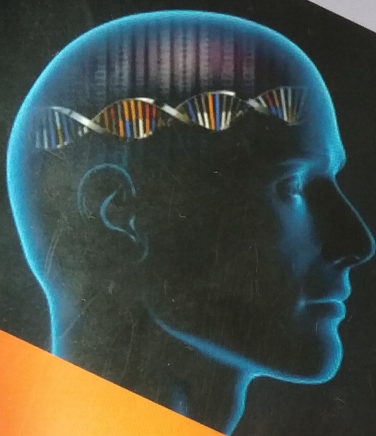


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Rajarshi Shahu Mahavidyalaya, Latur (Autonomous)
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded &
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"New Dimensions in Higher Education"
One Day National Open Forum (Seminar)

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16th Oct. 2018

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CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING AUTONOMY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Several reasons are responsible behind re-emerging the academic freedom and institutional autonomy in higher education on the agenda in the last few years. First of all, there is the spiraling increase in the number of students in higher education since the beginning of the 21st century, as its corollary, the explosion in most countries — whatever their political or social system — of the number of higher education institutions, a phenomenon that has gained momentum over the years. Autonomous status provides academic independence which gives the freedom to revise the syllabus with time and follow a schedule which is more suitable for the set curriculum. Exams are conducted by the institute itself and are in accordance with what is being taught during the session. The desire of the college to set free from the traditional and at times a standard approach of educating a student in a particular field, in fact, the UGC appeals more and more institutions to in the country to become autonomous so as to improve the standard of education. In present paper, the guidelines for autonomous colleges, proposed by UGC during X, XI and XII plan to promote autonomous status are studied and analyzed for their progressive development.

Key words: Autonomous college, guidelines, UGC.

Introduction

Autonomy and accountability are two sides of the same coin. Academic autonomy is

the freedom to decide academic issues like curriculum, instructional material, pedagogy, techniques of students' evaluation. Administrative autonomy is the freedom to institution to manage its own affairs with regard to administration. It is the freedom to manage the affairs in such a way that it stimulates and encourages initiative and development of individuals working in the institutions and thereby of the institution itself. Financial autonomy is the freedom to the institution to utilize the financial resources at its disposal in a prudent way keeping in view its priorities.

As the validity of the period of the guidelines for autonomous colleges during the XII plan (2012-17) ends this year, The University Grants Commission (UGC) will soon announce new guidelines for autonomous colleges that will provide incentives for academic innovations and special financial assistance for excellence in higher education. As the government tries various means to archive the required proliferation of good quality higher education, bolstering the autonomous colleges could well be the answer. Autonomy may be defined as a functional status given to the colleges, by the University Grants Commission by giving greater flexibility towards purely academic development for up-liftment of academic standards and excellence. "Autonomous College is one, which has the power to frame its own rules of admission, to prescribe its courses of study, to conduct exam etc." (Kothari, 1966). Highlighting the importance of autonomous colleges, the UGC document clearly states that: "The only safe and better way

to improve the quality of undergraduate education is to the link most of the colleges from the affiliating structure. Colleges with academic and operative freedom are doing better and have more credibility. The financial support to such colleges boosts the concept of autonomy." (UGC Guidelines, 2002; UGC Guidelines, 2007; UGC Guidelines, 2012)

One of the key challenges that we face in higher education is to improve the quality of education in colleges and universities. Unfortunately the affiliating system does not let the colleges grow beyond the limits set by affiliating universities. The affiliating system of colleges was originally designed when their number in a university was small. The university could then effectively oversee the working of the colleges, act as an examining body and award degrees on their behalf. The system has now become unwieldy and it is becoming increasingly difficult for a university to attend to the varied needs of individual colleges. The colleges do not have the freedom to modernize their curricula or make them locally relevant. The regulations of the university and its common system, governing all colleges alike, irrespective of their characteristic strengths, weaknesses and locations, have affected the academic development of individual colleges. UGC approved autonomous status to 613 colleges affiliated to 104 different universities from 24 states in the country (16.06.17). These colleges belong to No wonder none of the Indian universities figure in the top 200 universities in the world.

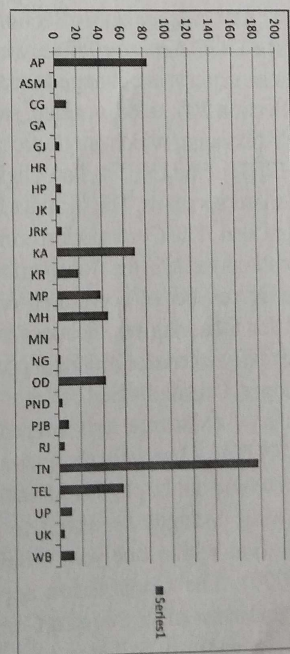
Hence, after the Education Commission (1964-66) UGC regularly recommends college autonomy, and encourage the colleges to apply for it for promoting academic excellence in higher education.

Review of Study

The National Policy on Education (1986-92) formulated the following objectives for autonomous colleges. An autonomous college will have the freedom to determine and prescribe its own courses of study and syllabi, and restructure

and redesign the courses to suit local needs. An autonomous college could prescribe rules for admission in consonance with the reservation policy of the state government. An autonomous college could evolve methods of assessment of students performance, the conduct of examinations and notification of results. An autonomous college could Promote healthy practices such as community service, extension activities, projects for the benefit of the society at large, neighborhood programmes, etc. There are 613 autonomous colleges from 104 universities in India (Graph-01). The highest no. of an autonomous colleges are found in Tamilnadu- 178 followed by Andhara-84 and Karnataka-70. Maharashtra have 45 autonomous colleges in all with 5th rank in India however there are only 07 autonomous colleges with traditional courses (B.A., B.Com., B.SC. etc) and others are concerned with professional courses.

Graph -01: Autonomous colleges in different states of India.



Methodology

UGC regularly updates the guidelines for autonomous colleges during different plans. In this regard the guidelines for autonomous colleges published by UGC during X, XI and XII plans are evaluated and discussed, specially the progressive changes in guidelines and difficulties in implementation of these guidelines.

Result and Discussion:

The guidelines for autonomous colleges published by UGC during X, XI and XII plans followed the uniform general pattern. The guidelines started with Introduction which covers introduction and need of autonomy. The introduction is followed by objectives of autonomy. The objectives mentioned in all above plans are same without any minor change. UGC continued his policy in respect to Relationship with the parent university, the state government and other educational institutions and Conferring autonomous status to different courses. As far as the eligibility target group is concerned major changes are made while confirming these criteria from plan X to XI. In plan X the eligibility criteria was as : All Colleges under Section 2(f) & 12 (B) of the UGC Act are eligible, where as in XI plan these criteria are changed as: All Colleges under Section 2(f), aided, unaided, partially aided and self-financing which are or are not covered under 12(B) of the UGC Act are eligible to apply for autonomous status. This includes Engineering Colleges also. The Commission considered the modifications made in the Autonomous Colleges Scheme in respect of accredited colleges and desired that following modifications may be made in the eligibility criteria for inviting applications from the colleges. Unaided/aided colleges: Minimum 10 years of existence and accreditation by NAAC/NBA. Henceforth non-accredited colleges would not be eligible for autonomy and the existing colleges be asked to undertake accreditation within one year (UGC Meeting 462nd,2009). The Commission approved the recommendations of the Standing Committee that NAAC accredited colleges should have a

minimum of B Grade accreditation. The Commission further decided that in respect of Engineering/Technical/Management Colleges, NBA accreditation should be insisted for at least three courses while considering them for fresh/ extension of autonomy tenure (UGC Meeting 490th,2012). During eleventh plan proposals from eligible colleges seeking autonomous status, were invited once in an academic year in September/ October, whereas from XII plan eligible colleges seeking autonomous status are free to apply any time throughout the in an academic year.

In the guidelines for the procedure for approval by the UGC were introduced from X plan onwards and modified with in plan XI (UGC Meeting 458th,2009; UGC Meeting 483rd,2012) and continued with some amendments in XII plan (UGC Meeting 514th,2016).

The financial assistance proposed by Commission under this scheme to autonomous colleges to meet their additional and special needs is different for different plans and given in Table-01.

Table-01: The financial assistance (in lakhs) proposed by Commission to autonomous colleges.

PLAN	UG Single faculty	UG multi faculty	UG and PG Single faculty	UG and PG Multy faculty
X plan	05	07	06	12
XI plan	09	15	10	20
XII plan Without NCC	09	15	10	20
XII plan With NCC	10	16	11	22

During plan X, the honorarium to Controller of Examinations (full-time) was not exceeding Rs. 5000/- p.m. and it was increased up to Rs. 8000/- p.m in plan XI and continued without any change in plan XII. A significant rise in the financial assistance proposed by Commission was found from plan X to XI but it is not changed in plan XII except the colleges who has started the NCC as an elective subject where the

additional grant of Rs, 01 lakh to 02 lakhs is provided to colleges for the introduction NCC as an elective subject. The commission proposed different governing committees the college to ensure proper management of academic, financial and general administrative affairs having same structure in all three plans. In all of these three plans no any special provision is made to provide additional grant for research.

Conclusions:

Granting autonomous status to colleges could be an effective step to improve higher education but UGC has formulated certain rigid guidelines and proposed limited assistances for autonomous colleges. The definitions of certain legal terms in the UGC Act and university rules needed to be "expanded" to enable more persons from different professions to be roped in to improve the autonomy scheme. At the same time, policy and administrative level changes were required to glorify the successful experiments in autonomy at a national level so that well-performing autonomous colleges became role models for other institutions that seemed to have insulated themselves from the changes". The aided colleges with traditional courses seeking interest in autonomy only at Academic and Administrative level and their number is very less as compared to the colleges with professional courses. This is because the limited resources at institutional level and limited financial assistance proposed by UGC to run Autonomy.

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