibilities, initiative in bringing about improvements, and a sense of discipline and loyalty to the institution. From senior members of the teaching profession and those occupying positions of authority one would expect a high degree of leadership qualities, encouragement and fair treatment of junior colleagues.

As a member of the academic community the teacher owes allegiance to the fundamental academic values and ethos. These may be expressed as love and respect for learning, intellectual curiosity, pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, reliance on reason and intellectual methods of enquiry for deciding issues, objective and honest reporting of one's own work and criticism of others' work, etc. It is the teacher's moral and professional responsibility to cultivate these academic attitudes and to help others do so.

The responsibilities of a teacher extend beyond his students, institution and academic ethos. As a custodian of the intellectual heritage of the human race, he has to be alive and responsive to the problems and processes of social development. The society looks up to the learned academics for proper examination and explanation of these problems and for guidance and advice on methods for their solution, as well as for meeting the challenges of the future. They have a moral duty to exert their influence by providing their expert opinion on the plans and policies which affect the welfare and progress of the nation. In a democracy the weight of this expert opinion is an essential safeguard for the long term, overall interests of the society against the populist but harmful measures many a times adopted by the government of the day to gain political advantages.

Academic Malpractices

Having outlined the different ethical dimensions of the academic profession and what ought to be the teacher's role in them, we now come to the question of what is the present situation. The next question, and perhaps the most important one, would be what can be

done to improve the present situation so that what is corresponds more closely to what ought to be. The individual members of the academic community are, by and large, capable, devoted and idealistically oriented scholars. It is a tribute to their strength of character and devotion to the academic cause that our system of higher education is still functioning reasonably well in spite of the vicissitudes to which it has been subjected, and the general decline in the moral values of the society around. However, what is noticeably absent is a collective perception of the professional ideals, its different ethical dimensions and a general debate on strategies for upholding these ideals. The result is that academic malpractices are multiplying, and what is worse, our sensitivity to them is getting blunted.

Some of the major academic malpractices noticeable in our universities may be categorised and listed as follows:

(i) *Misuse of students*

Using 'student power' for promoting personal gains or for settling scores, harassment of different kinds which in extreme cases has led to even suicides, ideological indoctrination, etc.

(ii) *Neglect of students*

Not engaging classes regularly, not making lectures interesting and challenging, not giving sufficient time to students outside the lecturer hours, not revising syllabus, etc.

(iii) *Academic dishonesty*

Plagiarism, fraudulent research, ghost writing of Ph.D. thesis, biased or false reporting, etc.

(iv) *Neglect of academic duties*

Spending too much time on personal matters, on paid or prestigious assignments, on too many extra-curricular activities, etc. at the cost of academic work.

(v) *Unfair practices*

Unfair practices, in evaluation of answer scripts, award of fellowships, appointments etc., often due to groupism, casteism, regionalism or nepotism.

To this may be added various other types of unethical and immoral conducts of individual teachers because of lack of personal character and integrity.

The extent of these malpractices may be debatable but their existence is a matter of common knowledge in the academic field. Sometimes they receive wider publicity when reported as scandals by newspapers. The usual response in such situations is to appoint enquiry committees which are usually mere sop to the outraged public opinion. The members of the academic profession generally treat such matters indulgently or at most as administrative problems for the university authorities. They have not been able to arouse the ethical conscience of the academic profession for finding a collective response to the problem and for devising self-regulatory mechanisms for checking the malpractices and for removing the "rotten apple" from their midst.

Possible Responses

The first need is to have proper forum for discussion of problems related to academic ethics. Although the number and circulation of journals on education is limited in our country, they should encourage regular features examining various aspects of the problem. We also need to establish a few "*Centres for Academic Ethics*", devoted to detailed study, field work and research. These centres should have a good collection of existing literature on the subject and should contribute to it by supporting publications in the area. The recently established Academic Staff Colleges should include discussions on this topic as a part of their orientation programmes. The proposed centres of academic ethics could as well be affiliated to these colleges.

An effective step for ensuring accountability of teachers in performance of the normal academic work would be a fair system of monitoring and evaluation. Measures like student evaluation, peer evaluation, superior evaluation have become standard institutional policies in many universities abroad. Unfortunately suggestions for their introduction in our country have not found a favourable response in the academic community. The two main reasons for this attitude appear to be:

- The psychological barrier of teachers, who have always been evaluators for others, in submitting themselves to evaluation, particularly by students; and
- A suspicion that such procedures would become instruments of exploitation and harassment of teachers.

To an extent this hostile attitude is because these measures are seen as impositions from above, rather than evolving out of teachers own concern for furthering professional ideals through self-regulation. Open debates in representative academic bodies could clarify many of the misgivings associated with these measures. The mechanics of implementation should be worked out by these bodies to ensure that proper safeguards are built into them so that the system serves its objectives and does not lend itself to abuses.

It is about time that the academic profession adopts a code of professional conduct similar to those adopted by other learned professions. A valuable effort in this direction is the recent report entitled "*Professional Code of Ethics for University and College Teachers*", prepared by a task force, set up by the UGC in association with representatives of teachers associations. This report again needs to be discussed by the established academic bodies and measures devised for acceptance of the finally adopted code by the academic profession.

Mere formal adoption of a code of professional ethics may not check the academic malpractices or promote professional idealism. We should also have an effective system for ensuring its proper implementation. This may require setting up of an independent "*Academic Ethics Board*" for investigating cases of violation of code of ethics and for suggesting proper action against the defaulting members of the profession, after following 'due process'. The Academic Council should appoint this Board, and it should be required to present an annual report of its work to the Council.

"*Disciplining*" the defaulting teachers is only one aspect of the problem. Many a times individual teachers taking a stand on ethical issues come in conflict with the administrative authorities or vested interests of pressure groups in different sectors of the university. It is the moral responsibility of the academic profession to support such teachers so that they are not left to fight the ethical battle single handedly. Therefore, the Academic Ethics Boards should also be charged with the responsibility of investigating such cases and deciding upon the measures to be adopted for safeguarding the interests of such teachers.

Many of the ills of the system of higher education, including the non-ethical academic malpractices listed earlier, arise because of the non-performance of their assigned administrative functions by

academic authorities like the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean, the Head of Department, etc. This again is mainly because of the absence of any system of accountability. In fact, before demanding accountability from teachers, the system must demand accountability from the academic authorities. One way of doing this would be to require the academic authorities to prepare annual accountability reports which should be placed before and debated by the appropriate academic body. For example the Vice-Chancellor should prepare his accountability report outlining the institutional goals, the challenges and problems before the university, the efforts made in meeting those challenges, the results achieved and the proposed future course of action. This report should be placed before and debated upon by the Academic Council of the university. It should also be submitted to the government bodies and other funding agencies. Similarly the Head of Department's accountability report should be placed before the Departmental Council and submitted to the Dean and the Vice-Chancellor.

The academic administrators and teachers both belong to the same academic profession with different functional roles. They do not constitute two different groups. However, in practice the perceptions and attitudes are somewhat different. The procedures proposed in the earlier paragraphs in a way demand mutual accountability of these two groups, which would be a healthy, autonomous manner of self-regulation. Existence of self regulating autonomous groups is an essential requirement of a modern democratic society. The noble teaching profession should take a lead in this direction and set up an example for other professions.

On University Autonomy

K.K. BAJAJ

In practice autonomy is understood to mean 'self governance' or functional freedom without any fetters and it implies 'management by internals' without any outside interference and checks. In the field of higher education in general and universities in particular this connotes a teacher oriented system. This is a concept which is dearly espoused and closely guarded by teachers and administrators alike with the argument that this alone can ensure the healthy growth and consolidation of their system and that any attempt to discuss it even in the prevailing situation is unnecessary and may dilute its implication and limit its area and scope. There is no doubt that a certain measure of freedom is required in a democratic set up to ensure the pursuit of higher learning and for the maintenance of academic standards within the framework of societal objectives. Ideal self-governance promotes the free and full exercise of intellectual and academic pursuits whereas outside political or bureaucratic interference or checks may impede the efforts which otherwise get encouraged in the course of the exercise of the autonomy. Our university system which owes its lineage to the British pattern of universities, leans heavily on the ideals which maintain highest standards of academic growth guaranteed through autonomy. The first Committee on 'Model Act for Universities', appointed by the Ministry of Education (1964) stated in its report '*Autonomy for a university is not a matter of fundamental right, as it were, but is a condition for its efficient functioning and for enabling it to achieve the true ideals and aims of a university. A university needs autonomy if it is to discharge properly its functions and obligations to society and play an effective part in the development and progress of the country*'. Kothari Commission (1964-66) in the context of autonomous colleges spoke of granting autonomous status to outstanding colleges to enhance their capacity

to improve themselves markedly. Dr. P.B. Gajendragadkar (1971) in his report of the Committee on Governance of Universities pointed out that "*in order that the Universities may perform their functions properly, their autonomy should be scrupulously respected by the legislatures and the executive...*". In the Seventh Plan the UGC came forward in a big way with an encouraging proposal for the establishment of 500 autonomous colleges to implement its concern for grant of autonomy to education institutions in accordance with the National Policy on Education (1986).

Social Responsibility Functions

In the matter of prescribing content of education, delivery system, norms of admission of students to different courses, deployment of its physical and fiscal resources in terms of their own priorities the universities have complete freedom. As custodians of maintenance of academic standards it is obligatory for the state in support these measures to ensure independence of choice and action by the universities. With education as an instrument of social change, the teachers in the universities have to act as creative craftsmen to shape and facilitate this change and consolidate human resource in the country. The teachers' social contribution in all their academic programmes that the universities implement, gets reflected in the shape of acceptance or rejection of their products. Incidentally this is also the indication of level of efficiency of our universities. The courses that are prescribed, the manner in which these are taught and the conduct of the teachers - all have a social impact and bearing. The society in a democratic set up responds to their worthiness in a befitting way. It is in this context that the autonomy in action draws attention. In a larger perspective this is neither to be construed as an undue attempt to subject the universities to social audit and evaluate their role in promoting equity and excellence with relevance in society. Universities are the acknowledged seats of higher learning. Their activities contribute to the improvement of quality of life, resurrection of values and culture besides creation of social awareness. By and large their goals are singularly social. They have social responsibility functions to perform. It is in doing so that they enjoy autonomy in the matter of prescribing curricula, selecting students, and appointment and promotion of teachers. Teachers constitute that creative human resource which helps the universities in the performance of their social responsibility function. While the UGC lays down the basic qualifications, the universities continue to

have their own statutory provisions and procedures for the selection of teachers, along with the schemes of merit promotion and personal promotion, for the inservice teachers to ensure and encourage their professional interest and growth. These schemes no doubt contribute to what may be called a confidence building effort for the teachers in the profession yet from professional and academic angles it remains to be seen how such vertical mobility measures enhance the professional competence of teachers. There are also social and psychological imperatives to sustain them. Partly realising the need for this the UGC has established a network of Academic Staff Colleges with heavy financial investment so as to institutionalise the programme of professional upgradation of teachers to some degree. Their academic packages include confidence building training besides subject-specific inputs. The effort is laudable and merits continuation to bring about awareness about qualitative improvement in the profession.

In this age of continuing competence where economic considerations have an edge over all the measures, efforts have to be diverted to establish the excellence of academic inputs through quality of teaching. In a society where degrees do not indicate the real level of attainment of candidates and as a consequence of which every job giving institution conducts a test of its own, the role of academic autonomy being enjoyed by our universities producing non-standard human stuff requires to be reviewed. With each university having its own avowed level of academic proficiency, the level of one university varies so much from that of the neighbouring university that the products do not even receive recognition and credibility anywhere. With this disparity in the attainment level of students and the promotion of parochial and regional preferences in the absence of a nationally acceptable uniform academic or employment standard, the products have to compete among themselves for the few jobs that are available. While competition in the academic world leads to growth, at places, it also indicates the rank poverty of human material which is available in the job market as a by-product of the dubious attribute called academic autonomy being enjoyed by the universities. In the name of academic autonomy the obsolete courses get perpetual reruns without the academics revising them in the context of the emerging occupational patterns and social linkages. This indicates that in the course of enjoying autonomy the courses continue to be arbitrarily prescribed and perpetuated to suit the convenience of a handful of teachers in universities. Even such a central coordinating and monitoring agency as the University Grants

Commission (UGC) cannot directly interfere and advise the improvement of courses as a national exercise to be adopted by these universities though it does encourage such initiatives to restructure courses with assistance packages and model curricula developed by it in different subjects with the help of experts in Curriculum Development Centres. Apparently in the exercise of academic autonomy some of the universities insulate themselves and permit long-term freezing of their courses at the behest of some of their teachers.

Need for National Consensus

Autonomy permits the universities to prescribe their own academic calendar which includes schedule of admissions, number of teaching days, preparatory holidays, conduct of examinations etc. Though the UGC emphatically prescribed a minimum of 180 working days many universities according to their own regional compulsions and other considerations which are perhaps beyond their control end up with a compromise for fewer number of working days. The pressure groups of students, teachers and karamcharis for one reason or another demand, disturb the working schedule of the universities and in the name of autonomy exploit the system to their advantage. The maintenance of academic standards gets the last priority attention and as a result of this the society eventually suffers. It is in this direction that a national consensus requires to be evolved to ensure that while enjoying academic autonomy the number of working days are not reduced and that the system does not suffer despite regional imbalances, diverse pressures and compulsions. The entire process of higher education has to be a concerted national effort. It has to be an action oriented system which enthuses our youth to build up confidence in our future development with specific social objectives to sustain. Area specific responses and requirements have to be integrated in our exercise to determine and maintain standards uniformly in pockets of diverse nature and socio-cultural needs despite plurality of approaches. Mere propagation of elitism in fringe areas cannot justify survival of autonomy in our universities. Autonomy in determining university courses could also be a welcome facilitator in higher education provided such an agreement is not free from social scrutiny and accountability. By and large it is now being felt that our universities have failed to contribute adequately to the promotion of national economy and to contain our youth. The academic programmes of the universities without any social and industrial linkages speak of lack of accountability in our system which is wedded to the principle of autonomy. The universities opened under social,

political or regional compulsions failing to discharge social responsibility are only a drag on our system which is already top heavy and unmanageable. They draw financial support from society, state governments and the UGC. The payment of developmental grants should be linked to development indicators. The requirement could be weighed and justification assessed in terms of courses, infrastructure, students services and extension activities relevant to the society. As an apex academic nodal agency the UGC could encourage such universities as have action-oriented programmes through a study of impact analysis. More grants should flow to backward, hilly and rural areas which have remained deprived over a period of time. The universities which simply perform the task of *'baby sitting'* for our youth should be guided with greater counselling to improve their academic inputs and become socially relevant. Student information services should be introduced and obsolete courses and equipments weeded out in a phased manner.

Academic Leadership

Universities exist for students. Their principal functions are to be discharged through teaching, research and examinations. All programmes and packages require to be tailored for the enhancement of students' participation in national life and to make them better citizens. Those conventional courses which simply swell the ranks of unemployable youth and contribute to their frustration require to be restructured to command greater acceptability and recognition in the society. The academic leadership in the university should take initiative to guide the youth to academic goals and prevent them from being captured by power hungry politicians and teachers. The secular ideals and the national priorities should dominate our thinking at this stage. For continuation of this outlook and character the universities rightly deserve autonomy even though it may not be legal concept yet it has to be a functional attribute but its exercise has to be creative and socially relevant rather than absolute, dogmatic and unproductive.

The state universities draw their grants from the state governments while the central universities get their requirements fulfilled from the UGC. All managements survive anyhow. The system has so much of flexibility in it that it has withstood the challenge of times and vagaries of all political moods in the country. No universities are known to have been shut down while many have been bifurcated or even trifurcated over a period of time as a result of political or regional considerations. In the administrative context the universities all over the country present

a heterogeneous scenario. While a few of the universities enjoy complete autonomy there are others where decision making bodies stand heavily loaded with bureaucrats and politicians rather than academics of standing and scholars of repute. Where the autonomy gets compromised, the erosion is normally attributed to lack of sound academic leadership and infighting among the academics in the institutions. Here it is also stated that the decisions are devoid of vision and are usually on the basis of considerations other than academic - may it not be to suggest that vision flows from the consideration of academicians alone. This is an issue which can be debated but the present dehumanized academic order in the universities having promoted politics in the universities has failed to sustain its academic content and leadership. Senior academicians seem to have abdicated their role and permitted the popular fun-of-the-mill politicians and bureaucrats to take over. Demise and downfall of academic leadership of Vice-Chancellors who usually depend upon political grants has also led to the dilution of autonomy. Indifference of our own non-performing teachers and other academic executives is partly to blame. Political umbrella seems to be ominously overtaking our universities thus making autonomy a victim.

Administrative Set Up

At the administrative level autonomy may not mean total lack of outside participation and functioning under the policy of *laissez-faire*. Outside participation should be supportive enough to sustain our educational endeavour in the universities. Administration has to be the implementing arm of all academic plans and policies. Its presence has to act as a healthy check on the vagaries that might creep into the system to cripple it. It has to be effectively articulate in preserving the system. At no stage can it be permitted to dominate or overawe the academic system. Its role has to be that of a catalyst, a facilitator and promoter of all academic designs. While its presence has to promote all that is required for its healthy sustenance, the university teachers do not tolerate its interference if there it be so anywhere. In the right perspective and within reasonable limits it has to be its mentor to ensure its success. In the period of transitional growth and change, the educational and academic leadership has to owe its survival to it but wherever the administrative set up comes to acquire an interfering role in the academic pursuits and determination and coordination of standards its role is resented and questioned. Administrative autonomy does not match evenly with academic autonomy even though their roles

are complementary and one without the other cannot possibly contribute systematically to the system of higher education. The academic direction is determined by senior teachers while the administrative tone is set by bureaucrats. Temperamentally the two sides may not be ideally suited to have mutually complementary roles. It is for this reason that the presence of bureaucrats in universities is looked upon by the teachers and others with a sense of indignation and consternation. It is on this account that a national policy has to be evolved and adopted though Gajendragadkar Commission had set the ball rolling in the right direction for a national debate on the issue with broad suggestions on the role and status of both in the universities. Still it is a matter of open debate as to whether or not the university administration should be handed over exclusively to the bureaucrats who could be appointed as Registrars and Vice-Chancellors and then the teachers be asked to give only academic leadership and concentrate on teaching and research. The consensus to arrive at may not be so easy but wherever this experiment has been made, it has achieved a qualified success. While versatility of teachers in teaching and research cannot be questioned the talents of bureaucrats can also not be under-rated. Whereas the universities may be autonomous both in administration and academic functioning, any fight or confrontation between the two tells upon the health of the entire system with students and society suffering the most.

Academic leadership without administrative stability and maturity can hardly prove effective enough to withstand the challenge of our demanding youth. Our youth is highly volatile. The lack of coordination between the administrative and academic leaders can often result in renaissance of indiscipline, insubordination and politicisation in our universities. There should be no dichotomy between the roles of the two, the autonomy in the functioning of each should be mutually respected with areas of work and duty duly defined without any overstepping and overlapping. The homogeneity of such a system alone can ensure peace on campuses and negation of undue politicking among students, teachers and employees. This is all the more necessary in view of the autonomy that the educational institutions may enjoy.

Each university swears by autonomy and zealously propagates it at all possible operational levels. The state governments while funding the universities as a social responsibility function look upon the unfettered and autonomous functioning of the universities as an affront to their right to call for their social audit which inter alia leads to political interference or say the politicians like to have in them. Giving the

government its due role to act as the elected representatives of the people, it has to be considered whether the universities in the face of frequently changing governments and political states, have to be answerable to them. This is an open question. This has its critics and protagonists. This may have its operational difficulties which may make the system unstable besides being directionless and palpably open to manoeuvring of clever politicians. However in a democracy the system of higher education cannot be made inaccessible to the representatives of the people. Their involvement may give the educationists the much needed feedback to shape the system to suit the social demands. So the universities have to give such an academic leadership as may be relevant to social needs. It has to be a model of participative management drawing its people from different sectors in its decision-making bodies. The representation should be free from all narrow political and parochial considerations and should only be linked to excellence and achievement of individuals in different fields so that the university community could benefit from their vast experience and diverse social connections and could carve new programmes and policies to sustain its forward growth. The administration of the university should be equally receptive to the social calls and responsibility and should become accountable to the society through judiciousness and impartiality of its action and approach.

So where autonomy means independence in thought and action at different levels in a university, it enjoins upon it a greater responsibility in a democratic set up to act with greater restraint so as to be open to social audit, public scrutiny and a more sustainable participative management. The whole set of responsibilities in providing academic leadership and administrative competence get linked to social aspirations in the exercise of autonomy.

Universities and their Autonomy in the Indian Context

R.N. CHATURVEDI

The pioneer universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established as autonomous institutions. Not only they have continued to be autonomous institutions of higher learning, their example has encouraged the government to persist in this policy of establishing more and more autonomous institutions in the country. Yet the concept of autonomy as applied in the case of institutions of higher learning, has been far from neat and Gajendragadkar Committee had to make certain observations about the use of the academic autonomy to clarify the situation.

The committee observed that no one is above law and that a university, when it is an autonomous body, is not 'a State within State'. This means that the term autonomy when applied in the case of institutions of higher learning does not connote what it implies in the phrase like '*Provincial Autonomy*'. It is also observed that autonomy in the university is not something legal or of a statutory nature but an ethical necessity for the furtherance of academic matters. These observations indicate that autonomy (whatever it means) cannot be claimed as a matter of right. It is to be viewed as something falling in the category of non-physical infrastructure, necessary for furtherance of the cause of higher education. This point was emphasised by the Committee in the context of the recommendations for representation of the students in the academic bodies of the universities. The Committee further observed that it was not because it was claimed by the students, but because the participation of some serious students in the universities' bodies was expected to further the academic interests.

The universities in India did not have an organic growth like those of Oxford and Cambridge in the U.K. Initially only three universities were

established at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras by the then Government by legislative enactments. There are at present about 200 universities and each one of them have been brought into being by a separate legal enactment. Interestingly enough all of them have been established as autonomous educational institutions of higher learning.

Universities in India were designed as autonomous when there was no provision for election and all the members of the Senate were nominated by the Government. The change in the procedure regarding composition of various university bodies like Senate, Syndicate or Executive Council, Academic Council and Board of Studies does not change the connotation of the term of university autonomy.

A university in a modern society is not meant to function in an isolated situation. Every university is an indivisible whole, but it is just one among numerous such institutions scattered not only within the bounds of a country but all over the world. For this reason, it has to maintain its standards if it is to justify its existence with any degree of academic excellence vis-à-vis other universities of the world. This requirement serves as an objective worth striving for and also as a limitation on way-ward exercise of its autonomy.

Autonomy in higher education is often conceived to have two aspects viz. internal and external. In the modern world external autonomy in the sense in which it was enjoyed by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the early days of their growth or something analogous to it, is unthinkable. The countries in which the universities exist and function have, their overall policies and the universities, too, have to adjust themselves with them. This implies that they and their affairs cannot be immune from discussion, comment and criticism in the national and state assemblies and in the press. As corporate bodies they can sue and be sued in the courts and are subject to the laws of the land. External autonomy can, therefore, never mean that universities are lords of all they survey, and their rights, there is none to dispute. '*External autonomy*' can merely connote complete freedom from extra legal or extra-constitutional pressures in the working of the universities. It is this aspect of external autonomy which has to be safeguarded to make the internal autonomy function in a meaningful way.

There are numerous ways in which this external autonomy has been eroded by extra-legal and extra-constitutional pressures which are brought to bear in very subtle ways. If the Government (irrespective of its shade and colour) wishes, the erosion of external autonomy can be

brought down to the minimum. Extra-legal and extra-constitutional pressures might continue but they would cease to be effective within the constitutional framework.

Internal autonomy implies that various academic bodies like Senate, Syndicate, Board of Studies, Faculties and Academic Council are free to work in their respective spheres without any intervention or interference by external forces. These bodies enjoy autonomy under the rules in all the universities of India. Since the implementation of the scheme of rotation of headship, with much greater participation of staff councils in the administration of teaching departments, the scope of internal autonomy has also become much wider than before. Bodies like Faculties, Boards of Studies and Academic Council are composed purely of teachers, Senate and Syndicate have also very fair representation of teachers and some representation of students. The acid test of autonomy is the extent to which these bodies function without external intervention or interference. There is not much empirical evidence to show whether or not there is political interference in the working of these bodies. To the extent that these bodies function with an eye on academic standards with individual interests kept in check, the observation that autonomy in institutions of higher learning is an ethical necessity will stand vindicated.

There is one more aspect of university autonomy and it is financial. The government, whether of the states or the union, is answerable to the legislatures for all the money spent by it. When universities are fully financed by the government, the question of financial autonomy in their case, has little basis in reality.

Extra-legal and extra-constitutional pressures and counter pressures that erode the internal autonomy are generally most active at the time of admissions or during the days of elections of students' unions or at the time of selection of teams for various games and sports. As things stand there is hardly any university affair on Indian campus in which they are not present. The cases in which these pressures succeed in pushing up the less deserving and pulling down the more deserving are too subtle to be investigated. But the atmosphere generated by these pressures renders it vicious. The under current of the feeling that outside support is weightier than merit, tends to depress those whose eyes are on merit in every department of activity. In such an atmosphere, merit, which is another name of high standards, loses charm of pursuit. Undue favours (possible to an extremely limited extent only) seem to have become a commodity so attractive as to allure a large section of ambitious teachers

and over ambitious students. The academic bodies of the universities can hardly be expected to remain untouched by this sort of surrounding climate. Those teachers who have affiliation with outselling undue favours and consequently they can hardly be expected to work in the academic bodies of which they happen to be members with a mind concentrated on standards alone. Autonomy even if conceived as an ethical necessity, but if it gets planted in an unethical environment, it ceases to be functional as a force for a healthy growth of the universities.

All the universities in India suffer more or less from the evil effects of extra-legal and extra-constitutional pressures and counter-pressures in their working. The appointment of a high powered committee by the UGC under its own chairman in the year 1982, is an evidence to indicate that the malady has acquired dangerous proportions. Pressures, counter pressures and undue favours appear (more often than not) in ideological garbs, resulting in unrests and disturbances of varying kinds, all making the climate quite uncongenial for healthy and academic pursuits on the Indian campuses.

The University and the State: University Autonomy in Theory and Practice

G.B.K. HOOJA

Delivering the Presidential Address at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Inter-University Board at Patna, in 1955, Dr. Zakir Hussain said *“The first thing, that has been disturbing me is the anxiety about what is commonly known as the autonomy of the universities. Whatever the legal fiction, the universities in India, during the period of foreign rule, had not been autonomous in any real sense of the word. That was one of the chief reasons, in my view, why they did not grow into as vigorous and as significant centres of the nation’s intellectual and moral life as one could well wish. This has to be changed in a free India if the universities are to play their rightful role in the growth and development, the enrichment and purification of national life. Freedom is the life-breath of intellectual and moral life of which the universities must be the cherished centres. On the scrupulous preservation of academic freedom depends the strength and vitality of the universities as transmitters of culture, as critical appraisers of culture, as places extending the boundaries of knowledge, as the headquarters of the nation’s general-staff of forces assigned for the advance across the frontiers of ignorance and prejudice and superstition, and as places for the formation of character and the building up of free moral personalities from generation to generation. In the din of political party clash, the guarantee of academic freedom becomes crucial. The problem becomes more acute with the growing financial needs of university education and their growing dependence in that behalf on the State. The wisdom of our generation is on test in our country for devising methods of liberal financial assistance by the State without any desire to influence or control the working of the universities. It presupposes a clear vision of the nature and significance of the work of the universities and it presupposes a considerable degree of self-*

restraint or modesty, perhaps, in people with power - a difficult but not impossible presupposition.....

The concept of the right of academic freedom, I wish to state expressly and hope fervently, should not be confined to the right to advance knowledge in a particular area of scholarship without external interference, it should also include, if university men are not to be doomed to become partial fragmentary existences, freedom of thought and expression even on issues outside their particular areas of conventional specialisation...the only limitations and restraint on it should be those of decency and decorum and those of social responsibility....

While on this point of social responsibility of university men, I may be permitted to say a word about the possibility of our universities getting out with their beneficent work from their sheltered cloisters into the open world around. The open world in India, Burma and Ceylon is wide and is sadly neglected by the intellectual elite of these countries. Universities seem to be too preoccupied with their narrowly conceived work. The countryside is almost foreign land to the universities.... The work of Land Grant Colleges in the United States.... has transformed the rural life of America.... the Indian universities may well be encouraged to take up work of a similar nature... It is true that the university should be comparatively a place of 'shelter to grow ripe' and of 'leisure to grow wise', but it cannot afford to forget that the true value of knowledge comes out only when it functions and only when its use is harnessed to the service of some higher values does it reveal its true significance and exercise its liberating mission. 'Knowledge is idle if it becomes the private possession of an esoteric coterie. Knowledge has redeeming and life-giving power only when it continually re-enters the life and work of the community'. We should do something to make our seats of learning temples of such redeeming and life-giving knowledge".

Now that the question of university autonomy has surfaced once again in the wake of the proposed bill to amend the UGC Act, the academic community would do well to ponder over the nature and balanced advice of a seasoned and committed educationist as given above. Similar sentiments were expressed by the Gajendragadkar Committee too, which was appointed by the UGC on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellors' conference, under the chairmanship of Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar, the then Vice-Chancellor, Bombay University, to consider specific issues relating to governance of universities. It said in its report for 1971:

“The concept of university autonomy....is not a ‘legal’ concept, not even a ‘constitutional’ concept. It is an ethical concept and an academic concept. This concept does not question that, in a democratic society like ours legislatures are ultimately sovereign, and have a right to discuss and determine the questions of policy relating to education, including higher education....The concept of University Autonomy, however, means that it would be appropriate on the part of democratic legislatures not to interfere with the administration of university life, both academic and non-academic. The claim for autonomy is made not as a matter of privilege, but on the ground that such an autonomy is a condition precedent if the universities are to discharge their duties and obligations effectively and efficiently as regards imparting and advancement of knowledge and also making their unique contribution to the life and development of the nation”.

It, therefore, advised that before introducing new legislation, the Government should consult the UGC and the respective universities. Nothing should be done which would affect adversely the reputation or public image of a university. This is an obligation, of course of the university, but it is also an obligation of the State. To attain this, the Committee made a point of the desirability of ensuring flexibility in the organisation of a university; and referred particularly to the flexibility of the academic structure and the academic needs and requirements, conception and changing nature of academic problems; and suggested that the items to be covered by legislation should be kept to the barest minimum, leaving the composition and powers of various authorities and bodies to the initiative of the universities.

It is in this background that the inroads on university autonomy which are contemplated from time to time have to be examined. It may be stated at once that university autonomy does not mean absolute ruinless, uncontrolled, unquestionable power to the universities. It is hedged in by self-restraint and calls for due discharge of responsibility to the community which sustains and supports the university system. The universities cannot neglect the top level leadership and renaissance role expected of them in the nation’s march towards regeneration and development. they are a reservoir of the accumulated wisdom of the community and citadels of youthful power, and are, therefore, expected to play a critical role in the movement for national resurgence.

As stated by Dr. Zakir Hussain, even in the British period, the universities were not fully autonomous. It is time the universities

realized that the fulfilment of the Directive Principles of State Policy as outlined in the Indian Constitution is an imperative task before the nation; and in this the universities have a leadership role to play by way of research, communication and extension activities. They must break their prison walls and devote themselves to community educational agricultural universities modelled on the Land Grant Colleges of USA.

As of today, there are 198 universities and 7,000 colleges. Student enrolment is of the order of 4 million - 88% being for graduate courses, 10% for postgraduate courses and 1% for research. Forty percent enrolment is for Art Courses, 21% for Commerce and 19% for Science. Women account for 1.3 lakhs. Men number of teachers is 2.5 lakhs. Four decades ago, there were 700 colleges, 25 universities, 2 lakh students. No doubt, UGC has played a significant role in quality improvement and promotion of excellence in teaching and research. There has been a conscious effort at improving the status of teachers. Educational technology and media have also entered the field.

However, the scenario reflects serious weaknesses including:

- Proliferation is unplanned;
- Infrastructure facilities are inadequate;
- There is a mismatch between education and employment;
- Wastage rates in terms of high failures;
- Implementation of examination reforms is slow in coming;
- Academic activities and academic calendar are often disrupted;
- Memorization, regurgitation over-shadow creativity; and
- Not many colleges can pride themselves of imparting education comparable to some well-known world institutions.

The Programme of Action under the National Policy on Education (1986) envisaged establishment of 500 autonomous colleges in the 7th Plan, in order to:

- Reduce the load on the university system;
- Decentralize academic administration;
- Promote creativity, innovations; and
- Give freedom to prescribe rules of admission, determine courses of study, method of teaching and evaluation.

But the teachers are reluctant to have this autonomy. Here is an opportunity which should be seized in order to usher in an atmosphere of

academic autonomy at the grassroot level. It would, at the same time, help build a corps of valuable expertise with self-governing culture by linking the academic community with the neighbourhood.

Curricular and Examination Reforms

It is admitted on all hands that examinations as now conducted tend to corrode the educational system by distorting the very purpose of education. They are at best an unreliable subsystem for certifying merit of a dubious nature. As a wit remarked, apart from earned marks, one may now count on grace marks and even dagger marks to get a distinction. The universities are squeaking and crumbling under this burden.

What is needed is:

- Modularisation and semesterisation; and the entrustment of evaluation to the teachers. (Are there any takers?);
- Students should have the freedom of choice of modules rather than whole packages; a cafeteria, based on self-help model;
- Provision should be made for transfer of credits from the institution to another;
- Governments should be pressurized to amend recruitment rules to delink jobs from degrees. (This has lingered on for more than a decade) Most jobs should be available to +12 candidates;
- Let the holding of competence tests by employing agencies become a universal phenomenon. Varying standards of certification have already eclipsed the reputation of several universities, so far as PSC's are concerned;
- While education up to the 12th standard should be available to everybody, entrance to degree courses or other avenues should be subject to a further test, to assess aptitude, motivation and worthiness; and
- There should be no summer vacations. The universities should observe a 365 day schedule, with brief gaps for preparation, registration, acclimatization, familiarization, etc.

Grievance Redressal

This is yet another area which brooks no delay. Law Commission has gone into this question with considerable thoroughness and has

proposed Tribunalization of justice in the academic field for the following reasons:

- Educational disputes require a special expertise to appreciate the ever-increasing complexity and diversification of disciplines of a burgeoning educational system, which is not available in the general legal system. (There are about 2,000 tribunals of a specialized nature in the UK);
- The general legal system cannot cope with the multiplicity of academic litigation, resulting in delays;
- The present situation of availability of Industrial Disputes Act is unsatisfactory; and
- Tribunalization will help in speedy disposal.

Law Commission has recommended a 3-tier system at grassroot, state and national levels, having taken note of the Poona University Act.

- Grassroot Tribunals shall be participative in nature, representing all affected interests and shall deal with disputes concerning admissions, examinations, students, teachers etc.
- State and national level Tribunals shall have original and Appellate jurisdiction.
- The jurisdiction of all courts upto High Courts shall be excluded.
- State Tribunal shall consist of:
 - a. A sitting or retired judge of High Court as Chairman;
 - b. Two persons from those eligible to be High Court judges;
 - c. A retired VC; and
 - d. An eminent Professor
- National Tribunal shall consist of:
 - a. A sitting or retired judge of Supreme Court;
 - b. Two members from those eligible to be Supreme Court judges; and
 - c. Two members from retired VC's/distinguished educationists/administrators.

A relevant question is why do the universities NOT take steps to guard their autonomy in this field. Why do they force aggrieved persons to knock at the doors of Law Courts or to go to the streets?

The Vice-Chancellor

The threats to the status of the Vice-Chancellor (VC) pose another question mark to the autonomy of the university. Inconvenient VCs have been, not unoften, removed unceremoniously. In such cases, recourse to Law would be *infra dig* for a really worthy person. The VC is the head of the university, and the symbol of its prestige. As the man behind the machine, on his calibre and security would depend the progress and growth of the university. A mediocre in this position cannot be expected to offer effective leadership to the intellectual life of the university, to encourage quality researcher create a climate of scholarly and practical achievement. In the rise and fall of universities, this has been an easily discernible factor.

In order to secure and retain eminent worthies for this office, the following steps are called for:

- Draw up a panel of distinguished academicians/administrators considered fit to hold this office on a national basis;
- Give a 5-year term to the incumbent (to be made renewable);
- Make sure that he is not removed on political whims/winds;
- Process of removal should be as in the case of High Court judge;
- Strengthen the AIU; let the peers' counsel prevail;
- Bar the jurisdiction of lower courts to entertain complaints against VCs;
- Give the VC ministerial status, so he does not hang round in the corridors of power.
- And above all, give block grants linked with specific projects subject to performance audit.

Supporting Staff

It is self-evident that the VC alone cannot deliver the goods unless he is supported by an equally committed, meritorious, loyal staff. It is a painful truth that educational career is not the first priority of the university alumni. A teaching job is the spring-board for ambitious, clever graduates, who continue to strive for entry into all-India services until age permits. It is in this background that the NPE (1986) recommended the revival of the Indian Educational Service so the cream of university talent may be attracted to the educational career. There should be no hesitation in saying that while administrative services can do with high IInd class graduates, the educational services demand

nothing less than 1st class minds, for on their quality would depend the quality of their products, and they would, in turn, embellish the offices which they are called upon to hold.

Now that the voting age has been reduced to 18, the responsibility of the university/political leadership to equip the young educands with the basic principles of a democratic/republican/egalitarian/participatory form of government becomes self-evident. The political parties and persons in position of authority should help create an environment in which the youth of the nation devote their formative years in acquiring high physical, mental, spiritual and professional standards.

It may be argued that the university system is a subsystem of the social landscape and cannot escape its distortions; but it is a facile alibi. If education means to draw out the best, the academic dons must accept their critical role, for where else shall we find light if not in the universities and the institutes of higher learning?

But all this shall remain yet another pious and meaningless exercise in rhetoric unless specific micro-level measures are outlined, laying down requisite performance indicators so as to ensure quantifiable accountability. In this view of the matter, the activation of College/Departmental Development Councils on a permanent basis may be considered, to suggest measures for the fulfilment of educational goals and objectives, which may include

- Conflict management;
- Induction of talented youth into the educational system;
- Transmission of ethical, scientific values;
- Development of work ethos and pursuit of excellence;
- Introduction of College/Departmental autonomy; and
- Formulation of code of conduct

Deliberations and Action

Following the Memorandum of Intent, contained in our Constitution, numerous committees and commissions have sat in the past 40 years to deliberate upon the nature of educational reforms needed to bring about an era of progress and prosperity. But the measures adopted so far have proved short of the target; and it has not been possible to pull the system out of the ruts, notwithstanding the exhortations of and bold experiments launched by a galaxy of distinguished academicians like Shradhananda, Tagore, Aurobindo, Vaswani, Zakir Hussain and others. When young

teenagers take recourse to self-immolation and convert themselves into flaming torches, it is not merely a revolt against authority, but the testament of youth written in letters of blood that the existing system of education and governance holds no hope for them as they enter adulthood. Shall we take heed and transform the educational system to suit the needs of the consumers and the community? Otherwise, university autonomy has no meaning.

Sharing Autonomy: Structural Changes in the Affiliation System

A.N.P. UMMERKUTTY

Madras, Calcutta and Bombay are the first universities in India, all started in 1857 and organised as affiliating universities on the model of the then University of London. Gradually affiliating system got established in the country with a sort of division of labour between the parent body and the attached institutions. The university gave necessary academic guidance, regulated the various courses of studies and conducted the final year examinations, while most of the educational process including teaching, library work, practical demonstrations, tutorials in the evening hours, internal tests, assessment of the performance of the students in terminal examinations etc. were carried out in the affiliated colleges.

In 1902 the first teaching department was organised in the Calcutta University on the recommendation of Ashutosh Mukerji Commission appointed by the then Govt. of Bengal to study the problems of higher education and to suggest reform measures. Later still, research was also started in the university teaching departments. This innovation was followed by other universities also so that gradually the university consisted of a campus with its own teaching-cum-research departments and a number of colleges affiliated to it, but located in far off places. The hierarchical relationship between the parent body and the affiliated institutions was thus completed with the former having a distinct leadership role. This state of affairs continued till 1947.

After independence some major events took place that radically altered the course of evolution of the affiliation system. They are:

- a) Enormous expansion of the higher education system in the country, universities having increased approximately 10 fold, colleges 15 fold, students 30 fold and teachers about 25 fold;
- b) Large scale expansion resulted in the deterioration of standards. III-equipped laboratories, poorly-stocked libraries, inadequate space, neglected campuses, under-qualified and often disinterested teachers, inexperienced administrators and management, entirely new social composition of students etc. contributed to this deterioration and flattening of educational standards;
- c) Qualifications for the appointment of teachers, admission rules for students and courses of studies offered in the university departments being more or less identical with those prevailing in colleges, the university departments practically lost their leadership role and;
- d) Prestige of university departments was further eroded by shortage of funds for research activities. In free India quite a large number of autonomous research institutions outside the university system sprang up. They work under the umbrella organisations like the CSIR, ICAR, ISRO, ICMR, DRDO, AE etc. and drain away most of the funds available for research, thus depriving the university departments of any worthwhile opportunity for serious research.

These are major changes that have necessitated rethinking on the need for structural changes in the affiliation system which seems to have evolved into a sterile, fruitless, dead end. Being a century old product of the colonial times, the affiliation system has developed its own self-perpetuating techniques and therefore radical structural alterations in the system are not immediately feasible. But at the same time, no functional improvement is possible without corresponding structural adjustments. In the following pages some remedial measures are suggested. These measures will have the double advantage of both injecting a new self-propelling dynamism into the system and of gradually eroding the present day stagnancy, and rigidity of the affiliation framework.

The essence of the structural changes, suggested is a clear demarcation in the educational duties and responsibilities between the university and the affiliated colleges in the real educational process. It is well accepted that the university should be fully

autonomous in all its educational and academic functions. It may be noted that this implies an element of autonomy for the affiliated colleges also, for the university autonomy is the sum total of all the autonomy exercised by its various departments, affiliated colleges, recognised institutions etc. In other words, university's autonomous functions are performed through its constituent units. So demarcation of the academic duties and responsibilities between the university and the affiliated colleges means the demarcation of autonomous functions which the colleges (all colleges, not a select few) should be enabled to share with the university.

Sense of Inquiry

At present, the colleges exercise hardly any autonomy at all. In theory, they are supposed to perform a function subordinate to that of the university. In practice, they hardly do even that. Most of the colleges are now reduced to mere coaching centres for examinations which are to be conducted by the university in an impersonal way at the end of each academic year. No doubt the examinations are vital in assessing the merits or demerits of the students and in classifying them on the basis of their performance in given tests. However, higher education is much more than mere coaching for examinations. It is essentially a process involving close and intimate academic interactions between students and teachers and should result in the all round development of the former. Giving lectures and dictating notes in a mechanical fashion constitute only superficial aspects of this interaction. What the teacher transmits in this way to the students is only the personal knowledge he/she has acquired about the subject he/she is teaching. In addition to this mere parrot-like transmission, the teachers will have to inculcate in the students a sense of inquiry so that they may improve upon the transmitted knowledge through their own private efforts in the libraries or through other means. It is not the acquisition of knowledge, but the capacity to acquire knowledge relevant to any occasion and to individual and social needs that is important. Teachers should help the students to acquire this capacity in addition to transmitting whatever knowledge they possess. As a result there should be continuous input and feedback in the process of higher education and it should become a constant give and take experience both for the teacher and for the student, resulting in the desired growth for both.

This is far cry from the real situation that prevails in most of our colleges and this deplorable situation has developed because of the total absence of autonomy and the consequent accountability in the colleges. Irresponsibility seems to be inbuilt in the present mode of working of the affiliation system. Students are hardly responsible to teachers for the latter have no direct hand either in assessing their development during the course of study or in evaluating their performance in the exam at the end of the course. After the introduction of direct payment system the teachers also seem to have lost accountability to anyone. Being reciprocal and mutual, their relationship and the attendant accountability to students is reduced to nothing for the reason already mentioned. Then there is the *troika* of the government, the university, and the management to all the three of whom the teachers are supposed to be accountable in theory but hardly so in practice. Though the government is the paymaster teachers resist any control by the former asserting that such controls should be exercised by the university.. But they are able to escape any regulatory attempt from the university for the latter is not in a position to take any disciplinary action for that is the prerogative of the paymaster. Accountability of the teachers to management also has been greatly eroded for the controlling role of the management seems to be totally absent, once the appointment of a teacher is regularised and probation completed.

Sharing the Autonomy

Neither students nor teachers are to be blamed entirely for the present deplorable state of affairs which has come about due to the built-in irresponsibility and inertia that have of late, crept into the affiliation system. Only some structural changes or rather structural adjustments in the system itself can bring about desirable results for no functional changes can be expected without corresponding structural adjustments.

What is argued is that colleges should share the autonomy with the university and there should be vertical demarcation in the autonomous functioning of the university and the affiliated colleges. Exercise of such limited autonomy should be one of the conditions of affiliation. Unless the institutions and the faculty giving leadership to them are given adequate autonomy, it will be difficult to pinpoint their accountability, and the net result will be the continuation of the present near-anarchical and aimless floating of the higher education system with the enormous amount of human and material wastage.

The autonomous colleges were launched by the UGC as an experiment for overcoming the malaise the affiliation system. University Grants Commission, wanted to set up 500 autonomous colleges in the country with the hope that these institutions would function as models and set the tone for a fresh rejuvenation of the higher education system. But there were only a little more than 100 takers for the idea. These autonomous colleges constituted only a new category of institutions but did not offer any solution to the all round deterioration and aimlessness of colleges as a whole.

There are more than 7500 colleges in the country and even if all the desired number of 500 colleges had taken up autonomous status they would have constituted only about 7% of the total number. This could easily be dubbed as elitist, for nearly 93% of the colleges would have been left high and dry. Further, teachers in general were reluctant to support the autonomous colleges for they felt that the idea was discriminatory with extra amount of work for teachers working in autonomous colleges. The fact is that even if autonomous colleges were successful, they would have constituted only an island in the vast ocean of mediocrity.

So, as a real and meaningful remedy for the many ailments afflicting the present mode of affiliating system, the idea of autonomy (or to be more specific, demarcated autonomy) for *all colleges* is suggested here as against the autonomous status for a few select colleges. There is substantial difference between the two concepts. Not only some well defined autonomous functions are to be offered to *all affiliated colleges* but the exercise of such autonomy is to be made a condition for the continuation of the affiliation, subject to biannual or triannual review by experts committee. Since almost all our colleges now have degree courses and many have PG programmes as well the educational atmosphere is very congenial in these institutions for a radical rethinking on the possibility of restructuring many of these courses and introducing innovative programmes based upon local needs and resources.

Demarcated Autonomy

Details of the autonomous functions to be demarcated for colleges are to be worked out after consultations at various levels. However, it is to be indicated here that the amendments required in the statutes, ordinances, regulations etc. in the different Acts now governing the universities will be minimal and the functions of the present

university apex bodies like syndicate, senate, academic council, faculties and boards of studies need not be diluted much. College autonomy can effectively and fruitfully function even within the provisions of existing laws provided a genuine understanding is arrived at on the issue. The broad lines on which college autonomy can be built up are indicated below:

a) *New Programmes Planning Committee* should be constituted in every college. Besides the representatives from the members of the different faculties of the college, there should also be representatives of the university, government, management (if any), parents, alumni, students, regionally important industry, local administration etc. Principal should be the chairman of the committee. The committee should meet atleast twice a year to plan, to design and to formulate restructuring of courses, introduction of new courses etc. within the approved patterns of degree and PG programmes already approved by the university. The restructuring or new formulations could be more or less on the lines now being followed for the vocationalisation of degree courses in a few select colleges under the guidelines of UGC. But all the courses need not be vocationalised, they can also be restructured or altered to meet different academic or practical needs. Once such new formulations and suggestions are finalised by the college concerned, formal sanction can be obtained by the academic bodies of the university. University need not raise any objections to such proposals as long as they are academically sound and within the overall approved pattern of degree and PG courses. Government also need not object to such schemes as long as there is no additional financial commitment or dislocation in the staff strength, working hours etc. This arrangement will permit a great deal of initiative to individual colleges. Since the opportunity is available to all colleges, there can be healthy rivalry between colleges in evolving ever newer and relevant course of studies which are really need-based and life-oriented. Such an exercise of autonomy will greatly increase the accountability of the institution as well as that of the teachers and students.

b) *Programmes Management Committee* should be constituted by the College Academic Committee. This should be a small body with representatives from the departments implementing the new/altered programmes, external agencies who are cooperating financially or otherwise with their implementation, university, government, management etc. Principal should be the chairman for this

committee also. The functions of this committee include management and close supervision of the course, arranging the extra finance required for putting up additional faculties, engaging part time faculties, if necessary, and such other matters that require special attention for smooth running of the courses. It has been suggested earlier that restructuring or new formulations can be conceived at this stage only without additional financial commitment to the government. This is a realistic approach for higher education may not be able to get substantial increase in the allotment of funds at the cost of other developmental activities or priority sectors. We may have to try to mobilize some local resources to support regional initiatives and autonomous ventures and in great many cases this can be achieved if right sponsors are located. It is believed that once such new/altered programmes of studies are stabilised with initial sponsorship, adequate public finance could be obtained. After all, autonomous colleges are supported by UGC and if a wider and broader type of autonomy is to be practised by other willing colleges that scheme cannot go unsupported by public funding agencies or by governments.

c) *College Academic Committee* though mentioned last, this is the most important and most visible body that should be held responsible for the academic performance of the college and should consist of all the members of the various faculties of the college. Principal is to be the chairman of the committee. It should meet three or four times a year and should be collectively accountable both for the day to day functioning of the college and for its long term achievements. The College Academic Committee should plan, monitor, assess and review, at frequent intervals, all the curricular and co-curricular activities of the college and adopt necessary corrective measures for complete achievement of the results desired. Sub committees could be constituted to focus attention on various important activities. These should include the apportionment and completion of teaching schedules in time, conduct of monthly/term-wise/annual college exam, attendance and general discipline of the students, observance of the code of conduct both by the teachers and non-teachers, smooth and timely conduct of various co-curricular functions by the students' unions, supervision of important activities such as NCC, NSS, Sports etc. Separate reports from such sub committees should be discussed in the general meeting of the College Academic Committee which should really become both the symbol and the vital organ of the college autonomy.

If such exercise of autonomy regularly takes place in the college, a major part of the meaningful educational process would be completed there itself. The boys and girls who then come for university exam will be a thoroughly prepared group with a great deal of desirable changes already internalised. Such a worthy preparation of the youngsters by the college before they come to university examination is what is intended by the vertical sharing of autonomy between the colleges and the university. This will have to be achieved if the affiliation system is to become useful and vibrant once again.

Mention was made earlier of the New Programmes Planning Committee and Programmes Management Committee both of which will be mainly concerned with new/altered programmes and their efficient management. Essentially they represent the expanding horizons and community involvement in the affairs of the college. But the College Academic Committee is the key central body responsible to carry out all the programmes, whether old or new, for it comprises the members of the faculty of the college on whose shoulders the academic leadership of the institution should ultimately rest. Even if new programmes are not readily forthcoming the College Academic Committee has enough academic responsibilities to perform for the healthy and autonomous functioning of their institution. Probably only such sincere striving would save our colleges from their present, precarious predicament and justify their continued existence. The suggestion in this paper is that they should go a step further in the exercise of their autonomy with the formulation of new or altered courses in response to their regional needs and resources. Such autonomous action would not only justify their existence but even guarantee their relevance. Further, as indicated in the beginning of this paper, such bold autonomous ventures by the affiliated colleges would give a new dynamism to the affiliation system itself and help its evolution in more healthy and creative directions.

Autonomy: A Structural Innovation in Higher Education

VARGHESE P. PALAMATTAM

Introduction

Scientific methods of management involve the processes of planning, organising staffing, directing, controlling and coordinating. In management practice decentralisation of authority by assigning objectives and responsibilities to individuals and groups is an accepted principle for the efficient handling of the above processes and for the highest attainment of organisational goals. Decentralisation is employed to accommodate the most unpredictable of all management inputs, namely, the human beings. Decentralisation of educational management structures is desirable because in education what we are dealing with are these unpredictable human beings in their pursuit of knowledge.

Autonomy to colleges is the latest structural innovation in higher educational management. This is envisaged as the highest possible method, in the present set-up for the time being, of decentralisation in higher educational management. This has been promoted by knowledgeable academics and far-sighted administrators because the existing system of affiliated colleges with the maximum centralisation of administration at the university has been proved unimaginative and non-creative, cumbersome, unviable, inefficient, ineffective and unproductive. Tamil Nadu has taken the initiative in conferring autonomy to colleges. In 1978 autonomy was conferred on 12 colleges in Tamil Nadu and now they have 45 autonomous colleges. Altogether 102 colleges in India are autonomous now.

Mass Higher Education in India: Possibilities and Relevance

According to Kapur (1975), when 30 to 40 percent of a country's youth in the age group of 17-23 years are in higher educational

institutions, we say that country is providing for mass higher education. When this percentage goes to 70 to 80, we have reached the stage of universal higher education and most of them do not even intend to. Higher Education for them is very costly, not often for the government but definitely for the students and their guardians. Some countries like the USSR have even educational policies which state that universal higher education is not a desirable goal. India's enrolment in higher education institutions in 1975 was 13 percent, later it had declined to 7 percent and now it is on the increase. But we can never aim at universal higher education and in the near future not even at mass higher education. In fact, we have not achieved even universal elementary education. Hence what we can reasonably desire in the very limited area of higher education is quality and excellence and responsiveness to the needs of the country and that of the immediate surroundings of the articular educational institution. If higher education in our country has to serve these purposes, the institutions should have functional autonomy.

As mentioned above, India cannot and should not aim even at mass higher education in consideration of its financial constraints and manpower requirements at the higher qualification level. Hence selective admission to higher educational institutions is a must. Such selective admission is an accepted practice in most countries and an enforced policy in a few others. If quality, excellence and needs of the country with specific emphasis on the region and environment are accepted as the possible and viable goals of higher education, autonomous status to colleges with an implied freedom for such selective admissions seem to be the best available form in institutional management we can envisage for higher education in India.

Drawbacks of Affiliating University System

The most important and perhaps the only advantage of the present affiliating system of universities is that it can absorb a large number of students and somehow satisfy the high rush for admission into higher education. However, as years passed they have earned the approbrium of degree manufacturing factories and their concentration is only a conducting examinations and that too in a very poor manner. They have ceased to be academically useful and administratively viable because of the sheer burden of numbers both of students and of affiliated colleges.

In these circumstances diversification of courses, arrangement of internal and continuous evaluation, innovations in syllabus and curriculum, new experiments in teaching, testing and research, providing inter-collegiate facilities for curricular and co-curricular activities, etc., have become practically impossible. Thus affiliating universities have become some kind of outdated and inflexible structures.

A few other drawbacks or disadvantages of affiliating university system are listed below:

- In this system the actual teaching and learning process takes place in the affiliated colleges. But the power to decide whom to teach, who is to teach, what to learn and how to evaluate; etc., are highly centralised in the university. The colleges are denied any initiatives in these regards.
- The colleges have only subsidiary character with no function as a catalyst in education for social change and progress.
- Teachers have hardly any role in generating knowledge and absolutely no recognition is given for research undertakings.
- Students have only limited options with hardly any provision for individual's aptitudes and aspirations.
- The developmental needs and qualified manpower requirements of the country find hardly any place in the educational process.
- Changes in curriculum and syllabus are very slow in the affiliating system due to the difficulty of bringing together the large number of people involved in the process.
- By the same reason communication channels are very slow moving and cumbersome in this era of communication revolution.
- *"The system of affiliation in Indian universities has undergone distortion to such an extent that the present bond of supposed affiliation has become 'affliction' to the colleges and to the students"* (Shankar Narayan, 1974). *"This monstrous system is a legacy of the colonial past and has so engrossed our minds that attempts to give autonomy to colleges are often resisted for variety of different reasons"* (Yashpal, 1990). Since it is a system of catering to the large masses, quality is at stake and standards are determined by the average or the mediocre rather than by the excellent.

The affiliating university system now is characterised by its dilution of standards and non-pursuit of excellence. It can enforce only a straight-jacket system.. Even good, efficient and well managed colleges and their teachers are incapacitated from taking creative, imaginative and effective steps in improving the scope, relevance and effectiveness of their programmes in the geographical and social context in which they are placed.

Meaning of Autonomy to Colleges

Etymologically autonomy means "*self norm*". Thus an autonomous college is given the freedom to be a norm to itself, a freedom for self-governance. It is a freedom for assuming responsibility for itself. Thus freedom for self-governance is given at two levels:

- (i) At the institutional level where the college is free to determine its policies and programmes; and
- (ii) At the individual level where the teacher is given the freedom to learn and the freedom to teach. This means the teacher is given the operational freedom to develop and innovate different methods and styles of teaching, research, testing and evaluation.

At the individual level the freedom to learn is also extended to the students. Learners should have the freedom to choose those courses which they think would help them grow (Carnegie Commission Summary Report, 1974).

Autonomy envisages a two-pronged liberation: first of all, liberating the universities from the burden of conducting examinations for lakhs of students and the certification of the same. This obsession with examination deters the universities from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities of teaching, learning and research and giving academic and administrative leadership in the higher educational field. In the autonomous system the process and programmes of testing, evaluation, grading and certification of the students are the portfolios of the colleges, and the universities are relieved of these responsibilities in respect of the students of autonomous colleges.

Secondly, autonomy is also to liberate the colleges from the excessive, minute and sometimes oppressive control of the universities and allow them necessary freedom to chalk out their plan of action including course, curriculum and examination management,

of course, subject to the overall supervision and control of the universities.

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Concept of Autonomy: With Special Reference to Autonomous Colleges

J.N. KAPUR

Autonomy

Autonomy is government of an organisation by persons most deeply affected by the organisation, in the best interest of the organisation, and with minimum interference from other agencies.

Since a university is a community of teachers, students and researchers, committed to communication and advancement of knowledge, university autonomy is government of a university by the stakeholders for the furtherance of education and research with minimum interference of the government. Similarly college autonomy means that the principal, teachers and to some extent, students are in charge of admissions, curriculum, teaching, examinations and appointments, subject to the control of the university.

Likewise, we can have autonomy of a university department, or of department of a college; autonomy of a research organisation and finally autonomy of a teacher to teach with as much freedom as possible.

The basic philosophy is that a person or group which is free and autonomous is more efficient than a person or a group which is controlled. Of course, the person or the group has to be responsible and accountable for its actions, but there is no interference in the day-to-day functioning of the individual or the group. This basic philosophy is similar to one which states that a free market economy will lead to greater productivity, than a controlled economy, and that democracy leads to greater creativity, than a dictatorship.

Some Thoughts on University Autonomy

I seek university autonomy because I believe a university cannot function without it. My motivation is practical. I want autonomy for the university because without autonomy, a university cannot draw the best either from its Vice-Chancellor or from its teachers or from its students or stimulate the best in them.

A nice balance has to be kept between two necessities, namely, the necessity of freedom for academic institutions and the necessity that they should serve the nation's needs. Let me first state the position negatively. Autonomy does not mean either independence from social objectives or isolation from social change. A university is not a sovereign body. It comes into existence by legislation and maintains itself and acquires the physical facilities for its functioning largely through the aid of public funds. Every state has the inherent power to see that its universities function as instruments for the service of society; and it has the explicit authority to do so through both its legislative and financial powers. University have the obligation to supply the country with the academically trained personnel it requires for its development.

The Role of the Government

Usually university autonomy implies that the government should not interfere in the affairs of the university. However, the government is accountable to the public for the funds that it spends on the university. It has to exercise some control on the universities to see that the funds are properly spent. It can encourage some activities by providing some funds for these and it can discourage some activities by withdrawing funds from them. Thus in most foreign countries government provides funds to universities depending on the number of students permitted in various courses and no university can increase the number of students by itself. The permission for Ph.D. programmes is not easily given and no university can start a Ph.D. programme on its own. But once a programme is started, the university is completely free to run it the way it likes. The government may itself like some courses to be started and may provide the funds for the same.

In our country, the government does not mind if a university admits double the number of students for which facilities exist, provided no additional funds are asked from the government. Thus the government does not discourage lowering of standards; in fact it encourages it. The

government itself starts new colleges and universities without making adequate provisions for them. Every university is automatically permitted to start a Ph.D. programme in any subject whether adequate facilities in the form of qualified staff and laboratory equipment and library books exist or not. Thus while in other countries government control is used to maintain and raise standards, in our country it is used to dilute standards.

Political Interference in the University Autonomy

In our country university autonomy has been threatened much more by political interference than by government interference. The distinction is important. The government interference has to be through open directives to the university, while political interference can be in more subtle ways.

One method of undermining university autonomy is through appointment of 'convenient' persons as Vice-Chancellors. Since the Vice-Chancellor is a key person in the university, the ruling political party can have a great deal of influence in the university through him. However, the opposition knows the affiliation of such a Vice-Chancellor and begins to gun for him from the day he takes office. The result is that the university becomes a political arena where supporters and opponents of the ruling party fight their battles. Teachers and students are also divided into politically motivated groups. When politics enters through one gate of the university, autonomy leaves from the other gate of the university. Peace in the academic campus is disturbed and there is no climate for academic pursuits. University autonomy becomes meaningless under these conditions.

This happens in many universities and this recently happened in Rajasthan University where the Vice-Chancellor was changed in the interest of the political parties and academic activities in the university came to a stand still.

Another method through which the state governments manage to control the universities is by means of making posts of registrars, deputy registrars and even assistant registrars as transferable within the state. These officers of the university run regularly to state secretariats to get their transfers to convenient locations and this gives a lever to the bureaucrats and politicians to manipulate things in the universities. The officers care more for the bureaucrats and the politicians than for the Vice-Chancellors and the academicians. This is apparently done

to control the powers of registrars, but essentially it results in transfer of powers from within the university to the political powers. This means complete erosion of the university autonomy.

With these powers, the bureaucrats and the politicians manipulate appointments of professors and readers and sometimes they stoop low enough to manipulate university results and corruption prevails in the university system.

The politicians consider universities as centres of political influence rather than as centres of learning. There can be no university autonomy under these conditions. This type of political interference is unknown in Western universities. There political parties compete with one another to see as to which political party can help in building up academic activities on the campuses so that the universities can deliver the goods for the nation and nation is in a position to compete internationally.

In our country, we have started talking of international economic competition and globalisation without realising that without an internationally competitive educational system, all this can make no sense and for that purpose, political interference in the universities will have to be stopped completely forthwith.

University Autonomy and External Examination System

All universities have the autonomy to conduct their examination in the way they like. With almost no exception all affiliated universities have opted for external examination system. One group of senior teachers prepares the syllabus, another group of teachers teaches it and a third group of teachers from outside the university sets and examines the papers. Since the external examiners are not sure what has been taught in different colleges, they set some standard questions and provide plenty of options. The students can leave 30 to 40% of the course and prepare answers for some questions from made-easy books, work for three months in a year and can pass the examinations and get good degrees. No real learning takes place, no thinking takes place and often good books are not taught at all. The universities have given up their own right to examine the way they like.

Once I visited University of Roorkee as Chairman of a UGC committee and had a discussion with the entire faculty there. They complained "*You at IIT, Kanpur examine your own students and you*

can teach the way you like, but we at Roorkee have an external examination system". When I asked them whether the external examination system was required in the Act of the university, it became clear that the teachers had themselves imposed the chains of the external examination system on themselves and that they themselves could break these chains by just passing a resolution in the academic council. Some year later they did precisely this and now they have a much better examination system.

External examination system weakens university autonomy which includes teacher autonomy and student autonomy. It interferes with the right of the teacher to guide learning process of the students and interferes with the right of the students to meaningful interaction with their teachers. University autonomy is incomplete without teacher autonomy and teacher autonomy is incomplete without internal assessment.

Why College Autonomy?

Today the students in colleges are completely alienated from the educational system. Their main contact with the teachers is as passive listeners to the lectures of the teachers. They have seldom person-to-person discussions. They feel that they can as well study with the help of made-easy books and private tutors and they are not often interested in attending college classes.

We have always praised our ancient *Gurukula* system of education with its close relationship between *Gurus* and *Shishyas*. Today we are farthest from this relationship. In fact students and teachers in the west are following this system much more than we are following. If we want to bring greater contact between students and teachers, internal examination system is necessary and for that college autonomy is a must.

Continuous Internal Assessment

Here the teacher teaches his students. He gives them quizzes almost every week. He also gives regular assignments, mid-semester tests and end-semester tests, corrects all these either himself or with the help of assistants. All the marked answer books are shown to all the students so that students can see whether the marking is fair. The students can discuss their marks with the teacher so that the teacher is very careful in marking.

The teacher has not only to give absolute marks, but he has to give grades. He has to grade the students in order to merit, so that each student again becomes a watchdog on the fairness of the system. In

addition, students give their evaluation of the teachers and courses so that they feel involved in the system.

The teacher keeps a record of topics taught in every lecture. He keeps the records of the quizzes, assignments and tests, so that everybody can see that the course has been covered in full.

In this system every student has to have the textbook and he has to read the easier parts himself so that the load of the teacher is reduced and his examination load is correspondingly increased. He gets help from senior students in correcting assignments who are paid for this work and who partly support their education through this work.

Autonomous Colleges

The teachers of autonomous colleges have the power and the responsibility to see that:

- All admissions are on merit;
- All examinations are fair and objective and there is no secrecy about these;
- Minimum time is spent in conducting the examinations;
- All appointments made in the colleges are fair; and
- The university curriculum is modified (while keeping the same standard) in order to use the expertise of the faculty and the needs of the region.

Kothari Commission had recommended autonomy for colleges and this has recently been supported by the UGC. The UGC has agreed to provide additional funds to autonomous colleges. In spite of this support, the scheme has not made as much progress as it should have, for the following reasons:

- The state governments are not prepared to give up their powers over the government run colleges;
- The managements of private colleges are apprehensive that they will lose their powers;
- The teachers are themselves not fully willing to assume the full responsibilities of autonomy; and
- There is apprehension that a college degree may not have the same status as a university degree.

The state governments and the college managements have to serve the interest of education rather than serve their own interest. If everybody works in the interest of the education of the next generation,

some of these problems can be solved easily. The basic question that is to be decided is whether we want to produce students who work throughout the year, students who learn how to learn and how to think for themselves, who are self-reliant and who can face problems of modern times, or we want just to produce those who can cram answers to some standard questions and forget them soon afterwards.

Autonomous Institutions Elsewhere

Except in the Indian subcontinent, everywhere in the world all educational institutions including schools, colleges, universities, research institutions are autonomous and all examinations are internal. Universities sometimes conduct their own admission tests and employers hold their independent interviews. Students know that these tests and interviews would be fair and do not depend upon the recommendations they get. Therefore, they concentrate on learning rather than on cramming.

There autonomy produces wonderful results. Students work for 50 hours a week for 10 months in a year as against our students who work for 12 weeks in a year. They work 4 to 5 times as hard as students in our country. We cannot afford to waste and we are wasting our resources. They can afford to waste, but they are not wasting any. Their system is full of optimism and full of faith. Our system is characterised by cynicism and lack of faith.

Autonomous colleges offer a way out, but it needs courageous minds to accept the challenge.

Every successful autonomous college will give a new faith to our educational system. Teachers can not change the whole educational system, but they can work together to change the institution they work in and to run it as they like by getting for it an autonomous status. We hope that more and more college teachers will accept the challenge.

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Scheme of Autonomous Colleges: Myths and Realities

K. SUDHA RAO & GEORGE MATHEW

Prologue

The scheme of providing autonomous status to the affiliated colleges in this country has remained more an issue of debate than implementation at the college level, in spite of the fact that the scheme was initiated as early as in 1970s on a selective basis. The scheme was implemented on a larger scale in mid eighties as an outcome of National Policy on Education-1986. Though more than 7500 colleges are functioning under the affiliating system with 148 universities, only 107 colleges are autonomous in seven states. State wise break up of the colleges is : Tamil Nadu -44, Madhya Pradesh -29, Andhra Pradesh -20, Rajasthan -5, Orissa -5, Gujarat -2 and Uttar Pradesh -2. Though the data reveals that seven states are implementing autonomous scheme, it is only four viz Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan that have implemented the scheme in real sense of the term. In Madhya Pradesh, it is only on paper while the rest of them are in no way near it.

The hesitation to opt for autonomy and its implementation in colleges is attributed to a variety of reasons. The most significant, amongst others, is the very social attitude towards development. paucity of resources has made educational experts abstain from developing indigenous models through research. This had led the developing countries to adopt and adapt the theories and models that are tested for developed countries. This process has generated both positive and negative experiences. It is those negative experiences that have left bitter feelings and hence stronger impact on the minds of the people. Resultant outcome is resistance to accept any new programme or policy that is already tried in developed countries. It could be either due to

ignorance or just the feeling of “*play safe*”. Even academic faculty maintains apprehensions and reservations on similar lines. One such strong apprehension about autonomous scheme is that, it is a western concept and hence might not suit the Indian conditions. But this assumption is far from reality.

Teaching, learning and evaluation are the trinity of academic functions which is to be carried out by the institutions through the teachers and students, no matter which country it is. This philosophy is universally accepted and the *Acharyas or Gurus* of ancient India practised this. In *Guru Ashram* System of Education of Ancient times, the ‘*Guru*’ designed the curriculum to be taught depending on the students’ needs: both cognitive and affective, and adopted suitable methodologies of teaching and evaluation as well. Anybody who is exposed to the scriptures cannot question the quality of education that was imparted as also the behavioural input that had gone into this process. Philosophy of autonomy actually envisages this concept of freedom, mainly of academic functions. It emphasises the need for greater freedom to teachers to enhance students learning. No doubt it is a challenge to the teachers to be at his best, and to give his very best.

The Purpose

The present article is an illustration of “*state of art*” of apprehensions about scheme of autonomous colleges in India. The article is developed on the basis of authentic data collected from teachers working in autonomous and non-autonomous colleges, field observations and interviews held with implementers and beneficiaries of the system. The purpose of the paper is three fold.

- To highlight the findings on teacher’s apprehensions about the autonomy in government and private colleges;
- To understand reasons for such apprehensions in the context of their institutions; and finally
- To disseminate the knowledge and findings to facilitate better understanding of the scheme of autonomous colleges.

It is believed that such a presentation would not only held in understanding the concept of autonomy and the scheme but also assist colleges in having an open mind towards exploring the possibility of implementing autonomy in their respective colleges.

The Facts

One of the striking findings of the study which was surprising to note from the teachers, students and principals of the colleges was that much of the resistance emerged from sheer ignorance and lack of awareness of

- the very concept of autonomy and the proposed scheme of autonomy by UGC; (Sudha Rao 1990);
- pros and cons of the scheme and its influence on the college and the quality of teaching-learning on the one hand and teachers, students and administrators on the other; and
- demerits of the affiliating system and its impact on the students and in turn society.

India is one of the very few countries of the world where the major part of the higher education is imparted through its affiliated colleges. Though the system of affiliation was copied from London University in 1850s, it was discarded by them long ago. But we still follow the outdated system and today it has been proved that it has not been able to serve the needs of the society and is also responsible for the state of art of general arts and science courses in the colleges. Our Constitution adopted in 1950 has been changed more than seventy times in the last four decades to suit the changing needs, the monuments constructed in 19th century have undergone physical changes due to the passing of time if anything remains in the original form in this country, without any change, for about 140 years, it is our affiliating system of colleges.

The affiliated colleges compete with each other for marks and divisions in the university examinations and have concentrated more on the examinations rather than on the achievement of real goals and objectives of higher education. The Academic Council, Board of Studies, Syndicate and Senate which are the major academic bodies of the universities, meet occasionally, discuss the non academic issues as they form the crisis agenda more often than the academic matters. As a result, the universities on an average take around four to eight years to make changes in the syllabus (if at all it is initiated). Postponement of examinations, mass copying and other malpractices have become common practices in the colleges. The conduct of examination has become a major law and order issue in good number of states. Some of the states had to enact laws to make malpractices in examinations as a non-bailable offence, and also at times, it has become unavoidable for

the college authorities to seek the help of law enforcing machinery for the fair conduct of examinations. In the affiliating system, syllabus, curriculum (good number of courses have already become obsolete, students rush to enrolment is another indicator of the course quality), examinations viz. setting of question papers, printing secrecy maintenance, distribution of question paper to colleges, announcement of examination dates, actual conduction of examination, evaluation of answer sheets, declaration of results, retotalling and re-evaluation, certification and awarding of degrees, all these activities are the responsibilities of universities. The teachers who participate as paper setters, invigilators and evaluators of answer sheets get remuneration for these tasks (of course at times get threatened from students as well), are some of the main features of affiliating system. No doubt it also provides equal protection irrespective of different levels of performance of the teachers.

As we know, there are universities having more than 200 colleges affiliated to it. Some of them are at such distances that much of the administrative delays are unavoidable due to physical distance itself. Anything can happen while reaching the question papers and transporting the answer sheets at the time of examination. Incidents of errors in evaluation of large number of answer scripts by teachers, such as over and under estimations, carelessness are reported time and again. Lack of preparation for examination on the part of the university can affect students future. There are incidents of students losing 2 to 3 years due to delays in conduct of examinations. This situation prevents even those colleges with better resources and determinations from improving the quality and achieving their objectives. This makes affiliating system a status-quo and stagnating one, and thus society has started raising questions against the very purpose of higher education itself. Moreover, affiliating system has made the colleges mere implementers of the decisions taken by the university without participating in the decision making process.

Well, if these are the negative tones to affiliation, there are positive (if it is viewed as such) ones as well. Colleges get recognised in the name of the university. Responsibilities remain with the university for all the decisions, except teaching in the classes and hence the faculty remains in the shadow of the university. But the risk lies in the image. Individual faculty or college, irrespective of their performance (good or bad) will be identified by the image of the university.

The Realities

The history of higher education in modern India starts with the history of autonomy. The colleges were established in the British provinces before the establishment of Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857. The Hindu College was founded in 1816, Poona College in 1821, Agra College in 1827, Elephinstone College in Bombay in 1827, Hoogly College in 1836, Benthune College for Women in Calcutta in 1849 and Madras College in 1852. These Colleges designed their own rules for admission of students, prescribed courses, conducted the examinations and declared the results. These institutions were later affiliated to the three universities in 1857, and some of the functions performed by the colleges were taken over by the universities and it is these universities that were declared autonomous later.

Autonomy to colleges is suggested as an alternative model to the age old practice of affiliating system. The importance of introducing the autonomous scheme has been emphasised by several commissions and committees: Kothari Commission (1964-66), UGC Committee (1966-67), Gajendragadkar Committee (1969-71), Central Advisory Board of Education (1977), and Jaikrishna Committee of (1974), are the few amongst many.

The affiliating system gives no specific identity to a college while autonomy is based on the individual identity and recognition to the college. Autonomy emphasises the principal of "*smaller the unit, better the management and in turn better the quality*". Underlying the whole concept is the principle of decentralisation for effective implementation. Under autonomy the college takes decision through committees constituted by the college itself for the purposes of achieving the specified goals and gets it implemented too.

The Attempt

A quick survey was conducted on teachers working in autonomous colleges in three states viz. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. Questionnaires were administered to 443 teachers to know their awareness, apprehensions and understanding of the scheme of autonomous colleges.

Table indicating the statewise sample of teachers and the percentage aware of autonomous scheme.

Table 1: Teachers' Awareness of Scheme of Autonomous Colleges

State	Number of Teachers (Total Sample)	Percentage of Teachers		
		%age	Aware of aims and objectives	Not aware of aims and objectives
Andhra Pradesh	105	23.76	82.91	17.09
Tamil Nadu	254	57.47	98.77	01.23
Rajasthan	84	18.77	58.07	41.93
Total	443	100.00		

The figures indicate that even amongst those teachers who have been working under the scheme for more than four years, are also some teachers who are not sure of the aims and objectives of the scheme of autonomous colleges. It became obvious with the teachers response to one of the queries - "*Are you clear with the aims and objectives*"? We can notice that 82.91 percent from Andhra Pradesh, 98.77 percent from Tamil Nadu and 58.07 percent from Rajasthan are aware of the aims and objectives. In other words, 17.09 percent teachers from Andhra Pradesh, 1.23 percent from Tamil Nadu and 41.93 percent from Rajasthan, who are working in autonomous colleges, are not clear about the aims and objectives of autonomy. This finding supports the assumption stated earlier that the resistance for the scheme of autonomous colleges originates from the teachers' apprehensions, and that too, not based on the proper understanding and analysis of the scheme.

The responses to the query on different aspects revealed that teachers hold different opinions and perceptions towards autonomy and these responses attain greater significance when their background is also taken into consideration. These teachers are those who have worked under the affiliating system, for several years before entering into autonomous system and are now working in autonomous system for quite some time.

It is obvious from the findings that autonomy has been able to promote introduction of changes, more so, in the area of restructuring of curriculum. Teachers are given both power and freedom to restructure the courses because it is known that autonomous system cannot function

without involving teachers in college administration and decision making. With these it is expected that it promotes accountability as well. Restructuring of courses necessitates introduction of changes in teaching methods and evaluation. Internal assessment, project work, semester system, etc. are some of the methods tried in these autonomous colleges. Through project work students have been able to use their talent and energies for creative activities. Semester system is expected to introduce discipline in students and keep them busy with the academic matters and thus promote quality. All these would obviously encourage better interaction between the teachers and students. Table below reveals the actual responses of the teachers on various issues:

Table 2: Teachers' Perception of Advantages of the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges

Statement	AP (%)	TN (%)	Rajasthan (%)	Total (%)
1. Autonomy promotes Accountability	69.02	77.08	62.87	72.5
2. Autonomy promotes more freedom in developing new methods of teaching	79.97	88.04	60.20	80.9
3. Autonomy promotes recognition of teachers and college	74.07	78.82	58.07	73.8
4. Autonomy promotes better interaction of teachers and students	75.76	84.57	54.34	76.8

Responses are in percentage of teachers who "agreed" with the statements made.

The data above provides for hope in higher education quality improvements through autonomous colleges. It is evident that even in Rajasthan where only government colleges are made autonomous, more than 50 percent of teachers have responded in a positive manner. Though autonomy is advocated as an alternative to the affiliating system it is not the panacea for all evils in higher education. The good or bad again depends much on the people within the system.

Autonomous scheme is also not free from criticisms. Some of the apprehensions against the scheme are: "*autonomous colleges will*

promote elitism”, “*autonomy will be misused by colleges for corruption in admission and evaluation*”, “*teachers and students will be victimised*”, “*administrators will use their power arbitrarily to penalise the staff*” and “*teachers service conditions will be affected*”. Keeping these criticism in view queries were raised and the responses are tabulated below:

Table 3: Teachers’ Perception of the Adverse Effects of the Scheme of Autonomous Colleges

Statement	A.P. (%age)	T.N. (%age)	Rajasthan (%age)	Total (%age)
1. Autonomy creates job insecurity	27.78	21.58	35.16	25.6 (74.4)
2. Promotes exercise of power over students	35.36	40.54	36.20	38.5 (61.5)
3. Promotes malpractices in examination	12.21	25.23	35.16	24.0 (76.0)
4. Promotes malpractices in administration	17.26	26.28	38.36	26.4 (73.6)

Responses are in percentage of teachers who “agreed” to the statements. Figure in parenthesis pertain to teachers who “did not agree” to the statements.

It is interesting to note that only 25.6 percent of the total respondents felt that autonomy creates job insecurity while the rest of them felt that it is no way affects the job (74.4). Surprisingly, the teachers seem to have ignored taking note of the UGC guidelines item (12.ii(a)) which clearly states that “*the employees (both teaching and non teaching) of a college on conferment of autonomous status will continue to be governed by the same terms and conditions of service as on the date of conferment of autonomous status*”. The study reveals that the anxiety of the teachers towards job security is not based on authentic facts but on lack of awareness among the teaching community about the scheme and its merits and demerits. As regards the criticism, promoting exercise of power over students, 38.5 percent of teachers felt that it might do so but 61.5 percent did not agree. Similarly, as regards malpractices in examination and administration it is only 24 and 26.4 percent of teachers who agreed with statement whereas those who did not agree is 76 and 73.6 percent respectively. If we look at Table -1 and Table -3 together, we could only see the impact of one on the other.

With regard to autonomy promoting elitism, well, one needs to define the word elitism in the context of autonomous colleges. Whether we are referring to the accessibility to only richer students, or the institution becoming elite or the products becoming elite? However with regard to admission malpractices, affiliation system is no exception to this. Admission policy of autonomous colleges is to a great extent, guided by the existing regulations of the state government norms and the university norms. It has to respect the reservation policy of the state government and each college has to constitute its own admission committee and formulate guidelines.

Similarly credibility of autonomous college depends on the kind of evaluation system it adopts. Any malpractices, continued for long, places the credibility of institution at stake and once the institution loses its credibility, it is bound to die its own death. Society would accredit these colleges with the layman's criteria, and students will hesitate to enter such colleges and get degrees from them as it may not help them in building their career. These degrees and certificates are hardly of much use under the present challenges posed by the employment sector and also entry methods adopted by institutions of higher learning. They have started conducting their own entrance examinations to assess the competence of products developed at undergraduate level.

Epilogue

Of the total sample, 57.47 percent of the respondents are from Tamil Nadu. And amongst them 98.77 percent have favourable perceptions. It is to be noted that Tamil Nadu is the first state which implemented the autonomous scheme and have the largest number of colleges and the views of the teachers have withstood the test of decades of experience.

However, the experienced teachers from autonomous colleges have following secrets to reveals. Autonomy supports teachers' freedom, will not affect any service conditions or it does not increase the working hours beyond the 40 hours per week specified by UGC. Powers of the management, depend on the representation of teachers in various bodies, viz. the Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Studies, Examination Committees and so on. In other words, "*Who*" are the representatives and "*How Many*" and "*How Effective*" they are. Yes all these, provided the teachers are conscientious and ready to be accountable to the teaching profession.

Autonomy is not a licence to a college to do anything it wants. The parent university has its role and responsibility at each stage of the

process. The committees constituted (Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Studies and others) in an autonomous college have representative of university and the state government and UGC. These representatives are empowered to exercise their powers in decision making in the concerned bodies. Autonomy is not conferred for ever. It is initially for five years and can be extended after reviewing the performance. The parent university can revoke autonomy at any time, if found detrimental to the academic interest. As the country is moving towards more liberalised and open system, let the college education system also be permitted to face the challenges.

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Scheme of Autonomous Colleges: Some Intrinsic Infirmities

OM PRAKASH

The concern for academic autonomy in our country appears to begin as well as end with discussion of autonomy of universities. We are still clinging to the archaic system of compulsorily affiliating colleges to universities although the rest of the world has given it up as being suffocating and unproductive. We too often blame this system for the prevailing poor standards and low quality in the field of higher education, but are not able to muster enough courage of conviction to scrap it. We still talk of 'reforming' the system but do not seem to be serious about replacing it 'by a freer and more creative association of universities with colleges' in spite of this having been resolved in Section 5.28 of the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and also in its slightly revised version of 1992. A reform suggested by the celebrated Education Commission (1964-66) three decades ago was of conferring autonomy on selected colleges. This suggestion took more than a decade to be put on trial, and the first small batch of eight colleges affiliated to Madras University was granted autonomy in the year 1978. The idea did not gather any momentum until it came to the enshrined in the section of the NPE referred to above that "autonomous colleges will be helped to develop in large numbers". But against the target of 500 set for the seventh Five Year Plan period, only 111 colleges could become autonomous by the year 1992. Around this time the NPE itself was caught in the vortex of political turmoil. When relative stability was restored, its slightly revised version came to be issued in 1992 that retained the section under reference without any change. Those were the days of liberalisation and lifting of controls in areas of economic and industrial activity but alas! not so in the field of higher education. The years so lost gave time to status quoists to regroup themselves. They began talking of

the failure of this experiment in the colleges already made autonomous, as if drifting in the status quo is any success or the continued existence of the grounds for change could be ignored. The Rajasthan story is particularly painful, where the experiment came to be sacrificed at the altar of politics in teacher's associations.

Concept of Autonomy

The concept of autonomy of colleges is based upon incontrovertible premises. A system of freedom accompanied by accountability is a natural corollary of democratic way of life and pattern of decentralised governance. After all, autonomy of higher education is not something to be wrested from bureaucrats and politicians only to be locked up in vice chancellor's chambers. Universities cannot be accepted as being synonymous with offices of their registrars and controllers of examinations that they have, in fact, degenerated into for their affiliated colleges. To be meaningful, the feeling of freedom and responsibility should percolate down to each and every academic unit, creating in the minds of all teachers and students a sense of partnership and involvement in the pursuit of learning. Rather than remaining passive spectators, who indulge occasionally in incoherent comments by way of commonroom pastime, the teachers in colleges and departments are supposed to be actively associated with decision making on the four fundamental questions of what to teach, how to teach, whom to teach and how to evaluate. Consequently, curriculum and evaluation techniques could be different in different colleges. However, differences and modifications would arise only in due course when culture and cultivation of autonomy begins to ripen. A reasonable time would naturally be required for breaking old moulds and inculcating new habit of creative thinking in the minds of teachers, administrators, students and their guardians. But the critics began insisting on autonomous colleges showing perceptible difference almost immediately. Some colleges became victim of such impatience and embarked upon the path of putting on artificial differences by adopting shortcut methods of adding one or two strikingly new subjects or introducing new combinations of traditional subjects, and so on. The matured ones showed the wisdom of giving priority to quest of quality in teaching-learning process under the existing curriculum, holding in reserve the enabling provisions of autonomy for making innovations and changes as and when they are felt both necessary and feasible. They took pains on measures like ensuring larger number of teaching days, holding classes

with greater regularity, arranging seminars, symposia, extension lectures, etc. to broaden horizons of the learners, restricting factors of choice and chance in examinations and curbing use of unfair means. But such quiet commitment to quality might have been too subtle to attract any notice.

Learning by Comparison

Once the impatience of declaring it unsuccessful is overcome, the progress of the experiment of autonomous colleges could well be studied with a positive concern for making it a greater success. Such a study should begin with analysing the prevalent model and methodology with a view to see if they possess any intrinsic infirmities that are creating difficulties for autonomous colleges. An opportunity of learning by comparison has come our way unexpectedly as a by-product of a recent development in the field of tertiary education. Institutions imparting training in computers and management have sprung up in large numbers in recent years. Such institutions are mostly academically autonomous in the sense that they are not affiliated to any university, yet they are in great demand. It would be instructive to compare their features and characteristics with those of colleges in the liberal stream of arts, commerce and science to understand what facilitates their functioning in the autonomous mode.

Historically, the faculty of management is an offshoot of the faculty of commerce. But the traditional degree of Master (of Commerce) in Business Administration is not as prestigious as the degree of Master of Business Administration in the faculty of management. However, the most prestigious institutions imparting management education are the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). They are not universities, regular or deemed, nor are they affiliated to any university. Therefore they can neither confer nor secure university degrees for their students. They award their own postgraduate diplomas. Thus, diplomas awarded by institutions not affiliated to any university began commanding greater respect in the field of management education than degrees of many less known universities. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is permitting institutions to spring up without insisting that they should get themselves affiliated to any university. Quite a few institutions imparting computer education appear to have come up even without seeking prior permission of the AICTE. They themselves draw up their courses and instructional programmes and

evaluate the students. Their autonomy is finding ready acceptance too, insofar as they are attracting students who willingly pay quite high fees. Their students have to take some pains in securing admission, therefore they are serious and regular in their classes, assignments, project work, etc. Consequently, the institutions are able to show almost cent per cent results without attracting the suspicion of indulging in dubious practices of inflating the scores and rigging up the results. The division or grade earned by students may help them in securing their first jobs but subsequent rise depends solely on their on-the-job performance. So while they toil and sweat for their examinations, the regrets some of them might have for lower than expected scores are soon forgotten. The internal evaluation is, therefore, well tolerated. While the autonomous institutions not affiliated to of marks for sessionals, term tests, project work, etc. is dominant also in determining the results of students studying in institutions affiliated to universities in spite of formal final examinations.

The Familiar Scenario

Now let us compare this picture with the too familiar scenario prevailing in the stream of liberal education. The first and foremost difference is that the colleges providing education in arts, commerce, science, law, etc are required to be affiliated to the regional universities even for being recognised, otherwise they are dubbed as being 'coaching institutes'. Even autonomous colleges are affiliated colleges. All affiliated colleges prepare their students for earning university degrees. In the face of such insistence on affiliation, it is also surprisingly true that affiliation conditions are the most flouted and overlooked regulations in almost all universities. Sub standard colleges are not only able to crop up but also to subsist for decades under provisions of temporary affiliation, but their products get the same bench-mark as those coming from well established colleges do on passing the common university examination. The second point of material difference is that in spite of apparent rush for admission, universities and colleges starve for eager learners and well motivated students. Quite a few students joining colleges do not have high attainments at the school leaving examinations and are likely to have already collected some frustration and cynicism by failing to secure admission into technical courses. Instead of paying any considerable fees to their colleges, they secure eligibility for scholarships, travel concessions, subsidised hostel accommodation and many other

privileges. They are also able to avoid being called unemployed for some years, vaguely hoping that university degrees would land them into some white collar job.

Another point of difference is the paradox that on the one hand even after graduating with honours, the students of liberal education stream are required to face a host of screening tests, competitive examinations and personal interviews in search of jobs but, on the other, a third division marks their prospects of life. Naturally, they begin 'taking chances' in such competitions during years of study in college. Consequently, they are not enthused by any scheme of continuous evaluation and are inclined to take 'yet another chance' to 'try their luck' in a facile annual examination for which they could count upon legitimate help of their teachers in the form of guess papers, notes and tuitions. A pass percentage of about 50 in such examinations is accepted as satisfactory and about 70 is considered quite good. Not only that, a lower pass percentage is frowned upon for being indicative of a harsh and unsympathetic assessment but eyebrows are also raised at a higher pass percentage, suspecting too liberal evaluation of doubtful 'sanctity'. In such a barren scenario, autonomous colleges formally authorised to examine their own students are saddled with an unwritten requirement of following, by and large, the traditional university pattern and to give results around the accepted averages. The dons and deans of the affiliating university appear to be eager to 'safeguard' the uniform standards of their degrees. The students press for similarity with their argument that they should not be made to toil harder for the common degree that the university would award to students of other colleges as well. Thus, the provision that the degrees shall be awarded by the affiliating university is not conducive for autonomous colleges adopting scheme of internal evaluation to any significant extent.

In the existing scheme, autonomous colleges are on perennial probation, as it were. The regulations and guidelines require that their performance be assessed every three to five years as their autonomy is in need of being reviewed and extended after such short intervals. A university may well oscillate between crest of academic glory and trough of indolency and nothing would follow except some stray remarks of dismay in some circles. The deemed-to-be university status, once conferred, is also for ever. But autonomy of a college is in need for extension after every three or five years on the basis on envious appraisal against undefined norms. What a misplaced distrust of

decentralisation of academic responsibility and initiative! The fear that if autonomy is not extended then they will have to revert to and fit in the traditional pattern prevents the colleges from making major deviations in any direction. Cosmetic changes of reversible nature only are attempted that naturally do not impress anybody.

Affiliation: A Hindrance

This short discussion shows that the insistence on award of degrees by the affiliating universities is the main debilitating element in the scheme of autonomous colleges as is being pursued currently. The number of agencies engaged in the mass production of degrees in our country is more than two hundred - already large enough to create many kinds of confusion. Continuous comparison of standards for establishing equivalence of degrees is hardly possible any longer, and any and every degree awarded by any and every statutory university automatically gets *de facto* recognition. The names of universities can possibly be verified with the help of an ever enlarging list, but no track can be kept of the names of their rapidly changing vice chancellors and other officers authorised to sign on degrees, marksheets, etc. The rackets of forging degrees of genuine universities and making out fake degrees of bogus universities are no longer uncommon. The growing confusion calls for early implementation of a far reaching reform that has been advocated on the basis of many other fundamental considerations and has also been promised in sections 5.38 to 5.41 of the National Policy on Education, 1986 - reiterated in its 1992 version - of delinking degrees from jobs. The link already stands broken in one direction as the degrees are no longer any assurance for jobs. From the civil services down to the ministerial posts, recruitment is now through multiple rounds of tests. Degree of a university is necessary but no longer sufficient even for the limited purpose of continuing one's education. Tests for admission to technical, medical and management courses are already common, but some universities take pride in prescribing tests for admission to M.Sc., L.L.B. and such other courses also. It is surprising that academics are not shocked at the outcome of such tests when they result in material alteration of not only merit order but also division awarded by the same university at its main examinations. If the marks obtained by students and awarded by universities cease to be relevant within days of issuance of the marksheets even for purposes of admission to the next higher class, then how can they retain any significance in later life? The earlier this irrelevance is admitted the better. The practice of stamping on a person his academic

status and calibre by way of a degree and division secured there at need not be perpetrated any longer.

It may be expected that once this craze of attaching to one's name a string of alphabets called 'degrees' is eliminated, many other reforms in the system of higher education would follow as corollaries. Students would join a college for education, training or coaching, whatever it offers and not for just adding degrees to their names. Such willing entrants would readily accept the discipline of the college and, in particular, would be more regular in their classes. Consequently, they would not resist continuous assessment of their progress in the college. In other words, they would accept academic autonomy of their college in the manner trainees in management and computer training institutes are seen doing. Once it gets accepted that the colleges do not exist only for procuring lack-lustre degrees for their alumni, the insistence on their being affiliated to universities would also disappear. In the pattern to be revised on the example of institutions for management education, autonomous colleges would not be treated as affiliated colleges nor would their autonomy be in need of being extended every three or five years. If sharing of expertise and resources be a purpose then a new kind of association would be carved out, as is envisaged in the NPE. Autonomous colleges would be free to cooperate among themselves or with any of the universities, research laboratories and industrial centres for human resource development.

Academic freedom for All

It has to be accepted much sooner than later that academic freedom is not something that can be bestowed upon some institutions and can be withheld from others. The chances of success of autonomous colleges are reduced by presenting them as a rare species. Uncommon objects do not always inspire awe and respect - they are also liable to be treated as freaks. Autonomous colleges as a rarity have attracted more of envy than admiration. The faculty in such colleges has been described as pseudo-intellectuals and their heads as impatient zealots. On the other hand, since teachers working in such colleges cannot be given any superior status or emoluments, the less dedicated among them whisper that they should not be isolated for toiling and seating under the limelight of accountability. The tendency of languishing in mediocrity would change when autonomy of colleges becomes a rule rather than an exception and their continued leaning on affiliating university is treated as a mark of weakness and lack of viability.

To conclude, it is evident that the scheme of autonomy of colleges as has been drawn out in our country, has not proved as attractive as probably it was expected. In any case, the colleges are not seen clamouring for autonomy. Some of the colleges that were made autonomous in the first thrust of the NPE also seem no longer excited about it. This lack of enthusiasm may be ascribed to a large extent to the provision that autonomy is in need of review and extension after short periods of three to five years. On the one hand this provision implies an impatience of seeing perceptible differences in curriculum and evaluation technique in such short periods, but on the other, it also points towards the lurking danger of having to revert to the traditional pattern and thwarts major deviations. Colleges do not seem to be too willing to face such impatience. But their small number itself makes autonomous colleges a rare species and hinders their widespread acceptability. It, therefore, needs to be underlined that power to make innovations is only an enabling clause in the scheme. New ideas do not come very frequently and innovations would cease to be innovations if they become commonplace. Autonomous institutions are seen flourishing in the areas of management and computer education. A comparison suggests that the requirement of autonomous colleges remaining affiliated to universities for procuring degrees for their alumni is a major constraint to their progress. This and some other impediments inherent in the existing model would disappear if the other reform of delinking degrees from jobs, recommended by educationists on many a valid ground and incorporated in the NPE, gets implemented. Reforms are usually complementary in nature, lending momentum to each other, but their piecemeal implementation could be quite frustrating.

Evolution of the Concept of College Autonomy in India

VARGHESE P. PALAMATTAM

A Brief Historical Sketch

It is worth noting that in India originally we had autonomous colleges from 1834 onwards, and only later came the universities and the system of affiliating colleges to them (1857), introduced by the British rulers in order to suit their empire-building designs. From 1916 onwards attempts were being made to regain autonomy for colleges. Till that year the universities in India were only examining bodies and there were no teaching departments attached to them. In that year teaching departments were started in Calcutta University which was viewed as an encroachment on the rights of the colleges and so the principal of Presidency College, Calcutta campaigned for the freedom of his college to prescribe its own curricula and to conduct its own examinations. This was the first attempt at regaining autonomy for colleges.

University Education Commission (1949), headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan discusses at length about autonomy to educational institutions but no specific mention is made about autonomous colleges. In 1954 Dr. R.K. Singh the Principal of B.R. College, Agra, succeeded in getting a resolution passed in the senate of Agra University in support of conferring autonomy to colleges under the university (John 1970; and Gupta 1983). UP legislature passed an amendment to the Agra University Act to incorporate this resolution of the University Senate and to sanction autonomous colleges. But unfortunately, there was vehement opposition to this novel idea and neither Agra University nor UP State could achieve the distinction of

being the first in starting autonomous colleges in the country. In fact, UP State does not have a single autonomous college till now.

Report of the Committee on Colleges, 1962, made recommendations for autonomous colleges. "One of the practical methods of improving the standards of higher education in India seems to be to select a few colleges on the basis of their past work, influence, tradition, maturity and academic standards and give them, what might be called for want of a better phrase, 'autonomous status' with freedom to develop their personalities, experiment with new ideas, frame their own syllabi in consultation with the university, devise and conduct their examinations and initiate new movements. This does not mean that the autonomous colleges will have university status" (Recommendation No. 30).

The Kothari (Education) Commission has reiterated the arguments of this Committee and made strong recommendations to confer autonomy at least to 50 colleges in the fourth Five Year Plan itself. Later on the Central government and the University Grants Commission instituted Committees to work out the details of these proposals and after much promptings and pleadings the dream of academics for autonomy was realised in the year 1978 in Tamil Nadu and nominally in five other centres in the country. Later on it was expanded in 1987-88 to other centres and states.

Goals of Higher Education

At this point it is worth going a bit deeper into the goals of higher education. Educational institutions can no longer be information handling centres, but they have to be generation cells for creative thought and imaginative action. They must provide thought and convert human beings into thinking organisms generating new ideas. These new ideas should be such that are directed towards solving the existing and future problems of the country and of humanity in general. This creativeness should be expressed in the conversion of scientific knowledge into technology, in harnessing technology for the service of mankind, in the inculcation of basic human values, in creating a climate for people to live together in harmony and fellowship and thereby enriching the quality of life.

The Education Commission (Govt. of India, 1971) emphasizes these ideas when it enumerates the objectives of higher education in India as follows:

- The pursuit of knowledge,
- The evolution of right leadership for the future,
- The training of experts for a developing economy, and
- The inculcation of good cultural values.

This Commission was of the opinion that within the then existing framework of higher education, these four aims could not be achieved because of the built-in-bottlenecks in the academic and administrative system of affiliating universities. As an alternative the Commission recommended the conferring of the autonomy to affiliating colleges.

The Commission said: *"We would like to refer to the question of autonomous colleges which has been under discussion for many years. Where there is an outstanding college or a small cluster of very good colleges within a large university which has shown the capacity to improve itself markedly, consideration should be given to granting it an autonomous status. This would involve the power to frame its own rules of admission, to prescribe its course of study, to conduct examinations, and so on.... We recommend that provision for the recognition of such autonomous colleges be made in the constitution of the universities"*.

Need for Change in Attitudes and Traditional Methods

For the success of autonomous colleges there is need for reorientation of the staff and thorough preparation of the students and their parents and whole-hearted cooperation between these two groups and a close collaboration among the management, staff, students and the community, the university, the UGC, and the State Government. A keen willingness on the part of each of these groups to innovate, to experiment and to adapt and undergo change is a must. It requires on the part of the teachers continuous updating of knowledge and exposure and being open to the changes in society, industry and environment. The teacher must be conversant with curriculum framing and renewal and new teaching and evaluation methods.

Departing from the traditional methods, the students will have to be exposed to situations like field training community service, project work, etc. The general part of compulsory curriculum could be composed of seminars, term papers, minor and major projects, field training, community service, vocational training etc.

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Curriculum for Autonomous Colleges: Challenges and Opportunities

A. JOSEPH

Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

The Rock - *T S Eliot*

These realistic words of the immortal poet of our times will, I believe, set the proper basis for discussion on the curriculum that will be suitable to autonomous colleges. The issue seems simple because many of its dimensions and implications have been taken for granted and reduced to a formal pattern based on conformity to the general trends in life. This complacency takes the form of facile acceptance of a curriculum by the vast majority of teachers who have to translate the conceptual configuration of the curriculum into learning units, resulting in perfunctory performance leading to the wasteful practice of accumulating details without acquiring knowledge, leave alone wisdom. The damage that can be done by not realising why we are teaching something and how is it to be taught is really grave, because it will undermine the processes of empowering the individual which is the primary goal of education. It is, therefore, imperative that everyone in the teaching community, and not just the elders, the members of the Boards of Studies, administrators etc., should have a proper understanding of what constitutes curriculum and how it is related to the main objectives of the educational institution which will in turn dictate the methodology to be adopted in the classroom.

The curriculum seems to be the only tangible aspect of autonomy given to the autonomous colleges. Even here, because of society's reluctance to appreciate the intrinsic worth of an educational programme, there are certain compulsions to adhere to general patterns

regarding year of study, obligatory and optional courses, etc. for the sake of ensuring equivalence between the degree offered by the autonomous college and that offered by the non-autonomous colleges. But this desire to ensure equivalence of the structural pattern need not deter us from providing a curriculum that is robust, vibrant and realistic. That the autonomous colleges can provide this, was the basis for granting autonomy to some colleges. Among other things, some colleges even while following a uniform pattern, have had the courage and initiative to put the stamp of their educational goals on the learners and therefore, proved their potential and confidence in organising a system of education independently. It is this determination to establish and spread a particular form of education which should be at the centre of educational planning.

The Parameters

While it is impossible to give a blueprint of a curriculum for all autonomous colleges, because of the ever so many subtle distinctions between one set of goals and another, what is possible is to remind ourselves of the parameters that should govern the structuring of curriculum. Broadly defined, a curriculum is a Course of Study and it is to be distinguished from the methodologies and strategies adopted in the classroom. Even though it is the methodology which ultimately helps in realising the objectives of educational system, we should not be tempted to equate the educational programme only with the methodology but see it as a means to an end, viz., that of realising the curriculum. In this context, the issues raised in the UNESCO documents *Learning to BC* (1971) and *Curricula and Life-long Education* (1981) may be helpful in visualising the framework of the curriculum:

1. Whether the focus of attention should be on the individual; developing the ego-centric tendencies of the individual or catering to the utilitarian needs of the society;
2. Whether to provide education to learners who come through a process of selection thereby encouraging meritocracy and elitism or promote democratisation and bring to the highest level possible all learners where guidance takes the place of selection and the context becomes open-ended and diversified to allow each individual to fulfil his wishes and aspirations;
3. Whether education should be centred on the teacher or the learner;

4. Whether it should be formal or non-formal, full-time or part-time, general or specific (certificate or non-certificate), three-tier or life long;
5. To choose from encyclopaedism (stressing memorisation), formalism (highlighting intellectual aptitudes), utilitarianism (advocating practical activities), and functional materialism (which combines knowledge and its functions in the theoretical and practical pursuits of the people);
6. To favour a model of thought from forms such as logical thought, empirical rationalism, intuitive thought, dialectic thought, symbolism and dogmatic thought; and
7. Whether education should be “to do” or “to be”.

In the choices available, those focused on the teacher and the system, utilitarianism, selective meritocracy and encyclopaedism are easily systematised, effectively controlled and empirically evaluated and thus prepare the learner “to do”. On the other hand, to promote a system of education focused on the individual, guidance, openhandedness, diversity, formalism and functional materialism, one has to be innovative, patient, sympathetic and adaptive, so that the learner comes to terms with life on his own terms and learns “to do”. On the other hand, to promote a system of education focused on the individual, guidance, openendedness, diversity, formalism and functional materialism, one has to be innovative, patient, sympathetic and adaptive, so that the learner comes to terms with life on his own terms and learns “to be”. Therefore, the tendency has been to opt for the former even while being fully aware of the merits of the latter.

This paradoxical situation has arisen out of an undue concern for what Alvin Toffler calls “presentism” which encourages the ‘cult of immediacy’. This is but natural to any institution in a nation that is faced with such problems as

- acute shortage of manpower resources to manage its industrial growth;
- an unprecedented demand for education and the right to be educated;
- providing a system of education commensurate with the increase in the volume of knowledge;
- giving priority to specialisation; and

- co-existing with the developed nations that have programmes suited to ensure the development of the full potential of their people and self-fulfilment of the individual.

The Cobwebs

Realistic as these features are, one has to be cautious in attempting an easy solution to the potential problems that can be created by preferring an educational programme that is controlled by manpower needs, mass education, wider range of information, highly specialized courses and introduction of courses and patterns followed in developed nations. Though these features of a curriculum are useful in themselves, they become counter-productive when introduced for their own sake and not as means to achieving the objectives of the institution. To ward off the temptation of quick solutions, and conforming to the general trends of the times, it is necessary to study the real implications of some of these issues to see whether there is any fallacy underlying them.

Let us take for instance the much publicized issue of education fulfilling the manpower needs of the economy. This is based on the argument that as the economy evolves, it will need certain inventories of trained manpower at successive future dates and that these needs can be predicated and education at all levels should be geared to meet these needs. But the economy is highly flexible in its capacity to adapt to different combinations of skills. If it lacks certain skills it can train people quite quickly for the necessary jobs. In some cases the economy can do without certain types of work. Another example to show that the requirements of the economy are not fixed and predetermined is the way in which a country can mobilise for war and reconvert to peace.

Another misconception is that educational planning has to be done on the basis of the future needs of the nation. The manpower principle depends on what the country wants to do, whether the country is at war or peace, exploring space, concentrating on domestic issues, etc. But what the country wants to do or can do will be affected by the kind of manpower available, by the way people have been educated. In this context, Bowen (1977) rightly observes that "*Education is an active generator of values, not merely a passive adjuster to them*".

There is also the strong view that it is somehow wrong or wasteful to provide an education that will not be used directly in a vocation. This widespread opinion is based on the rigid one-to-one relationship between education and jobs. But this overlooks several facts. Even education with a specific vocational and professional bias produces

learning, personal traits, etc. of wide applicability. For instance, a Ph.D in English or History may find this destiny in journalism in government service, in publishing or in college education. that education has a wide applicability and produces flexible and versatile people should be seen as a success rather than as a failure of education.

The manpower theory of educational planning is based on the misconception that the world is regarded as being divided into inputs, in the form of effort or work, and outputs, in the form of economic goods and services. What is overlooked is that the inputs are as much part of life as the outputs. Some people may choose vocations and workstyles that are personally rewarding even if they are not productive in the sense of adding to the GNP of the economy. According to Bowen (*op.cit.*)

“Education is not designed to prepare people to do whatever work flows from the blind and predestined imperative of technology; rather, it is intended to educate people of vision and sensitivity who will be motivated to direct technology into humanly constructive channels”.

The question of mass education is of relevance to us when we have to consider the conflict between elitist tendencies in education and social commitment. There are many misconceptions rather than fallacies in this sphere. Theodore M Herburgh first of all wants that:

“We educators must remove the stigma from the word ‘elite’. When I am sick, I want an elite doctor, when on an airplane, an elite pilot, when in difficulty with the law, an elite lawyer.... And where will they come from if not from elite education, open to the highest talent of every nation and race? There is a difference between equality and egalitarianism and there is a bottomless gulf between quality and mediocrity”.

The Way out

In the eagerness for providing equal opportunities should not sacrifice quality. The popular view is that these do not go together and that one has to be sacrificed if the other is to be promoted, especially with the open admissions policy prevalent these days. If the open funnel model is adopted then atleast we can expect some kind of filtering at the exit point; but as things are, there is a great demand for the cylindrical model which ensures free flow at the terminal level also. But Patricia Cross (1974) sees the situation from another dimension which while conceding open admissions does not allow the quality to be watered down at all, through, a system that takes care of varied talents. Since selective admissions have to be done away with, to achieve education

for all, there is a great need to bolster the self-image of those who belong to the disadvantaged sections of our society. According to Patricia Cross (*op. cit.*)

“School is geared to the development of a narrow range of talent consisting of approximately one twelfth of the known human abilities; it is not surprising that students whose chief talents lie among the unexploited eleven-twelfths have trouble demonstrating that they can make contribution to society. It is a statistical fact that on any single dimension of human ability, half the students in the nation will be below average by definition. Naive egalitarians have the notion that working with the bottom half will somehow raise them to equal status with the top-half. Unfortunately status in the society is relative and on any single measure there will always be a lower half. There is, however, a way to reduce the number in the lower half, and that is to talent is measured. If talent is measured on two dimensions, then 75% will be above average on one or the other dimension. If three independent talents are assumed, the statistical probability is that 87.5% will be above average on one of the three dimensions.”

Since the three major functions of an individual in society are work with data, work with people, and work with things, we realise that most jobs consist of combinations of the these three functions and requires various levels of skills in each area. Thus a student who has the interest and ability in the manipulation of ideas would pursue academic excellence and at the same time develop minimum levels of competence in working with things and people. So, no skill will be considered better or higher than any other; all are important in the society.

This programme recognises individual differences and allows to establish realistic standards of performance rather than be just tolerant of those who cannot meet academic, standards and thereby create a new class of the ‘disadvantaged’ among the educated. It will also solve the major confusion in the concept of democratization of education which is realised as equal opportunity to all students. But equal opportunity for whom and in which area of knowledge? Most often it has been according to Patricia Cross, *“equal opportunity to develop mediocre competence in the area of someone else’s strength”*. Now in this programme means can provided to develop one’s own talents to the point of excellence and still be a useful citizen.

It is true that in formulating a meaningful curriculum for Higher Education there are eternal points of tension; scholarship versus training;

attention to the past or the present or the future; integration versus fragmentation; student choices versus institutional requirements; breadth versus depth; theory versus practice; ethical commitment versus ethical neutrality. These tensions cannot be resolved and perhaps may turn out to be necessary to maintain the high sensitivity of the differences in the various formulations of what it is to be educated.

This brings us to the consideration of the correlation between objectives and the curriculum which cannot be sacrificed at any cost. Depending on the objectives, a curriculum is neither better nor useless but only relevant or irrelevant. Objectives are needed in “*every area where performance and results directly and vitally affect the survival and prosperity of the business*” (Peter Drucker. *The objectives of a Business*). The objectives of an institution reflect the judgement exercised in balancing the variety of needs and goals of the institution. Objectives should enable us to organise and explain the whole range of phenomena in a small number of statements, test the statements in actual practice, predict behaviour, apprise the soundness of decisions when they are still being made and analyse one’s performance and improve upon it. We should be determined to steer clear through the welter of provocations posed by presentism, consumerism and rationalism and provide the courses and learning experiences which will make us realise what we want an educated person to be.

If the objective of education is to give the wholeness of the intellectual experience or foster creativity and experience beauty or encourage mutual growth through openness to others or seek to change society or enhance adaptability, then the course (core and supporting) and the learning experiences offered to the learners should help us realise objectives while at the same time providing a scheme for recognising the varied talents among our learners.

Since this analysis is based on the dichotomy between *Learning to Do and Learning to Be*, it would be appropriate to conclude with the words of Theodore M Hesburgh, who says,

“I suggest that we give major attention to the humanistic or liberal aspects of the total course of studies, for it is only here that a student learns to situate himself or herself personally in a rapidly changing world, as a man or woman, as a religious or non-religious person, as a member of a given race, nationality, culture or tradition. It is mainly through liberal education that one learns how to think clearly, logically, beautifully; how to express oneself; how to learn continually in a wide

variety of ways; how to evaluate ideas and ideals; how to appreciate where humankind has been and is going. Whatever else we do to educate our students, all these liberating qualities, skills and concepts are essential to what kind of persons they are becoming, no matter what they are preparing to do in life”.

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Autonomy of Government Colleges

OM PRAKASH

The system in which a college cannot be conceived except as being affiliated to a university is said to be a peculiarity of India and some of its neighbouring countries. The historical fact in the country is that the Presidency colleges are the forerunners of all universities. The Presidency College, Calcutta functioned independently until the Calcutta University came to be established in 1857. The concept of academic independence of colleges found a renewed acceptability a hundred years later, when the provision of autonomous colleges came to be incorporated in Agra University statutes in 1954 by the untiring efforts of Prof. V.V. John, the then principal of Government College, Ajmer and Prof. R.K. Singh, the then Principal of B.R. College, Agra. The idea also found favour with the Education Commission 1964-66 and was included in its major recommendations. However, it secured a token implementation at the hands of Madras and Madurai Universities only, who conferred autonomy upon 19 of their well known affiliated colleges. The situation was reviewed two decades later when the National Policy on Education, 1986 was on the anvil. Again a strong necessity was felt for replacing the existing system of affiliation by "*a freer and more creative association of universities with colleges*" in the field of higher education. Therefore, it was resolved that "*autonomous colleges will be helped to develop in large numbers*". The Programme of Action drawn for putting the Policy into practice envisaged that 500 colleges would be made autonomous in the Seventh Plan period itself i.e. by the year 1990. The UGC came out with model guidelines as well as a scheme of providing additional financial incentive to autonomous colleges in their initial years. Consequently, 11 States proceeded to implement this policy decision, and 91 colleges were conferred autonomous status by the end of the year 1988, their number rising to 104 by the following year. Although non-government colleges far

outnumber government colleges in the country as a whole, some states like Rajasthan have a preponderance of the latter. It was natural that such states begin applying the idea to their government colleges.

The progress of implementation of the Policy slowed down between 1989 and 1992 on account of fluid political scenario and changing priorities. But the minor modifications in the Policy made in 1992 consequent to Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report have not diluted its emphasis on autonomy of colleges. However, it appears that the universities, who are so zealous about their own autonomy, are also jealous of sharing the same with the colleges. The conservatives utilised these years in expressing misgivings about the scheme and doubts about its success. Even those who had nothing to present by way of performance of their own universities in the areas of curriculum development and examination reforms felt free to say that the autonomous colleges have not achieved anything in these areas. Consequently, the UGC appointed an expert committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Iqbal Narain to review the scheme and its implementation. The expert committee recommended in the year 1991 that the scheme be continued with some minor operational correctives. However, the number of autonomous colleges rose only to 111 by the year 1992.

In Rajasthan, large well established colleges happen to be under the management of the government. It was, therefore, natural for the State to proceed to experiment with autonomy of government colleges. The State government set up an expert committee in 1986-87 to suggest modalities of operation. Consequently, four major government colleges were conferred autonomous status by the University of Rajasthan in the year 1987. Two more government colleges were conferred autonomy in the following year. In course of time, the States of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh also came to have government autonomous colleges. This special feature has been made the target of attack by some of the opponents of autonomy of colleges. They allege that autonomous colleges in the State have not been successful on account of there being an inherent contradiction between a college being both 'government' and 'autonomous' at the same time. An attempt has been made here to disprove this proposition and to show that given the spring-board of political will and support, government colleges are equally likely to succeed as autonomous colleges. Therefore, if their achievements so far have not been upto the expectations, proper thing to do is to look for the causes elsewhere and to remove them.

Administrative Autonomy

Let a glance now be cast upon the dimension of administrative autonomy. In Rajasthan, irrespective of the fact that government autonomous colleges are fully financed by the government, a separate registered society has been established to manage each one of them. The society has a governing council as its apex decision making body. Its composition is in accordance with the guidelines issued by the UGC. The Council has on it educationist members nominated by the University, the UGC, the Government and members co-opted by the Council itself besides the teachers' co-opted by the Council itself besides the teacher's representatives. However, according to the UGC guidelines, the management is authorised to nominate three members, one of them being the Chairman. These members are nominated by the trust or society running a non-government college and by the government in case of government colleges. One of these three is either the Special Secretary in the department of Higher Education or the Director of College Education. Another nominee is usually the Collector of the district, whose involvement has been found useful in view of law and order problems and desired coordination with various developmental agencies. Thus, the number of government functionaries on the governing council of a government college is less than their number on the Board of Management of the Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati University, Ajmer which has three Secretaries to the Government and the Director of College Education as ex-officio members in addition to two M.L.As and one nominee each of the Government and the Governor. Yet, this provision is often criticised out of all proportions, as if this is the major obstacle in the path of autonomous functioning of the college. To blunt the edge of this criticism, practice has been initiated in Rajasthan, recently in the year 1993, to include one non-official eminent educationist among the three government nominees and to make him the Chairman of the autonomous college society. This is by way of modification of the earlier practice of nominating the Special Secretary in the department of education as common chairman in the interest of bringing about similarity and uniformity of procedures. It may be mentioned here that still earlier practice was to nominate different government officers as Chairman of different colleges. Thus, the Government of Rajasthan has shown openness of mind in this respect. If the governing councils have yet not been as assertive as they should be then part of the blame must be shared by their educationist members as also by the nominees of the UGC and the University.

A point that has found place in the recommendations of the UGC Expert Committee, and consequently in the revised Programme of Action, is about the personnel in government autonomous college being liable to transfer. It may be readily agreed that unlike the staff in revenue department, the teachers should not be transferred in any routine manner or on political desires and recommendations. On the recommendations of the State Committee (1986-87), it stands decided in Rajasthan that the principals of autonomous government colleges would be appointed after special selection and on the recommendations of their governing councils. Other teaching and non-teaching staff would also be screened for their suitability and willingness to shoulder added responsibilities in the autonomous colleges. Thereafter, transfers would be made only on recommendations of the governing councils. The first principals of the four autonomous colleges were actually appointed after special selections in the year 1987. But implementation of this decision did not make any further headway. On the contrary, transfers on the basis of desires of political bosses, whose interference was not accepted by the selected principal, began to be ordered from the very next year. Similarly, many teachers having quite mediocre academic and service records and who are also apathetic towards challenges of autonomy have managed to stay put in, or get themselves transferred to the autonomous colleges on the basis of political patronage they could muster. It is unfortunate that no educationist member or nominee of the UGC or the University ever moved a resolution in the governing councils showing resentment to such transfers and non-implementation of earlier decision of screening the staff. Undirected remarks against transferability of staff get ignored easily. The evil lies in the political misuse of the provision and in the academics acquiescing in such misuse. Otherwise, under healthy conditions, liability to transfer could be an added tool in the hands of governing councils. The only course open to a non-government college for dealing with a misbehaving employee is to enter into a head-on collision through disciplinary proceedings and consequent litigation. An autonomous government college may get rid of him through transfer. Similarly, in case of vacancies arising in the college, experienced personnel could be obtained expeditiously through transfer. The staff that sees no chances of career advancement in the same college may also willingly go on promotion and transfer elsewhere. For similar reasons, it is sometimes recommended that provision of transfer of staff among the provision of transfer of staff among the universities in a State should be made.

Academic Autonomy

Most fundamental dimension of autonomy of a college, viz., academic autonomy, it would bear repetition that the very origin of the concept lies in dissatisfaction with the prevailing system of affiliation. The three freedoms of deciding what to teach, how to teach and how to evaluate relate to the relationship with the universities and not with the government. Each autonomous college has its own boards of studies, academic committee and governing council corresponding to and on the pattern of, boards of studies, academic council and syndicate of a University. Each one of such bodies has on it university nominees and external experts. If an objective comparison is made with a small unitary university, nothing would be found lacking in an autonomous college except the top heavy structure and the licence to award degrees that go with the term 'university'.

A fact that often goes unrecognised is that through its nominees on various statutory and non-statutory bodies, the university is in closer contact with an autonomous college than it is with any ordinary affiliated college. A non-autonomous college is hardly ever visited by a university professor and the periodical inspections prescribed in the statutes are seldom conducted with any regularity or seriousness. Colleges not fulfilling minimum conditions of affiliation are allowed to subsist for decades on the basis of year to year extension of their provisional affiliation. Colleges not yet fulfilling the conditions of permanent affiliation for first degree level are granted provisional affiliation for postgraduate courses. Their naturally substandard products are readily awarded the common degrees. But when it comes to awarding degrees to graduates of autonomous colleges, some university dons raise their eyebrows. They wake up suddenly to the sanctity of university degrees. It should be welcome that sensitivity of the university is aroused towards sanctity of its degrees, even if a beginning is made with autonomous colleges. The right thing to do would be that a special monitoring cell is established directly under the Vice Chancellor to obtain feedback constantly from the university nominees regarding the functioning of every autonomous college. The university should impress upon the colleges that autonomy is one-way road open only towards greater excellence. The curriculum, academic calendar and other norms prescribed by the university for all colleges is the base line for reference. An autonomous college would be encouraged and supported in excelling such norms in as many areas as it can. For example, it may make innovations in the syllabi and

curriculum, achieve larger number of teaching days with better regularity of classes and of students therein, conduct evaluation more objectively and expeditiously, undertake social service and extension projects, and so on. The college may even be permitted to stay at the base line for a couple of years in the hope that by being able to manage its own affairs it would build up confidence and courage also for taking some steps forward. But it shall not be permitted to dilute the syllabi, waste working days, prolong examinations, distribute bonus marks and mercy chances and do such other things. If such a procedure of continuous communication and monitoring could be evolved, the concern of the university would prove highly conducive to the success of this bold experiment. the proposal for developing an external accreditation and assessment council may or may not materialise, but the university can certainly perform the function of such a council for autonomous colleges in its jurisdiction.

It must have been on such considerations that the provision of periodical review of autonomy came to be incorporated into the scheme from the very beginning. A college must earn autonomy continuously to stay autonomous. This is in healthy contrast to the irreversible alternative of turning an institution or cluster of colleges in a city into a university or a deemed to be university. The provision that basic service conditions of staff would not get altered on the college becoming autonomous is also a corollary of keeping the possibility of reversion from autonomy open. But it may be forcefully emphasised here that review of autonomy is not intended to be a fault finding exercise with a predetermination to declare the experiment a failure. It should be no surprise if the autonomous colleges are found suffering from many of the common ills prevalent in the existing system. But would it not be a gain in itself that instead of attributing all ills to a distant nebulous entity called "the university", each college is offered a challenge of finding remedy at its own level of atleast some of the faults higher education system is often said to be suffering from. Developing local self-governance in the field of higher education should be a natural corollary of attitudinal change embodied in recent national resolve reflected in the 73rd amendment to the Constitution to give statutory status to panchayat raj institutions as instruments of taking democracy to the grassroot level. The management theorists also suggest that a sure way of making sub-units of a large system accountable is that clear objectives be placed before them and then they may be given a measure of autonomy for choosing their own strategy to achieve those objectives. The large

university system may be in a better position to protect its own autonomy if it proceeds to share and distribute the same among its sub-units called the colleges and teaching departments. If the autonomy is concentrated in any single authority, then any unscrupulous group would be tempted to capture and tame that authority and enjoy the fruits of power vicariously. The wholesale dismissal of Vice Chancellors in Bihar some years ago, recent attempt at replacing the Governor by Chief Minister as the Chancellor of universities in Tamil Nadu or removal and replacement of members of university syndicates in Rajasthan, all are pointers to the vulnerability of the age old autonomy of the university system if it is kept confined to the Vice Chancellor's chamber or the syndicate meeting hall. In the scheme of autonomous colleges and departments, the academics have an opportunity to share, distribute and spread their autonomy so widely that nobody would be able to gather and usurp it.

Financial Autonomy

Beginning with the most sensitive dimension of financial autonomy, let it be admitted that it can hardly be said to be existing in absolute terms even in case of the universities. All universities and almost all non-government colleges in fact depend upon the grants they receive from the governments for meeting upto ninety percent of their recurring maintenance expenditure. Naturally, they are not in a position to incur any recurring financial liability without obtaining prior concurrence of the government. Until recently, their fees income and savings also used to be adjusted towards the grants-in-aid. Their autonomy is limited to utilise the resources generated by themselves or received as gifts or endowments, or, to making some adjustments in reallocations within the amount of block grants received. The same applies to autonomous government colleges, with the only difference that the government provides them the remaining ten percent of their expenditure as well. Thus, the autonomous government colleges need not worry about the sources of income for meeting their approved expenditure, as the whole of it is met from public funds. In matters of fees collected, resources generated, endowments received by the colleges, they get the same treatment as is meted out to universities. To underline this attitudinal change, the government autonomous colleges in Rajasthan are not allocated any budget by the Directorate of College Education but are given block grants directly out of a special separate sub-head carved out of the minor budget head "Grants to non-government colleges". The emphasis on the term "non-government colleges" is worth noting. The procedure of getting estimates and proposals scrutinised by the finance

committee and approved by the governing council of the college and placing them before the Budget Finalisation Committee (BFC) of the finance department of the government is same as is in vogue for the universities. The internal flexibilities as also requirements of submitting utilisation certificates and audited accounts are also similar. Each autonomous college has the identity of a separate unit and its financial requirements are given full consideration against the practice of a lumpsum amount being placed at the disposal of the Directorate of Education for being disbursed to non-government colleges as grant-in-aid.

Conclusion

This discussion is not intended to imply that everything is fine about government autonomous colleges in Rajasthan or elsewhere. Its limited purpose is to show that there is no inherent contradiction in the concept and to invite attention to steps that had been contemplated at the very onset to make and enable government financed colleges function in autonomous style. Therefore, those who feel that the performance of such colleges has not been satisfactory should examine the manner in which the scheme is being implemented both by governments and universities and suggest remedial steps. Errors committed in early enthusiasm may also be diagnosed dispassionately and corrections suggested. For example, one such error appears to be that colleges were identified for conferring autonomy with caring to see that alternative colleges also existed in the same cities. Therefore, what could be an offer to students to either join autonomous colleges and participate in a more challenging course of learning, or to join a traditional college has in reality given rise to a situation in which they are liable to be misled to feel that a new experiment has been thrust upon them only to make their passing the examinations more difficult. With renewed faith in the validity of the concept, all concerned may work for the success of this bold experiment with revived optimism and determination. They should insist that steps contemplated but not yet taken be now taken soon, operational difficulties encountered by the colleges be removed and lapses in implementation of the scheme be corrected forthwith. The governing councils, in particular, and other statutory bodies in general, should start asserting the roles they have been assigned in the memorandum of association of the registered societies rather than accepting to be ignored. The university may maintain constant encouraging touch with the colleges and all educationists should create an atmosphere of understanding in which impossible expectations are not aroused of the autonomous colleges.

Autonomous Colleges: Focus on Teachers

K.K. BAJAJ

Higher education profile continues to be dominated by traditional interests and attitudes despite the efforts of a few farsighted educational planners and thinkers to give it a new orientation and direction relevant to social demand and global compatibility. As colleges offer diversity of approach in their academic packages, management patterns and vocational relevance, most of them continue to maintain strong affiliation links with universities, depending upon their territorial jurisdiction. Affiliation, though an inherited legacy to maintain academic linkages and leadership of the universities, has since lost its significance and relational impact in view of the numerous administrative problems, bureaucratic pulls and political positioning of the universities where affiliation is only a formality of sports rather than an arrangement of academic requirements and relationship. At best it is a certification to draw UGC assistance rather than an exercise in accreditation of academic standards under the university. The affiliating system which differs from university to university depending upon its local compulsions read in its statutes, at best limits the initiative and innovation in pursuit of excellence at the micro level. To give a chance to the colleges which can strive for excellence on their own, National Policy on Education, 1986 emphasised this educational reform as a planned intervention through the UGC, universities and the state governments. Under the scheme the college has to establish its own lead in the maintenance of academic standards through its own set of admission rules, curriculum, examination and evaluation schedule with appropriate strategies for independent functioning. There is creative freedom which permits area specific studies and combination of courses without any dependence on university prescribed procedures and syllabi. The college has to conduct itself in terms of its own collective wisdom and according to its own guidelines and programmes while leaving the

parent university with the nominal role of general supervision and conferring of degrees. The links with the universities being so strong and tradition bound cannot be severed so soon while the scheme is an experiment in educational decentralisation. The social acceptability and credibility of courses conducted by such colleges are yet to gain ground parallel to the courses offered by the affiliated colleges under syllabi prescribed by them. So the interventionist role of the universities cannot be wished away that soon.

An autonomous college has to strive towards overall planned development while maintaining its functional independence. It has to be its own policy formulator and has to match its declared objectives with actual performance. It has to ensure coordination of teachers for a proactive role to bring about qualitative improvement through dedicated professionalism. This calls for orientation of teachers, redesigning negotiated courses, preparation of better learning material, workshops and seminars, examination reforms such as continuous internal assessment, improvement in infrastructural facilities besides better amenities and avenues for teachers and students. For all this, the UGC offers an assistance of rupees seven lacs per year to the institution. This assistance package has not tempted many to take up the challenge which the scheme otherwise entails. Only about a hundred colleges out of over eight thousand colleges have sought autonomous status. This situation calls into question the preamble, procedure and imbalances of the scheme besides the assistance packages. This is a disturbing report about the dismal performance of the entire scheme during the last over eight years. Analyses both scholarly and otherwise reflect this argument suggesting midcourse corrections and redefining of emphasis and action points. It is clear that in spite of the so called provisions and incentives there have not been many takers. The progress has been slow. Many state governments are not enthusiastic to abandon control over their best run colleges. Most of the universities are indifferent or at least do not encourage the scheme. The teachers are not prepared to accept the challenge of independent functioning with the additional hard work and accountability that it will mean for them. Besides this, the non-government managements are equally confused. Thus, the entire thinking linked to the implementation of the scheme is that of doubt and lack of clarity in its conceptual framework needed to make the scheme a success. At the managerial level it is even apprehended that the managements, in the wake of grant of autonomy will emerge stronger and autocratic and in the scheme of things teachers' participation will

remain dubious and insignificant with no built-in guarantee to check malpractices by the managements. Even the chances of financial mismanagement may grow. At the academic level, the teachers are satisfied and complacent enough to follow the present set of prescribed syllabi which they like to teach year after year without any alternations and additional inputs. In the context of an overall lack of social and political discipline they are not prepared to work extra time beyond routine teaching and evaluation. The scheme definitely calls for a new work ethos. It requires an enlightened outlook for the present and a better vision for the future. The teachers have to measure themselves upto the new requirements and challenges right from the tailoring of courses to the evaluation of students in a more responsive and accountable manner. In doing so, they have to recharge themselves and get their credibility reestablished. The challenge is not free from hardships. In most of the colleges admissions at present remain almost unchecked with concessions being conceded to students every moment and examination of the universities even being uncertain and irregular. A new discipline both in admissions and examinations would require men of integrate, discipline and impartiality to run the system, of course with social safeguards. Any weak link in the chain brings bad name and disaster to the entire system. Introduction of new courses is always a challenge; combination of subjects is another difficulty. Both of these are doubling the strain on teachers with an ever increasing flow of students seeking admissions. All these situational dichotomies compound to increase the thrust of the new challenge that the teachers have to face and there are not many teachers who can accept these challenges.

The relevance of the system to the students is measured only in the context of their placement and employability. When there are no visible employment avenues the total exercise of education at the tertiary level appears to be irrelevant or at best casual. Employability of students through autonomous colleges with experimental courses without the formal support of universities could be yet another problem of its own kind because of institutional reputation and rivalries in the academic world. Besides this, the students never feel comfortable and confident about their mobility from an autonomous college to an affiliated college and vice-versa. There is no mechanism to determine and establish equivalence of courses available in autonomous colleges, affiliated colleges and the constituent colleges of the universities. The apprehensions of the students, teachers and parents are singular and

convincing. At least no guidelines of any mandatory nature have been enshrined in the scheme to allay their fears. Simultaneously students' participation in the curricular activities of the central bodies of the collegiate sector at the university level becomes difficult. At the university level the academic leadership having once been withdrawn the college has very weak and tenous links with the academic world or at best the guidance of the university teaches now available through Boards of Students, Academic Council and other statutory bodies, gets marginalized or at best is reluctantly offered. The university college interaction becomes more half-hearted than what it is now. At the financial level also the UGC assistance is a mere inaugural offer and is not a substantial contribution or incentive to encourage the colleges to experiment with the scheme and succeed particularly after five years when the UGC assistance would cease and the total financial liability will have to be taken over by the government or the non-government managements who would find it difficult even to sustain such programmes as get started initially with such a central doze of assistance. Without substantial financial inputs autonomy is a misnomer and cannot be an eventual success. Even the managements of well established colleges could find things to be difficult.

In spite of all these difficulties linked to several sensitive issues the scheme requires to be given a fair trial after the gaps are bridged and anomalies removed. Teachers, students, parents and the people at large are required to be educated about the merits of the scheme which decentralises administration and aims at academic growth, values, initiative and involvement of all concerned. The resource crunch should not stand in the way of its implementation otherwise any half-hearted acceptance of the scheme would mean yet another experiment without corresponding good results. It has to be taken with a positive attitude and with a renewed sense of responsibility in educational planning and implementation. Above all it is the teachers who have to be mentally tuned to accept this organizational and academic change as it entails extra efforts and social accountability. The success of any institution lies in the core of its faculty. There are no direct incentives for the teachers and instead the scheme calls upon them to offer extra inputs for its success on moral, social and professional grounds alone. As such it continues to be resisted or at best half-heartedly implemented. In order to make it a success the scheme has to be reviewed to the extent that the teachers are brought centre-stage with proper awareness, fresh confidence and appropriate incentives. This is necessary if institutional

reform is to be driven to any academic advantage and social relevance. Otherwise the entire exercise is going to be counter-productive.

At the UGC level the incentives for the teachers of such colleges should be specific. They should be treated as a separate category for preferential assistance both in the matter of their approach for assistance for new courses and in all matters of research, training and professional enhancement. They have to be helped in carrying out an awareness campaign about the merits of the scheme vis-a-vis their proposed academic packages linked to social needs and employability of students. There have to be separate orientation course for the teachers of autonomous colleges as their approach, quality and delivery systems have to be vastly different from those of conventional colleges. In an autonomous college each teacher has to be engaged in pursuit of excellence for which he is responsible while in affiliated colleges the university prescribed courses are a collective enterprise which has an element of sharing of burden linked to examinations conducted by the parent university. All this makes a definite difference in attitudes and styles of teaching. The UGC has to devise ways and means to make its intervention in the scheme more catalytic to enhance the interest and role of teachers in its implementation. Special inputs are sought to make the scheme viable and competitive. Besides this, teacher exchange programmes for the autonomous colleges require to be taken up to create better avenues for nationwide exposure to the teachers so that they could profit from mutual interaction and learn from exchange of views on success and failure stories across the country. There has to be a national pool of resources for such colleges. The present arrangements of stray recognition and consideration in different states and in the UGC, leave them as individual institutions without a sense of getting into the national mainstream of educational reform. The half-hearted approach to the autonomous colleges leaves them without establishing their merit and with the progressive resource crunch the chances of consolidation even recede with passage of time.

So for the success of autonomous colleges, the teachers have to be given their place of importance with suitable support incentives and brought centre-stage. They have to be encouraged by the universities, governments, managements and above all the UGC. Each at his own place has to offer help to the teachers as they alone can make the scheme socially relevant and successful. They, of course, have to identify their role and discharge their duties with a change of heart, accept the challenge of extra work, accountability and come upto the expectations

of the students and society. Their changed role performance would earn them praise only if their products are different from those produced by the conventional system of which they too have been a part and parcel for such a long time. In brief, the teachers are more important in the new scheme of things than anything else and attitudinal changes are called for at all levels for this. It has to be realised that unless teachers are ready for this in their perceptions, this system with whatever merits it may have, will not be acceptable, and wherever it has come to be adopted, this will receive their half-hearted support and after a few years will result into yet another educational failure at the tertiary level.

Recently yet another significant effort has been made by the UGC towards vocationalization at the first degree level. This is to enhance the employability of students as they come out of the colleges. The scheme without basically altering the pattern of degree courses envisages through vocational subject specific inputs added to degree courses to prepare the students for occupations better. It is of course neither technical education nor professional training as such but is definitely directed to improve the core content and skills level of students to improve their self confidence and employability as compared to routine graduates with conventional combination of subjects. The scheme has many innovative and application oriented areas to consolidate the gains of first degree for the students. But without going into its merits and demerits, it is a scheme that holds sufficient promise for improving students' competence in the job market and as such should be suitably addressed to autonomous colleges as an incentive as in the case of autonomous colleges the acceptance of the scheme is free from usual bureaucratic and university level handicaps and bottlenecks that can be experienced country wide. Again the teachers of such colleges should be the first to be preferred for the introduction and success of such courses. They should be offered all the facilities to undertake this academic reform in the interest of their students and society as they alone can act upon the scheme so expeditiously.

So it can be seen that the scheme of autonomous colleges hinges round the will and participation of teachers who require to be motivated and sensitised for this great educational reform. Since this has not been gainfully done so far, it is time it is done now, if the scheme is desired to survive. Running an autonomous college is both challenging and problematic when it comes to measures of performance. Firstly, the concept has not been standardised as a system and as an integral part of tertiary education. Secondly, most of the universities have not come to

terms with identifiable measures of performance in these as the colleges have not established their indisputable identity and independence, the universities still being asked to award degrees. Thirdly, the level of state support for continuing the scheme is at best not clear and firm. These require to be addressed at the earliest and need continued boldness to ensure their success. At least the bureaucratic tendencies to conform to the pre-autonomous state should not stand in the way of the programmes of such colleges. Another worry is the economic downturn which surely impacts all programmes and capability. So a movement requires to be created by the teachers with energy and eagerness to match this new challenge and change. Survival of the scheme is linked to achievements. This is a fresh opportunity to make tertiary education free from shackles of tradition and to make it socially relevant in this age of extraordinary expansion and competition. Without any conceptual difficulties, competence and understanding of teachers will alone make the system acceptable in the framework of future which definitely is not going to be either like the present or the past particularly in the context of more coherent alternative of Distance Education which is fast replacing conventional framework of collegiate education and which is going to outperform conventional education through technological revolution and its learner oriented approach going across regional barriers. So there has to be a shift in emphasis and orientation of institutions with a more forward looking independent approach at all levels in the UGC, universities and the state governments through continued support and better funding to be demonstrated through additional inputs and incentives for the teachers to provide the required leadership, quality and coordination to make the scheme a success.

Why Have Autonomous Colleges Failed?

PREM BHATNAGAR

Education is a national responsibility. It contributes to socio-economic development. The key question is how far our education planners have succeeded in eradicating socio-economic imbalance, unemployment and unrest in the youth by implementing different national education policies since 1968? The latest document on National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE) visualises that education should become more dynamic and there is a stress on more autonomy for more colleges and university departments.

An important question that arises is as to why till now these universities have failed to enjoy adequate autonomy? In the National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE) there is provision of granting autonomy to 500 colleges in India. Under the policy, 86 colleges in seven states have been granted autonomy since 1986. Out of these 86 colleges, only 6 are in Rajasthan. I do not know much about other States but can say with confidence that autonomy has miserably failed in all the six colleges of Rajasthan.

Let us analyse the present position of the autonomous institutions. Autonomy was granted on political basis and it lacked clarity of objective at that time. Not a single seminar was held in Rajasthan University or college on 'Autonomy and after'. Only a few academicians were consulted before granting autonomy to these colleges. The founder promoter of this scheme late Mr. V.V. John, Ex-Director of College Education and Vice-Chancellor of Jodhpur University and Prof. R.S. Kapoor were very much alive in 1986, but their opinion and suggestions were never sought. Only the then Director of College Education visited Andhra Pradesh where the scheme was implemented with greater vigour. There was a dire need of long term

perspective debate before establishment of autonomous Colleges in Rajasthan.

Programme of Action 1992 reveals, "*It would appear that the initial enthusiasm for this scheme has waned due to the opposition of a few states to the scheme on the ground that it is elitist, apprehensions, expressed by the teaching community regarding their workload, arbitrariness by managements, irregularities in conduct of internal examinations, paucity of funds, and operational difficulties in implementing the scheme*" (page-121).

I put up a discordant note to the then Education Commissioner as President, RESA (Collegiate) and told him frankly that teachers community of Government Colleges was not prepared to accept so called autonomous college pattern at this stage as the concept of autonomy would not really work in the present political set up, which was all together indifferent to teachers cause. Then I asked two questions, "Are you going to grant full autonomy to these Colleges?" "Shall these Colleges enjoy full administrative, financial and academic autonomy?" The answer was 'No'. Then he added that the spirit behind the structure to be evolved was new experiment and therefore important than the infrastructure itself.

Do we find any structural change in these autonomous Colleges? The answer is again, 'No'. Has any of these Colleges brought any drastic change in curriculum or introduced tutorial system? At the time of revision of scales, the government had laid down that the active teaching in these Colleges would be done for 20 hours per week. To what extent these goals have been achieved, is a matter of introspection.

It should not be necessary to talk of self administration and management in these autonomous colleges as everybody is well informed about 100% powers which are still in the hands of government. Not a single Principal can take independent decision as he is equally answerable to management and government. The management too is full of government nominees. So mostly government framed rules are in existence. After five years of existence teachers are the same. Not a single teacher has ever faced interview to prove his talent of a model autonomous calibre. Selection of Principals and Vice-Principals of course was held once in 1988, but that too was eye wash. Some of the Principals and Vice-Principals are there only on the ground of their seniority and not on merits, so how can they compare themselves favourably with University Professors or Readers, who have comparably

lengthened their academic achievements by writing books, articles and guiding research scholars. With such Principals and Vice-Principals at the helm of the affairs how can we dream of academic excellence in these autonomous colleges? How can we talk of improvement of education in such institutions. The teachers at large are busy in tuition work and want status.

Financial powers also are with the government. Therefore, all talk of autonomy is only on paper. Principal or Vice-Principal run to Jaipur every month to run day-to-day administrative budget. The plain truth is that these autonomous colleges are being run at the mercy of government or UGC finances and have miserably failed to evolve their own resources. After becoming autonomous they consume a substantial portion of government and UGC budget. Before granting autonomy these very colleges were running administration with one Principal, one or two Vice-Principals and one Head Clerk and Accountant. Now there are three Vice-Principals, one Superintendent and one AAO. Whenever any attempt to cut the number of posts will be made a crisis atmosphere in the name of autonomy is sure to be created.

he teaching in these colleges has also suffered a lot as Principal and most of the faculty members are always busy in conducting the examinations. This results in great loss of studies in such institutions. Then the question of secrecy arises. How is it that the pass percentage has increased over night in these autonomous colleges. Can their graduates or postgraduates compare favourably with their counterparts of Rajasthan or Jodhpur University. Of course there is some genuine teaching in one or two autonomous colleges, but privately speaking most of the teachers told this author that there is all pleasure after we became autonomous college teachers. Honest seminars are the talk of the past, intellectual honesty is a word packed in dictionary now and moral values have rushed from learning temples towards wastelands of towns. Only higher proportion of competent and devoted teachers introduction in these institutions can save the worsening situation of these Colleges.

Suggestions

- Clarity of objectives should be evolved before expanding these autonomous Colleges.
- There is need of second thought to be given to implement or scrap the policy of expanding autonomous colleges. As most of the colleges have failed to achieve academic excellence so the best talent should be transferred in these institutions.

- The Government or UGC should appoint an Expert Committee to review the state of affairs in autonomous colleges.
- Monitoring of the scheme should be watched very carefully.
- Block grants for full one year should be provided to these institutions, so that Principals or Vice-Principals do not run for budget periodically.
- The government, universities and society should accept and recognise them curriculum and new courses as and when accepted by these autonomous colleges.
- The autonomous colleges should prepare perspective plans for development, research and extension activities.
- To check external and internal political and bureaucratic interference, it is suggested that more powers should be given to Principals of autonomous colleges.
- Board of Management of these colleges should be reconstituted and more representation be provided to faculty members and educationists.
- One of the major functions of Board of Management of these colleges should be to mobilise internal resources to meet the additional expenditure on Autonomous Colleges.

Appendix

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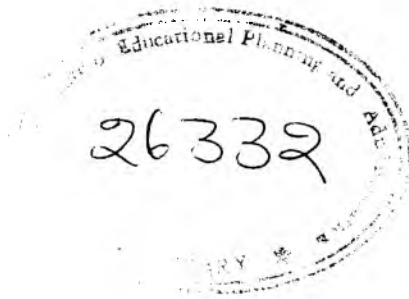
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