



PERCEPTION OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS TOWARDS INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Institutional autonomy has attracted more and more attention nowadays . In recent years ,a considerable number of institutions have already been allotted the status of Institutional Autonomy and some more have begun to show great interest in making their institution acquire the status of autonomy. The objective of the study is to find out the perception of prospective teachers towards Institutional Autonomy. The survey method is adopted for conducting the study .The questionnaire contains items concerning the prospective teachers perception towards Institutional Autonomy .The results indicate that students have positive perceptions towards Institutional autonomy. They have a general desire to be involved in an institution having the status of autonomy as they may be believing in the value of effort and self-discipline though in the midst of freedom.

KEYWORDS: Institutional Autonomy, Perceptions, Prospective Teachers

INTRODUCTION

In the process of transpiring the knowledge society of the 21st century, higher education has become the most important tool of development and the universities have become instrumental to knowledge generation. For excellence in academics, good governance and financial well-being of institutions are prerequisites and these can be achieved when institutions are allowed to have autonomy, which is practised with responsibility and accountability. Indian higher education has always suffered the stress and strain of heavy over-regulation in a top-down system. Policy are formulated in the centre at the behest of a plethora of agencies like MHRD, UGC, AICTE, all keen on holding the reins, and sent as directives to universities who themselves are silos having numerous colleges under them. Room for curricular innovation, shift from traditional teaching-learning methods and evaluation or changed norms for admissions does not exist with universities, let alone colleges. autonomy basically means providing freedom to all people who are responsible for the execution of the job itself. The autonomy is expected to provide a better framework through a decentralized management culture. According to Kant, the delegation of authority with accountability for the academic as well as the associate management function is therefore, essential for the success of autonomy. An autonomous person is, fundamentally, one able to act according to his or her own direction the prerequisite for rational human action. Likewise, an autonomous institution is one able to regulate its own affairs. Rousseau's writings illustrate that the relation between the self-government of a group and individual autonomy is complicated by the need to distinguish between the collective self-government of a group and the self-direction of an individual member of that group. Ideas about individual autonomy are closely linked to conceptions of freedom.

The concept of autonomy commonly refers to the professional independence in schools where the teachers can make autonomous decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it. An autonomous institution has the academic freedom to decide on the organisational and administrative structure, set its priorities, manage its budget, hire its personnel and admit its students, decide the content and forms of its teaching and research. To guarantee higher quality and to attain better performance in teaching and learning processes it is necessary to encourage the involvement and commitment of all those involved with the process like teachers, students and the management. Foisting of orders and command would necessarily be a factor impeding the innovation, competence and commitment of those involved in the very process and such a course for achieving excellence is therefore, undesirable. Owing to the development and acceptance of Institutional autonomy in promoting life-long learning, more and more educators have realized that it is quite necessary to become autonomous and to equip the institutions with learners having the ability of “learning how to learn”.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are several reasons why the issues of academic freedom and university autonomy have re-emerged on the agenda in the last few years. First of all, there is the abysmal increase in the number of students pursuing higher education, as its corollary, the explosion in most countries — whatever their political or social system — of the number of higher education institutions, a phenomenon that has gained momentum over the years. Autonomy of higher education institution goes hand-in-hand with its accountability, the delegation and devolution of power and authority concomitant with responsibility should flow not only from the external environment to the higher education institution but should be given at different levels within the higher education institution itself. (CABE, 2005) There should be a charter of responsibility and devolution and delegation of authority defined for different levels within the university system and both should be monitored together. Teachers are in the best position to make informed decisions about their student’s education. Hence teachers should be given autonomy to determine instructional strategies, curriculum, and academic matters. It could develop teacher quality, teaching quality and improve the effectiveness of teachers in public-school instruction, including administrative oversight. It helps to easily comply with the increased educational and professional requirements for new teachers and improving their job performance. Hence the researchers made an attempt to study the student teachers (as they are “going to be teachers”) perception towards institutional autonomy. Teachers should be given the right to design their courses from conception to evaluation. If outside help (guest faculty, experts from industry and academia) is used, it may be done for specific and specialized units or modules.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A research work will always take the essence of the information and the knowledge that had been amassed in the past as a result of the research endeavors by the aspiring investigators. A considerable number of researches have been conducted on institutional autonomy. An account of the review of related literatures pertaining to variable (institutional autonomy) under study by the investigators is presented here under.

In a study, Spector, P.E (1986) found that high levels of perceived control was associated with high levels of job satisfaction (overall and individual facets), commitment, involvement, performance and motivation, and low levels of physical symptoms, emotional distress, role stress, absenteeism in an autonomous institution.

Cottrell’s (1995) through her study suggested that before the intervention of any programme, it is necessary to measure learners' readiness for the change when autonomy is functional and so the present study aimed at knowing the knowledge of students on autonomy.

Hayden & Thiep (2007) conducted a study on Institutional autonomy for higher education in Vietnam .They recommended that measures supportive of institutional autonomy in higher education need to be addressed through legislative and regulatory reform.

Robert (1983) authored a book on maintaining diversity in higher education where he insisted upon implementing diversity in description, analysis, and assessment of American higher education and discussed on that aspects which makes institutions different indirectly suggesting the advantages of autonomy that could bring. He also put forward ways of measuring diversity and changes in institutions and advocated policy and program changes to enhance the diversity that is critical to the stability of U.S. higher education. Daniel (1980) conducted a case study on the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) with the title Diversity and Government in Mexico: Autonomy in an Authoritarian System. The study examined the meaning of autonomy and its relationship to regime control, personnel and student access, academic autonomy in regard to academic policy and academic freedom, and campus autonomy. The study helps to realize the delicate relation between the authoritarian state and institutional autonomy.

Kumar (1987) found that internal democracy is needed for accountability and autonomy in Higher Education. All these related literatures confirmed the significance of institutional autonomy in enhancing the quality of higher education.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Perception: In this study, perception means the way in which the said concept (Institutional Autonomy) is understood or interpreted.

Student Teacher: The prospective teacher here refers to the student studying for the B.Ed. course in the Colleges of Education of Kanniyakumari District.

Institutional Autonomy: Institutional Autonomy refers to the status conferred to the institutions to make autonomous decisions about their functioning.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the perception of the B.Ed. Students towards institutional autonomy

Method:- The survey method was adopted for conducting the study.

Sample:- The study was carried out on a representative sample of 100 students studying for the B.Ed. course in Colleges of Education, Kanniyakumari District

Instrument:- In this study, the investigator used Perception Scale on Institutional Autonomy to collect data.

Procedure:- After administering the tools on the prospective teachers, the responses collected from them were carefully subjected to statistical analysis. Percentage analysis was the statistical technique used.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION-

An integral part of this concept and the related reforms is the granting of more autonomy to institutions of higher education to plan their activities, mobilize resources to implement programmes, and monitor activities. The present study focuses on institutional autonomy and the role it plays in governance and management towards enhancing the overall effectiveness of higher education systems. It addresses in particular the effect of autonomy on academic programmes, staff appointments, student admissions, administration, and financing. The responses made by student teachers on their perception towards institutional autonomy are given in the following tables.

Table - 1
Perception of 100 Respondents towards the Areas Positively Affected by Institutional Autonomy

Sl. No.	Sub Categories	Response		
		agree	disagree	undecided
1.	Academic Programmes	63	20	17
2.	Staff Management and Evaluation	71	19	10
3.	Students Administration and Management	76	15	9
4.	Administrative Procedures	68	17	15
5.	Decision Making Structure	74	21	4

6.	Financial Management	69	29	2
7.	Power for Governing Bodies	72	19	9
8.	Organizational Structure	67	21	12
9.	The Conversion of Students and Teachers from “ Consumers “of Knowledge to “ Producers “of Knowledge”	71	28	1

From Table 1, it is observed that the majority of the student teachers have positively opined on the implementation of autonomy to institutions , Academic programmes 63%,Staff Management and Evaluation 71%,Students Administration and Management 76% , Administrative Procedures 68%,Power for Governing Bodies 72% ,Organizational Structure 67%, the Conversion of Students and Teachers from “ Consumers “of Knowledge to “ Producers “of Knowledge” 71%,whereby it could bring considerable changes in its academic condition including the academic programmes, management and evaluation .

Table - 2

Perception of 100 Respondents on the need to promote Institutional Autonomy

Sl. No	Sub Categories	Response		
		agree	disagree	undecided
1.	On deciding “what and how to learn”.	71	21	8
2.	Learning for self-efficacy	64	22	14
3.	To develop innovative curriculum	67	24	9
4.	“Life-oriented” approach rather than “examination –oriented” approach.	65	20	15
5.	All-round personality development of individuals	74	18	8
6.	Productive shift “from dependence toward independence”	69	15	16
7.	People to take responsibility of their role by themselves than by compulsion	72	18	10
8.	Freedom in selecting the leaders of the institution	72	21	7

From Table 2, it is observed that the majority of the student teachers have positively opined on the need to promote institutional autonomy. They viewed that it would decide on “what and how to learn” 71%, learning for self-efficacy 64 % , to develop innovative curriculum 67%,”life-oriented” approach rather than “examination –oriented” approach 65 % ,all-round personality development of individuals 74 % , productive shift “from dependence toward independence” 69%, People to take responsibility of their role by themselves than by compulsion 72% and freedom in selecting the leaders of the institution 72%.Hence the prospective teachers perceived on encouraging institutional autonomy.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:

Higher education plays a crucial role in the realisation of India’s potential for economic and technological growth and hence autonomy of higher education institutes nowadays is a debatable topic.. Autonomy helps institutions in maintain quality and accountability, thereby encouraging institutions to integrate distinctive pedagogical developments and practices into the curriculum. In his recent Union Budget speech, the finance minister Arun Jaitley announced his intention to reform the higher education sectors including the University Grants Commission (UGC) to provide more autonomy to quality higher educational institutions. The announcement highlighted the principle underlying the fact that the autonomous status could ensure institutional effectiveness in performance and governance.

Therefore the young human resources in higher education sector should formulate constructive perception on institutional autonomy. Accordingly a study was conducted and the results of the study revealed that, the majority of the student teachers have perceived on the increasing necessity of becoming institutional autonomy for all. They have suggested that institutional autonomy enhances the quality of an institution and encourages on deciding “what and how to learn”. It is a kin to learning for self-efficacy .They

also perceived that it can bring innovativeness on course content and make them as “producers” instead of “consumers” of learning. It removes examination-oriented “approach and offers “life-oriented” approach. Institutional autonomy also helps for the holistic personality development of individuals whoever concerned with it. It could also be heightened to the status of constitutional right as Academic freedom is a constitutional right in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Department of Education, 1997).

CONCLUSION:-

From the study it was concluded that, the student teachers of Colleges of Education have, perceived on the need for making institutions autonomous.

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