

Status of Autonomy in Engineering and Polytechnic Colleges of India

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Abstract : The status of autonomy in engineering and polytechnic colleges of India is described on parameters such as autonomy enjoyed and used by institutions, students placement, filling up of admission seats, percolation of autonomy, implementation of quality assurance mechanism, use of substantial reflection, frequency of academic audit, corrective and preventive measures taken, performance standards, recommendation of quality assurance cell, problem-solving and grievance handling mechanism, buffer to deal with financial uncertainties, status on academic areas, co-curricular areas, extra-curricular areas, research, continuing education programme, managerial autonomy, administrative autonomy, admission of students, financial autonomy, satisfaction of faculty members and students. The study is based on views expressed by 752 respondents in Google form. It is a descriptive qualitative and quantitative research study in which purposive sampling was used. Sample represents engineering and polytechnic colleges of India.

Keywords : Autonomy, types of autonomy, accountability

1. Rationale

The national education policy 2020 states that all higher education institutions (HEIs) will become autonomous by 2035 in India . In the past 30 years autonomy was granted to engineering and polytechnic colleges by AICTE and UGC based on the criteria and standards set at the national level. A limited number of institutions are having autonomy in India. In this study, the current status of autonomous institutions is drawn in the light of NEP 2020. concluded that the autonomy of institutions is necessary to function freely and fearlessly to achieve national education objectives. concluded that higher education policy on university autonomy and academic freedom results in the improvement of many dimensions of functioning of the institution. identified eight criteria such as owning building and equipment, generation of funds, spending budget for achieving the institutional objectives, design academic programmes, employ employees, decide salaries, decide the size of students' batch, and the fee to be charged. concluded that the limited autonomy does not result in high quality of achievement of goals of the institute. concluded that autonomy plus context results in performance.

The autonomy of the institutions is studied in a broader perspective considering the requirements of the accreditation and future requirements of the institutions. The diagnosis of current status will be useful for designing and implementing strategies at

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the national and institutional levels to grant a different degree of autonomy to institutions.

2. Literature Review

The literature is reviewed to generate parameters to ascertain the status of autonomy of technical institutions in the Indian context. stated that it is a time to rethinking higher education on challenging past practices, restore institutional autonomy, value the goals and challenges posed by the students, engaging in lifelong learning, streamline regulations, promote innovation, allow new entrants to education. stated that the gradual approach of reform is more appropriate in contrast to the big bang approach. analyzed the reasons for poor quality of education viz a viz affiliation system and stated that autonomy is a means to achieve the goal of quality education. The author concluded that autonomy helps in self-governance. provided an overview of getting autonomy for higher education institutions from a UGC point of view and institution points of view. The relation between autonomy and accountability is established. discussed the concepts of autonomy and gave an account of international evidence of autonomy of educational institutions, and the aspects of autonomy. suggested to create conditions such as total autonomy, independent empowered board of governors', academic leader, funding by government, and good faculty members. established the importance of autonomy for achieving the institute objectives, described the substantive and procedural autonomy, and stated the aims of the autonomous environment as strategic plans. discussed the models of systemic reform in the context of undergraduate engineering programmes. recommended that the living autonomy of the university should be analyzed on a well-defined framework. stated that the state government should come out with a policy complementing the central government policy for granting autonomy to higher education institutions. described the theoretical approach, conceptual framework global overview, and framework for decentralization. stated the areas of university autonomy with reference to expectations of the society. The author described the expectations in the form of contributing to the knowledge economy, development of advanced knowledge base, lifelong learning, embedding international, multicultural education, equal opportunity, and access to education.

described the effects of increased autonomy stating that it requires coherent national policy, sequential process for progressive adaption, extended rapidly,

effective leadership, prevent undesirable effects, and concluded that autonomy is used as means for improving the system performance. NAAC stated seven criteria for granting accreditation to autonomous colleges . described the four combinations of autonomy viz manager dominated, empowered, hands tied, and operator dominated. In the context of NEP 2020 traversing towards empowerment of institutions, teams and individuals are very important to achieve the innovative and reform-oriented goals of the institute. described the problems of autonomy to be addressed, academic, administrative, and financial autonomy. Datta analyzed the best practices of top accredited colleges of India and concluded that best practices have a positive impact on accreditation . AICTE compiled the best practices of the institutions. described the best practices for quality improvement. developed a detailed scorecard on the autonomy of the university on organizational, financial, staffing, and academic autonomy. They have also stated the challenges linked to reform implementation, formal and informal autonomy, financial issues, and accountability requirements. stated that autonomous colleges need to be re-energized themselves in curriculum, teaching-learning process, research, collaboration, and services to ensure quality.

3. Profile of the Respondents

Respondents: The distribution of respondents is 3%, 20%, 19%, 20%, 1%, and 37% of respondents were from IIT/NIT, university, polytechnic college, NITTTR, and other institutions respectively. The respondents are from NIRF-ranked institutes, NBA accredited programmes, and NAAC accredited institutes.

Designation of the respondents: Out of 752 respondents, 4% are Director/Principal, 7% are Deans, 11% are HODs, 25% are faculty members, 18% are students and 35% are other respondents respectively.

Experience: The academic and industrial work experience of respondents are considered. 56% of respondents fall under 0-10 years experience, 29% respondents are from 11-20 years experience, 12% respondents are from 21-30 years experience, 2% respondents are from 31-40 years experience, 0.6% respondents are from 41-50 years experience, and 0.4% respondents are from more than 51 years experience.

4. Research Objective

To ascertain the status of autonomy in Polytechnics and Engineering colleges in terms of fulfillment of purposes and objectives.

5. Research Instrument

The researchers designed the research instrument as there was no standard research instrument available to ascertain the current status of autonomy in engineering and polytechnic colleges. The literature review, UGC guidelines for granting autonomy, national education policy, and experiences of the researchers were the basis for designing the research instrument. The research instrument was mailed to 42 faculty members for providing their suggestions for improving the quality of the research instrument on content and construct. The major comments received on the draft instrument were; it is too lengthy, it is difficult to get data in terms of quantity by individuals, there is no scientific mechanism for data management in autonomous institutions, views of the persons should be gathered who are actually involved in the implementation of autonomy, etc. considering the views of the experts it was further revised and refined. In the second cycle of validation, only 2 persons offered comments related to contents that were incorporated. This research instrument was validated by 7 experts working in the area of technical education and autonomy. The Cronbach's alpha for different items falls between 0.94 to 0.96 which indicates a high degree of reliability of the instrument.

6. Status Of Autonomy

The status of autonomy on different areas of functioning of the institute viz academic, managerial, administrative, and financial is described in the following paragraphs.

Autonomy enjoyed by institutes

Institutes have enjoyed 74% academic, 67% financial, 72% managerial, 72% administrative, 69% substantive, and 70% procedural autonomy out of granted autonomy. The overall autonomy enjoyed by institutes is 71%.

Use of autonomy

Institutes used 74% academic, 69% financial, 71% managerial, 72% administrative, 71% substantive,

Table 1: Potential of autonomy

Potential of Autonomy	Weighted Mean
Academic	3.4
Financial	4.0
Managerial	4.0
Administrative	4.0
Substantive	4.0
Procedural	4.0
Standard deviation	0.3

and 70% procedural autonomy to harness the full potential of autonomy. The overall autonomy used by institutes is 71% to harness the full potential of autonomy. In the views of the respondents the potential available is indicated in table 1. The weighted mean is calculated out of 4.

Students placement

35% of respondents reported that increase in placement is 80%, 29% respondents reported that increase in placement is 60-79%, 16% respondents reported that increase in placement is 40-59%, 12% respondents reported that increase in placement is 20-39% and 8% respondents reported that increase in placement is below 20%.

Admission seats filled up in the current academic year

66% of respondents reported that all sanctioned seats were filled, and 34% of respondents reported that full admission seats were not filled. A very few respondents reported that the shortfall in admission ranges from 10 to 100%.

Percolation of autonomy

69-73% autonomy has percolated down to deans, heads of departments, faculty members, officials, and students to perform roles effectively and efficiently. The overall 71% autonomy has percolated down to all levels including students to perform roles effectively and efficiently.

Implementation of quality assurance mechanism

Implementation varies on a continuum of 72-76% on various areas of institute functioning such as programme evaluation, teachers' continuing education, student-centric approaches, organizing national and international level events, problem-solving, and grievance handling. The overall

Table2: Implementation of quality assurance mechanism

Implementation of quality assurance	Weighted Mean
Internal Quality assurance	3.06
Programme evaluation	3.00
Teachers' continuing education	3.01
Student-centric approaches	3.03
Organizing national and international level events	2.88
Problem-solving and grievance handling	2.99

implementation of the quality assurance mechanism is 75%. The weightited mean of each parameter is shown in table 2.

Use of substantial reflection

Institutes use 75% substantial reflection on parameters such as vision and mission of the institute, student-centered approaches, motivation to learn, performance appraisal, and assessment of knowledge. The overall use of substantial reflection is 76%.

Frequency of academic audit

41% of respondents reported quarterly, 22% reported six-monthly and 37% reported yearly frequency of academic audit in the institute.

Corrective and preventative measures

91% of respondents reported that corrective and preventive measures are taken based on the recommendations of the academic audit, 9% reported no action is taken.

Performance indicators and standards

77% of respondents reported that performance indicators and standards are set at the institute level and published on the institute website, and 23% of respondents say it is not done.

Implementation of recommendations of quality assurance cell

87% of respondents reported that the recommendations are implemented, and 13% reported that the recommendations are not implemented.

Problem-solving and grievances handling mechanism

85% of respondents reported that they have effective and efficient problem solving and grievances handling mechanism and 15% of respondents reported that they do not have such a mechanism.

Buffer to deal with financial uncertainties

73% of respondents reported that the institute has sufficient buffer to deal with financial uncertainties and 27% of respondents reported that they do not have such buffer.

Academic area

Curricular

Status on academic areas

Institutes are fully pursuing the vision and

Table3: Achievement on Academic – curricular aspects

Extent of	Mean	Percentage
Pursuing the vision and missions of the institute	3.17	79
Deciding curriculum of the programme	3.02	76
Programme curriculum relevance with the world of work	2.95	74
Implementing outcome-based education	3.03	76
Implementing learner-centered teaching-learning approaches	3.02	76
Use of ICT and online training programmes by students and teachers	2.96	74
Use of project-based learning	2.87	72
Use of research-based learning	2.70	67
Internship and industrial training of students related to curriculum	2.95	74
Developing abilities related to leadership, working in teams, professional ethics, safety, project management & economics	2.98	74
Implementing outcome-based assessment	2.94	74
Imparting psychomotor and affective domain skills related to programme	2.87	72
Implementing paper presentation, competitions, quiz, techno fest, students' seminars, and other similar activities	2.87	72
Professional development of students via learner-centric pedagogy & ICT	2.91	73
Inclusive education	2.92	73
Preparing the students to meet the global challenges	2.83	71
Incubation and innovations in the functioning of the institute and its products	2.77	69
Offering interdisciplinary and new programmes	2.80	70
Validity, reliability, and credibility of assessment and certification system	2.86	71
Accreditation of programmes	2.85	71
Standard Deviation	0.11	

missions of the institute, implementing outcome-based education, deciding the curriculum of the programme, implementing learner-centered teaching-learning approaches. Institutes are very highly involved in developing abilities related to leadership, working in teams, professional ethics, safety, project management, and economics, use of information communication technology and online training programmes by students and teachers, programme curriculum relevance with world of work, internship and industrial training of students related to curriculum, implementing outcome-based assessment, inclusive education, professional development of students via learner-centric pedagogy and information communication technology, use of project-based learning, imparting psychomotor and affective domain skills related to programme, implementing paper presentation, competitions, quiz, techno fest, students seminars and other similar activities, validity, reliability, and credibility of assessment and certification system, accreditation of programmes, preparing the students to meet the global challenges, offering interdisciplinary and new programmes, incubation and innovations in functioning of the institute and its products, and use of research-based learning. The weighted mean on the parameters of curricular aspects is shown in table 3.

Status on co-curricular areas

Institutes are very highly involved in the participation of students in techno fest, student's seminars, presentations, and other similar activities organized by other institutes implementing paper presentation by students, the participation of students in career opportunities, entrepreneurship, research, and development activity, participation of students in various AICTE launched events and patent filing by

Table 4: Co-curricular areas

Extent of	Mean	Percentage
Implementing paper presentations by students	2.85	71
Participation of students in techno fest, student's seminars, presentations, and other similar activities organized by other institutes	2.96	74
Patent filing by students	2.45	61
Participation of students in various AICTE launched events	2.70	67
Participation of students in career opportunities, entrepreneurship, research, and development activity	2.77	69
Standard Deviation	0.56	

students. The weighted mean on co-curricular areas is shown in table 4.

Status on extra-curricular areas

There is very high participation of students in sports activities, cultural activities, organizing various academic and other events, community development activities, and activities of national importance. The weighted mean on extra-curricular areas is shown in table 5.

Table 5: Extra curricular areas

Extent of	Mean	Percentage
Student's participation in sports activities	3.01	75
Student's participation in cultural activities	2.96	74
Student's participation in community development activities	2.85	71
Student's participation in organizing various academic and other events	2.95	74
Student's participation in activities of national importance	2.82	71

Status on research

Institutes are involved at a very high level in undertaking high-quality technology-related research studies (sponsored/ consultancy or otherwise), research and academic publication, undertaking high-quality systems improvement-related research studies such as need analysis, tracer study, impact study, and patent filing by faculty members. The weighted mean on research areas is shown in table 6.

Table 6: Research areas

Extent of	Mean	Percentage
Undertaking high-quality technology-related research studies (sponsored/consultancy or otherwise)	2.64	66
Undertaking high-quality system improvement related research studies such as need analysis, tracer study, an impact study	2.59	65
Research and academic publication	2.62	65
Patent filing by faculty member	2.51	63
Publication	2.64	66
Standard Deviation	0.05	

Status on continuing education programmes

Institutes are very highly involved in offering continuing education programmes for faculty and staff members of their institute and other institutes, and industry personnel. The weighted mean on continuing education programmes is shown in table 7.

Table 7: Continuing education programme

Extent of	Mean	Percentage
Offering continuing education programmes for faculty and staff members of other institutions	2.80	70
Offering continuing education programmes for industry personnel	2.59	65
Offering continuing education programmes for faculty and staff members of your institute	2.77	69
Standard Deviation	0.11	

Status on managerial autonomy

Institutes are very highly involved on parameters such as branding of institute among students and employers, ensuring career progression through training and development, restructuring the organization structure according to changing needs, formulating and implementing evaluation criteria for quality education, satisfaction of employees, mobilizing the resources of stakeholders to achieve the objectives, missions and vision, attraction for talented faculty members for accepting challenges, rewards and recognition for unique achievements of students, faculty members and staff members, setting benchmarks in different areas of functioning, deploying and redeploying the internal resources to achieve the objectives, timely obtaining new and innovative projects, framing and modifying policies according to changing needs, accreditation of programmes and institute from national and international agencies, generation of resources to meet the growing requirements, extension activities

Table 8: Managerial areas

Extent	Percentage
Restructuring the organizational structure	69
Deploying and redeploying the internal resources	68
Mobilizing the resources of stakeholders to achieve the objectives, missions, and vision	69
Framing and modifying policies	68
Implementation of collaborative projects with stakeholders	66
Generation of resources to meet the growing requirements	67
Extension activities for masses related to areas of functioning	66
Setting benchmarks in different areas	68
Branding of your institute among students and employers	71
Accreditation of programmes and institutes from national and international agencies	68
Satisfaction of employees	69

for masses related to areas of functioning under corporate social responsibility, implementation of collaborative projects with stakeholders, collaborative projects with national and international agencies. The weighted mean on managerial areas is shown in table 8.

Status on administrative autonomy

Institutes are very highly involved on parameters such as transparency in the selection process at all levels, autonomy to appoint people for various duration and purposes, freedom of evaluating the performance at all levels based on objective criteria, freedom of undertaking career development and career progression decisions for various cadres, freedom of selection of external and internal experts for various funded projects, freedom to design and use manual/guidelines for planning, implementation, and evaluation, freedom of appointment of technical and ministerial staff for funded projects, freedom for deploying and redeploying people as per requirements, freedom of deciding rewards and punishment. The weighted mean on areas of administration is shown in table 9.

Admissions of students Institutes are very highly involved on parameters such as validity, accuracy, preciseness, completeness, security, and safety of documentation, deciding admission process, no of seats (intake) in each programme, promoting accountability at different levels, professionalism to select the head of the institute, and deciding to offer a new programme or terminating the obsolete programme. The weighted mean on the admission of students is shown in table 10.

Table 9: Administration

Extent	Percentage
Autonomy you have to appoint people for various duration and purposes	69
Freedom of selection of external and internal experts for various funded projects	67
Freedom of appointment of technical and ministerial staff for funded projects	66
Freedom for deploying and redeploying people as per requirements	66
Transparency in selection process at all levels	70
Freedom of deciding rewards and punishment	66
Freedom of evaluating the performance at all levels based on objective criteria	68
Freedom of undertaking career development and career progression decisions for various cadres	68
Design and use of manual/guidelines for planning, implementation and evaluation	67

Table 10: Admission of students

Extent	Percentage
Deciding admission process, no of seats (intake) in each programme	71
Deciding opening of a new programme or terminating the obsolete programme	67
Policies permitting collaboration with different agencies	68
Validity, accuracy, preciseness, completeness, security, and safety of documentation	72
Promoting accountability at different levels	71
Professionalism to select the head of the institute	68

Status on financial autonomy

Institutes are very highly involved on parameters such as the audit of financial transaction regular as well as under project, providing scholarships and financial incentives to students, providing financial rewards to meritorious, dependence on government funding, discrimination in the fee paid by various categories of the students, autonomy to decide and give financial rewards to good performers, generating funds to promote innovations, research, and motivational teaching, autonomy to decide the fee for different programmes for students, autonomy in adopting processes of deploying and redeploying funds based on the priority, generating funds to establish new

Table 11: Financial areas

Extent	Percentage
Generating funds to promote innovations, research, and motivational teaching	65
Generating funds to establish new infrastructure to offer new programmes	64
Autonomy to decide the fee for different programmes for students	64
Autonomy to decide and give financial rewards to good performers	65
Providing scholarships and financial incentives to students	68
Providing financial rewards to meritorious students	67
Autonomy in adopting processes of deploying and redeploying funds	64
Autonomy to impose financial penalties on students, teachers, and clients	62
Decentralization of financial powers	61
Involvement of alumni in generating funds and furthering financial activities	62
Audit of financial transaction regular as well as under project	69
Discrimination in the fee paid by various categories of the students	66
Increase in state funding	64
Rely on government funding	67

infrastructure to offer new programmes, increase in state funding, autonomy to impose financial penalties on students, teachers, and clients, involvement of alumni in generating funds and furthering financial activities, and decentralization of financial powers. The weighted mean on financial areas is shown in table 11.

Satisfaction of faculty member

The satisfaction of faculty members is very high on parameters such as professional satisfaction in getting, receiving, appreciation, incentive, encouragement for innovative contribution, financial benefits, and career growth and development.

Satisfaction of students

The satisfaction of students is very high on parameters such as the development of competency, implementation of curricular activities and events, facilities such as drinking water, electricity, cleanliness, hygiene, transport, and canteen, implementation of extra-curricular activities and events, implementation of co-curricular activities and events, development of life skills, soft skills, emotional intelligence and professional skills, Internet facility, e-learning resources, and software, teaching-learning process, academic culture of the institute, ethics and moral values for making of a balanced personality, implementation of national and international level events, acquire career skills and fully pursue to take part in a successful career, avoid ambiguity, vagueness, unwanted generalizations issues, facilitating job placement of choice, basics of entrepreneurship and develop business plans, and implementation of the research culture of the institute.

7. Conclusion

There are very few autonomous engineering and polytechnic colleges in the country. These institutions are enjoying all types of autonomy and using it at a very high level may be more than 75%. These institutions are using autonomy in the context of outcome-based education, accreditation, and NEP 2020 on a wide spectrum of activities. These institutions are creating a very high level of satisfaction for faculty members and students.

Suggestions

It is recommended that higher education

institutions should be granted a greater degree of autonomy as stated in NEP 2020 to harness the full potential of institutional resources to provide quality education to the students and effective services to significant stakeholders. The students should be at the center of policy decisions of autonomy. The design of autonomy must incorporate the accountability, transparency, and credibility concept at all levels (institute, department, programmes, sections, portfolios) in the institute. In the context of NEP 2020, the involvement of significant stakeholders in policy decision-making should be ensured. The autonomy should be used for reengineering the systems and processes of the institute to assure the quality of education. The autonomy should be effectively used to continuously improve the performance of the institute on teaching-learning, research, and services and enhance the core competence of the institute. It should be used as a competitive, innovative, and quality tool in higher and technical education.

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