

AUTONOMY IN TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In the existing management structure of majority of technical institutions, there are no adequate delegation of powers at the institutional level. The present management structure is highly cumbersome and centralised. The institutions have practically no autonomy and cannot even take day-to-day decisions as regards to its financial, administrative and academic matters are concerned. This is a major drawback in management of technical education system of our country. Unless some changes are made in this direction, the institute will never be able to meet the rapidly changing requirements of industry and other user agencies.

PRESENT STATUS OF AUTONOMY

The present system of technical education is highly rigid and permits very little autonomy to institutions. The autonomous college model as chalked out by University Grants Commission (UGC) in National Policy on Education-1986, to improve the quality of instruction and learning in technical institutions has had very limited success so far. The UGC had envisaged that nearly 500 colleges would be granted autonomous status by the end of seventh five year plan (1989-90). But if we look at the present status, there are hardly 110 autonomous colleges in our country with Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh accounting for 90 of them. Thus the figure

here reflects that concept of autonomy goes abegging in the present technical education system of our country. This fact has come forward because there are certain apprehensions and fears amongst various sections of people which are listed as :

- i) Several teachers feel that autonomy results in **greater workload** and does not provide any adequate compensation in terms of financial assistance.
- ii) To some, granting of autonomy means provision of appointing representatives of UGC and State governments on governing bodies of the institutes. These members are often uninterested and many a times violate teachers' interests and rights.
- iii) Another apprehension is that autonomy tends to intensify dichotomy in technical education. It means only well-equipped and reputed colleges will be given privilege of autonomy and provided means to innovate and grow.
- iv) Some feel that granting of autonomy to various institutions who lack basic infrastructure facilities and teaching material may lead to mass closure of such institutes.
- v) Autonomy in institutes enable them to introduce new courses and system of internal assessment. Students of such institutes are often denied admission elsewhere, including advanced courses in the parent University itself.

Despite from the fact that certain fears and apprehensions are groping in the minds of

people, still the need of hour is to introduce autonomy in technical institutes. This fact has been illustrated in the succeeding topics of this paper.

NEED FOR AUTONOMY

The concept of granting autonomy to technical institutes was envisaged first by Kothari Commission (1964-66). It received a major thrust in the National Policy on Education (NPE) -1986 two decades later on. The autonomous college model as chalked out by University Grants Commission, on the recommendations of NPE-1986 was to improve the quality of instruction and learning in technical education system.

In the present day context of technical education, granting of autonomy to various technical institutes is very essential for bringing about excellence and qualitywise improvement in the system. Autonomy in technical institutes revolve mainly around areas which are administrative, academic and financial.

(a) Administrative Autonomy :

The institutions should be given necessary administrative autonomy to deal with various operational matters such as procurement, maintenance and upkeep of equipment, determination of staff structures, recruitment of faculty, staff development, welfare of staff and students, planning and executing of developmental activities within the given budget. The autonomy in administrative matters will allow management at institute level to have necessary authority so as to bring about modifications in organisational structure and the type of staff required for effective and efficient management of institute activities. The institute will have requisite freedom to adopt flexible standards in terms

of staff structure, qualification of faculty and utilization of resources to suit the changing requirements of technology. This will further enable the institute to promote component of shared version and responsibility amongst its staff so as to build up potential in terms of excellence through various incentive schemes and rewards. At the same time, autonomy encourages initiative in colleges, particularly the better ones as indicated above, and administration is streamlined.

b) Academic Autonomy :

Over a period of time, technical institutions should become fully autonomous as far as their academic matters are concerned. Academic autonomy in institutes permit them to bring necessary changes in terms of curricula of courses, instructional strategies to be adopted, conduct of examinations, system of student assessment and also provide certification. This will enable the institutes in planning and implementing innovations that would bring about qualitywise improvement in the technical manpower produced by the institute. This will also permit the institutes to have much needed collaboration with industries so as to provide assistance and undertake projects which are mutually beneficial to both the parties and will go in a long way in improving the level of competence of faculty. In other words, the academic autonomy is certain to bring about any changes towards improving relevance of course offerings and will help the faculty of institute to remain abreast with advancements in technology.

c) Financial autonomy :

In the present system, financial authority is highly centralised. In order to bring excellence, financial authority needs to be de-centralised to the institutional level. This means the vesting of enhanced financial powers with the heads of institutions thereby

enabling them to procure easily the essential items such as laboratory equipment, furniture for students and staff, consumables and teaching aids etc. Such an arrangement in terms of financial matters will help in better utilization of institutional resources and timely procurement of essential items for undertaking various programmes and activities. The institutes should be given freedom for augmenting resources and raise additional funds through consultancy and providing testing services to local industries, conduct of continuing education programmes for working professionals and other activities. They should also have necessary freedom to make use of such funds for its efficient development and functioning. In other words, financial powers should be vested with head of institution and partly delegated to heads of departments for improving overall efficiency in terms of growth and development.

As we have noticed that autonomy is an extremely important and essential component for building excellence in technical education, it is all the more essential to link it up with

system of accountability. In other words, institution and its staff should be accountable for performance both qualitative and quantitative.

CONCLUSION

The ideas discussed above reflects that granting of autonomy to institutions is a desirable feature. Granting autonomy to well established institutes having good track record will enable them in establishing their own identity and status. Autonomy also brings forth diversification, which caters to the rapidly changing requirements of technical manpower in a particular region. Autonomy also ensures accountability, and if coupled with effective monitoring mechanism at national and state level, will definitely improve the quality and standards of technical education system.

REFERENCES

1. Document of "World Bank Assisted Project" for Technician Education

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