



## AUTONOMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*During the last six decades, the Indian higher education system had undergone many important changes; the most significant being its unprecedented growth and consequent transformation from an elite system to a mass system. Against a backdrop of rapid enrollment growth, declining education quality, accountability to the needs of growth and development and increasing financial pressure. At the same time, there is an evolving need of autonomy for the higher education institutions. India's key policy document for economic development through 2017 - the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan has recommended that the country's higher education institutions be granted more autonomy over curriculum, staffing, and programs offered. It is heartening to know that the Union Budget for 2017-18 recognizes the phenomenal significance of autonomy in the institutions imparting higher education. The need for autonomy in higher education ascends on the grounds of academic expansion, excellence and innovation. In the same note, the Draft New Education Policy of 2016 admits the need for autonomy in higher education. But it fails to identify suitable mechanisms for guaranteeing autonomy that is needed for transforming India by maintaining excellence in higher education. Hence, the objective of this paper is to discuss the issues related to autonomy of higher educational institutions in India and conceptually analyze whether autonomy is actually practiced or not linking to the present situation of autonomy of higher educational institutions in India and its impact on the quality of education.*

**KEYWORDS:** Higher Education in India, Autonomy, Autonomy in Higher Education in India.

### COMMISSION, COMMITTEE AND POLICY ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The different commissions and committees that have examined the Indian higher education system, after independence, have identified the illness that affect it and have also suggested remedies. The Kothari Commission emphasized that the proper sphere of Institution autonomy is in three fields: 1) Selection of students, 2) Appointment and promotion of teachers and 3) Determination of courses of study, methods of teaching and selection of areas and problems of research. However, we have failed to follow up on the recommendations. The maladies identified by the Kothari Commission over three decades ago still exist. The latest example of our indifferent approach is the half-hearted manner in which the Programme of Action, 1992 is being implemented.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, visualized that higher education should become dynamic as never before. One of the main features of the programmes and strategies to impart the necessary dynamism to the higher education system consist of the Development of Autonomous Colleges and Departments. The system of affiliated colleges does not provide autonomy to deserving colleges to frame curricula, courses of studies, or their own system of evaluation (Gandhi, 2013). The affiliation system as introduced by the British in India in 1887 is currently in practice only in two other countries, Bangladesh and Pakistan (Singh, 2016). As under this system, the university is responsible for the functioning of all its

affiliated colleges and as the quality of higher education in India remained stagnant while elsewhere the quality soared, there was a demand to revamp the Indian higher education system. There was an urgent need to revolutionise the system and the Kothari Committee on Higher Education, in its report submitted to the Government of India in 1966, recognised this need formally for the first time and suggested a gradual move away from the affiliation system to a system of autonomous institutes. The committee cited the increasing number of colleges affiliated to a university as being a burden to the latter and slowing down the decision making process as the biggest setback to improvement of the quality of higher education in India. The UGC defines autonomy to be a functional status conferred upon colleges by it, granting them greater flexibility towards purely academic development for the upliftment of academic standards and excellence. The Government encouraged the granting of the status of autonomy to more colleges as suggested by the Kothari Committee Report. The Madras University was the first University to grant the status to colleges affiliated to it. Starting with three Universities - Madras, Bombay and Calcutta - with colleges affiliated to them, India today has 575 autonomous colleges affiliated to 100 universities in 23 States as of August 1, 2016 (University Grants Commission, 2016). The move towards autonomy started in the early 1970s as suggestions of the Kothari Committee Report were taken into consideration. The Kothari Committee, 1966, identified that the affiliating system led to large inefficiencies and contributed substantially to the widening gap of India's quality of education with respect to global standards. The delay in decision making process by universities as they struggle to manage the numerous colleges affiliated to them, the rigid academic curricula which has not been revised as per changing trends, economic needs and tastes of students, the stagnant, low level of research carried out in colleges and the lack of global competitiveness in the wake of increased number of foreign universities establishing their institutes in India are some of the problems identified by the committee in its report submitted to the Government of India in 1966. One of the challenges of higher education is to make students, work ready. With the global scenario changing rapidly with sectorial growth varying from time to time, it is necessary for higher education institutes to revise their curricula to accommodate these changes and introduce new, high quality courses according to the need. It has been noted that, under the affiliating system, the revision of curricula is a long drawn process and hence is taken up occasionally.

### ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

Etymologically, there are two features of autonomy viz. the nature of self i.e. 'autos' and the kind of norm and rule - 'nomos'. Put together autonomy would thus mean adopting for oneself self norms - self-governance and responsibility. According to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1995), autonomy refers to 'the ability to make own decisions about what to do rather than being influenced by someone else or told what to do'. Autonomy thus introduces the idea of self-direction' as well as recognition of norms or principles with which the autonomous person governs himself. Later on it came to be widely understood as a property of persons as providing freedom to all people who are responsible for the execution of the job itself. Autonomy is expected to provide a better framework through a decentralized management culture. 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. Autonomy and accountability are two sides of the same coin.

Sometimes institutional autonomy is taken in a narrower sense. It then refers to the specific freedom to design and define academic programmes and curricula, and to select (categories of) students. In my view the freedom to design and carry out organizational and financial competences and capacities should be seen as aspects of the broader academic autonomy of a university. All these aspects are closely linked, and more importantly a university needs broad freedom of action exactly because of its core

academic role. A university is not a theatre under independent management where various academic groups come to perform academic plays, but rather an integrated academic company and community responsible for all and everything it needs and brings forth (Noorda, 2013).

In an abstract way and at the institutional level, autonomy refers to the freedom to design and execute individual, integral strategies and services. Autonomous universities have full authority and are able to carry full responsibility for the efficiency and quality of their performance – in teaching, in research and in public service. In this sense autonomy implies a considerable degree of independence, the freedom to make all strategic and operational choices and decisions relevant to a university and its role in society. Autonomy in higher education is usually understood to mean “academic freedom”, with universities enjoying freedom of discovery, inquiry and the teaching and learning of their students (Johns, 2018). The delegation of authority with accountability for the academic as well as the associate management function is therefore, essential for the success of autonomy. Autonomy, when exercised with the sense of responsibility and accountability will inevitably lead to excellence in academics, governance and financial management of the institutions. If it does not lead to this, it can be safely concluded that autonomy has been misused.

### CHARACTERISTIC OF AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTIONS

Autonomous colleges need to be affiliated to a certain university. These colleges can conduct their own admission procedure and exams. However, at the end of the course completion, they cannot issue their own degree or diploma. The final degree is issued by the affiliated university.

Autonomous institutes, like deemed-to-be university, enjoy full autonomy or independence in deciding courses, syllabus, admissions and fees. However, some autonomous institutes are permitted to award degrees, though they are not referred to as universities. These institutes include Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIITs), National Institutes of Technology (NITs), All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), etc. (Gupta, 2017).

#### Salient Features:

- Conducts their own admission procedure
- Can decide their own syllabus
- Conduct their own exams
- May or may not grant diploma or degree to students.

### CRITERIA OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

Institutional autonomy has many and complex components, not all of which require absolute autonomy, but the essential point is that our institutions are legally entitled to freedom of action in managing their affairs within the restraints of the laws. The claim for autonomy does not rest upon any assumption of special privileges, but upon the argument (based on long experience) that the institutions can properly undertake the work expected of them by the community which supports them only if they have freedom of choice and of action. This does not exempt them from public interest and criticism, nor does it mean that their policies should not be under review by themselves, and by others.

One of the more important areas of institutional autonomy is in the selection of staff and students. Although pay scales and, under certain circumstances, conditions of employment may require government approval, the individuals appointed to posts, even at the highest level, are ultimately a matter for the institutions' Councils alone. Student numbers are determined by government on the advice of the UGC, but the acceptance or rejection of applicants for places is entirely a matter for the institutions.

Another aspect of institutional autonomy lies in the determination of curricula and the setting of standards. Although choices will necessarily depend upon prior educational achievement at school and upon employers' and professional bodies' needs and expectations of graduates, and there will be financial

limitations in some disciplines, responsibility for what is taught and how well it is taught lies with the institutions.

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. Of course, academic plans and their financial consequences need detailed discussion with the UGC, not just because the Committee is in practice the paymaster, but because it can view one institution's proposals in the context of those of all of the institutions and of educational trends worldwide, and because it is aware of government's own needs. But, once triennial funding has been settled, the detailed implementation of academic plans, the modification of those plans to meet changing circumstances and the introduction of unforeseen developments to meet unexpected opportunities are all done more efficiently by unfettered institutions than by the UGC. Indeed, wise institutions will devolve much of this work to departmental level and give similar freedom of action.

Institutional autonomy in research is more complicated, since questions of the freedom of the individual researcher are also involved. In a broad sense, however, institutions are free to accept or reject external proposals (and finance) for research depending on their view of their role and whether their human and material resources, which are limited, are best deployed in a particular area. Research at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels has always remained poor in India with very few research projects being undertaken and of those being undertaken, fewer add to the existing bank of knowledge (Deepa, 2006). Some of the reasons identified for this include lack of funds allocated by parent universities to the colleges under the current system. In the wake of increased globalisation of higher education and with more foreign universities venturing into India, the deteriorating quality of education offered by Indian colleges poses a threat to the very survival of these colleges. Given the challenges Indian higher education institutes face today in declining quality and the resultant preference for foreign education by Indian students, it is pertinent to reform the system such that it addresses these shortcomings and makes India a preferred destination for higher education. It is highly important to analyse if the prescribed solution of granting autonomy to more colleges is effective and to determine if the current system of autonomous colleges need to be revamped. Identifying the constraints to the smooth functioning of autonomous colleges will help us explore possible solutions and improve the functioning of the colleges.

### **AUTONOMY OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS - PRESENT DAY SCENARIO**

To build world-class higher education institutions in India, we need to change the method of assessment and accreditation. Making accreditation bodies autonomous is the first step in this direction," said Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan, former vice-chancellor of Madras University and dean of research at Sri Ramachandra University in Chennai. "In India there is a lot of political interference right from the time a college or university is established. Affiliation is dictated by state and central government entities. Having full autonomy, structural stability and accountability will give teeth to existing accreditation bodies (Thyagarajan). Prof. A.N. Rai, director of the NAAC, said functional autonomy meant it would not have to consult with the University Grants Commission, or UGC, when setting norms on assessment parameters and policies. "We will be directly communicating with the ministry, which will help us to have more freedom to formulate our own rules. The total time for processing applications will also come down significantly," he said.

Notably, India has 723 universities including institutions of national importance, 37,204 colleges and 11,356 professional schools offering diploma-level courses. Overall, some 28.6 million students are pursuing higher education, according to data from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, or HRD. Despite such large numbers, only a handful of Indian institutions are rated highly on quality parameters. Universities and the education ministry have faced strong criticism for not making it to global ranking lists compiled by organisations such as Times Higher Education and QS. (Mishra, 2014)

Many of the ills of Indian higher education can be attributed to the system of affiliation. Most conventional Indian universities are teaching-cum-affiliating; and some of the larger universities have more than 600 colleges affiliated to them. The colleges have common syllabi and the students appear for a common examination usually conducted at the end of the year. For many universities the conduct of examination has become the most important administrative function. The affiliating system was devised to regulate and standardize the quality of education. But with the tremendous increase in the number of institutions the system has become counter-productive. The affiliating system is a drag on the better institutions that would otherwise regularly revise and updates their curricula and introduces innovative programmes. In order to allow the growth of colleges that had the desire to move ahead the concept of autonomous colleges was introduced about a decade back. It allows the college to have autonomy as regards academic matter. Management, teachers and students all look upon this innovation with suspicion. There is clearly a need for dialogue amongst all concerned so that a conducive environment can be created. Many educationists feel that the programme of granting to the colleges needs to be vigorously pursued, even to the extent of making every college autonomous and responsible for itself.

### **AUTONOMY: A PRIVILEGE AND A RESPONSIBILITY**

There are more than six organizations which typically take a control-oriented, rule-based view. Unlike international accreditation agencies that operate in developed countries - who have a process view of things - where assisting the institutions to achieve excellence is the motto, unfortunately Indian institutions take a regulatory view. This goes against the spirit of experimentation, innovation and co-thinking of the teacher and the student. Too many institutions for generating controls are also a burden to the national exchequer.

It is important that the academics are made free from the fetters of such controls and given autonomy to do what they are supposed to do: teaching and researching (Sankaran & Joshi, 2016). Knowledge work requires a climate of trust and the spirit of trusteeship which can least be fostered by the compliance orientation we see today. The cultural ethos of our ancient nation of respecting knowledge and sacralizing the process of knowledge generation and transmission are completely at odds with the bureaucratization we see today. Questioning is more important for the students than having answers to what the teachers ask. It is interesting to note that most great works of ancient India start with the student asking a question and the Master giving answers.

But it can be done only when the higher institutions get full autonomy and the autonomy or self-government is a basic quality of modern universities, if practiced well. Universities need a fair deal of autonomy to be able to fulfill their mission well. Yet, although this is an essential condition, it is not sufficient for success. Autonomy may be seen as a privilege; nevertheless, it should be practiced as a responsibility and a task. If academic self-governance is mainly being perceived as freedom be it from outside and/or from top-down interference and if it is not embedded in a broader practice of good quality governance and balanced responsibilities, it will not yield the desired fruits. Simply put, autonomy may be a popular theme, it is not a cure-all. Good self-governance requires much more than the restriction of outside intervention. It should be seen and practiced as a core aspiration of the university community, both in terms of structure and of culture, of responsibilities and of personalities.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION NEEDS AUTONOMY FOR EXCELLENCE, NOT MERE REGULATION**

Universities are meant to create excellence which should reflect in quality of education, transparency, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, employability, industrial collaborations, and international competitiveness. All these endeavors need autonomy because all these, especially industrial and foreign collaborations, which are most crucial for experiential learning and joint quality research, can be decreased by over-regulation. Universities should also be encouraged to become sustainable by creating their own corpus fund for research innovation and entrepreneurship.

Putting it simply, too many regulations negatively affect the teaching and learning process, making achieving excellence that much more difficult because regulation does not involve any quality benchmarks, whereas accreditation does. Self-regulation is the most effective and productive regulation. Autonomy with accountability and accreditation should be the norm (Bawa, 2017). For instances, state governments in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh timely (from late 1990s and early 2000s) sensed the importance of doing away with rigid laws and policies, and offered a liberal regime for higher educational institutions to thrive. Thus, by 2010, these states were successful in establishing majority of the private medical, engineering, management and nursing colleges of the country. States in the north have realised the same much later and therefore Punjab too is a late starter. But fortunately Punjab is in a growth and expansion mode, looking forward to competing with universities in other states and countries.

### **INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST**

Institutional autonomy is vital. It supports academic freedom and its necessary corollary: without it, higher education institutions cannot be self-governing, and if they are not, the danger is that external interference will ultimately limit academic freedom. Higher education without academic freedom- the ability of staff to pursue research and teach without fear of being censored or disciplined- is not higher education at all (Andrews, 2015).

Institutional autonomy is not the only principle that higher education staff should defend. The sector does not exist in a vacuum, beyond the needs and interest of society at large. Higher education should have at its heart a desire to make a difference to the lives of individuals, regions, nations and the world. Learning and research, teaching and knowledge exchange, are valuable and valued, which is precisely why it is important to monitor, assure and enhance these activities. Institutional autonomy should operate consistently and in harmony with systems of accountability and the legitimate public interest in the sector's activities. Funding all too often is the accepted reason for external intervention, but who funds higher education- and hence whether an institution is private, public, and charitable or for profit-is not the salient point: public interest in higher education is legitimate precisely because what we do is so important. Greater appreciation of the balance the needs to be struck between institutional autonomy and the public interest would benefit the sector as it grapples with numerous thorny issues.

To increase productivity of the beneficiaries of higher education emphasis should be on reflective education and education that enlightens about the self and gives a peek into one's own mind. This linkage between human productivity and higher education was the main theme for discussion in the 90th Annual Meeting of the Association of Indian Universities held on February 05-07, 2016 at Sardar Patel University, Gujarat. It is interesting to note that one of the important representatives of NAAC was ready to admit that most of the colleges and universities do not have enough autonomy to take their own decisions (Singh, 2016). The government rules and regulations rather slow down the speed of progress in higher education. Many institutions find it difficult to comply with the directives and conditions of multiple regulatory authorities so much so that it has become a herculean task. Any effort towards transforming India would call for well-developed structures and systems in higher education that would allow for reaping the benefits of autonomy.

### **AUTONOMY FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

Philosopher Immanuel Kant held that autonomy is at the root of human dignity and the source of all morality. In education, excellence in academics, good governance and financial well-being of institutions can be achieved when autonomy is practised with responsibility and accountability. However, this concept is alien to Indian higher education (Das, 2018). Right from the source of power, the HRD ministry, to the delivering unit, a teaching department in a university, lack of autonomy has been a cause of great distress. A system steeped in hierarchy, which believes in foisting orders and in commanding, overrules greater autonomy and academic freedom. Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralisation, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a

result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted (Kumar, 2015). As much as institutional autonomy is required for higher education to achieve its vision and mission, it is important for such autonomy to percolate to the lowest and fundamental unit, the faculty member.

The faculty and their student stand at the center of the enterprise called university. The ideal role of a faculty is not restricted in imparting knowledge but in inculcating qualities in students where they learn how to acquire knowledge themselves, ask intellectual questions and evaluate evidence.

It is fundamental to autonomy that it cannot be executed without scrutiny, beyond professional norms, or without boundaries. The larger role of university, at least until now, is towards the community, the society. Universities thus should not be exempt from public scrutiny. Accountability, output control, performance based funding, quality assurance are tools of higher education policy which can exert necessary checks and balances in an autonomous system.

There are plenty of empirical evidences suggesting how financial autonomy, constitutional autonomy have positively correlated with performance of institutions. Thus constantly squeezing budget, demanding ever greater accountability and shifting goalposts under governmental pressure does not augur well for autonomy in higher education.

Research has shown that mere asking people for their perspectives give them a sense of autonomy. At the level of departments, steps like noting revisions undertaken in response to faculty concerns, providing timely and detailed feedback, providing rationale at the face of lack of choice, encouraging individual dialogue and questioning are steps that academic leaders should take to foster autonomy. The problem with autonomy in Indian higher education can be and information asymmetry between a commanding government and receiving university. The field of autonomy gets muddled with the agent taking decisions for principal, a hugely diverse and dynamic set, about which it has not much information.

The need for autonomy in higher education arises on the grounds of academic expansion, excellence and innovation. The whole field of higher education in India is plagued by multiplicity of controls and interventions exercised by the government with the result that there is quantitative expansion without excellence and innovation. There are more than six authorities or bodies exercising controls on management education which has to play a crucial role in the growth and development of the country. The Draft New Education Policy of 2016 admits the need for autonomy in higher education. But it fails to identify suitable mechanisms for guaranteeing autonomy that is needed for transforming India by maintaining excellence in higher education. It is heartening to know that the Union Budget for 2017-18 recognizes the phenomenal significance of autonomy in the institutions imparting higher education. It goes without saying that the States should complement the efforts of the Central Government for what is absolutely needed for ensuring both excellence and innovation in higher education in the times to come.

Good quality institutions would be enabled to have greater administrative and academic autonomy. Colleges should be identified based on accreditation and ranking, and given autonomous status. A revised framework will be put in place for outcome based accreditation and credit based programmes. Since, many matters of higher education are in the State list of the Indian Constitution, the State Governments should also take policy measures to complement what the Centre proposes to do through the budgetary announcements. They should also admit that without a well-structured higher education system guaranteeing autonomy in the real and full sense of the term their growth and development will be further stunted.

In a landmark announcement on 20<sup>th</sup> March the Indian government announced greater autonomy for 62 leading higher education institutions to start new courses, plan their own curriculum and syllabi, decide their own admission procedures and enter into academic collaborations with foreign institutions. In a boost to internationalisation, 25 top-ranked universities out of the dozens selected will also be able to hire foreign faculty and enroll foreign students – up to a fifth of the student body and faculty and be allowed to fix fees and charges from foreign students “without restriction”. The others will be able to do so with government approval.

In all, five centrally-funded universities, 21 state universities, 26 private and so-called 'deemed' universities and 10 other colleges will benefit from the government's initiative announced by (HRD on 20 March 2018) that would enable institutions to function more efficiently. The selected institutes can engage in academic collaborations with the world's top 500 universities, and also set up distance-learning courses. The centrally-funded institutions include Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi, Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, Aligarh Muslim University, the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in Mumbai and the University of Hyderabad, among others ( Niazi & Sharma, 2018).

A day after the announcement, students and teachers from a large number of colleges from Delhi University - which was not among the universities given autonomy – and JNU, which was, held a protest describing it as an "ill-conceived decision". The Delhi University Teachers' Association said it was a step towards privatisation of publicly-funded institutions.

The Federation of Central Universities Teachers' Associations (FEDCUTA) said financial autonomy would enable institutions to decide fees, but it also means cuts in government funding. "The government wants to reduce the institutions' dependence on government funding and this would make education commercial, market determined and market dependent," FEDCUTA said in a statement. JNU teachers said in a statement it would bestow on "authoritarian university administrations" the impunity to "flout all rules, norms and codes and exercise unchecked power in privatising universities and undo the agenda of social justice". Dinesh Singh, former vice-chancellor of Delhi University, criticized the fact that the UGC will continue to have oversight, despite the proposed autonomy.

The role of the UGC has been regressive and counterproductive and it was important to do away with UGC control and regulations, he said, adding: "The institutions can work better without the government meddling in their affairs."

## CONCLUSION

Autonomy of higher institutions broadly emphasizes the freedom to function to achieve academic excellence and freedom to administer the institution through its own rules and regulations. Such autonomy has now become a veritable myth on account of too much linkage with political powers of the state, and financial constraints faced by the institutions. Many states have come to apply more control on autonomous functioning of universities & colleges by various means and methods. Financial aid has become most powerful instruments in the hands of state government to curtail the autonomy of the University & Colleges.

The concept of autonomy or autonomous colleges thereof can be systematically dovetailed in the aforesaid issues. It seems desirable to reiterate that the whole exercise will serve no purpose if Union Government and State Governments keep enjoying their control through its departments. Some of the aforesaid key issues in the present day scenario of granting autonomy and ensuring accountability for excellence in higher education have been discussed in this paper. These issues are to be resolved in progressive manner, with definite and meaningful action plan for the same.

RAND researchers reviewed documents and policies from countries that are similar in terms of size, governance structure, or higher education system quality. The report of the study revealed a connection between successful autonomous institutions and measures of quality that are closely aligned with national goals for higher education. However, simply establishing policies linking quality and funding is not sufficient to ensure a high-quality education system. A range of other supports, such as developing a pool of well-qualified faculty and strengthening quality assurance bodies, are needed for these policies to succeed (Daugherty, 2013).

Furthermore, improvement measures should be applied to both public and private institutions, and they should be transparent and accessible to all stakeholders to encourage quality-based decision making. Consequently, additional resources will be needed to support these stakeholders as they transition to their new governance roles.

To reduce the political meddling, the Central advisory board of Education (CABE) committee also recommends that the institutions must make efforts to generate their own resources "for better self-



reliance and for improvement in the infrastructure requirements that are becoming all the more demanding in the knowledge era.” While still receiving assistance from the state, institutions that generate their own resources “must be encouraged by providing them some incentive package.” The committee further recommends that “all guidelines should emanate from within the institutions.” However, all these recommendations have only remained on paper.

If Indian higher education institutions are to produce quality research, if they are to generate employable graduates, if they are to compete with their counterparts globally, they need greater autonomy. The concept of autonomy must be understood by all tiers in higher education leading to the teacher in the classroom. Only then can things change for better. Control just leads to compliance, a phenomenon the powers that be are fond of, whereas autonomy leads to engagement, a prerequisite for good education.

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