

## The Role of Autonomous Colleges in the Context of Globalization

**P. Venu Gopal**

*Hindu College, Guntur, (Andhra Pradesh) India*

**P. Venkata Ramu**

*Hindu College, Guntur. (Andhra Pradesh) India*

**Abstract:** Globalization is a widely used term which has acquired several meanings varying in their degree of precision, among intellectuals, media, multilateral lending agencies, business community, environmentalists, economists, traders, educationalists and others. Globalization is very closely connected with the concepts of liberalization, privatization, free markets, centrality of productivity, cultural pluralism transnationalism, informatisation and so on. Education in general and teacher education in particular occupies a significant role in the modern context of the global society. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the time. Globalization has replaced the intrinsic value of teacher education with an instrumental value. Consequently education is identified as a salable commodity and non-salable knowledge is sealed down in the global perspective. The rapid global expansion of knowledge demands an over--all re-organization of education, especially a. basic change in the perspective and process of teacher education.

**Keywords:** globalization; Indian Higher Education System; socio-cultural identity

The new challenges initiated by globalization emphasis the need for re-thinking and restructuring the objectives, contents and methodologies of teacher education programme under the new value perspective, namely, quality, competence and performance, emerging in the global scenario. In this content the concept of autonomous system had increased its role Hence an attempt is made in this paper to examine the advantages and disadvantages of autonomy colleges in India.

### **History of Indian Higher Education System (Stage - 1)**

The theme of higher knowledge and higher education was fashioned in India by the ancient Rishis and sages in the Vedic age. The early Gurukul system of education flourished in the Vedic and Upanishad period, but a huge University came to be set up at Takshasila in the 6th century B.C. Two universities namely Nalanda and Vikramsila were established in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>- centuries A. D. respectively.

The first institution to be given the status of university was Sera Moore College, near Calcutta in 1829. The first three universities established in India in 1857 at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras which were affiliating universities following the model of the London University, Allahabad University was a later formation, which has completed one hundred years was established as a Unitary University.

### **Present System of Higher Education in India (Stage - 2)**

It was only during the period 1904 and 1913, that imparting instruction within the universities began in India. Even so, the general pattern of affiliation of colleges continues with most of the universities in the country. Some of the major problems that are confronting the present university affiliation are discussed below:

The System of affiliation was introduced when there were just a few colleges in and around the university/city. And there, the number of students was also small. Communication between the university and affiliated colleges in the same area was easy and smooth. Today, many affiliated colleges have between 3000 - 5000 students. Thanks to the de-linking of pre-degree students, the number is dwindling in several colleges, but colleges cannot start new courses because of affiliation.

Catering to the educational needs of students in remote corners was not a major concern during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, because the number of students going for higher education was small. Repeating the old type of education for the new generation of students is not going to be helpful to them.

The sudden expansion of Higher Education has led to lowering of quality; many colleges do not have even adequate physical infrastructure, not to speak of innovative and community related, socially relevant courses.

The University's monitoring of the quality of teaching, research, physical facilities like library and laboratory equipment is often nominal and some times politicized.

Although the university sets standards, there is no proper mechanism to monitor the observance of those standards.

The University has become a huge examination mechanism conducting exams to thousands of students every year in regular and private streams, evaluating answer books and declaring results are major activities, for which new buildings are to be constructed.

The system of Affiliation puts the responsibility of updating or revising the syllabus on the shoulders of the University. The colleges themselves must be made responsible for such revision. The evaluation would be better if done by the concerned teachers.

### **Stage - 3**

College autonomy is not a new idea. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) has formally recommended college autonomy for the first time in India. In 1969, Dr.

Gajendra Gadkar committee also suggested the concept of autonomy to the university department. Subsequently, in 1973, the UGC sent a circular to all universities recommending them to set up Autonomous colleges. From 1978 onwards Autonomous colleges came into existence. The UGC has initial objective of establishing 1000 colleges at the end of 8th plan. At present, around 140 Autonomous colleges exist in 8 states.

The concept of 'investment in education' was explicitly adopted by the Govt. of India in the national policy on education in 1968. Keeping in view the growing requirement of the educational system, the Govt. of India has promised to allocate at least six percent of national income to education from the public exchequer. This goal is set for realization by the end of 9th five year plan. Besides its social and cultural dimensions, education is also an economic and political investment yielding long-term benefits. It is, therefore, not only justifiable but desirable to raise money from private sources in order to ease the pressure on public spending. This of course, is not meant to release the State from its financial commitments, which have been substantial in India.

#### **Stage - 4**

In recent years, rapid changes have occurred in the field of higher education. The internationalization of higher education has been recognized as important development in world declaring on higher education adopted in Paris in 1998. This declaration has emphasized upon national and international partnership based on common interest, mutual respect and credibility. All this culminated in the general agreement on trade in services or the GATS. Indian higher education system as a whole has to address the challenges of the emerging internationalization based on its own strengths and weaknesses.

The GATS 2000 also recognizes that education is to a large extent a government function, in that governments will continue to play an important role as suppliers of such services.

So, in the view of the globalization of education, our Indian institutes must be in a position to face the challenges imposed by the external institutions.

Autonomy in principle enables a college to develop and propose programmes that are considered relevant by that college, to its immediate environment as well as the country as a whole. In other words, a college should be able to identify the aspirations of the community that is round it and effectively translate those aspirations in to viable academic programme. An Autonomous college will have the freedom to decide on curriculum and course of study. The teacher himself or herself will study the individual and social needs, arrived at the course of study and design the curriculum in order that every student is well informed of the recent development in the discipline of his choice, is capable of self - learning, reasoning

and is creative. The main thrust in an Autonomous college is maintaining and promoting academic excellence among its students.

### **Objectives of Autonomy**

- An Autonomous college will have freedom to:
- Determine and prescribe its own courses of study and syllabi
- Prescribe rules for admission in consonance with the reservation policy the State Govt.
- Evolve methods of assessment of student work, the conduct of examinations and notifications of results
- Use of modern tools of educational technology to achieve higher standards and a greater creativity.

### **Advantages of Autonomy**

- Board of studies can be formulated consisting of the concerned faculty members.
- Value education can be introduced.
- More scope for teacher development and his/her participation in the college administration.
- Decentralization of powers and building a visionary leadership at grass root level.
- Eligible for special financial assistance from UGC under the special Autonomous grants scheme.

The concept and objectives of autonomy in principle looks good but in reality it is total different. The problems may be said to owe the lack of clarity on the following matters:

1. The concept of autonomy needs more clarification. Many times it exist - dilemma over to whom the autonomy is granted, is it for Principal? Or is it for Department? Or it is for the management?
2. Unless the financial support from UGC increases, most of the managements will n show interest in getting autonomy. But UGC is not ready to release additional grant So there is a dilemma in the minds of managements to opt for the Autonomous college status.
3. Minority privilege either it may be based upon religious or linguistic category is a very powerful weapon which is often misused in Autonomous colleges, to cover all t1 problems, short comings and mismanagements. In some cases, these managements are challenging the laws of the land itself. Another hard reality is

that, the minor institutions are in more number in total number of Autonomous colleges. Yet another hard reality is that, all the objections raised hither to against the Autonomous college scheme were the basic objections belonging in the minority institutions only. Instead of pointing against these institutions many people simply blame the Autonomous college scheme itself. What is the alternative for this type of misuse of Constitutional provision?

4. Most of the teaching staff, feel that autonomy will cease their individuality; moreover they generally feel that the autonomy is the beginning of privatization and gradually leads to reduction of the funds released by the Govt. The doubt must be clarified. 5. Will the appointments and other benefits of Autonomous colleges be equivalent those provided to Govt. colleges and to affiliated Colleges enjoying UGC funds? The UGC must clarify the doubts aroused.

The system survives if the following points are maintained strictly:

1. The review committees should be constituted to assess the functioning of the colleges periodically; particularly the evaluation pattern, fees structure, utilization funds, changes in syllabus etc.
2. The student council and teacher's council have to be established and their concern to be taken out. An effective regulatory mechanism should be established by the UGC to monitor the functioning of the colleges.
3. Before extending Autonomous status to other colleges, objective evaluation and revamping of the existing Autonomous colleges may be done.
4. In the name of autonomy no extra fees should be imposed on students because it is generally the rural and lower middle class students who join in the affiliated colleges.

Lastly, in India, we should not impose uniformity throughout the country. Variety will make the people to think in divergent ways. Creativity increases with variety. So we should allow variety.

Autonomous college scheme is a new one. Some good experiments have also been made. Because of some bad experiences, at this juncture, we need not oppose the whole scheme. At the same time, we need not put a red carpet welcome for this scheme. As part of Variety in the educational field we should allow the scheme for some more time.

"The Autonomous college system cannot be an alternative system for the degenerating affiliation system. There should be special efforts to correct the present affiliating system also". -- ?

"The stars and Autonomous statuses are not for commercial purposes to market the college name and fame. They are mere representations of high quality and quantity

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of educational standards of the institutions. On the name of Autonomy, there should be no cut in aid from the government or t1GC. Higher education to all is the unavoidable responsibility of State and in the name of Globalization, internationalism, Corporatization; General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS), funding agencies should not avoid sanctioning aid for Higher Education.  
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*Funding higher education is not mere non-profitable expenditure; it is a good capital for brighter tomorrow.*