

ROLE OF AICTE

Dr. P. C. Shejwalkar *

WITHER AUTONOMY

Thanks to the pace of economic reforms, our country has been fortunate enough in witnessing new era of globalization . liberalization and privatization. With the introduction of internet and advance Information Technology, globalisation has made further progress. In the last few years, we have also found that foreign universities have started invading our Indian markets and providing attractive facilities to our students for getting foreign degrees. These foreign Universities do not come under the control of the Central or the State Governnents. We cannot stop this invasion, particularly because, with internet facilities so easily available in our country, within a few years, there is a possibility of having cyber Universities all over the world. IT has made national or geographical boundaries totally obsolete.

In a way, I am inclined to think that this invasion by foreign universities

is a blessing in disguise since our universities now will have to think of further improving the quality of our education so as to make our degrees as attractive as the degrees awarded by foreign universities. If you want to improve the quality of learning and teaching, I am absolutely clear in my mind that there is a need for giving as much autonomy as possible to the educational institutes, particularly to those institutes, which are providing professional , vocational and technical education. Autonomy does not mean a licence to do anything under the sun and to distribute certificates to anyone, treating education as a purely commercial business. Even those foreign universities which are distributing certificates have no place in the minds of students and also employers. In most of the foreign countries, the universities and the teachers teaching in Universities and Colleges, are given considerable autonomy, with a provision that if the teacher did not improve his teaching skill and knowledge, his contract

* Dean, Faculty of Management, University of Pune.

of service will be terminated. Autonomy promotes quality; autonomy is a strong tool for achieving excellence; autonomy also gives a feeling to the students and teachers that they have the freedom to think independently and inquisitively and they get motivation to find out answers to questions which they themselves have raised,

Unfortunately, in our country, though on one side, we have kept onward march towards liberalization in industry, there is excessive control over our professional education. It is true that in the absence of any control, some of our notorious colleges and institutes will adopt commercial approach and bring down the quality and reputation of our education. But at the same time, if there is excessive control, it would amount to creating speed breakers in the progress of education. When the Government of India established All India Council of Technical Education to regulate technical and management education, we welcomed it because we thought that AICTE would assume the role of promoter of quality education and not just a regulator. AICTE, it was thought, would also play effectively the role which is now being effectively played by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, established at Bangalore. Rules and regulations framed by the AICTE, the State Government and the Universities are so rigid and clumsy that those who wish to start engineering or management colleges, spend their time and energy in finding a way out of all these rules and regulations. In the whole process, some of the good institutes are

discouraged from introducing quality education and to get the approval of the AICTE. The AICTE's administrative work has also increased so much that it cannot cope up with the work of controlling one thousand professional and management institutes in the country. The AICTE, therefore, should decentralise its administrative and monitoring work by establishing regional councils. The AICTE is also supposed to organise training programmes, seminars and discussions for the benefit of teachers as well as Principals and Directors in order to motivate them to improve their skills. It was a wonderful opportunity for the AICTE to promote standard structure of courses and syllabi of subjects for all institutes in the country in the faculties of Engineering and Management. If this had been done, there would have been unified standards of teaching in all the universities in the country. Though AICTE gives approval to various Institutes in Management and Engineering Faculties, in actual fact, these institutes are controlled by the Universities so far as academic content is concerned. We have found that in certain states, the academic standards are not satisfactory, whereas in certain other progressive States, the Universities have taken efforts to upgrade the syllabi of subjects. Thus, though all the institutes are given approval by the AICTE, their image in the eyes of the larger society is judged depending on the standard of learning and teaching in their respective universities. The AICTE also needs to decentralise the monitoring and

inspection work. While undertaking this inspection work, the primary thrust should be on finding out the quality of teaching, infrastructural facilities, library facilities and selection of faculty members. The faculty should be selected and approved by the AICTE on all India basis and not by the respective Universities or the institutes.

DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

AICTE should lay down criteria of quality of professional education and enlighten the heads of the Institutes regarding the norms to be followed. AICTE should also sympathetically keep in mind that quality and development cannot be the same in all Institutes. It should bring to their notice that in a competitive environment, their performance will be judged by and credibility will depend on, the quality of higher education developing a team spirit and sense of brotherhood and nourishing basic social values which will not be compromised; otherwise, the process of de-humanisation and degeneration will loom large.

In my opinion, the AICTE should undertake a massive programme of training teachers just as in the Insurance industry. The Insurance Regulatory and

Development Authority has laid down a compulsory four weeks training for Insurance Agents. The training should aim at removing the traditional mindset of the teachers and also conservative methods of teaching and examinations.

Quality will not improve unless education is cost-based and cost-effective. The present education is highly subsidised and rise in tuition fee is imperative but at the same time, provision should be made for a large number of scholarships and freeships for economically and socially handicapped students.

International perspectives in the teaching will have to be developed in the structure of the courses to be framed by the AICTE, particularly in the context of the IT revolution and the use of internet.

Finally, the AICTE should keep it in mind that professional education would be best handled not by bureaucrats or by businessmen, but by academicians and therefore, the Management of the institutions and colleges should be in the hands of academicians, some of whom, may be nominated by the AICTE directly as members of the Governing Bodies of the respective institutions.

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