

# Inclination towards Autonomy in Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework

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**Introduction-** As our freedom fighter Shree Swami Vivekananda said, "Education is not all about information that is learnt by us and runs riot there undigested all our life. The actual use of higher education is to find out solution to the problems of life." According to Shree Swami Vivekananda transformation of society into a strong nation with cultural and moral values is possible only through education. According to him, "Education, can unlock all doors for a progress. A nation advances in proportion to education and intelligence spread among masses. Education can help India to increase its full potential as a strong united nation with strong cultural and moral values".

Autonomy in system enables an institution to develop and propose programmes that are considered important by that institute, to its basic environment as well as to the country as a whole. In different words, an institute should be able to know the aspirations of the group of people that is around it and effectively convert those aspirations into a viable academic programme.

## Objectives:

- To know the concept and aspects of related to autonomy.
- To know the progress of autonomy in Higher Education.
- To understand changing scenario of higher education.
- To understand Challenges in Implementing Autonomy.
- Suggestions for improving quality of higher education & significance of autonomy

Before knowing the inclination first of all it is important to understand the concept of autonomy. And is it giving autonomy is a type of way which can improve and strengthen the teaching and learning process?

Can autonomy alone give guarantee higher quality? autonomous status of the institutions as have the capability to design their own curriculum, introduce innovative teaching and new strategies. Of course autonomy is expected to provide a better structure for delivering these factors than the affiliation system with all its limited conditions not able to do in higher education system. At the conceptual study of autonomy is the decentralized management culture.

The essence of the success of autonomy is delegation of responsibility with answerability and accountability for the academic.

The facilities for carrying out autonomous functions such as updating syllabus, designing modules, content, various systems of examination and evaluation, different pedagogical things, practical learning, etc. require not only sufficient financial resources but also continuous training and up gradation of teachers. Autonomous institutions should, therefore, have the means to mobilize resources on a predictable basis. Their dependence solely on governing authority and state governments which have their own limitations for resource allocations, will be a major issue. In the rapidly changing environment, an autonomous system can facilitate much needed innovations such as inter-disciplinary programmes, inter-organizational sharing of academic loads, transfer of credit points between different models of learning and so on.

## Aspects Relevant to Autonomy and Accountability

-Autonomy is self-regulation providing responsible exercise of decision-making freedom with full commitment for accountability, and not just decentralisation of selected powers. Accountability is the academic, administrative and financial responsibility with certain goals for each of especially for teachers, students, non-teaching staff and all others aiming towards providing quality education for the society. The measurement of accountability includes self-regulation and be stick to rules; motivational efforts towards accountability and pro-active role in conceiving

and implementing innovations. The types of accountability would involve individual category-oriented accountability; intra-institutional and inter-institutional accountability, and system oriented accountability. The strengths of ideal autonomy are:

- Innovations.
- Experimentation.
- Expansion and maximum utilization of potential.
- Quality improvement.
- Relevance
- Full involvement of teachers in the entire system.
- Enhancing confidence in students and teachers.
- Transparency in pedagogy and evaluation.
- Increased scope for educational reforms.
- Planning as well as implementation of programmes.

The weaknesses apparent in the present system of autonomy are:

- Autonomy is directed mostly for colleges and not for all higher education institutions.
- Approval process is still time consuming.
- Universities presently do not have complete academic, administrative and financial autonomy and are governed by the state agencies.
- Manpower deficits affect the efficiency of the system.
- Infrastructure shortcomings.
- Implementation obstacles; financial crunch faced by the autonomous institutions.
- Systemic weakness where managements do not support autonomy.
- Apprehensions among teachers about salary and stability.
- Apprehensions among students.
- Insufficient powers, inherent or delegated, to the heads of higher education institutions. The strengths of achieving accountability are:
- Quality improvement in higher education
- Feedback mechanism.
- Setting up of benchmarks of accountability and quality.
- Checks and balances for monitoring accountability and quality
- Appraisal to get oriented towards the entire system of higher education.

The weaknesses of the present accountability machinery are:

- Lack of effective surveillance and monitoring of self-financing institutions.
- Only teachers are blamed for accountability and not the administration
- Lack of requisite finance and infrastructure.

**3. Changing scenario of higher education:** Over the years higher education system has become an enterprise having much of business orientation with all level of competition. Indian education system also faces challenges in the new era. These challenges are diversified and contemporary module development, quality accreditation and ethical values to policy planning and governance. With unprecedented growth of knowledge typically in the area of information and communication that is to be at par at global standard.

**Quality and Accreditation:** Quality is a critical factor in influencing the educational outcome of the educational institute is make them employable. In today's world the interests of many students, parents, future employers, the State and funding bodies need to be taken care of while developing a strategy leading to quality in higher education, In this regard, India has established National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), similar policies adopted by many developed nations to promote quality in education. The overall quality assurance framework followed by NAAC has all the basic elements of quality assurance like accreditation, assessment and academic audit. Further, the methods adopted by NAAC like institutional self-study report, on-site visits, face-to-face interaction with faculty and students leave a fair degree of consequential impacts on the educational institutions to adhere to quality norms and standards.

#### **Public Private Partnerships:**

As India has entered an era of high economic growth with growth becoming multisectoral it faces manpower deficiencies. There is no denying the fact that high level of knowledge and manpower development can promote economic prosperity and international recognition vis-à-vis potential skilled labour force and other tangible socio-economic benefits. Therefore, financing higher education has come to the centre stage of debate and discussions among the policy makers across the globe. The origin of debate much relates to public and private funding of higher education. Even in most of the developing economies the shift from public funding to private funding is visible. Pressure of fierce intersectional competition for public funds and also the requirement of massive funds for developmental projects aggravate financial

stringencies. It is also not practically possible for Public higher education systems to meet growing demand for higher education, especially in view serious constraints. This has opened up new possibilities like the public private partnerships in higher education system.

The objective of enhancing the accessibility of qualitative higher education with equity to a seemingly diversified population can be accomplished through effective and meaningful private participation rather than exclusive dependence on public funds.

This public private partnership may take any form like public ownership with private participation, private ownership with public subsidy, etc. involving interplay between three stakeholders: the government, the individual learners and the private individuals or enterprises. Apart from many changes being witnessed in the traditional means of running higher education systems, the conventional approach of positive externalities of public expenditure on higher education is also slowly getting replaced by more productive and efficient private participation. The reasons for such a transitional change of treating education and technical education in particular not as a merit good but as a private good may be many, but factors like growing awareness of people to pay for qualitative education leading to better earning capacity in turn ensures a better tomorrow and the low price elasticity of enrolments which removes the fear factor of the private operators of loosing a sizeable market owing to relatively higher course fee are most important. But, private operators should not be given free hand to operate on the ground that private participation reduces the burden on government budgets, and helps ensure that the costs of higher education are borne by those to whom the benefits accrue. There are obvious concerns associated with the participation of private sector like motive of profiteering, degradation of quality, restriction on academic autonomy and the like. (Dash, 2011)

#### **4.Challenges in Implementing Autonomy:**

The Education Commission pointed out that the implication of academic freedom by teachers is a crucial requirement to the development of the intellectual and interactive climate of our country. Unless such a climate prevails, it is difficult to achieve excellence in our higher education system. As students, teachers and managements are essentials in raising the quality of higher education, its fact that they all share a major responsibility towards this and hence the Education Commission recommended college autonomy, which, in

essence, is the instrument for promoting academic excellence. Consequently, it was decided to represents autonomous status to such institutions as have the ability to design their own curriculum, evolve innovative pedagogy and evaluation strategies.

The governing body on the recommendation of an Expert Panel and in consultation with the Government and the University concerned, confers autonomous status on colleges to enable them to determine their own syllabus, rules for entrance, evolve methods of assessment of student work, conduct of examination, use modern tools of educational technology and promote healthy practices such as community service, extension activities for the benefit of the society at large.

An effective control mechanism should be established by the University grant commission to monitor the functioning of the colleges. Before extending Autonomous status to other colleges, objective evaluation and revamping of the existing Autonomous colleges may be done.

#### **5. Suggestions for improving quality of higher education & significance of autonomy**

**1. Industry and Academic Collaborations-** Industry and Academic collaboration necessary to ensure syllabus and skills in it with requirements. Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability of academia to understand and make sure good jobs keeping in view knowledge ,skills,global professional skills that gives good jobs.

**2. Innovative & creative Practices-** The new technologies offer huge opportunities for progress in all aspects of life. It offers opportunities for economic growth, improved health, better service delivery, improved learning and socio-cultural advances. Though efforts are required to improvise the nation's innovative and inventive capacity, yet the efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research and innovation- creative growth link.

**3. Information Age and Digitalization -** The world is entering into an ICT age and developments in communication, information and technology will open up new and cost-effective approaches as well as controlling cost for providing the reach of higher education to the youth as well as to those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of fast-changing scenario of occupations, and lifelong education. Knowledge, which is at the core of higher education, is a resource in the development

of political democracy, the struggle for social justice and progress towards individual enlightenment.

**4. Student-Centralized Education and Innovative Methods-** Learning is important and Models of higher education also have to be appropriate to the needs of learning to learn and implement. Student-centric education and employment of innovative methods of education will require from teachers new attitudes and Innovative skills. Methods of teaching through lectures will have to auxiliary to the method that will emphasis on stress on self-study, personal concern between teachers and students, and sessions for seminars and workshops. Methods of distance education will have to be employed on a large scale.

**5. To Job-Oriented Courses-** All round development of personality and person. but make them employable is very important. So, combination of arts subjects and science and science and literature should be thought so that such courses could be useful for the students to do jobs after their studies and they will be recruited in some companies. This should be focused on graduate studies and post graduate studies in research and developing tactics and mechanisms for the rapid and efficient delivery of knowledge and for its real life application application.

**6. Foreign Collaboration-** Universities in India along with research, innovation, teaching, human resource development, and continuing education. Foreign collaboration is gaining importance as another important function. With the increased development of transport and communication, the globalization is witnessing a growing emphasis on foreign cooperation and action to find solutions and probable solution that have global impact.

**7. Educational and cultural tours** -With the help of government it is necessary so that students can understand about people, culture, arts, literature, religions, technological developments and progress of human society in the world. and it can help them in enhancing knowledge.

**8. Privatization of Higher Education-** In any country education is the basic necessity for the socio-economic development of the persons and the society. In real sense only 20% of Indian population has quality education. So, developed standard of education as first importance should be offered to the majority by the govt. authorities with sincere political will. Also, privatization of higher

education is absolutely necessary in a vast country like India as government alone is helpless to do so.

**9. Quality development-** Quality depends on its all functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, building, facilities, utensils, services to the community and the academic environment. It also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international measurements: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, flexibility of teachers and students and international research projects, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances.

**Conclusion:** The successful proposal of the concept of sovereignty requires willing and honest participation of the students, teachers and management in the education process. They should be willing to stand up to intense scrutiny of their role in sovereignty. A system of academic audit at every step of the proposal of the concept of sovereignty should be acceptable to all concerned parties. The facilities for carrying out autonomous functions such as innovations in curricular content, systems of examination and evaluation, teaching methods, supplementary learning, etc. require not only sufficient financial resources but also continuous training and progression of teachers. Independent institutions should, therefore, have the means to mobilize resources on a predictable basis. Their dependence solely on UGC or State Governments which have limited allocations for higher education will be a serious draw back.

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