

IMPLEMENTATION OF AUTONOMY IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF KERALA: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The successful implementation of autonomy in about 441 colleges in India made the Govt. of Kerala also to think in the same way. This article makes a comparative study of autonomous and non-autonomous system. The study is conducted among the teachers, students and the university employees in Kerala. It Points out the merits and demerits of the autonomous system. It also gives some suggestions for the proper functioning of autonomous colleges.

KEYWORDS: *autonomy, autonomous college, autonomous institute, autonomy in Kerala, academic autonomy.*

INTRODUCTION

Autonomous institutes are those which are affiliated to a govt. University but not follow its syllabus and Curriculum. The UGC document on the X plan profile of higher education in India says that “The only safe and better way to improve the quality of undergraduate education is to delink 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. It is proposed to increase the number of autonomous colleges to spread the culture of autonomy, and the target is to make 10 per cent of eligible colleges autonomous by the end of the Plan.”^[1]

In India the higher education Institutes are classified in to Non-autonomous institutes, Autonomous institutes under Deemed University. Non autonomous Institutes are affiliated to a Govt. University and follow its prescribed syllabus and curriculum. This curriculum is common to many other institutes affiliated to this University and it is regulated by the University throughout a region. Here examinations are conducted by the affiliated university. On the other hand autonomous institutes have academic freedom and they use this freedom to revise their syllabus in time. Examinations are conducted by the institution itself. But the degrees are awarded by the affiliated university. In the Institute under Deemed university, the admissions are conducted by the institution itself. Examinations are conducted by the deemed university.

There are some other institutes which have authority to award degrees autonomously but they are not universities. Examples are IITs, NITs etc. These are under the administrative control of Department of Higher education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The colleges in India are now in desire of being set free from the traditional approach of education of the universities. Now the colleges are capable of following advanced study approach because of good infrastructure and efficient faculty. Moreover in India, the working and administration of the colleges face some obstacles due to politics also. So for the betterment of output colleges want autonomy. Moreover, autonomous institutes have some higher status compared to others. So the management think it as a prestige issue. In case of financial autonomy, the management can decide the fees to be collected from the students. In India there are 441 autonomous colleges as per 30-05-013. During the academic year 2013-14 UGC invited applications from Govt., Aided and Self-financing Colleges to get Autonomy. In Kerala about 45 colleges applied for autonomy. This is the background of this study.

OBJECTIVES

The fundamental objective of the study is to investigate the overall financial commitment in implementing autonomy in a state like Kerala. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the merits of implementation of autonomy in higher education sector.
2. To investigate the financial burden of the students.
3. To know the financial commitment of the management

HYPOTHESIS

Implementation of autonomy in higher education sector will create great changes including positive and negative.

METHODOLOGY

The study mainly covers data collected from the principals of different autonomous colleges outside Kerala, non-autonomous colleges inside Kerala, University employees, Professors and students. This study is also using the secondary data collected from various media for identifying similar situations in other types of educational institutes. The present study is based on the factors such as the condition of institutions before and after the implementation of autonomy and the effectiveness of the same.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A detailed questionnaire was distributed among samples to collect data for the study. Table 1 depicts the results.

From table 1, it is clear that a major portion of the sample is saying that the availability of UGC grant will increase on implementation of autonomy. In X plan period, UGC introduced a scheme called Colleges with Potential for excellence (CPE) Scheme. The colleges selected

under this scheme will be provided additional funds to improve and strengthen their infrastructure in order to attain high academic standard. It is decided to continue it in the XII plan period (2012-2017) also. In this scheme among accredited colleges, preference will be given to autonomous colleges^[4]. Thus by receiving grants from UGC for the upgrading of autonomous colleges, the overall outcome will increase.

Another point of discussion is Campus politics. Now especially in Kerala, the classes in the universities and affiliated colleges are interrupted by the campus strikes. By the introduction of autonomy many people say that it will reduce. In various autonomous colleges outside Kerala are working without any political issues. Because in autonomous colleges, there will not be any common problem related to syllabus or academic matters such as in universities. The college will have Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Studies and Financial Committee for the proper functioning^[2]. The college will, in addition, have other committees such as the Planning and, Evaluation Committee, Grievance Appeal Committee, Examination Committee, Admission Committee, Library Committee, Student Welfare Committee, Extra-Curricular Activities Committee and Academic Audit Committee. Therefore, student participation is much higher in autonomous colleges and they can't spend time in politics.

Another important factor is student performance. In response of the advancements in the syllabus and curriculum, the students will perform their best and ongoing outside the campus, they will get an advanced knowledge in their discipline. But an equal portion of the sample says that the standard of the students will decrease because of the simplicity and the less content of the syllabus that implemented by the autonomous college itself. The students of these kinds of institutions are not competing with the outside world. They are competing among 40-50 students of their institution only.

The financial commitment of management is important before the implementation of autonomy. For getting autonomy to a particular institute, that should have a well maintained infrastructure also. The colleges which are accredited by NAAC with A grade are eligible for applying. The initial financial expenditure of the management is inevitable. Most of the people of study are also saying this.

The autonomous colleges have right to start new courses without the prior permission of university. Starting of new advance courses in the nearby college will attract the students of locality to this college and the reach of such courses will rapidly increase in the society. Most have opinion like this. But some are against this by saying that these new courses will be self-financing and this will push away the financially backward students from autonomous college.

The role of university will shrink only to award degrees for those students who are recommended by the college. Designing and restructuring of the syllabus of the courses are doing by the autonomous colleges themselves. The examinations are conducted and the valuations are doing by the college itself. In today's structure, the syllabus is prescribed by the

university. In the case of restructuring of the syllabus, the university conduct workshops in which the teachers of various affiliated colleges are participating and according to their suggestions, commonly accepted modifications are done. But in the case of autonomous colleges it is done by the Board of Studies of college itself in which only staff of that college are members. Internal marks are not monitored by the university. Of course the result publications will be faster, but the transparency will be lost. About 85% of the people are saying this.

The students of autonomous colleges are in a kind of small group and they are not competing with the students of other institutes. The syllabus for the same course will be different from other institutes or university. Therefore any kind of comparison is not possible among the students of autonomous college and the students of non-autonomous colleges of the same university. In the admission procedure of next higher courses this will create some kind of confusion. Thus no doubt, the relationship will decrease.

Most people are saying that the work of teachers will increase. Teachers will have great role in an autonomous institute. Rightly from the designing of curriculum, teachers are involving in a course. Thus by the implementation of autonomy, teachers are more updated and their level will rise.

Considering the results, some are saying that the result will increase and an equal portion are saying that it will decrease on the implementation of autonomy. Since the autonomous colleges are preparing question papers themselves, they will conduct the examination of what they had taught. They are evaluating the answer papers and there will no chance to go the results down. But the other portion is saying that, because of the advanced syllabus the students will score less than those students in the other colleges of the same course.

Regarding the overall quality of the courses, major portion is saying that the quality will decrease. This may be because of the simple syllabus and low content of the course. But this is a relative case.

A detailed study was conducted among the teachers and students of various colleges in Kerala and the employees of the four universities of Kerala in order to know whether they welcome autonomy or not. The result is depicted in figure 1.

From Figure 1(a) and 1 (b), it is clear that most of the students and teachers of higher education institutes in Kerala are responding against autonomy. They have a lot of confusions and are in a state of fear of implementing autonomy without any serious discussions among them. Students are more afraid of the fee to be collected from them in order to meet the examination expenditure etc. They are also thinking that there may be some malpractices in internal and external evaluation because of the lack of monitoring by the University. Teachers are also worried because they will not get transfer to any desired college. There is also some confusion about the salary protection of the teachers in the aided sector. But the Kerala state

govt. is saying that all of these confusions are without cause and there will not be any problem to teachers and students of autonomous colleges ^[5]. In spite of all these uncertainties, Kerala govt. selected 2 govt colleges and 11 aided colleges, to nominate for autonomy to UGC.

SUGGESTIONS

The author is putting forward some suggestions for the smooth functioning of colleges after the implementation of autonomy.

- In Kerala, most of the colleges are in aides' sector. So before awarding autonomous status, each and every loop holes should be banned by the government otherwise there may be chance for misuse.
- Only academic autonomy should be granted. All the other matters should be under the control of Govt., Universities and UGC.
- The colleges should strictly follow the conditions laid out by the Govt., otherwise their autonomy will be terminated.
- The monitoring should be fair, transparent and authenticate.
- In order to avoid any dispute regarding the curriculum and contents, before the designing of syllabus serious consultation should be done with the external eminent academicians.
- The transfer system should be regulated in order to balance the interests of colleges and teachers.

CONCLUSION

In spite of some opposing factors, the autonomous system is essential for improving the reach of higher education to all the sections of the society. It will help to design new generation courses, Vocational higher education, will increase job opportunities and will lead to social empowerment. The implementation of autonomy will reduce the time lag in the publication of results, awarding of degree etc. This will ultimately lead to the students' progress.

REFERENCES

1. UGC guidelines for the scheme of autonomous colleges, X Plan, www.ugc.ac.in
2. UGC guidelines XII Plan
3. Wikipedia
4. Guidelines for the colleges with CPE
5. Report on autonomy, KSHCEC

TABLES

Table 1: Changes in Higher Education System due to the implementation of Autonomy

SI No.	Changes in the	Increase	Decreases
1	Availability of UGC grant	83%	12%
2	Campus Politics	25%	60%
3	Performance of Students	60%	36%
4	Financial Commitment of the management	81%	11%
5	Reach of Course	90%	10%
6	Role of University	10%	85%
7	Relationship among institutes	4%	90%
8	Level of activity of teachers	65%	32%
9	Results	52%	47%
10	Quality of Courses	30%	60%

FIGURES

Figure 1 : Response of (a) teachers, (b) students and (c) university employees in Kerala on the implementation of autonomy in Kerala Higher education system

