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Higher Education Commission of India Act 2018: A Critical Analysis of the Policy in the Context of Institutional Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

University grant commission (UGC) was institutionalized in the post independent India to strengthen, supervise and regulate the universities. This UGC facilitated a centralized administrative system in university education throughout the country even though education constitutionally listed in the concurrent list. Recently, higher education setup discusses the scope of autonomy in its all level. Here is the context of introducing the higher education commission of India act 2018. In this article researcher critically analyzing the higher education commission of India act 2018 in the context of institutional autonomy and also explaining the structure and composition of reputed autonomous institutions in the world.

Key Words : Autonomy, UGC, Policy, Universities, Autonomous institutions

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the largest middle class populations in the world. Emerging middle class is facing different issues in Indian higher education. The divergent issues of Indian higher education are primarily attributed lack of quality, changing demand, problems of equity and access, financial affordability, dearth of higher education institutions, academic competency, accountability of institutions and primarily the lack of functional higher education policies. The idea of autonomy in Indian higher education system takes its prominence in this spectrum of education. Autonomous policy introduced in Indian higher education system is the solution to these divergent issues in higher education. The policy has structural as well as philosophical solution to the issues in Indian higher education system at all levels. The concept of autonomy was evolved from 1980, when autonomous nature was experimented in both developed and developing countries. Most of the reputed universities like oxford, Harvard and Cambridge established the autonomous model in its all level including financial aspects.

Autonomy is crucial for the growth and development of higher education. Institutional autonomy lies principally in the following fields: innovations in the pedagogy and courses, intake and promotion of teachers, mode of student's selection, evaluation, zone of research and use of resources. Each institution of higher learning is believed to be a centre of excellence. It is supposed to be achieving excellence in three things, namely, in teaching and learning, discovery and engagement. But the fact remains that there are only a few institutions of higher learning which are known to have achieved excellence in the genuine sense. And, they are those institutions that have embraced and institutionalized autonomy in the truest sense. It is amply evident from the history of global higher education that the issue of autonomy is crucial to the growth and development of higher education and that there is an umbilical relationship between autonomy and excellence. Autonomy has been a subject of discourse in the reports of the commissions and committees set up from time to time, since independence, to review the system of education and to initiate the needed reforms and innovations.

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Need and significance of Institutional Autonomy:

In the higher education system in India, there are many serious concerns about its role and performance. The complex array of associated issues deserves a total rethinking of our approach to higher education. Serious efforts are now underway to develop the policy perspectives in education involving deeper national introspection and fundamental changes in the structure, content and delivery mechanisms of our university system. Both structural and philosophical interventions are indulging and it is getting promoted in Indian higher education. In this context autonomous status process started and evolves to function in Indian education system.

Autonomy has been a topic of research for many academicians and in each and every study they come out with contradictory explanations. Different studies are happened in different country on quality, practicality and accountability of autonomous institution. Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) is one of the international non government organizations that had studied institutional autonomy and the protection of higher education from various attacks. GCPEA studies have been done in Latin American countries, United States, Canada and Europe. The various studies that have been published are revenge for classroom content in Zimbabwe, 'Balkanization' of higher education in Iraq, answerability for assassination of academics in Pakistan and Resisting external pressure groups in Tunisia. All the studies make a shield to protect the system of higher education from government interference, politicization and ideological manipulation, ensuring academic freedom and commitment to quality. James b. Mckenna had studied the new University Reform law of Spain to achieve the autonomy and accountability. Li-Chuan Chiang examined the effects of positive relationship between University autonomy and Funding. Jung Cheol Shin analyzed changes in institutional performance in US on the adoption of performance based accountability standards. Carvalho and Diogo analyses the relationship between institutional and academic autonomy in the higher education sector of Portugal and Finland. Andreas Hoecht explores the issues of trust, control, professional autonomy and accountability in higher education quality assurance in the UK. Jeroen huisman and Jan studied the impact of answerability on higher education policies in Europe and the United States. How the responsibility movement relates to other policy drift in higher education, providing empirical data on how answerability was implemented and how educator and administrator in four universities recognized these policies.

Many different studies on autonomy had happened in India also. Ved Prakash studied autonomy in Indian context and explained that autonomy is pivotal for the growth and development of higher education. By understanding how different commissions and committees introduced by the Government of India from different period to have looked at autonomy and accountability, Prakash makes the attention that there is an interesting link between the two and that absence it is practically impossible to achieve excellence. Arun Kumar studied autonomy in relation to the principle of internal democracy. The difference against autonomy in higher education is being raised today in the name of creating the institution more accountable. In fact absence of internal autonomy in the higher education system also leads to loss of accountability. This link needs to be better understood. Absence of democratic functioning will reduce the creativity and academic freedom of individual and institution in total.

UGC and Institutional Autonomy:

According to the UGC Committee towards New Educational Management, autonomy broadly emphasizes the freedom to function to achieve academic excellence and to administer the institution through its own rules and regulations. Autonomy should percolate down to the various organs of the university system. One major aspect of institutional autonomy lies in the determination of curriculum and the setting of standards. Institutions can react to society's needs by the provision of new courses or the modification of existing ones much more effectively through their own network of contacts (including lay members of governing bodies and alumni) than through inflexible official channels concerned with manpower planning.

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, make it skill oriented and in consonance with the job requirements
- Prescribe rules for admission in consonance with the reservation policy of the state government /

national policy
- Promote research in relevant fields;
- Evolve methods of assessment of students performance, the conduct of examinations and notification of results;
- Use modern tools of educational technology to achieve higher standards and greater creativity
- Promote healthy practices such as community service, extension activities, projects for the benefit of the society at large, neighborhood programmes, etc.

There will be a symbiotic relationship between the parent university, State Government and the Autonomous College. The university will generally Support the Autonomous College in designing and framing the curricula, upgrading the method of delivery and also help to set up a framework in the Autonomous College for evaluation and examination of the students. The relationship between the parent university and the Autonomous College would be in the manner that it is conducive for the development of the College with the ultimate aim of converting it into a College of Eminence.

Nature and pattern of financial assistance and other enabling provisions:

The Commission will provide assistance under this scheme to autonomous colleges to meet their additional and special needs such as:
- Up-gradation of syllabus on regular basis making it skill oriented with quantifiable outcomes.
- Orientation and re-training of teachers.
- Re-designing courses and development of teaching/learning material
- Workshop and seminars
- Examination reforms
- Furniture for office, classrooms, library and laboratories
- Library equipment, books/journals
- Renovation and repairs not leading to construction of a new building
- Extension Activities
- Office equipment, teaching aids and laboratory equipment
- Guest/visiting faculty
- Capacity building for teachers
- Development of Area Study Programmes.

However, Self-Financing Colleges will not be provided autonomy grant

Administrative nature of Autonomous Institution:

High power committees constituted by UGC with four members have to visit arts and science or technical colleges to grant autonomy. Two member nominated by UGC and other two member nominated by parent university and state government. The colleges should have academic council, Board of studies and finance committee once it comes to the autonomous nature. These academic and financial administrative governing bodies are accountable to the subjects as well as government machineries. This is ensuring through nominating experts in academic council, Board of studies and finance committee from outside the colleges and Parent University. In academic council the experts will be representing from such areas as Industry, Commerce, Law, Education, Medicine, Engineering, Sciences etc. Three nominees from Parent University not less than professor level also part of academic council. Board of studies composition include Two subject experts from outside the parent university to be nominated by the Academic Council and one representative from industry/ corporate sector/allied area relating to placement. In the same way one member from UGC, State government and Parent University are representing in governing body.

Composition of Finance Committee include The Principal (Chairman), One person to be nominated by the Governing Body of the college for a period of two years, Finance Officer of the affiliating University and One senior-most teacher of the college to be nominated in rotation by the principal for two years. Term of the Finance Committee will be two years. The Finance Committee will meet at least twice a year. The Finance Committee will be an advisory body to the Governing Body, to consider budget estimates relating to the grant received/receivable from UGC, and income from fees, etc. collected for the activities to undertake the scheme of autonomy and audited accounts for the above.

Accreditation and Criteria for granting autonomy to colleges:

UGC Committee has to visit arts and science or technical colleges to grant autonomy. The committee includes three eminent academicians out of which one shall be the Chairman is the first member. One academician nominee of the Parent University is the next member. One academician nominee of the State Government is the third member and the last member is the UGC Official also the Convener of the committee. If

the parent university and state government is not nominating the member in time UGC will visit the institution with chairman member and convener.

Institution approaching for autonomy must have following eligibility.

- Academic reputation and previous performance in university examinations and its academic/co-curricular/extension activities in the past.
- Academic/extension / research achievements of the faculty.
- Quality and merit in the selection of students and teachers, subject to statutory requirements in this regard.
- Adequacy of infrastructure, for example, library, equipment, accommodation for academic activities, etc.
- Quality of institutional management.
- Financial resources provided by the management/ state government for the development of the institution.
- Responsiveness of administrative structure.
- Motivation and involvement of faculty in the promotion of innovative reforms
- Hostel facilities

Quality benchmarks and monitoring:

The autonomous policy is clearly mentioning the quality benchmark of an institution through governance, academic excellence, equity initiative and research and innovation index. The following are the detailed indicator and weightage wise description.

- Governance quality index: Out of 100 percentage 16 percentage weight age given to governance quality. This is measured through percentage of Faculty Positions vacant 2.0%, percentage of Non-permanent faculty 4.0%, percentage of Non-teaching staff to teaching Staff 3.0%, Total no of under graduation programs 1.0%, Total no of post graduate programs 1.0%, Total no of doctoral programs 1.0%, Faculty appointment - turn around/cycle time in months 2.0% and Delay in payment of monthly salary payment of faculty 2.0%.
- Academic excellence index: 21.5% given to academic excellence. It is measured through delay in exam conduction and declaration of Results 3.5%, Plagiarism Check 1.0%, Accreditation 4.0%, Teacher Student ratio 4.0%, percentage of Visiting professors 1.0%, percentage of graduates employed by convocation 0.5%, percentage of Number of students receiving awards at National and International level 0.5%, percentage of expenditure on Library, cyber library and laboratories per year 1.0%, Ratio of expenditure on teaching staff salaries to non-teaching staff salaries 1.0%, percentage of faculty covered under pedagogical training 1.0%, percentage of faculty involved in "further education" 0.5%, Dropout rate 1.5%, No of foreign collaborations 1.5% and Subscription to INFLIBNET 0.5%
- Equity initiative index: 12.5 percentages given to equity initiative. It is measured through SC Student percentage 3.0%, ST Student percentage 3.0%, Gender Parity 3.0%, Urban to Rural Student population 2.0%, Existence of CASH 0.5%, Existence of Social Protection Cell 0.5% and Language assistance programs for weak students 0.5%
- Research and innovation index: 24 percentages is given to research and innovation. It is measured through Per-faculty publications 2.0%, Cumulative Impact Factor of publication 3.0%, H Index of scholars 2.0%, percentage of staff involved as principal researcher 1.0%, percentage of research projects, fully or more than 50%, funded by external agencies, industries etc. 2.0%, Total no of patents granted 1.0%, percentage of faculty receiving national/ international awards 1.0%, percentage of research income 1.0%, Doctoral degrees awarded per academic staff 1.0%, percentage of doctoral degrees in total number of degrees awarded 3.0%, percentage expenditure on research and related facilities 1.0%, Digitization of Master's and Doctoral thesis 0.5%, UPE/ CPE 3.5% and percentage of Income generated from non-grant sources 2.0%.
- Student facilities: 15 percentages is given to student facilities. It is measured through number of new professional development programs 1.0%, Existence of Placement Cells and Placement Policy 1.0%, percentage of expenditure on infrastructure maintenance and addition 3.0%, Availability of hostel per out-station female student 3.0%, Availability of hostel

per out-station male student 2.0%, percentage of students on scholarship 2.0%, Average scholarship amount per student 1.0%, Student Experience Surveys 1.0% and Graduate Destination Surveys 1.0%.

– Infrastructure and Others: 11 % is finally given to infrastructure and other remaining rubrics. This part is measured through percentage Income generated from training courses 1.0%, percentage Income generated from consulting 1.0%, Infrastructural sufficiency 3.0%, Computer coverage 3.0% and Internet connectivity of Campus 3.0%

Higher Education Commission of India Act 2018 and Institutional Autonomy:

Higher education commission of India act 2018 specifically formed to alter the higher education of the country by understanding the ground reality of India. In the released draft report commission repelling UGC and it becomes the custodian cum evaluator of higher education in India. In the beginning of the draft report it is clearly stated to promote autonomy in higher education institutions. It is mentioned that "The Commission shall, subject to the provisions of this Act and regulations made under this Act, take measures to promote the autonomy of higher educational institutions for the free pursuit of knowledge, innovation, incubation and entrepreneurship, and for facilitating access, inclusion and opportunities to all, and providing for comprehensive and holistic growth of higher education and research in a competitive global environment". And also in the following lines it is mentioned that commission will lay down standards for grant of autonomy for institutions and provide flexibility and freedom to institutions granted autonomy to develop their own curriculum, Specify norms and standards for Graded Autonomy to Universities and Higher Educational Institutions and accordingly prescribe regulatory mechanisms. All matters concerning the education quality in higher education curriculum including research and moderate growth of higher education will be monitored through a national data base management system.

From the above clauses of higher education act 2018 it is clear that the government intention is to build the self sufficient and self reliant higher education institutions in India. This is highly welcomed in the Indian social reality. The heterogeneous languages, culture, thoughts and markets are the stamp of Indian unity. To survive in this diverse reality, heterogeneous mode of education system with highly locally oriented curriculum and administration is very necessary. Promoted autonomy can ensure all the above attribution to the higher education institutions. The act is really invited by the contemporary lust of Indian higher education. As a temple of democracy if a nation should prosper on the academic standards and the quality of educational output that it produces autonomy is very essential for its educational institutions.

Indian Higher Education over Centuries:

"Gurukula" system is the ancient teaching and learning system existed in Indian sub continent. This system of education had in the mode of residential where guru and disciples were stayed together and learned religion, philosophy, science and life skills. By 6 BC present Indian sub continent experienced modern concept of university system through the establishment of Nalanda and Takshila. This education set up had continued till the arrival of British to the Indian subcontinent. These higher education setups were important source of different rulers which ruled across Indian subcontinent for thousands of years and produced the desired human resources for creation, irrigation and fighting.

Indian subcontinent had experienced religion based learning in ancient and medieval especially up to 1200 AD. These institutions invited students from Europe and other Asian countries attention on Literature, Philosophy, Astronomy Architecture whose induce can be seen across the world in terms architecture and water management system. The discipline like geography, law, administration started influence in the Indian higher education setup after the influence of Islamic imperial power.

British Period and Indian Higher Education:

The British east India company rule changed the Indian traditional way of higher education from 1757 onwards. Before 1850 in India there were no formal education centers under British control. Their main intention was to enrich their rule in Indian subcontinent for that they introduced English language education for local administrator. By 1800 the legitimate rule of British institutionalized in Indian sub continent. Just after the legitimate control British institutionalized formal system of higher education. Lord Macaulay only introduced English as the language of medium over the Indian education system. The British style of University was institutionalized by 1857 in Calcutta, Mumbai and Chennai

by following the model of University of London. The core subject Universities concentrated on languages, literature, history and philosophy. The main intention of this learning centre is to generate an English speaking population in India. British did not give any important to modern science and engineering in Indian higher education during 1800. Tata institute established in India in 1903 only introduced science and engineering. The main important higher education centre in India up to 1947 was under the control of British rule.

Indian Higher Education after 1947:

The student enrollment figure in higher education showing that India is one of the largest countries had large number of students enrolled. Department of higher education working under Ministry of Human Resource development (MHRD), Government of India only introduced the policies related to Indian higher education. In the year 1956 government of India institutionalized University Grant Commission (UGC) to monitor, accredit and guide colleges, higher education institutions and universities. UGC only funding and guiding in both state, central universities, private universities and deemed universities in all states of India. To sustain these activities like promote, issue grants, make standards and introduce professional education in different domain UGC had introduced statutory Councils.

Changing Nature of Indian Higher Education:

Indian higher education has changed very slowly over different period of time after independent. In the beginning of 1950s and 60s government of India initiated to start universities and colleges in different parts of the country and also provide government aids to the higher education institutions. The College-University affiliation system becomes widespread. In the year 1991 witnessed a drastic change in the higher education in par with the changes in the economic structure of the country. The welfare perspective of the government slowly confined. This confinement effected in the higher education of the country. The new liberalized and privatization policy of the then government invited globalized trend in the Indian higher education. This trends again boosted in the following year.

As like formal /regular system of education non formal system of education also shaped Indian higher education. Open Universities are also started by the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Different state and central universities started distance education centre inside the regular university. Separate state open universities are also established in different parts of the country. This non formal education facilitated the growth of higher education enrollment in India. Especially in arts and commerce discipline it induced the enrollment and increased the graduate and post graduate holders. Non formal system also updated with the help of Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) Movement. In India central government initiated Study Webs of Active – Learning for Young Aspiring Minds or SWAYAM platform to launch online courses.

In 2010 the government of India framed a foreign university bill to invite foreign universities to India. Recently in 2015, The Prime Minister had called upon a meeting of ten bureaucrats to discuss the issue of Foreign University Bill, its impact and consequences on the Indian Education System. In September 2015 he had asked Niti Ayog to do a research and study about the hindrances which were not allowing Foreign University Bill to move forward in India.

In the case of budget allocation also changes happened in Indian higher education. The Finance Minister said that estimated budgetary expenditure on health, education and social protection for 2018-19 is Rs. 1.38 lakh crore. On education front, government investment is highly focusing on school education to provide the best quality education, especially to the tribal children in their own environment by 2022. High focus to the local arts and skill oriented school education including athletic spirit. Investments in higher education and research give attention to infrastructure development including health institutions. For this introduced ''Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022" with a total investment of Rs. 1,00,000 crore. To increase the quality of teaching an integrated B.Ed. Programme for teachers will be initiated very massively. Special scholarship for B.Tech students named ''Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF)". Under this, 1,000 best B.Tech students will be identified each year from premier institutions and provide them facilities to do Ph.D in IITs and IISc. Beyond all changes had mentioned above, in this fast changing world the restructuring process in Indian higher education should be more concentrated on institutional domain.

Status of Institutions in Abroad:

The world renounced institution working in abroad

are mainly autonomous in nature. Even if it is university it is generating it's on fund. The affiliation process maximum will go up to 50 centre or colleges. Here in this study, governance and structure of the one reputed universities oxford is analyzing. Congregation is the sovereign body of the Oxford University and acts as its 'parliament'. It has just over 5,000 members, including academic staff; heads and other members of governing bodies of colleges; and senior research, computing, library and administrative staff. Congregation has responsibility for:

– Approving changes to the University's statutes and regulations;

– Considering major policy issues submitted by Council or members of Congregation;

– Electing members to Council and other University bodies, and approving the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor

Council is the University's principal executive and policy-making body. It has up to 28 members, including up to four from outside the University. It is responsible for the academic policy and strategic direction of the University, for its administration, and for the management of its finances and property. It has five major committees: Education Committee, General Purposes Committee, Personnel Committee, Planning and Resource Allocation Committee, and Research Committee. Thirty eight colleges, though independent and self-governing, form a core element of the University, to which they are related in a federal system. Each college is granted a charter approved by the Privy Council, under which it is governed by a Head of House and a Governing Body comprising of a number of Fellows, most of whom also hold University posts

The University's academic departments, faculties and research centres are grouped into four divisions: Humanities; Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences; Medical Sciences; and Social Sciences. Day-to-day decision-making in matters such as finance and planning is devolved to the divisions. The Department for Continuing Education is the responsibility of a separate board. University of Oxford's funding comes from five main sources.

1. The largest source – £564.9m, which accounts for 40% of total income – is external research funding, from bodies such as research councils, charities, trusts, foundations, and industry. Oxford consistently has the highest external research income of any university in the UK.

2. 14% comes from government grants through the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

3. Other income includes annual transfers from Oxford University Press, income from the commercialization of research, and philanthropic support (23%).

4. Academic fees, from both undergraduates and postgraduates (22%).

5. Investment income (1%).

Conclusion:

The Indian higher education was not having fundamental changes in the structure for last sixty years. India is one of the largest human populated countries in the world, following the same colonial British legacy in Indian higher education even now. The university affiliation system and centrally designed framework is following for all courses throughout India. The regional cultural, market and geographical differences was not reflected in the course and curriculum of higher education. Twenty first century global trend in higher education was not seriously influenced in Indian higher education in its all soul. Here is the context of emphasizing the autonomous nature of Indian higher education institution. Most of the reputed institutions in India like NIT, IIT and IIM and outside world are running in autonomous nature.

In this context, higher education should welcome the newly drafted higher education commission act 2018 to reconstruct Indian higher education. The first and foremost thing in this act is reflecting the academic freedom of an institution through autonomy. Secondly, it repelling the centrally bridle UGC from higher education context to liberate higher education in its true academic sense. Thirdly, act clearly specifying the importance of accountability in higher education financial and academic level. Fourth is, it clearly focusing the quality level of higher education by introducing robust accreditation system. To achieve all these above aim, higher education commission act 2018 is giving high importance to the autonomous nature of the institutions. So after implementation of this act one institution can compete with the world class institution in teaching and research activity.

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