

Indicators for Assessing Academic Quality of Autonomous Colleges

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Abstract

The Concept of autonomy was first time recommended by The Education commission (1964-66). The affiliation system was always criticized for its limitations of addressing the needs and requirements of all colleges under a university equally. This system of affiliation thought to be suppressing the high performing colleges on one hand and on the other hand it increases burden of administration, governance and management of affiliating colleges over university which limits a university's potential to concentrate over research, and extension. The University Grant Commission formulated objectives of the scheme of autonomy for under graduate colleges providing colleges the liberty to restructure, redesign, rename courses and revising the syllabus of courses, determining rules for admission and devise new methods of evaluation and examination etc. There is no consensus over the success of scheme. A community of academicians opines that this scheme is nothing but giving unrestricted powers to colleges to exploit students and teachers. No study till date has been conducted which would have established the success of the autonomous colleges in academic aspects. In this study researcher identified ten parameters and their relative indicators to assess the academic quality of autonomous colleges.

Keywords: Beautification and maintenance of college campus, Indicators.

Introduction

Modern higher education system of India takes its genesis in the recommendations of Wood's Dispatch of 1854. This document underlines the need for a higher education system for a nation and proposed the establishment of three universities at Mumbai (Bombay), Kolkata (previously Calcutta) and Madras respectively. The model set for these universities was the London University Model. In that model University was assigned only a supervisory role. Functions of a University were granting affiliation to the colleges, determining curriculum, conducting examination and awarding degrees to students. There was no teaching and research in university- campuses.

The year after establishment of three universities in India, the London University Model was much criticized in England. This model was discarded there and England adopted the Oxford University model which allows colleges the autonomy in academic, administrative and financial affairs.

It is unfortunate to the Indian Higher Education system that we not only continued the same outdated model of affiliation system in higher education but also progressed with the same model, after 70 years of Independence and despite of consistent criticism. The present affiliation system does not serve any purpose of higher education in real sense except certification.

This system was justifiable when and where the number of the colleges within the jurisdiction of a university was limited. But the present scenario of the Indian higher education is totally different due to increasing demand for higher education in India. It increased enormously the number of colleges within the jurisdiction of a university. The number of colleges within a university have sore up to 1500 colleges.

A university finds it very difficult to manage and supervise this great number of the colleges. A part from the administrative problems, there are various practical difficulties which colleges and university have to encounter. It creates many hindrances in the way of university to discharge its duties and performing basic functions well. A university cannot fully devote to its basic functions of teaching, research, extension and supply of trained man power to industry and job market due to overburden of affiliated colleges. Most of the energy and time of a university are spent on managing issues related to colleges. The university determines the curriculum, scheme of evaluation and examination keeping in view the limitations of average, and low performing colleges which do not fit to all college equally.

This system of affiliation affected not only universities but also colleges. There are many colleges under a university which have potential to deliver outstanding results and they can excel in academics if they are granted liberty in academic, administrative and financial affairs but they have to follow the moderate path due to terms of affiliation.

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The Education Commission(1964-66) envisioned the scheme of autonomy for affiliating colleges as a strategy to bring qualitative improvements in higher education. It underlined the importance of delinking the colleges from their parent university and proposed the autonomy to well performing colleges which have potential to excel in academics. The Education Commission (1964-66) makes the following observation–

“When there is an outstanding college or small cluster of very good colleges with a large university which has shown the capacity to improve its markedly. Consideration should be given for granting it an autonomous status. Autonomy shall be a means to achieve higher standard and greater creativity”.

In the same stream The University Grant Commission said in relation to autonomy of college. “Academic autonomy has always been regarded as fundamental necessity for institutions of higher education. The conspicuous absence of this academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the case of college in India has the greatest dysfunctional factor responsible for decline in standard”.

In New education policy 1986, the need for granting autonomy to under graduated colleges was further reiterated. So UGC formulated objectives for autonomous colleges and started the scheme of autonomy for under graduate colleges in 1978. The scheme was taken with open arms by the colleges in southern states of India and the Loyola College; Madras became the first college in India to embrace the scheme of autonomy. The present data released by UGC as in academic year 2019-20 show 587 autonomous colleges spread in the 23 states of the India. The highest number of autonomous colleges is in Tamil Nadu. The colleges of southern India showed interest in the scheme and progress much but the condition of north India is very disappointing. The data of autonomous colleges in north India tells a different story.

Review of Literature

A number of studies conducted in relation to autonomous colleges keeping in view the various aspects of academic, administration, and governance. Devasenan (1979) found that there was an atmosphere of fear and anxiety prevailed in state after introduction of scheme of autonomy. A study by Thankaroj(1981) reveals that the a section of teachers was against the autonomy as they think that it doesn't ensure improvement in management. Bajaj (1989) found in his study that it increases work load without increasing any incentive for them. The study by kapur (1993) reveals that college autonomy provided greater scope for contact between teachers and students. Panda found in his study that students expressed in their views that question s asked in examination were wrongly worded and they were out of syllabus which led their poor performance in examination. They attributed it to the poor performance of administration. Ulker& Bakioglu (2019) found that the process of accreditation is used worldwide to evaluate universities and programs and provide quality assurance, improvement and accountability for stakeholders.

On the basis of the above studies, it can be said that there is an urgent need to identify and enlist the parameters and indicators to evaluate autonomous collages on criterion of academic quality.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to identify and enlist the parameters and indicators of academic quality of autonomous colleges

Methodology

The present study is a document analysis. The method of the study applied was document analysis method. Various documents such as the reports of various committees and commissions, annual reports of various colleges and agencies, surveys of different government and non-government organizations have been referred and used in the present study.

First of all, researcher studied the methodology of various accrediting bodies and ranking agencies working in India and abroad. At national level parameters and indicators of National Assessment and Accreditation Agency (NAAC) and National Institutional ranking Framework (NIRF) were studied. At international level, parameter and indicators of four ranking Agencies were studied. These are Times Higher

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Education World Universities Rankings, Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) or Shanghai Ranking, Q.S. (Quacquarelli Symonds) World university ranking. Apart from these, researcher studied parameters used by UGC for selecting colleges under the scheme of college with potential for excellence. The relevant academic quality indicators used by those assessment and accrediting bodies and ranking agencies, including the parameters used by regulating bodies working in India were identified and enlisted. The document, guidelines for autonomous colleges, prepared by UGC and other documents issued by UGC for improving academic quality of colleges and universities were minutely studied and found out the expected outcomes from autonomous colleges. On the basis of this a comprehensive list of parameters and indicators was prepared and scrutinized keeping in the view the steps taken by top rated autonomous colleges of India. Researcher collected the inputs of academicians, industrialists, principals and teachers working in the field of higher education regarding the appropriateness of parameters and indicators, who have proven abilities in the concerned field. Through this rigorous process, a list of ten academic parameters and their related indicators was prepared for evaluating academic quality of autonomous colleges.

Findings of the Study It was found that there should be ten parameters covering the all-academic aspect of an autonomous college. These are beautification of the college- campus, resources and infrastructure of the college, Admission policy and process, curriculum revision /reformation and introduction of new courses, Evaluation and Examination, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, community welfare work and extension programs, student-support system, Governance and administration of the college, and Academic quality assurance and enhancement strategies.

Beautification and maintenance of college campus

Indicators

1. Grandeur of the gate and proper set of various offices, services and facilities;
2. Trees, plants and vegetation;
3. Educative value of the campus;
4. Security of students and staff in the campus;
5. Cleanliness.

Resources and Infrastructure of college

Indicators

- 1-Availability of learning resources in library
- 2-Services run by library
- 3- Supporting infrastructure of library
- 4- Infrastructure, services and learning resources added after autonomy
- 5- Availability of equipment and consumables in laboratories
- 6- Equipment added after autonomy
- 7-Availability of infrastructure in the college
- 8- Infrastructure added after autonomy

Admission and teaching -learning process

Indicators This parameter includes the indicators as under-

1. Diversity in available courses, eligibility for admission, fees and potential for employability;
2. Transparency and credibility;
3. Implementation of reservation policy;
4. Popularity and demand of college among students' community;
5. Availability of teaching and non-teaching staff as per norms and standards of state government and University;
6. Teacher Students Ratio
7. Academic and administrative work load on teachers and its proportion
8. Involvement of teachers in teaching, research and extension and their output;
9. Variety and innovativeness in academic activities organized by college
10. Use of new pedagogical strategies in curriculum transaction and use of modern tools and technology in teaching;
11. Status of Teachers' performance appraisal and upkeep of its' record;
12. Attendance policy and degree of its implementation;

13. Performance of students in semester- end examinations and competitive examinations;
14. Monitoring mechanism for Students attendance and the teaching –learning work

Curriculum Revision/ Reform and Introduction of New courses

- Indicators**
1. Establishment of Curriculum Development Cell (CDC)
 2. Revision policy in context of priority and periodicity
 3. Revision done in various courses;
 4. Various sources of feed-back and modes of its collection;
 5. Introduction of choice –based- credit system;
 6. Introduction of new courses;
 7. Introduction of interdisciplinary courses
 8. Specifications of new courses

Evaluation and examination

- Indicators**
1. Innovative practices in evaluation and examination (semester system, continuous and comprehensive evaluation, grading system);
 2. Reforms done in evaluation and examination process after autonomy.

Co-curricular and extra- curricular activities

- Indicators**
1. Provisions for co-curricular and extra- curricular activities;
 2. Availability of necessary facilities;
 3. Performance of students;
 4. Major tournaments hosted by college
 5. Cultural activities organized by the college
 6. Magazine and other publications of the college

Community welfare work and extension programs

- Indicators**
1. Variety of and regularity in community welfare work and extension programs run by college;
 2. College's interaction with community

Students' -support system

- Indicators**
1. Identification of students' academic needs and catering to them;
 2. Spectrum of facilities and services provided to students

Governance and administration of college

- Indicators**
1. Timely constitution of statutory authorities and non- statutory bodies;
 2. Preparation of annual schedule of meetings its' compliance;
 3. Co-ordination among authorities
 4. Disclosure of resolutions passed by authorities and compliance of them and keeping of their records

Academic Quality Assurance and enhancement strategies

- Indicators**
1. Vision and Mission of the college.
 2. Outreach/ access of the college.
 3. Establishment of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC).
 4. Grading by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) grading and its cycle.
 5. Participation in National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) and rank awarded.
 6. Special status granted to college by University Grant Commission (UGC) or state Government- College with excellence, College with potential for excellence (CPC), Community college, and recognition of college by department of science and technology etc.
 7. Annual self-evaluation of academic performance, improvements in standards, and extent and degree of success in utilization of autonomy.

8. Disclosure of information related to academic and administrative affairs

Conclusions

Thus on the basis of the above findings, it can be concluded that quality of an autonomous college may be observed mainly in the admission policy, curriculum, introduction of new courses of study, teaching learning process and innovativeness in examination and evaluation process administration and governance, strategies for academic quality assurance. In addition to these aspects, co-curricular activities, extension programs and infrastructural facilities also indicate about the quality of an autonomous college.

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