

# ITM

## **AUTONOMY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the emerging knowledge society of the 21st century, higher education has become the most important tool of development and the colleges/ universities have become the real hub of knowledge generation. College/University is the place where knowledge is not only imparted but it is also created through research. Therefore, research is considered as important as teaching. However, knowledge produced through research has not only to be new but also to be valid in order to enhance the adaptive capability of the human society. Therefore, originality, creativity, intellectual honesty and integrity need to be considered important values in good colleges/ universities. These values, therefore, are to be consciously promoted on the campuses of the universities and colleges.

### **WHY THE NEED FOR AUTONOMY?**

Since 1968 when the first National Policy on Education was adopted, there has been continued emphasis on changing the *affiliation* system of colleges. The affiliation system which persisted since 1857 worked well during the early decades when the number of colleges affiliated to the universities was small and the universities had direct interest and close association with the programmes and performance of its affiliated colleges. During the last few decades, however, the number of colleges affiliated

to universities has grown to almost unmanageable proportions. The relationship between the universities and affiliated colleges has degraded to proforma functions, reducing the status of affiliated colleges to mechanical entities.

Higher education is continuing to expand, mostly in an unplanned manner, without even minimum levels of checks and balances. Many universities are burdened with unmanageable number of affiliated colleges. Some have more than 300 colleges affiliated to them. New universities are being carved out of existing ones to reduce the number of affiliated colleges.

While evolving new directions for higher education and strengthening its quality and relevance, the various Commissions on education underlined the structural weakness of the affiliation system which inhibited the implementation of their major recommendations. Under the circumstances, our dependence on autonomy as the means to improve the quality of such an enormous higher education system is gaining momentum as an effective solution.

Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions is a pre-requisite for enabling them to achieve their goals and objectives. An honest exercise of autonomy - academic, administrative and financial – will lead to making these Institutions as centres of innovation, excellence and development. With this in view such institutions need to be insulated from internal and external pressures of all kinds, may be bureaucratic, political and other groups.

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR AUTONOMY?**

Such institutions that have already made a mark in excellence in the specific area of their work need to be taken note of and provided autonomy which can enable them to move faster

towards still higher goals of achievements in the areas of their professional concerns.

Colleges with A+ or A++ Accreditation having strong post graduate programmes and identified as ***College with Potential for Excellence and have the capability to design their own curriculum, evolve innovative teaching and testing strategies*** are upgraded to the status of an autonomous college on the recommendation of an Expert Committee and in consultation with the State Government and the University concerned.

### **WHAT IS AUTONOMY?**

The concept of autonomy is a structural solution intended mainly to provide an enabling environment to improve and strengthen the teaching and learning process. UGC Guidelines (2003) on the scheme of autonomous colleges spelt out the objectives of autonomy as:

- 📄 to determine its own courses of study and syllabi;
- 📄 to prescribe rules of admission, subject to the reservation policy of the state governments;
- 📄 to evolve methods of evaluation and to conduct examination;
- 📄 to achieve higher standards and greater creativity;
- 📄 to promote national integration; and
- 📄 to ensure accountability of the institution and its members.

The essential factors for high quality education are the caliber and attitudes of students towards learning, the competence and commitment of teachers towards educational processes, the flexibility and foresightedness of the governance system and the social credibility of the educational outcome.

Grant of autonomy is expected to provide a better framework for fostering these factors than the affiliation system with all its constraining conditions hanging as a dead weight on the higher education system. Even the limited evidence so far suggests that autonomous colleges have by and large fulfilled the expectations of them.

At the core of the concept of autonomy is the decentralized management culture. The delegation of responsibility with accountability for the academic as well as the associated management functions is essential for the success of autonomy.

**Academic autonomy** is the freedom to decide academic issues like curriculum, instructional material, pedagogy, techniques of students' evaluation. Although academic autonomy is inseparable from administrative and financial autonomy, the concept of academic autonomy provides absolute freedom in:

- 📄 admitting students
- 📄 revising syllabi and courses
- 📄 regulation of courses
- 📄 choosing suitable teaching methods
- 📄 evaluating students
- 📄 recruiting and promoting teachers

- opening of new programmes and terminating obsolete ones

Freedom of dissent which happens to be the crux of academic autonomy should be the corner stone of the autonomous system.

**Administrative autonomy** is the freedom to the institution to manage its own affairs in 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 expend the financial resources at its disposal in a prudent way keeping in view its priorities.

## **STRENGTHS OF AUTONOMY**

Autonomy should necessarily lead to excellence in academics, governance and financial management of the institutions.

- In the rapidly changing teaching-learning environment, an autonomous system can timely facilitate much needed innovations such as inter-disciplinary programmes, inter-institutional sharing of academic loads, transfer of credits between different modes of learning and so on.
- The scope for employability of the graduates from autonomous colleges is demonstrably higher.
- The facility for mobilization of traditional and non-traditional sources of funding is enhanced by autonomy.

- International recognition will no longer be based only on the reputation of the affiliating university but also the college in which the graduate is trained and hence the autonomous colleges with higher accreditation rating stand to gain.
- The other strengths of ideal autonomy are Innovations, Experimentation, Expansion and maximization of potentials, Quality improvement and strict adherence to academic calendars, Societal relevance, Full involvement of teachers in the entire system, Confidence building between students and teachers, Transparency in teaching and evaluation, Increased scope for educational reforms and Speedy and timely implementation of programmes.

## **AUTONOMY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

The successful implementation of the concept of autonomy 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 autonomy. A system of academic audit at every step of the implementation of the concept of autonomy 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 upgradation of teachers.

Autonomy and accountability are two sides of the same coin. Accountability enables the institutions to regulate the freedom given to them by way of autonomy. The benchmarks include:

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- Willingness to accept ownership on quality matters to be achieved by self and peer appraisal of teachers, students and programmes.
- Increase of peer opinion in higher education.
- Restructuring of curricula to update knowledge along with good communication, managerial and entrepreneurship skills and employability.
- Updated teaching-learning methods and modules
- Improved documentation utilizing the advances of information technology.
- Improved student services in IT based learning resources and support services.
- Healthy practices and greater involvement of students, parents and alumni.

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**GURGAON**

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## DISTINCTION BETWEEN AN AFFILIATED AND AUTONOMOUS COLLEGE

PARAMETER	AFFILIATED COLLEGE	AUTONOMOUS COLLEGE
STATUS	Affiliated to a University & generally provides undergraduate education.	College upgraded for its potential for academic excellence & its capability to design its curriculum & evolve effective testing & teaching processes.
WHETHER RECOGNIZED?	RECOGNIZED	RECOGNIZED
DOES IT HAVE ACADEMIC AUTONOMY?	NO	YES
IS IT TEACHING OR RESEARCH ORIENTED?	TEACHING	TEACHING & RESEARCH
CAN IT MAKE ITS ACADEMIC RULES & REGULATIONS INCLUDING ITS OWN ACADEMIC CALENDAR?	NO	YES
CAN IT DESIGN THE CURRICULUM/ SYLLABUS?	NO	YES
CAN IT INNOVATE WITH THE TEACHING MECHANISM?	NO	YES
CAN IT PRESCRIBE THE GRADING PATTERN?	NO	YES
CAN IT CONDUCT THE EXAMINATIONS?	NO	YES
CAN IT EVALUATE THE ANSWER SCRIPTS?	NO	YES
CAN IT DECLARE THE RESULTS?	NO	YES
WHO AWARDS THE DEGREE?	AFFILIATING UNIVERSITY	A GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZED UNIVERSITY WILL AWARD THE DEGREE TO THE STUDENTS EVALUATED AND RECOMMENDED BY THE AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES WITH THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE MENTIONED ON THE DEGREE,
CAN IT PRESCRIBE ITS ADMISSION PROCESS?	NO	YES
CAN IT FIX THE MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ITS ADMISSION?	NO	YES
CAN IT MAKE ITS OWN ADMISSIONS?	NO	YES
CAN IT FIX ITS OWN FEE & OTHER CHARGES?	NO	YES
CAN IT AFFILIATE OTHER COLLEGES?	NO	NO

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