

HISTORICIZING THE GUMPTION AND EFFICACY OF NEGOTIATING AUTONOMY IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR OF KERALA

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Abstract— The present researcher intends to study why and how the road to autonomy was taken in the Higher education sector of Kerala, expose agenda if any behind the same, possibility and challenges of a unified structure and similar pertinent questions which require both theoretical frame of reference and an explanatory coverage. Kerala maintained a reluctant attitude in implementing autonomy in the past but all of a sudden, a paradigm shift is noticeable which makes the study further interesting. In the field of Higher Education some serious and drastic changes have occurred in the post LPG that makes this study necessary and not a poor apology to serious academic and social significance, contemporary history carry.

Keywords— Autonomy, Higher Education, Kerala Model, LPG

CENTRAL RESEARCH PROBLEM

The University Laws (third amendment) Act, 2014 of state of Kerala, incorporating the UGC guidelines, placing Autonomy in higher education sector of Kerala

THE TOPIC OF STUDY AND ITS RELATION TO THE PROBLEM

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A SURVEY OF LITERATURE:

{In order to adhere to the stipulated word, limit the researcher is presenting the review of only the most pertinent works, for the works consulted for opinion generation please see the bibliography.}

In the work "Autonomy in Education" Charles Glenn explains the state of autonomy as the one, where the system is more 'responsive to those they serve'. The beneficiaries are categorized as 'customers' in a market place, then clients of 'bureaucratic monopoly'. Glenn feels that the coming of market dynamics into education would 'hierarchize' the alternative providers and would lead the autonomous institution to be more 'selective' and the diversity part or catering to the needs of the common man becomes an obsolete question.

In the monograph COLLEGE AUTONOMY POLICY, PRACTICE AND PROSPECTS, Professor Ninan Abraham Convener, Kerala Higher Education Forum and former Vice-Chancellor, Kanpur University states that an autonomous college as conceived in the present context has freedom and authority in academic matters, that is, it has the right to decide what to teach, how to teach and whom to teach, that autonomy has improved the quality of education as well as

additional knowledge in the curriculum has been generated and that there is progress towards imparting higher education on the lines of 'modernity, relevance and diversification'

In the article Journey of Autonomy: Improving Quality of Higher Education in Kerala Himanshu Tripathi & Dr. JE Merlin Sasikala state that It has gone largely unnoticed, that the academic autonomy had been given to the faculty and the departments in the University of Kerala from 1995 onwards as part of the introduction of the Choice Based Credit and Semester System (CSS) in the PG Courses conducted by the University Departments. They feel that autonomy in Kerala should be a consensus, conscious and transparent decision and should be implemented as part of an overall attempt to reform higher education. The authors opine that that autonomy in the affiliated colleges works only in the presence of a well-functioning University system and academic vibrancy in the affiliated colleges. In the absence of both, this autonomy by itself will not bring in the desired changes as evidenced by the experiences of the autonomous colleges in other states.

In Autonomous Colleges in Kerala: An Evaluative Study Working Paper No. 3 October 2016 Nikhitha Mary Mathew and Dr Martin Patrick opine that the colleges granted academic autonomy in 2014 have not been able to enjoy the powers promised by the status initially, owing to the lack of readiness of the university to transfer much of its powers to the colleges. First, the extent of academic autonomy granted to the colleges, as per the guidelines of the UGC and the University Laws Act (Third Amendment) of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, is highly limiting. The study observed that the reluctance of colleges to bring about more far-reaching changes to existing curricula as alarming. The study suggests that autonomy should be continued at least for six years. In the sixth year, an evaluation has to be done and suitable reforms have to be initiated for the improvement of autonomy. More academic autonomy and limited financial autonomy can be considered as measures for the betterment of autonomous colleges, the authors added.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC:

The present researcher is an aided college teacher in the state of Kerala and being so, is a stakeholder of series of academic reforms and restructuring taking place in the state. The steps taken by successive state governments to reform and accelerate the higher education sector have brought out mixed opinion among the academia and public at large. In several regards like education, preventive medicine and economic headway Kerala has been a model for other Indian states. The stable growth in education sector has been of course, the base of all other developments and simultaneously over the years the state had achieved many laurels in the arena of Human Resource Development and capacity augmentation. The government of Kerala passed a historic act in December 2014, (The University Laws (third amendment) Act, 2014) incorporating the UGC guidelines, incorporating Autonomy in higher education sector of Kerala which stands, the question, subject and the point of departure of this academic exercise.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research and shall be inter-disciplinary in nature without compromising the essence of historical methodology. An exhaustive array of primary sources, mostly literature in the form of government documents, dossiers, orders, reviews, newspaper articles and books are available. This is in addition to a number of secondary sources and materials. As the study is primarily exploratory

In nature the researcher also intends to carry out interview with the real players and stakeholders who include officials, academia and public. The study shall be nourished with real time survey as well. The researcher also plans to add case studies of at least four autonomous colleges to reach and support the main conclusions. The style of writing may hover from theoretical space to descriptive space and vice-versa

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Historicizing refers to the process of interpreting something as a product of historical development. Gumption, on the other hand, is the ability to decide the best thing to do in a particular situation and to do it with energy and determination. Autonomy means 'self-norm' or self-determination. It basically refers to providing freedom to all people who are responsible for the execution of the job itself. The concept of efficacy stands for the quality of being successful in producing an intended result.

The concept of 'autonomy' is a radical departure from the existing affiliating system to self-governance. The basic premise is that the college conferred with the status of autonomy shall exercise complete academic freedom in its functioning and for this purpose shall be required to perform many of the functions of its parent university. Revising / innovating / restructuring curricula, designing new courses, working out its own assessment / examination / evaluation system and declaring results. In addition to these functions, an autonomous college shall have to carry out many other ancillary functions, which were hitherto being performed by the affiliating university. For a while now World Bank has placed Autonomy and Accountability as yardsticks of growth in higher education sector and defines Institutional autonomy as the degree of independence of the university to control itself, a condition where academic community determines how it works. Accepting for increased institutional autonomy means that government's increasingly exit from the day-to-day management of the tertiary sector, allowing universities and other higher education institutions to determine their own way and taking efforts to encourage institutions to have the freedom to making choices about their internal management and governance, provided with ideally existing market-driven incentives. 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, UGC sent a circular to all universities recommending them to set up Autonomous colleges. From 1978 onwards Autonomous colleges came into existence. The National Policy on Education -1986 suggested that autonomy should be available to the colleges in selection of students, appointment and promotion of teachers, determination of courses of study and methods of teaching and choice of areas for research and their promotion. The Programme of Action (PoA) for NPE-1986 recommended developing a large number of autonomous colleges as well as creation of autonomous departments within universities on a selective basis. In Kerala the first serious initiative in the matter of autonomous colleges was made in 1987 when the Government constituted an Expert Committee with Dr. K. Gopalan as Chairperson to study the various aspects of the proposal to have autonomous college in the state. The Committee recommended the establishment of autonomous colleges; The Inter University Consultative Council (IUCC) appointed a committee in 1999 to study and report the feasibility of granting autonomous status to affiliated colleges. The committee submitted its report in 2000 and in this case also no further action was taken. The Government made amendments in the University acts in 2004 so as to empower them to grant autonomous status to the affiliated colleges. The Government of Kerala constituted a higher education council in the year 2007 which has clearly stated down the intention of inducing autonomy in Higher education sector through the Report on Kerala State Higher Education Policy -2012. Absence of Institutional Autonomy has been referred in the document as the bottle neck for implementation of any reforms proposed and recommended. And that the key to success of reforms lies in a major structural change to be brought in to the administrative set up of state universities. The report further advocates for complete Academic and Financial autonomy. Academic autonomy has already been materialized in selected colleges throughout the state and many more colleges are on the verge of getting autonomy. As of 01.08.2016 there are 575 autonomous colleges in the country wherein the neighboring state of Tamilnadu accounts for 172 colleges, i.e. 30% of total autonomous colleges and Andhra Pradesh has 130 colleges which add up to 22.6%. Kerala which had jumped into autonomy in 2014 has presently 19 colleges

spread over three universities. The concept and understanding about autonomy in higher education had undergone tremendous change over the years.

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