



Anticipations And Apprehensions Regarding Autonomy

Higher Education Scenario in Kerala has been going through turbulent transformations in recent times. The situation has become explosive with the move to grant autonomy to colleges by the State Government. There is no doubt about the qualitative worth of the institutions handpicked for autonomy. Their reputation precedes them. However, there are apprehensions about the readiness of these institutions to absorb and implement the package of autonomy, and the apprehensions are both within and without the institutions. Under the circumstances, the colleges in waiting for autonomy are far from unfortunate. They can wisely wait and watch the proceedings of autonomy unroll in the 'fortunate' ones, learn from the mistakes made by others, and when their time comes, be ready to take the bull by the horns.

The concept of autonomy was first formulated in the National Educational Policy of 1992. There are 441 autonomous colleges in the country as on 9th January 2014. Autonomy is defined as a status given to colleges by the UGC allowing flexibility and freedom for academic development. The pre-requisite for becoming autonomous is inclusion under section 2(f) and 12(B) of UGC Act with sufficient academic and non-academic resources. The stakeholders include the faculty, students, parents or guardians, Alumni and local community. The degrees will be awarded by the parent university. Autonomy is awarded for a minimum period of five years at the end of which the performance and quality will be assessed for continuation or not of the same. The college will have to constitute bodies of statutory and non-statutory committees. Apart from degree courses, the college can also offer short term courses. Any new course started by the college will be reviewed and scrutinized by the University. The college will receive financial assistance and other enabling provisions from the Government and the UGC.

Autonomy is an institution's endeavour to reinvent itself. It ensures the freedom to pioneer a multidisciplinary, critical-thinking-oriented approach to education. The freedom to create its own curriculum and syllabus will help tackle the menace of rote learning, and smoothen the student's journey towards knowledge, understanding, application and creativity. For an institution that wishes to continue to provide enhanced quality education to students, autonomy poses possibilities as well as thrusts challenges. An overhaul of the curriculum and a strategic planning for its implementation is crucial. Formulation of policies and regulations for conduct of examinations, measures for improving quality of teaching and evaluation, promotion of a culture of research, organizing academic enrichment programmes are only a few of the multifarious responsibilities invested with the Academic Council and the Board of Studies in an autonomous institution. The tendency to hold the university responsible for delays and derelictions will be gone forever; and the institution will be accountable for any lapses or laxities.

The system of autonomy sanctioned for implementation in the state is far from an out and out total autonomy. Autonomy is to be exercised only on the academic front. Colleges have no say in matters such as appointment of faculty and staff, fixation of salary or students fees, admission regulations etc. Nevertheless, there are apprehensions afloat as regards the possibility of mismanagement of the mammoth powers of autonomy. However, the fact of the matter is that in spite of exciting advantages of being invested with power, the responsibilities and duties that accompany it, are indeed frightening.

The advantages include formulating new courses in accordance with global employability, conducting examinations and publishing results in time, avoiding the delay in decision-making honoring reservation norms and protecting direct payment and salaries.

The disadvantage consists of the presence of members in the major councils who are nominated, thereby leading to the fear of giving the management powers to nominate people of their choice. If financial and administrative autonomy is granted, there are apprehensions that the fee structure would be hiked and education would be out of reach for poor students.

The future of the credibility of the higher education system depends on the success of the implementation of autonomy. Therefore stricter and sterner assessment criteria should be devised to obtain at least a sustained reflection of quality, and desirably, an improved one at that. The anticipated outcome of the whole exercise is to take the education sector into the future and beyond. For this all the pertinent issues that attract attention need be addressed and the unhealthy practices weeded out.

Feats Accomplished

Ongoing Major Projects – 4 (Dr. Viji Mary Varghese, Dr. Sr. Viji M.O., Dr. Pearly Sebastian, Dr. Philo Francis & Ms. Soumya Stephen)

Membership in University Bodies – 1 (Mr. Stalin Raphel, Board of Studies)

Papers presented by faculty in International Conferences : 1 (Dr. Baby V.O. & Ms. Salja T.K.)

Books published by Faculty: 1 (Dr. Baby V.O.)

Publication of Articles in Books by faculty: 1 (Dr. Sr. Rose Anto)

Software Package/Digital Course Material Prepared by Faculty: 1 (Dr. Sr. Rose Anto)

Awards and Recognitions: 3

Sadguru Award for the Best Teacher in the University of Calicut: Dr. Sr. Annie Kuriakose

Sadguna Award for the Best Student in the University of Calicut : Ms. Anjali Poulouse

Best Research Paper Award : Dr. Liji K.T. & Ms. Sari T.C.

Positions held by Faculty outside the campus : 11

(Dr. Sr. Annie Kuriakose – Janamaithri, Dr. Sr. Rose Bastin – Justice Forum, Dr. Valsa John C – Prathyasa, Sr. Mini Thomas – Syro Malabar Campus Ministry, Dr. Jessy Emmanuel – Justice Forum, Dr. Sr. Rose Anto-KILA, Ms. Lilly T.L.-Janamaithri, Dr. Managalambal-KMA, Dr. Sr. Lilly P.L.-KMA, Fr. Jomy Thottian-Kerala Sabha, Dr. Gigi Poulouse-NSS Programme Officer)

Virtual Publication in e-journals : 1 (Dr. Roselin Alex)

Research Grant Received : Commerce –Rs. 1,65,000/-, Hindi – Rs. 35,000/-

Economics –Rs. 1,82,500/-, Physical Education – Rs. 2,50,000/-

Internal Resources Generated : Rs. 14, 915

Financial Assistance provided by departments : Rs. 1,58,310

Proceedings by faculty																				
Activities Undertaken	BBA	Biotechnology	Botany	Chemistry	Commerce	Computer Science	Economics	English	Hindi	History	M C J	Malayalam	Mathematics	Physical Education	Physics	Psychology	Social work	Zoology	Total	
Publication of Seminar Proceedings by students						8													8	
Software Package/Digital Course Material Prepared by Faculty									1										1	
Department publications and manuscripts							1				1						1		3	
Non-academic Seminars attended by faculty	1		1	3			1		1				1	1					9	
Collaborative Activities	1				1		1		1					1			1	1	7	
Research Guides				3	3								3						1	10
Research Scholars				1	16								5						6	28
Books purchased for the Departmental libraries							3											1	13	
New Journals subscribed for the departments							1	1									1		3	
Academic outreach programmes			1														7		8	
Non-academic outreach programmes		1			3										2				6	
Activities for promoting college neighbourhood network							1										1		2	
Career Oriented Courses offered by Departments	1				1				1				1						4	
Ongoing Linkages	10		1		10		1					1			2		19		44	
Consultancy Services Provided		8	2				1		2						1			2	16	
Faculty as Resource Persons Extension Services							1		2								1	1	5	
Departmental Extension Work							2		7								1		10	
Positions held by Faculty outside the campus				2	1		1		1		1		3					1	11	
Refresher/Orientation Courses attended by faculty		1					1	2		1								1	6	
Coaching classes given (JRF/NET/Civil Service etc)												1	1						2	
Virtual Publication in e-journals			1																1	
Students Benefitted from Campus Placement													1				2		3	
NET,SET, JRF, Other National Entrance Test Student Qualifiers																				
Patents																				

