

**COMMISSIONING HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:
A HISTORICAL STUDY (1949-2009)**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I, Shivam Agrawal, declare that this thesis entitled *Commissioning Higher Education in India: A Historical Study (1949-2009)* submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my bonafide work. I further declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

ShivamAgrawal

CERTIFICATE

Certified that this thesis entitled *Commissioning Higher Education in India: A Historical Study (1949-2009)* submitted by Shivam Agrawal, in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University has not been so far submitted, as part or full, for any degree of this or any other university. This is his own original work, carried out in the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies.

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Shivam Agrawal

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABCR	:	Ambani Birla Committee Report.
AMU	:	Aligarh Muslim University.
AIU	:	Association of Indian Universities.
B. A.	:	Bachelor of Arts.
BHU	:	Banaras Hindu University
B. Sc	:	Batchelor of Science.
CABE	:	Central Advisory Board of Education.
CAHEI	:	Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions.
CEWCU	:	Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities.
CU	:	Calcutta University
CUC	:	Calcutta University Commission
DU	:	Delhi University.
GCR	:	Gajendragadkar Committee Report.
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product.
ICT	:	Information and Communication Technologies.
IGNOU	:	Indira Gandhi National Open University.
INC	:	Indian National Congress.
IRA	:	Independent Regulatory Authority.
M.A.	:	Master of Arts.

MHRD	:	Ministry of Human Resource Development.
MPs	:	Members of Parliament.
M. Sc	:	Master of Science.
NAAC	:	National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
NEP	:	National Education Policy.
NCHER	:	National Commission for Higher Education and Research
NPE	:	National Policy on Education.
NKC	:	National Knowledge Commission.
OECD	:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
PG	:	Post-Graduation.
PPP	:	Public Private Partnership.
RCR	:	Ramamurti Committee Report.
R&D	:	Research and Development.
SCs	:	Schedule Castes.
STs	:	Schedule Tribes.
UG	:	Under Graduation.
UGC	:	University Grants Commission.
UEC	:	University Education Commission.
UP	:	Uttar Pradesh.
UK	:	United Kingdom.
YCR	:	Yashpal Committee Report.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The independence of India back in 1947 had impacted the life of Indians in every realm: cultural, economic, political and social. While assessing the cultural impact, the aspect of education had also acquired initial attention of the government, wherein the government utilised the mechanism of commissions and committee reports in order to inquire into such matters as had been bequeathed from the colonial masters. The pioneer works on higher education have exhaustively highlighted the numerous defects in the system including some of those as India was facing under the colonial rule. In fact, even though the list of appointed commissions and committees has now been significantly increased, yet there have been no changes on the ground and moreover, in the reluctance of the government. While on the verge of a crisis of higher education, it would be important to investigate: To what extent the commissions and committees have played a key role in transforming the higher education system as the stalwarts of national movement had dreamt of? Did the government indeed fail to fulfil the educational requirements of the masses, or in their endeavour to invent an efficient mechanism to reform the higher education system? And most essentially, should the government change its strategy to find the amicable solutions of numerous unsolved problems? Of course, in an era of globalisation, the world had experienced a revolution in all walks of life. The principles of market driven economy had been applied on formulating policies and the focus had immensely shifted from knowledge society to that of a knowledge economy. In such a competitive scenario, where every nation intends to leave a foot print on the world platform, it would be appropriate to rethink, revisit and reassess the historical aspect of the Indian higher education system and its allied mechanisms.

The genealogy of the modern education system, and the roots of the budding problems therein, can be traced back to the colonial times when it had first been introduced. The new education system subsequently superseded and replaced the traditional learning system and was being operated through a vast network of schools, colleges and universities. The institutions of higher learning, that is, the universities, proved to be bulwarks of scientific learning, rational thought and innovative ideas. However, they only catered to the needs of colonial masters rather

than the colonized people.¹ The first three universities at Bombay, Bengal and Madras had been founded in 1857 as examining bodies under the strict control of the government and bureaucracy.² With the turn of the nineteenth century, the commissions and committees acquired a place in the higher academia and became the linchpin of the government's policy of reforms. Despite the release of provocative reports of different commissions and committees, such as Indian Universities Commission 1902, Calcutta University Commission 1919, Hartog Committee Report 1929, report of the Central Advisory Board of Education 1944 and so on; the higher education system continuously faced the sloth and apathy of the alien government and its attempt of transforming the system went into substantial disarray. Thus, the character of the education disseminated was purely literary, while only a minuscule section of population had an access to it.³ Simultaneously, the Indian intelligentsia raised their voices against the colonial policy of higher education and demanded substantial reforms in its structure. But significant changes did not take place and the prevailing chaotic situation suggested that: the primary motive of the government from the system of education was to strengthen the Raj rather than to educate the colonised, and secondarily, the mechanism of commissions and committees had been utilised by the colonial government to dilute the mainstream discourses. This callous attitude of the government proved tumultuous against creating a conducive environment for higher learning, instead of opening up the doors of such universities for all.

At the time of independence in 1947, there were 20 universities and 420 affiliated colleges.⁴ But, none of them had the world class facilities of higher learning. By criticising the colonial policy of higher education, the Indian intelligentsia had a clear vision of making education system accessible, inclusive and equitable so that all citizens could get the benefit of education and later on contribute in the process of nation building. In addition, India encountered with numerous old and novel challenges similar to education at the front of economy, polity and society. Being a victim of colonialism, India also had a large number of poor and illiterate

¹ K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology and Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, 1st ed. (New Delhi: Tulika, 1995), 9.

² R. Littlehales, *Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in India 1922 – 1927 Volume I*, (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication, 1929), 52.

³ K. T. Shah, ed. *National Planning Committee Series (Reports of Sub-Committees) General Education and Technical Education and Developmental Research*, 1st ed. (Bombay: Vora & Co., Publishers LTD, 1948), 20-21.

⁴ John Sargent, *Decennial Review On the Progress of Education in India 1937 - 1947* (Vol. I) (Delhi: Central Bureau of Education, 1948), 108-110.

masses, scarcity of resources and paucity of finance, but the Indian Government under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 – 1964), was filled with hope, enthusiasm and energy and determined to never let down her commitment to reconstruct this nation. Consider the prevailing circumstances, the Government chose the idea of planning to have rapid growth in all sectors. The Universities are the life blood of any nation and the Government decided to reform the inherited university education system rather than establishing new one. Subsequently, the higher education system underwent substantial reforms where significant changes were made in the superstructure rather than in the base according the recommendations of different commissions and committees. The final outcome was not satisfactory and failed to fulfil the aspirations of Indians.

Even after a span of 70 years after independence, the higher education system is continuously growing, but it is also facing numerous challenges at the level of governance, quality, expansion etc. The major thrust of the study is to analyse the higher education system in the post independent India and delve deep into the reports of different commissions and committees which have acquired a central place in the series of reforms. This study will also explore the governance system of higher education and the number of unresolved issues including academic freedom and university autonomy. Since independence, the Higher education system of India has been rapidly expanding and has become third largest in the world next only to China and the United States,⁵ but, the quality of higher education did not meet the world standard and none of the Indian universities and colleges acquired place in the global ranking. The subsequent section has investigated the government's policy, reforms, intellectual debates on the quality of higher education. Apart from this, the quantitative growth was mistakenly treated as a complement to quality. But a serious policy flaws was needed to explore where different gaps existed side by side with the expansion of higher education system at the level of region, gender, funding etc. This study has also analysed this aspect in the following section. In conclusion, it argued that after having a series of recommendations of commissions and committees and valuable suggestions of intellectuals and policy makers, the deep seeded reforms did not take place in the Indian higher education system. we can proud of having a largest

⁵ World Bank, 'HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA - India_CountrySummary.pdf.', August 15, 2007, https://www.siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/.../India_CountrySummary.pdf (accessed January 07, 2019).

educational network, but, numerous daunting challenges at the level of governance of universities, quality of higher education and expansion of the higher education system dampen the spirit of reforms and posed a serious question on the policy of Government.

Literature Review

This section will particularly highlight gaps in the existing literature on higher education. Scholars have produced seminal works to deal with different aspects of higher education and the key issues of governance, quality and expansion undertaken in the universities. However, they have not provided an in-depth analysis of the whole system albeit missed the historical aspect. A thematic review of the monumental works has been produced here.

I. Governance and Higher Education

In an edited book titled *Higher Education in India*, Amrik Singh, S. P. Aiyar and V. K. Sinha dealt with the issues of governance of higher education, academic autonomy and freedom. Amrik Singh described the very nature of the university system and argued in favour of the autonomy of universities. He deemed that the university should be free to decide terms as to who shall teach, whom shall the university teach, what shall be taught and how shall it be taught? These four freedoms are supposed to be the cornerstone of the university's autonomy.⁶ In an era of strict administrative control, interference of the executive can be seen in the affairs of the universities by influencing the process of appointment of Vice Chancellors. However, the universities have been constituted in India through an act in the legislature and their power, authority and jurisdiction have been clearly defined. In theory, they are autonomous in status, but in practice, the indirect intervention of the government cannot be undermined. The author suggested that the University Grants Commission (UGC) should play a powerful role in guarding the universities against the crass and unenlightened intervention by the government. It should also provide a bold and decisive leadership to the universities so that they could function efficiently in the 'judicious mixture of persuasion and coercion.'⁷

⁶ Amrik Singh, 'Universities and the Government', in *Higher Education in India*, ed. A. B. Shah (Bombay: Lalvani Publishing House, 1967), 70.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

S. P. Aiyar dealt with the governance aspect of the university system and argued that the visible defects in the functioning of the universities lay at the level of structure and organization but, the very serious defects are in the character and decision-making authorities. For performing the main function of teaching and research, the decisions of the university should be based on academic considerations only.⁸ He favoured essential reforms to be made in the university bodies such as Senate, Syndicate, and Academic Council etc. He considered the departments as the nerve centres of the academic community and felt the need to reorganize the departments as well as liberate them from the traditional controls and methods of work. He advocated empowering The Head of departments and breaking the hierarchical system to promote collective decision making within the departments. He also suggested the gradual replacement of the concept of the Head of Department by a Chairman. All the decisions should be taken by a Committee of faculty members headed by the Chairman and the Chairmanship should be rotated by creating several professorships.⁹

The affiliated colleges were the backbone of the higher education system in India. Considering this view point V. K. Sinha explored the two aspects of the college education-academic freedom and college administration. He argued that the academic freedom is a condition but not a privilege given to a teacher. The character of the college administration is thus, completely responsible for the determination of its structure.¹⁰ However, in India, the concept of academic freedom had been realized very late. He proposed this by tracing its historical roots and revealing that both in ancient India as well as in the colonial period, space was not given to academic freedom. As far as the cases of the public run colleges and the private colleges are concerned, in the post-independent period, academic freedom has been inhibited and the problems in the system have multiplied. Thus, there is now an urgent need of administrative reforms to enhance quality. Finally, he suggested giving space to the voices of teachers in the system.

The most important intervention for analysing the governance system of the universities was made by J. N. Kaul through his widely celebrated book titled, *Governance of universities: Autonomy of University Community*. He explored the detailed history of the university system

⁸ S. P. Aiyar, 'The Governance of Universities', in *Higher Education in India*, ed. A. B. Shah, 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹⁰ V. k. Sinha, 'College Administration and Academic Freedom', in *Higher Education in India*, ed. A. B. Shah, 89.

and argued that the 125 years of university education can be characterised as the failure of transplanting the alien education system in Indian soil. As articulated by the Education Commission (1964 – 1966), it was the failure of creating an ‘indigenous thinking’.¹¹ The central focus of his study was to explore the implications of the concepts of university autonomy and university community. He analysed the different reports of Commissions and Committees from University Education Commission 1949 to the Gajendragadkar Committee Report 1971 and suggested that the University Community consisted of students, teachers and non-teaching staff and this idea bloomed with the publication of GCR in 1971. He highlighted that the Indian universities were functioning under tremendous pressure and suffering a crisis. The successful completion of the full academic session was a dream and a series of strikes and protests were often vulgar and violent on various issues which became a daily routine of the university. He referred to the Commissions and Committees from the time of Lord Curzon and demonstrated that due to some reasons, scholarly corpus of recommendations was not enacted to reform and restructure the education system of the country. In his view, the primary reason responsible for the failure of reforms is, ‘they assume conditions which, if they had existed, would have rendered the reform unnecessary.’¹² The role of UGC cannot be undermined in precipitating crisis. Largely an ignorant attitude of the UGC towards real issues made the situation worse. As Kaul argued that the UGC believed that all is really very well with the universities and there is need of a little bit advise and large sum of money.¹³ However, for this situation of crisis, it was not only the crumbling governance system of the universities alone responsible. There were several other issues involved in the process such as quality and expansion of higher education. For understanding the entire scenario, there is a need to delve deep into the discourse to reform the university system as a whole.

In a significant article titled “Governance of Indian Universities: from Decay to Dynamism?”, R. P. Saxena argued that after forty years of strenuous work, the higher education system has grown large but the issues of accessibility, quality and curricula etc are still knocking at its doors. A handful of upper and middle-class people have got the access to higher education and the government has vested interests in promoting elite institutions rather than ensuring

¹¹ J. N. Kaul, *Governance of Universities: Autonomy of the University Community* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1988), 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*

minimum academic standards and basic infrastructure. He termed this as the ‘egalitarian elitism’.¹⁴ The mismatch in the curricula and the employment requirements further aggravated the tensions; the huge cut in the funding stretched the glaring defects, while the very credibility of the higher education system stood eroded. On the flip side, the numerous unaddressed issues obliterated the higher academic quality which can be seen at the micro level, including the lack of planning for institutions, administrative interference in the appointments and the decision-making bodies, dysfunctionality in governance procedure and practice, defective examination system and so on. The author also highlighted the various defects in the functioning of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and blamed it for lack of boldness in conception and execution as well as lack of teeth to assert itself and bring discipline in the university system.¹⁵ The New Education Policy of 1986 was projected by him as a panacea of all ills but like other policies, the government did not vest energy in its implementation and it subsequently failed to bring desired changes. The author advocated for the collective Endeavour of teachers, students, educational administrators and the government along with rigorous system performance audit that can infuse new life, creativity and dynamism in the university system.¹⁶

The issue of academic autonomy was discussed in length by Madhu Prasad in her article “Autonomy and the Commercialization of Higher Education”. She argued for viewing the question of commercialization from the perspective of autonomy because both were now interlinked. Autonomy is the most essential part of an institution, and she suggested to implement it as a characteristic feature of all stages of higher education in order to promote quality. The role of an institution should be to promote competence and critical thinking, and it can best thrive in the environment that encourages Enovation and dissent.¹⁷ In the market driven economy, the concept of commercial autonomy has gained currency and old concepts seem to be outdated. She explained the market perspective of education, where the faculties and administrators are considered as providers, students as consumers, education as a commodity, and social forces and support systems such as governments, communities and parents as stake

¹⁴ R. P. Saxena, “Governance of Indian Universities: From Decay to Dynamism?”, *Higher Education* (Springer) 20, no. 1 (July 1990): 94.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁷ Madhu Prasad, “Autonomy and the Commercialization of Higher Education”, *Social Scientist* 33, no. 11/12 (Nov - Dec 2005): 45.

holders. The growing autonomous higher education system is the symbol of a mature society, therefore, she suggested to address all issues related to autonomy systematically, not selectively. She viewed the neo-liberalist market-oriented concept of autonomy as an effort to promote privatization which seriously compromised with the principle of academic autonomy.¹⁸

In an article titled “Governance Issues in State Universities in Maharashtra”, B. Venkatesh Kumar presented an interesting case study of the reforms in the governance of the university of Maharashtra state in the light of National Knowledge Commission and Yashpal Committee report. In his view, the appointment of the Vice Chancellors through the Search Committee will prove a game changer in the present scenario where political and financial involvement is being considered more importantly, rather than the academic quality and competence of candidates. The new system will bring transparency in the selection process and minimize the external interference. The second landmark step is to prescribe the eligibility conditions for the elected and nominated members in any body of the university. This step will lay the foundation for structural improvement in the composition of the governance system and the bodies like Senate, Academic Council, Management Council and others would be composed according to the new rules. The author finally suggested urgent changes in the Maharashtra Universities Act 1994 in order to provide enabling conditions to facilitate the two significant changes mentioned above.¹⁹

In another significant article titled “Governance of Indian Higher Education: An Alternate Proposal”, Dinesh Abrol proposed an alternative framework related to reforms in the governance of higher education. He noted two key problems in the existing system, first, inadequate state funding and second, insufficient integration with the overall national purpose which led to the crisis in the system, questioned its credibility and led to the wastage of higher education. Historically, numerous blunders were made by the policy makers, as he highlighted the parliamentary debate at the time of UGC Act 1956, where several issues of academic importance such as university autonomy, examination reforms, the funding of educational institutions and host of others were left undecided at the mercy of the executive. Thus, he called

¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹ B. Venkatesh Kumar, “Governance Issues in State Universities in Maharashtra”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 50 (December 2009): 25.

the UGC Act of 1956, a negotiated act between central and state government.²⁰ Subsequently, the goals and values of the national movement were compromised in the name of wide range of development requirements. The sighted example of founding the rural universities on the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission 1949 is enough to describe. ‘The idea of designing the university to suit the needs of Indian society was most actively explored in the Radhakrishnan Commission. The idea of rural university to which the Radhakrishnan Commission had devoted much effort was very different from the conception of the agricultural university that the Kothari Commission later approves in the mid-sixties.’²¹ However, the adopted model of the rural university was completely different and in fact, it was transformed by the Government of India in collaboration with the government of the United States and established a state agricultural university which had nothing common with the rural university as proposed by the Radhakrishnan Commission. He further evaluated the National Commission on Higher Education and Research Bill (NCHER) and suggested that the proposed legislation has completely failed to address the roots of present crisis and key challenges of purpose and credibility. As a solution, he proposed an alternative framework based on the criticism of the existing system which consisted of the innovative programmes that can be mobilized by the democratic movement.

Martin Carnoy and Rafiq Dossani in their article titled “Goals and Governance of Higher Education in India”, explored the evolution of the higher education governance in India and the role of the government in setting up of goals. They also focused on the causes of change in policy, outcomes and the key forces. In their analysis, they observed that the modern universities, established under colonial rule, were affiliated to the institutions for meeting the goal to provide high quality administration which finally catered to the need of only a small elite group.²² For describing the development in the post independent India, they unsuitably divided the whole-time span into three phases and marked each phase with the tenure of prime ministers. For example: higher education governance in the Nehruvian period (1947 – 1964), higher education governance in the Indira Gandhi period (1966 – 1984) and higher education governance in the

²⁰ Dinesh Abrol, “Governance of Indian Higher Education: An Alternate Proposal”, *Social Scientist* 38, no. 9/12 (September - December 2010): 148.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

²² Martin Carnoy and Rafiq Dossani, “Goals and Governance of Higher Education in India”, *Higher Education* (Springer) 65, no. 5 (May 2013): 600.

reform period (1984 – 2011).²³ They believed that the goals of higher education governance were altered in each period in order to fulfil the demand of time. After independence, the major objective was to produce manpower to work for nation building, therefore the policy makers initially focused on improving the quality and expanding the system. The central and state governments were active in accomplishing this task by dividing the responsibilities into two separate forms of governance. The centre played the role of maintaining quality by establishing new institutions and young graduates were trained to work in the industry. The state government initiated the expansion of the number of colleges in order to deliver quality education.²⁴ In the second phase, the political scenario had drastically changed and the focus of the Central government had now shifted towards promoting equity and greater emphasis was laid on social service. Popular and non-elite institutions were founded by the Central government while the states played the role of achieving the objective of elite expansion. The Third phase witnessed the growing privatization of higher education in a scenario where the central government, with the active support of state governments, responded to the processes of democratization, the devolution of political powers and the pressures of globalization in line with the experiences of other developing countries. However, the quality of higher education was compromised. The authors suggested the implementation of urgent and necessary steps to improve quality.

In a significant essay titled “Concerns about Autonomy and Academic Freedom in Higher Education Institutions”, Ved Prakash discussed about autonomy and academic freedom in higher education. He gave the reference of different commissions and committees to explore the concept of university, autonomy and academic freedom. He deemed that autonomy and accountability are interlinked and play a crucial role in promoting excellence in higher education. He termed it as an umbilical relation between autonomy and excellence.²⁵ He reiterated the words of Amrik Singh as noted earlier that the universities are bound by the Act passed in the legislature. Therefore, the scope for autonomy is limited in Indian universities. He further clarified that the coordination mechanism should not be considered as interference in the university autonomy. It is actually a system to provide input for enhancing academic

²³ Ibid., 596.

²⁴ Ibid., 603-604.

²⁵ Ved Prakash, “Concerns about Autonomy and Academic Freedom in Higher Education Institutions”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 46, no. 16 (April 2011): 37.

excellence.²⁶ He also discussed the trajectory of autonomy from teachers to students to different administrative units of the system. He suggested that the institutions should create a conducive environment for the preservation of autonomy and emphasized the need to have space for consensus making on the bases of discussion and debate.²⁷ He examined the various external and internal factors responsible for curtailing the autonomy of the institutions and highlighted the role of the academic community in remaining a mute spectator to the intrusion made by the political, social and market forces. Equally, it did not resist to the manipulation and subversion of the normative structure.

The strenuous exercise of understanding the issues of higher education governance, management and planning was performed by Mariamma A. Varghese and James Thomas in an edited volume titled *Higher Education in India: Emerging Issues and Future Prospects*. Varghese argued that the traditional system of governance had not been changed in accordance with fulfilling the demands of the time and it led to inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the system. It was created to satisfy all constituencies equally, and therefore, it preserved the status co. She interpreted the changing scenario by ‘the notion of the paradox of scope’ and suggested that Due to external forces, it can be seen that the periphery of colleges and universities is expanding while the core is shrinking.²⁸ She attracted attention towards the crisis in the system wherein institutions were experimenting with everything rather than setting up priorities and working on them with an effective strategy. Without the strategic commitment to a certain course of action, she warned that the undirected expansion of the periphery will weaken the whole system and the current governance system will face difficulties in fulfilling its mission.²⁹ Thomas has added some new points in the discussion and proposed that in the knowledge-based economy, the increase in enrolment and improvement in quality of higher education are significant. He reiterated the idea of quantitative expansion of the universities in the light of the recommendations of National Knowledge Commission and Yashpal Committee which suggested a substantial quantitative expansion of the colleges and the universities for promoting accessibility and inclusion in the higher education sector. He also acknowledged that the public

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 38.

²⁸ Mariamma A. Varghese, ‘Governance, Planning and Management of Change’, in *Higher Education in India: Emerging Issues and Future Prospects*, ed. Abraham George (New Delhi: Authors Press, 2013), 328.

²⁹ Ibid., 330.

sector cannot solely bare the entire Burdon and the private sector would have to play an important role in this endeavour. Thus, he argued, ‘private - public participation can be an answer for the quantitative and qualitative expansion of the higher education sector of the country.’³⁰ He further advocated the encouragement of the private sector and emphasized the need to put the private funded institutions above criticisms and free from malpractices as well as the need to promote quality, transparency and appropriateness in the governance of the institutions.³¹

In a recently published edited volume titled *Navigating the Labyrinth: Perspectives on India’s Higher Education*, Pankaj Chandra also explored the theme ‘Governance in Higher Education’. He presented a vivid description of the whole system and argued that the break down in the governance system is a disturbing and striking development in the higher education. In the post independent period, India started lagging behind the global developments in knowledge generation. The adverse impact of it can be seen in the deteriorating intellectual energy and vibrancy of thought.³² He explored the concept of governance and its implication in the academia. He also investigated the role of governance in determining the quality of education and the shaping of learning environment. He argued, the quality of governance defines the quality of education that will be imparted by the university. It should be designed to deliver the charter of the institution. Academic institutions are organizational forms that require a governance environment which balances academic freedom with accountability through a process of participative decision-making.³³ He also analysed the existing form of governance and observed that it is a threat to the provision of quality education and the key factor in precipitating avoidable tensions that the institutions are unable to resolve. He finally advocated the need of drastic change and reorganization in the governance system, if the quality is to be restored.

³⁰ James Thomas, ‘Higher Education in India: Concerns, Issues and Governance’, in *Higher Education in India: Emerging Issues and Future Prospects*, ed. Abraham George, 339.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Pankaj Chandra, ‘Governance in Higher Education: A Contested Space (Making the University Work)’, in *Navigating the Labyrinth: Perspectives on India’s Higher Education*, eds. Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan Private Limited, 2017), 236.

³³ Ibid., 241.

II. Expansion and quality of higher education

The J. N. Kaul's book, *Higher Education in India 1951-1971: Two Decades of Planned Drift*, is inspired from the success of agriculture revolution and industrial development in the decade of 1960s. He tried to portray the quantitative growth in higher education sector as a success story. Where in, he gave the reference that the economic growth of India did not exceed 3-4 per cent during the two decades i.e., 1951-1971 whereas the growth in the enrolments at the higher level of learning was reported around 11 per cent during the same period. The most encouraging growth around 342 per cent was reported in the increase of higher education institutions between 1947-1971.³⁴ The author considered this quantitative growth and similar others as the completion of a glorious first chapter of a success story. Behind these developments, the early two decades witnessed a detail debate on the various aspects of higher education expansion which the author missed during the general discussion. The different Commissions and Committees attracted attention towards prevailing ills in the system and proposed recommendations to reform the system. The central focus of the Reports was to correct the regional imbalances, increase the women enrolments around 33 per cent and promote the institutions of vocational education etc. The pressing problem of educated but unemployed needed special attention because this issue was widely debated in the Parliament and at the various academic platforms. Apart from this, there is also need to analyse the policies and strategies of UGC towards affiliated colleges. the author suggested that the expansion of universities did not result in any diminution in the number of colleges affiliated to the existing universities.³⁵ However, the affiliated colleges proliferated in an unplanned manner and even the basic facilities of library and laboratories were not instituted. This adversely affected the standards of education and mediocre degree holders were produced in a large number. Thus, there is a need to revisit the planning and growth of higher education institutions.

The book of R. N. Chaturvedi, *the Administration of Higher Education in India*, explored the functioning of UGC in the light of twin objectives as the UGC Act 1956 laid, first, the maintenance and determination of standards and second, coordinating the academic work of universities. He chose the Rajasthan Central University for the case study. By analysing the role

³⁴ J. N. Kaul, *Higher Education in India: 1951 - 1971 Two Decades of Plan Drift* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1974), 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

and functions of UGC, he argued that in last 30 years i.e., (1956-1986), the Commission stood as a frail administrative structure which is very flexible and weak to accomplish the twin task. The philosophy behind the creation of Commission became a hurdle in establishing a solid structure. He also observed that the Delhi Office of the Commission was unitary in nature and overburdened with other administrative duties. It was working on the basis of ad-hoc Committees and Panels which were not able to accomplish the task of strengthening the administrative roots of the body. He called the Committees and expert panels, 'Frankstein Monster'.³⁶ In addition, he suggested that the prevailing concept of university autonomy expected the UGC to take legitimate and purpose-oriented measures. Consequently, it emerged merely as an advisory agency.³⁷ He also analysed the data regarding teaching, research and standards of education in Rajasthan University. He observed that the University had more than adequate and satisfactory infrastructure and the other top UGC funded universities also enjoyed similar physical facilities. In terms of several UGC funded schemes such as pay scales, M. Phil and teacher Fellowship programme and Faculty Development Schemes etc, the outcomes are not much encouraging. The promotion of mediocre standard of education at Under Graduation, Post-Graduation and research level is a sad failure of the efforts of the UGC and the Rajasthan university administration. In the field of research, the Natural Science research gained priority and toned well with the international standards available in the discipline. But the social science and humanities did not acquire adequate space.³⁸ In conclusion, Chaturvedi suggested numerous reforms in the administrative set up of the UGC, education planning, and the administration of higher education.

In an article titled "From Kothari Commission to Pitroda Commission", Pawan Agarwal highlighted the recommendations of the different commissions in expanding the structure of higher education and the proposal submitted to deal with the challenges which the higher education system has been facing since its inception. He criticised the manpower planning approach given by the Kothari Commission for the expansion of higher education system which undermined the civic and societal role. The author argued that the primary objective of education is to acquire skills and competencies for producing activities in the economy and for creating

³⁶ R. N. Chaturvedi, *The Administration of Higher Education in India* (Jaipur: Priatwell Publishers, 1989), 174.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

new knowledge.³⁹ He gave statistical reference and suggested that the set target of enrolment rate in the eleventh five-year plan has already been achieved in the first year of its implementation. But, the main issue of quality education was not considered and the experience of two decades provided a gloomy picture where public institutions were not strengthened while private institutions were promoted for professional education. The adverse result of this can be seen in the production of poor labour force which led to the acute problem of unemployment and underemployment of graduates. Thus, the expansion of higher education system should focus on the development of society and economy.⁴⁰ In the second part of the article, the author discussed the major recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission submitted by Sam Pitroda in 2007 for overhauling the higher education system. Calling it a progressive document, he emphasized the need to implement its recommendations. In his conclusion, reminding the readers about the words of Kothari, who said, India's future cannot be built on the foundation of yesterday. Higher education policies rooted in the past will not work. We need policies rooted in today's realities with ability to adjust to changing circumstances.⁴¹

In another article titled "Commission versus Commission in Higher Education" Thomas Joseph refused to accept the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) as a report to the nation. In his view, it consisted of recommendations based on the correspondence between the chairman of the commission and the then prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. He blamed the Chairman of keeping the members of the Commission in the dark and highlighted the difference between NKC and UGC. The former report lay stress on the unregulated framework and encourage private and foreign collaboration, whereas the latter has promoted public education and has been characterized as transparent and participatory in its consultative process.⁴² Both are working with the triple objectives of 'expansion, inclusion and excellence'. He examined the sharp procedural difference between the two bodies for fulfilling the objectives and stated that the NKC recommendations tried to pit one objective against the other, and in the process, privilege the objectives of expansion and excellence at the cost of objectives of equity and inclusion. On the

³⁹ Pawan Agarwal, "From Kothari Commission to Pitroda Commission", *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 7 (February 2007): 554.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 555.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁴² Thomas Joseph, "Commission versus Commission in Higher Education", *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 50 (December 2007): 20.

contrary, the UGC is seriously working on the above mentioned triple objectives and all three objectives expansion, inclusion and excellence are integral and complementary to one another.⁴³ After analysing some major recommendations of NKC, the author highlighted acute contradictions and suggested having debate and consensus for a national policy on higher education and to keep the objectives of the education policy intact as proposed by the Kothari Commission, namely, ‘expansion, equity and excellence’.⁴⁴

In a significant article titled, “Equality vs. Quality”, B. K. Joshi explored the debate around ‘accessibility, equity and quality’. He argued that since the last two decades, the idea of accessibility was overwhelmingly promoted and the issues of equity and quality did not receive sufficient attention. In such a scenario, it was not surprising that the expansion of higher education was measured in quantitative terms for example the increase in the number of colleges, universities, professional institutes and increased access to enrolment. Evidently, the National Knowledge Commission emphasized accessibility as the motive of the education policy and highlighted the acute shortage of number of colleges and universities in relation to demand.⁴⁵ His suggestion was to work on the three ideals simultaneously: focusing on equity first and taking care of quality later. He proposed to conceive higher education as a triangular structure resting on the pillars of accessibility, equity and quality. The stability of the structure is largely dependent on the size and strength of each pillar. If the pillars are not equal in size then the strength than structure become lop-sided or even collapse. He explained this analogy and deemed that the pillar of accessibility was the longest and strongest, while the other two, equity and quality required much attention.⁴⁶ He elaborated the phenomenon of reservation and affirmative action and highlighted the emerging issues. He finally expressed the need to prepare a road map to achieve the said objectives.

In the book titled *Restructuring Higher Education in India*, Sudhanshu Bhushan touched on the various aspects of higher education system and a substantial part dealt with the growth patterns. He first acknowledged the role of different commissions and committees and national higher-education policies in setting up of the tone and style of its development. He deemed that

⁴³ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁵ B. K. Joshi, “Equity vs. Quality”, *India International Centre Quarterly* 34, no. 3/4 (WINTER2007 SPRING 2008): 143.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 144.

the official policies treated higher education as a non-commercial and social activity but, the current trends defied the old ones. The initiatives of promoting privatization pushed the conflicts to come on to the surface.⁴⁷ He further examined the growth of higher education system and highlighted the components on which the system has so far developed. He focused on the supply side in terms of institutional capacity, institutional mode and diversified disciplines. He also explained the foundation of colleges for general, technical and professional education in different states and showed the north south imbalance.⁴⁸ He examined enrolment by the level and discipline, and the issues of inequitable access available to certain gender and classes. He concluded the chapter by addressing the issues which arose after the quantitative development of higher education. The qualitative aspect of the higher education was also emphasized and he suggested that the quality of higher education as an integral part of the growth process and without it, the internal growth and meaningful participation of India in a global economy cannot sustain.⁴⁹ The debate on quality was also explored and analysed from both: the traditionalist and new perspective of promoting quality through competition. He finally suggested the need of a systematic understanding of the new dimensions to the quality debate in an international perspective. Simultaneously, there is also a need to understand the context of the newer quality debate to tune the higher education and to prepare the academic community to face new challenges and to resolve them.

In a remarkable edited book *Higher Education in India: in Search of Equality, Quality and Quantity*, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph presented an interesting study of the higher education trends in the decade of 1960s and the article was published in 1970. They argued that behind the decline in the standard of higher education, the chief and persuasive causes were the less supply of trained collegiate and post graduate teachers, and the expansion of higher education structure rather than secondary education. They alleged that the deteriorating standard was widely and frequently lamented and less frequently analysed empirically. They also raised the problem of lacking more precise criteria and measures to assess qualitative development, and sighted the examples of colonial and post independent India. They expressed satisfaction over the democratisation of higher education in the independent India and suggested that the increasing

⁴⁷ Sudhanshu Bhushan, *Restructuring Higher Education in India* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2009), 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

enrolment numbers despite whatever its inadequacy appears to indicate net improvement. They criticised the exclusion of vast section of the population during the colonial rule in the name of limited seats in the colleges, high fee and the admission standard. they acknowledged that the large expansion of higher education structure was associated with lower standard and cited the example of mounting students' unrest which provided that many students were aware of receiving inferior education.⁵⁰ Their analyses of statistical data presented a contradictory picture which showed the modest advance in the post graduate education and a shift from arts to science, technology and other professional courses. According to them, the foundation of the new high-quality institutions for the education in science and technology indicated their up gradation as a leading sector for economic development. Similarly, the education of social science was enhanced by adding new courses and strengthening old ones and few professionals from various fields acquired outstanding international reputation.⁵¹

In the proceeding part, A. M. Shah traced the roots of mediocrity in higher education and analysed the rules and regulations, acts, governing bodies etc. He proposed that various changes were introduced in the higher education system and its governance in the last three decades of the colonial rule. After independence, significant changes were made in the basic structure in order to democratise the entire higher education system. But the rooted ills appeared on the surface when the allumnai, government and non-academic actors interfered in the decisions of the universities after becoming a formidable force in the different bodies such as the Senate, Syndicate and Academic Council etc. It adversely affected not only the style of functioning, but the quality of university education and set it on a continuously downward path.⁵² He further examined the numerous programmes and schemes such as the personal promotion scheme, the m. Phil programme, the National Eligibility Test (NET) and the refresher courses; the model syllabus, dismal infrastructure and the declining priority for research. He drew the conclusion that the faulty procedure, increasingly poor quality of bodies concerning the academic matters and the failure of strategies promoted the culture of mediocrity. Errol D'Souza added few other

⁵⁰ Loyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, 'Standards in Democratise Higher Education: An Analysis of the Indian Experience', in *Higher Education in India: in Search of Equality, Quality and Quantity*, ed. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan Private Limited, 2013), 167-168.

⁵¹ Ibid., 181.

⁵² M. Shah, 'Higher Education and Research: Roots of Mediocrity', in *Higher Education in India: in Search of Equality, Quality and Quantity*, ed. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, 186.

points in the discussion by raising the issue of contractual teachers in the higher academia. He deemed that steps should be taken to reorganise the organisational structure of employment in order to ensure employment security. This may, however, result in cutting off the link between employee performance and employment, and can even cause the faculty to forget their obligations towards their profession. A number of departments have non-functional faculty members and institutions are protecting them in the name of security of their employment.⁵³ He advocated treating academics as a gate keeper, and in the Indian case, academics has failed to play the role of a gatekeeper, and due to this, the system has finally collapsed.

Critical Assessment

The extensive review of literature has explained the governance structure of higher education in the post independent India, and has highlighted the vital need of reforms in the basic structure, in order to evolve a vibrant and efficient system that could fulfil the educational aspirations of the masses. It has focused on the issues of academic freedom and university autonomy, and also analysed the debilitating approach of the government in dealing with the simmering problems which had led to a situation of crisis in the system. On the other hand, diverse opinions of different intellectuals on the contested issues of expansion and quality of higher education were also examined, and several flaws were observed in the policy formulations of the Indian government. The descriptions of different scholars however missed the opportunity of investigating the whole system of higher education and they did not explore the archival sources such as parliamentary debates, proceedings of the Vice-Chancellor's Conference etc. Hence, their approach seemed to be merely revolving around the macro level. In addition, very few scholars have sighted the historical context while tracing the roots of the existing problems in higher education, and the pioneering studies are centred around the changes which appeared in the system after the phase of economic liberalisation. Therefore, this study examined the reports of different commissions and committees on higher education which have been the cornerstone of the governments' policy. In order to generate a discourse, and to arrive at a logical conclusion, the ideas of intelligentsia on various aspects of higher education are also considered. The subsequent sections will deal with the burning issues in the higher academia, such as

⁵³Errol D'Souza, 'Contractual Arrangements in Academia: Implications for Performance', in *Higher Education in India: in Search of Equality, Quality and Quantity*, ed. Jandhyala B. G. Tilak, 207.

Governance, academic freedom, university autonomy, expansion and quality of higher education within the period of 1949-2009.

Rationale of the study

Since the days of colonial government, the commissions and committees were the centre stage for discussing various problems and proposing solutions related to education in general and higher education in particular. However, these were only advisory bodies and did not have any role in implementing the recommendations. The activists, educationists and government officials were a part of these bodies. The colonial masters had successfully utilised the mechanism to dilute the main stream discourses rather than implementing the recommendations to bring out substantial changes on the ground. The nationalist leaders attempted to criticise the moves of the government and promised to develop and adopt a favourable mechanism in accordance to India's need after independence. But the situation remained unchanged. The government of free India also relied on the same mechanism and even got mastery over it. Evidently, this period which stretched across a long span of time (1949 – 2009) witnessed numerous reports on higher education: from University Education Commission, 1949, to Kothari Commission 1966, to the National Knowledge Commission 2009, to Yashpal Committee 2009 etc. Like the colonial government, the Indian government neither showed any enthusiasm nor invested energy to implement the recommendations of commissions. Hence, the basic structure remained the same. The significance of the study lies in the fact that there are several works on the different aspects of higher education but, they provide a general picture and do not deal with the contested issues which have been repeatedly pointed out above in the context of commissions and committees. This study attempted to fill that gap.

This work also highlighted the commissions and committees as a prism to lay bare the streams of discourses under the considered period which was an important era of great transition. The discourses which took birth after the commissions and committees are not embraced here in the form of a simple narrative and moreover are not produced here in a manner of storytelling. On the contrary, a wide range of approaches and methodologies are adopted to unearth hidden discourses and to make rational analysis of the past in order to understand the prevailing discourses and the state of higher education system in the present time. The reasons behind rooting the study in the select genealogy (1949 - 2009) lie in the facts that the above-mentioned

major reports of commissions and committees had been published during the said period and the higher education system had been transformed and emerged as the third largest one, after the United States and China. The constitutional governance provided a significant ambience to Indian intellectuals to express themselves freely and proposed remedies for the existing state of higher education. The idea of expanding the study beyond the twentieth century is to also consider the changes that appeared in the higher education policy as well as in the system after economic liberalisation and the set priorities which were different from the earlier administration.

Objectives of the study

The above literature review reveals that the existing literature gives a general idea about the development of higher education in the post independent period. In addition, it lacks the historical aspects and mainstream debates on various key issues. The intentions of this work, from the ambit of higher education are:

- To analyse the recommendations of different commissions and committees on the issues of the governance of higher education, quantitative expansion, the quality of higher education during the period considered, that is, from 1949 to 2009.
- To examine the higher education policy of Indian Government, its role in the implementation of recommendations on such issues and the ground reality.
- To study the response of intelligentsia on such issues and their alternative proposals.

Research questions

In the light of the above objectives, this study dealt with the following questions:

1. What was the approach adopted by the Indian government for maintaining standards in the universities and colleges? Did the universities emerge as pioneer centres of higher teaching and research? If not, what were the suggestions of different commissions and committees to tackle such a crisis? How did intellectuals seek to resolve the problems?
2. What were the changes made by the Indian Government in the basic structure of higher education after independence? Was it successful in improving the governance system and dealing with the issues of academic freedom and university autonomy? If not, what were the

alternative suggestions proposed by the different commissions and committees to reform the system? What were the opinions of intellectuals on such issues?

3. What was the policy of Indian government to meet the demand of higher education? Was it successful in managing the expansion and the quality of higher education? If not, what were the recommendations of different commissions and committees related to such issues? What were the suggestions of intellectuals to resolve the simmering problems?

Methodology of the study

This study applied both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the history of higher education in India and it can be situated in an interpretative paradigm. Hence, the historical method would be applied to discern the hidden discourses in both the primary and secondary sources. The focus of the study is to analyse the higher education policy of the Indian government between 1949 and 2009 and the changes which have been introduced in the superstructure. Moreover, different commissions and committees were appointed by the government that played a decisive role in setting up of the tune and style of higher education. The proposed study needs to analyse the changing recommendations of different commissions and committees from time to time and examine their implementation on the ground, therefore, the reports of the different commissions and committees would be used along with the reports on the progress of education in India. Apart from this, For the critical examination of the higher education system and for constructing a balanced picture, this study will also deal with the functioning of the commissions and committees, characteristics of the recommendations, the motive of government behind such activities and the vacuum between the recommendations and ground realities.

In a democratic country like India, several institutions like the parliament, ministries, courts etc played a key role in drafting and implementing policies. As far as the Indian higher education system is concerned, education is a subject of the concurrent list, and the universities and institutions are constituted through an act in the legislature. Therefore, the proceedings of the parliament and the education department, legislative acts, resolutions and constitutional amendment acts etc would be employed as the sources. On the other hand, the Indian intellectuals opposed the interference of the government in the academic space and put forth a demand to guard the university autonomy, academic freedom, the balance between quantitative

expansion and the quality of education and to evolve universities as the premier centres of teaching and research. Therefore, the study will not only focus on the commissions, recommendations and its impact on the higher education but also would try to deal with the popular demands of intelligentsia. For the purpose, the private papers, articles, writings and speeches, memorandums, autobiographies, biographies and correspondence of intelligentsia including Abul Kalam Azad, Humayun Kabir, J. P. Naik, K. G. Saiyidain, S. Radhakrishnan, Santi Swarup Bhatnagar, Yashpal, Zakir Husain etc would be utilised.

Outline of the chapters

In the following chapter, the problem of declining standards of higher education is explored. Since Independence, the Union Government did not adopt a holistic approach to deal with the impending crisis. Over the years, extensive debates and discussions took place among intellectuals, legislatures and policy makers with regard to maintaining standards in higher education institutions. Opinion was widely divided along expansion verses consolidation. A serious flaw in government policy was to treat quantitative achievements as a complement to quality. However, the essential facilities of library, laboratory, classrooms and others were not adequately installed in the newly established universities and affiliated colleges. The UGC was constituted to determine and maintain the standards of higher education in 1956, but it could not reform the system and remained a fund-raising body. When the policy of Government found itself hanging between quality and quantity, there was the intervening voice of numerous intellectuals who advocated consolidating the existing universities and departments. Apart from this, intellectuals like A. B. Shah, J. P. Naik and politicians like Somnath Chararjee and others raised the issue of promoting elitism and attacked on the ivory tower approach of the government. They demanded to ensure quality higher education for socially and economically deprived sections of the society. Thus, the ideas of access and equality were also attached with the quality of higher education. Due to not having substantial changes, the issues of access, equity, quality and inclusion are still debated.

In the next chapter the issue of governance of higher education has been dealt with, which was directly linked with concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom. It is highlighted that the two decades immediately after the independence of India were dedicated to conjure up the ideas of university autonomy and academic freedom. Intellectuals, politicians and

policy makers did not mark a sharp contradiction between the two concepts till the publication of Kothari Commission Report in 1966. Numerous students' protest movements highlight the approach of the Union Government towards the idea of university autonomy. The authoritarian government took harsh measures to control the institutions. Numerous instances were witnessed in the decades of 1970s and 1980s when the autonomy of universities was encroached upon. This tendency was also observed in the action of the State Governments after transferring education from State List to Concurrent List in 1976. The Vice Chancellors of State Universities were made scapegoat. The mass resignation of eight Vice Chancellors in Bihar in 1985 has been highlighted with other instances. The Association of Indian Universities, a statutory body, submitted a Memorandum to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986, and demanded to protect and guard university autonomy. Finally, the ideas of university autonomy and academic freedom were being expanded after a long debate on the various issues, but an ultimate model could not be derived and it is still debated.

In the proceeding chapter, the issues of expansion of higher education have been examined and large number of gaps have been observed in terms of region-wise distribution of colleges and universities, gender-wise enrolments and distribution of courses etc. The genealogy of the prevailing chaos has been traced and its roots have been found in the colonial establishment. The old maladies continued in the system of post-Independent India and no serious efforts were coming from the Union Government to ameliorate the conditions, as any reform in the education system was largely dependent upon the suggestions of Commissions and Committees. The reluctance of the government gave birth to lively debates among intellectuals and policy makers regarding the expansion of higher education. A battle was pitched around expansion verses consolidation and quantity verses quality. Instead of acting in accordance to the suggestions, the Union Government designed policy by considering its own priorities and moreover, scarce financial resources. Thus, the higher education institutions expanded in an unplanned manner and the UGC also failed to contain the crisis. The government subsequently found itself under tremendous pressure with the rising demands of constituting new vocational and technical institutes and generating employment opportunities. It had a major challenge to balance out the growth of professional courses and general courses. This chapter consists of statistical data of 1970s and conveys that a wider gulf persisted in several sectors of national education of the country. The foundation of Indira Gandhi National Open University in 1985

proved to be a turning point in meeting the larger demand of masses and freed the universities and colleges from overcrowding. Meanwhile, neoliberal policies also influenced the expansionist policy of the Union Government. But it could not make a concurrent policy for the expansion of higher education and the universities and colleges were found expanding in an unplanned manner.

In the subsequent chapter, the issues of quality, governance and expansion of higher education are separately dealt with during the neoliberal era. The adopted policy of liberalisation was not only confined to economy, but a large impact of it was felt on education. The neoliberal policies of the state pushed market forces to invest in education system. For instilling competition and assessing external quality of higher education institutions, a National Assessment and Accreditation Council was set up in 1994 and afterwards market forces gained momentum. The recommendations of Five-Year Plans, Ambani Birla Committee Report, National Knowledge Commission and Yashpal Committee Report further suggested to increase private investment to make India as a knowledge hub in the 21st century. As expected, India emerged as the largest network of education but higher education remained underrated in the global ranking. It adversely promoted towards treating education as a commodity, wherein private education was meant for quality and access, equality and inclusion became distant dreams. Finally, the debate for quality higher education was found hanging between state vs. market. In the same vein, the term 'new managerialism' was coined to reorganise the governance system of universities. The Gnanam Committee 1990 significantly transformed the understanding of university autonomy and academic freedom and emphasised on accountability. The Commissions and Committees during the period emphasized to introduce changes in the administration to make it more result oriented. On the other hand, the system of higher education continued to expand in an unplanned manner and made a huge quantitative jump in 2006-2007 and emerged as one of the largest networks of the world, but the issues of regional imbalance, gender wise gaps in the enrolments, distribution of courses and mismatch between education and employment still continued even after a series of Commissions and Committees.

Finally, it can be concluded that India witnessed huge debates on the various platforms regarding the university governance, improving the standards of higher education and the expansion of higher education network etc. A series of Commissions and Committees had been

appointed to assess the system and proposed suggestions to make strategies and take action against the prevailing ills. But the Government seemed to be in no mood towards enacting the abundance of significant recommendations by which the changes can be visualised in the inherited colonial system of higher learning. A trend of launching the National Education policies also emerged after the Report of Kothari Commission, but substantial changes did not appear on the ground. While launching any new policy, the government argued to enact the ideas of educational commissions however, in reality, its priorities and agenda acquired the space. Moreover, it exploited the whole mechanism in diluting the main stream discourse to resolve the key issues and enhance the standards of teaching and learning. Therefore, at the time of implementing the recommendations, the government displayed a distinct lack of will for execution and credibility. Consequently, general requirements were not fulfilled and due to numerous unresolved key issues, the Indian academia found itself struggling and nowhere near to the global standards. Thus, the setup of commissions appears as a valuable mechanism to assess the status of education as well as to propose suggestions for reforms. However, the implementation part is most important to assess substantial changes on the ground. As we notice, the governments did not pay much attention on the effective implementation of the recommendations and neglected them without citing any reason.

CHAPTER 2: DEBATING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Post-Independence India would have to necessarily focus upon quality university education in order to ensure the requisite rapid economic development and change in polity and society. It had to bear the burden left untouched by its colonial masters, who created neither a general framework for higher education nor took any interest whatsoever in providing quality education to the masses. In such a situation, the new government had dual challenges: first, to chart out a concrete plan of action for reorganising the education system in general; and, second, to provide basic facilities for an academic environment to sprout up. Following the path of its colonial predecessor, the governments of independent India appointed a series of commissions and committees to seek suggestions for creating facilities, enhancing overall quality of education and to make it development oriented. The present chapter will explore in detail the various recommendations of the Commissions and Committees and the debates that had taken place on the matter of improving the standards of higher education in the Parliament. For the sake of better comprehension of the longstanding dialogue, the viewpoints of a few Indian academicians have also been utilized.

In conclusion, it is argued that the bureaucratic machinery remained a hurdle in implementing lofty ideals and recommendations and the paucity of finance added fuel to the fire. In the following long span of forty years, the government could not evolve a system of assessing quality and generate competition among institutions for swift change. It was in 1994 that the National Assessment and Accreditation Council was founded so that Indian higher education institutions could figure up in global rankings. When the economic structure of the country was to be reorganised, the doctrine of neoliberalism received widespread consensus. This period witnessed a quick growth of private institutions and very soon the debate of quality of education shifted between public and private institutions.

Quality of higher education: ideas, debates and reforms

The first three modern universities were constituted at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857. The steadily growing Indian intelligentsia was not given any direction or funding as per demands

and, therefore, the education system duly failed. As a result, the standard of Indian universities was no match for western academic system and foreign degrees were always considered a marker of excellence. The colonial attitude was largely responsible for this, the Calcutta University Commission noted in its report that the Indian Universities ‘...were not corporations of scholars, but corporations of administrators; they had nothing to do directly with the training of men, but only with the examining of candidates; they were not concerned with learning, except in so far as learning can be tested by examinations.’¹ The Commission suggested a number of reforms to transform the education system, but none of them were to be considered while formulating policy. In the last decade of colonial rule, the situation became even more grim as university education in India became ever overcrowded and many students, who otherwise would not have been in the universities, were there. As statistics provided by the Report of Central Advisory Board of Education 1944 showed, there were 4,54,140 pupils in the upper stage of the high schools in British India, and 1,63,408 students in the universities. Many of these were there not because they had been found fit for higher education or had a thrust for knowledge, but because they could not find any opportunities for employment on leaving schools and their parents were hoping that their scions might stumble upon a successful career after obtaining a university degree.² In the absence of essential teaching facilities, the quality of education was bound to be compromised and the number of failed students rose sharply. The report of C.A.B.E provided the numbers of failed students in British university examination: out of 20,502 students, who appeared for the B.A. and B.Sc. examinations in all the British universities in (1940-1941), only 11, 185 students could qualify.³ This showed how deeply the standards of university education had plummeted, and the government of free India was required to seek proper guidance so as to reform the system.

The leaders of national movement were critical of the bureaucratic system of British government and had resolved to build a flexible, responsible and transparent system after independence. To reform the education system, they adopted the idea of reorganising the system on nationalist lines. To fulfil this dream, the government appointed a University Education

¹ *Report of the Calcutta University Commission (1917 – 1919), Volume 1, Part I, Analysis of Present Conditions* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919), 57.

² *Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education (Sergeant Committee Report)* (Simla: Manager Government of India Press, 1944), 29-30.

³ *Ibid.*, 30.

Commission under the Chairmanship of an educationist and philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975). The Commission submitted its report in 1949 and suggested a thorough overhauling of the existing university system to allow for a speedy economic growth. The UEC delved deep into the various aspects of deteriorating standards of education and suggested that

...many of our universities do not compare favourably with the best of British and American universities in respect of their teaching and examination standards. Unless we ensure the highest standards of teaching in our universities, our degrees will not command recognition and respect either in our own country or abroad, and a large number of students will have to go abroad for their higher education. Our universities should maintain the academic character of the work on a level recognised as adequate by the universities of other countries. Universities are our national institutions, and to keep up our national prestige, our degrees must be such as to command international recognition.⁴

To reform the university education system, the Commission recommended to have a multifaceted approach wherein the school level and higher education system must be simultaneously ameliorated. It had successfully shown that the problem of deteriorating standard of university education was explicitly linked with the poor quality of school education, therefore, without raising the quality of school education, the standard of higher education could not have been improved. Therefore, it recommended refresher courses for schools, intermediate colleges and university teachers:

Refresher courses would be mutually beneficial; they will bring universities and university teachers into close relation with their former pupils as well as other teachers, and through them with the high schools and intermediate colleges within their orbit; on the other hand, they would raise the standards of teaching and examinations in schools and intermediate colleges, and consequently, the university entrance will come better trained academically. The university can thus become a real intellectual and spiritual home to which its teacher alumni would love to come back for nutriment of mind and spirit, by establishing friendly relations with school and intermediate teachers, university teachers can bring about the collaboration of the highest utility.⁵

The colleges and universities also required vigorous changes for raising the standard of education. The causes of their problem, as the Commission had highlighted, lay in the overcrowding of colleges, lack of proper university calendar, inefficient use of lecture method,

⁴ *The Report of the University Education Commission (December 1948 – August 1949)* Volume I, 1st rep. ed. (Simla: Manager Government of India Press, 1963), 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

absence of a proper method of written exercise etc. The UEC called for work in those very areas which could help to resolve these issues to some extent. In order to free up the colleges from getting crowded, it recommended to reduce the number of students admitted every year by colleges. But it failed to suggest any alternative whereby the growing number of students could be absorbed. In addition, it recommended that lectures should be carefully planned and supplemented by tutorials, library work and written exercises. It also recommended providing well equipped libraries and laboratories.⁶ The qualitative improvement in infrastructure was a distant dream in a context when India was suffering from financial crunch. It required an adequate budget and careful planning. Post-graduate education and research also required reforms and the Commission emphasized upon advance teaching and research in science and humanities. As it wrote:

There should be a uniformity in the regulations for the M.A. and M.Sc. degrees. To pass graduation successfully a candidate should study for at least two years and for an honours graduate at least one year; teaching for these degrees should be properly organised by means of regular lectures, seminars and laboratory work. The course should include advanced study of one special subject and training in methods of research, but not actual research. Admission to these courses should be on all-India basis in every university.⁷

Thus, the UEC proposed an outline to rebuild a university education system where the standard of education could be maintained and effective teaching and research could contribute for the economic development of the country. Instead of recommending a proper mechanism for assessing the standard of university education, the Commission vaguely proposed to adopt the foreign degree as a measurement of standard and to create a competitive environment. The final decision of implementing the recommendations was in the hands of government which had dual challenges; first, to contain the deteriorating standard of education and second, to build new education institutions for growing number of students. Hence, discussion among policy makers revolved around quality verses quantity and the success of the government depended on how it would make balance between the two.

The government adopted the method of planning to have a rapid growth in all sectors of nation building. The First Five Year Plan highlighted the vital role of education in the plan

⁶ Ibid. 101.

⁷ Ibid., 150-151.

development of the nation. The impact of education could be felt in the quality of manpower and the prevailing social climate. In a democratic country like India, the intelligent participation of masses was a prerequisite for the effective functioning of democracy.⁸ Instead of directly focusing on quality, the First Plan suggested some structural changes. It drew attention towards the higher cost of university education which prevented numerous intelligent students to take part in the higher education. The Commission recommended to increase free studentship and scholarship and to develop facilities for part-time work by students to meet the expenses of their education. It also sought inculcating originality and the spirit of research, devoid of the undue stress of examination and temporary work. Emphasis was also given to bridge the gulf between the educated class and the masses. To that end, it suggested to introduce the study of Indian culture which would help in developing the cultural and political identity of the nation. The role of text-books was also considered crucial in building up of civic loyalty and creating understanding for democratic citizenship.⁹ The recommendations of First Five Year Plan were looked upon optimistically by the Indian intellectuals and policymakers. In the eighteenth meeting of CABE in 1952, Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), then Union Minister for Education, elaborated the role of planning and stated, 'I feel that national planning must therefore aim not merely at the utilization of our existing resources but at the creation of a new type of mind. We want in India of the future men and women of vision, courage and honesty of purpose who will be able to play their part worthily in every field or national activity.'¹⁰ However, the structural changes as proposed by Planning Commission were not going to be enough to induce a deep change in the higher education system of the country. Moreover, the government neither took the recommendations of UEC seriously nor discussed them in Parliament for preparing a broad outline of education policy.

The Union Government went ahead with the Herculean task of reconstructing the higher education system of the country with greater emphasis on reorganising the administrative setup of the universities. Issues of governance and university autonomy were of prime concern.

⁸ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'First Five Year Plan (1951 – 1956)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/1st/1planch33.html> (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Arabinda Biswas and Suren Agrawal, *Indian Educational Documents since Independence: Committees, Commissions, Conferences* (New Delhi: Academic Publishers, 1971), 25.

However, Indian intellectuals and policymakers were engaged in the wider deliberation on the issue of standard of university education. Expressing such concern in his Banaras Hindu University Convocation address on December 22, 1953, an administrator, educator and scientist Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar (1894-1955) called for adopting the policy of consolidating the existing department of studies rather than establishing new one. In his words,

I have begun to think that the best course for our universities would be to consolidate their present activities rather than indulge in a policy of expansion and institute new departments of study. There is so much to be done even with respect to the consolidation of existing departments. Teaching would be made more lucrative so that the best men may be attracted to the profession. The number of teachers should be increased and the standards of teaching must be improved. Necessary teaching aids should be provided. These requirements have a prior claim on the limited financial resources of universities. Universities are becoming dependent to an increasing degree on State and Central governments for finance, but the funds which can be made available for university education from the State exchequer are necessarily limited. In the past, universities benefited considerably by donations from princes and industrial and business magnates. These sources are now drying up. I feel convinced that the proper course for university authorities is to consider how best they can consolidate their present activities and raise the standards of instruction in the subjects they have already introduced.¹¹

Contrary to the approach suggested by Bhatnagar, the government evidently wasted its energy in establishing new institutions at the cost of quality for meeting the increasing demand of higher education. The quinquennial Report of 1947-1952 had observed a rapid increase in the number of enrolled students in universities and colleges. There were 323,882 students at university stage in 1951-52 in comparison to 1,83,238 students in 1947-48. Thus, around 70 per cent growth took place in the enrolments of students in five years. The rise in the number of universities also took place: in 1952, there were 30 universities with 261 teaching departments, 157 constituent colleges and 609 affiliated colleges.¹²

The adverse impact of government's policy was soon realised when sufficient number of employment opportunities were not created for the educated youth. Azad expressed dismay on the wastage of higher education in a symposium in 1953. He said that it was due to the prevailing

¹¹ *Banaras Hindu University Convocation and Important Addresses: 100 Years (1916 – 2016)* Vol. 1 (Varanasi: Malviya Moolya Anusheelan Kendra and Mahamana Archive, 2017), 281.

¹² Humayun Kabir, *Progress of Education in India (1947 – 1952): Quinquennial Review with an Introductory Survey* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1953), 110.

mentality of treating the university degree as a passport to secure government service rather than to acquire knowledge to become useful members of society. It was obvious that the government could not provide employment to every degree holder and in the same vein, it could not prevent any individual from taking university education. He gave the reference of a principle of economics, that of correlation between demand and supply and any deviation from such correlation leading to social crisis. As a solution, he recommended to reorganise the education system in a way that the majority of graduates at secondary stage could engage themselves in various professions, trades, industries, etc. and a very small number adequate to the needs of society, go to university for higher education.¹³ However, Azad did not provide any outline of how the government was going to create the opportunities of trade, industry and commerce for educated youth. His imagined idea of restricted admission policy was widely deliberated and initially, it was decided to change the attitude of students to desist from treating the university degree as a token for securing government service. In the same symposium, a popular politician and educationist, K. M. Munshi (1900-1970) was also in favour of such a plan but he rather advocated an active role for government in creating facilities. As he suggested,

Immediate steps should be taken to see that the universities cease to be avenues for securing government service, except where high professional and academic qualifications are required in the candidate. To raise our universities to a proper level of efficiency and usefulness, the entrance to government service should only be through competitive examinations at different levels of services. University education should be thoroughly reorganized and planned and the present set-up, which is a relic of the dead past, should be changed. Once a degree ceases to be a passport to government service, the existing universities would be sufficient to meet the demands of higher education for some time. But before they are made to suit the new conditions, more accommodation and equipment, a well-paid first-class staff and funds for their full development should be generously provided by the government.¹⁴

The gravity of the matter can be realised from an assessment by a scientist and administrator Dr. K. S. Krishnan (1898-1961), who deplored the poor condition of colleges and universities. In his opinion, focus should have been on providing better facilities and efficient management rather than restricting the admissions. As he stated,

¹³ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *The Future of Education in India: A Symposium* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1954), 5-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

The one remedy that is healthy, but would strain all our present resources, is to find more money and the wherewithal to expand the colleges and equip them adequately to enable them to impart real university education to all those who are competent and who seek it... The country will have to find enormously larger sums for education than she has been able to provide. The problem is immense, and is of nearly the same magnitude as the problem of improving the standard of living in the country. Changing the statutes, or redrafting the syllabus, or appointing a few more proctors to enforce better discipline will not provide the solution as long as the colleges have to deal with such large numbers and with such meagre facilities.¹⁵

In contrast, some intellectuals like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan looked at the situation rather optimistically and advocated for educating the masses by cutting funds from several developmental projects. He also proposed an idea similar to restricted admissions at university level that Azad had earlier advocated. While addressing the youth in the Convocation of Gujarat University on 8 October 1955, he emphasized the qualitative improvement of education and making structural changes in the universities and colleges. He stated,

There is no point in our bringing about material rehabilitation, having large dams, etc., if the men we turn out are small and petty-minded... What's the good of bringing about a change in the environment if we do not bring about a change in mind? We must change ourselves and if we have to change ourselves, we have to start this process in the institutions which cater to the needs of students. Therefore, greater attention requires to be paid both by the State and the Central governments to see to it that colleges have restricted admissions, have adequate staff, and there is a living communication between the teacher and the students...¹⁶

A rattled government did not come out with any tangible solution for the problems of growing enrolments, scarcity of funds or declining standard of education. It vigorously adopted the suggestion of establishing University Grants Commission for coordinating university function and determining standards as proposed by the UEC.¹⁷ While introducing the University Grants Commission Bill in 1955, Dr. M. M. Das, The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education, highlighted the growing importance and demand of higher education in independent India. He drew attention towards two emerging serious problems caused due to phenomenal increase both in the number of students in the universities and the number of the universities themselves:

¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶ S. Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings (October 1952 – January 1956)* (Delhi: Publications Division, 1956), 170.

¹⁷ *The Report of the University Education Commission*, 381.

The first problem is to maintain co-ordination among the activities of our Universities. The second problem is to maintain the standards in our Universities.’¹⁸ He further pointed out the precarious financial condition of the universities: ‘On the one hand their incomes are not sufficient to meet their present needs. On the other hand, the pressure upon them, namely the number of students, is continually increasing. The results under such circumstances are bound to be inadequate facilities for education, poorly paid teachers, ill-equipped laboratories, and ill-equipped libraries, want of proper accommodation, lowering of the teachers-students ratio-all leading to the one, inevitable result, namely the lowering of standards in our Universities.’¹⁹

He also elaborated upon another headache for the government, i.e., coordination within universities. He highlighted the limited role of Inter University Board for such a purpose, which had been founded in 1924. To solve the problem, he advocated a body namely ‘University Grants Commission’ as unanimously recommended by the State Education Ministers and Vice Chancellors for the dual role of maintaining co-ordination and standard in the universities and allocating funds from the central exchequer to the universities for their development and improvement.²⁰ Thus, the government proposed an outline of a permanent body which would play an active role in dealing with the crisis situation. Discussion in Parliament provided a diverse opinion of the Members of Parliament. M. S. Gurupadaswami (Mysore) raised an issue of the University autonomy. He expressed doubt over government’s intentions. While examining the dual objectives of the Bill, he urged the government to define exactly terms such as ‘coordination and determination of standards.’²¹

Continuing this debate, some members like Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat) advocated to make UGC as an independent body which would be free from the pressure of government. She felt the term ‘determination of standards’ was very vague and warned of its danger that it must not lead to stereotyping. She suggested the scope and important functions of the commission such as exploring the question of expansion of the university education, coordination of universities and facilitation of research, ensuring the minimum levels of attainment in examinations, and ensuring of the minimum standard of living for teachers and staff etc.²² N. M.

¹⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. I, No. 2, February 22, 1955, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1955), 66.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

²² *Ibid.*, 98-99.

Lingam (Coimbatore) gave his general views on the University Grants Commission Bill in 1955 and criticised the business of appointing Commissions and Committees and organising Conferences and Seminars. In his words,

I regret to say, we have not evolved a national pattern of education. In other words, we do not have definite objectives. We do not have goals which will subserve the national ideals by developing what I call the national character in our young men. We have launched the First Five Year Plan and are on the eve of initiating the Second Five Year Plan. We may achieve economic independence. If the system of education is not improved, all achievements of the Five Years Plan will be of no avail. That University education is anything but satisfactory can be seen not only from the low standard of education at all levels but also student indiscipline and from the drifting that the students are having. It is most unfortunate that our young men and women having lost their moorings become a prey to every slogan not knowing their own national ideals, not knowing their place and the place of education in the scheme of things. The Commission may serve a limited purpose under the Bill.²³

Adding a new dimension of mass literacy, Annie Mascarene (Trivandrum) strongly recommended to promote primary and secondary education because in her view, it was a desideratum for reforming higher education. She further recommended to invest more money for the promotion of education system instead of the then current percentage of the national income that was about 2 per cent or more than 2 per cent. She compared the whole policy of the government with 'crowning a leper patient with a diadem' and further said, 'I would, therefore, request government to consider before passing this Bill, scheme to re-organise primary and secondary education on a strong basis, and then to pass this Bill to crown it all, so that the future India may be an enlightened country.'²⁴

The discussion on the UGC Bill in Lok Sabha widely highlighted the worry of the members about prevailing crisis and the determination of the government was to find an administrative solution of the problem. Therefore, the UGC Bill was passed without impacting the spirit of the model Act and numerous issues remained unresolved. Contrary to the expectations of Union government, the Second Five Year Plan observed the deteriorating standards of university education due to rapid rise of students' enrolment in the universities and colleges. As per sources, the number of qualifying students in the examination of arts and science degree had increased during each year of the First Five Year Plan from 41,000 to 58,000.

²³ Ibid., 102.

²⁴ Ibid., 119-120.

While at the end of the First Plan, the total increase in the enrolments of students was expected to be 7,20,000 as compared to 4,20,000 five years ago.²⁵ For ameliorating the quality of higher education and for reducing the wastage and stagnation of unqualified students, the UGC took various steps 'These include the institution of three-year degree courses, organisation of tutorials and seminars, improvement of buildings, laboratories and libraries, provision of hostel facilities, stipends for meritorious students, scholarships for research and increase in salaries of university teachers.'²⁶ The UGC also took an important decision for raising the standard of higher education. It suggested not to focus only on the post-graduate study and research through university departments, but to provide sufficient financial support to affiliated colleges. As proposed by UGC,

it is necessary to assist in the improvement of standards in the colleges by making grants to them. As required by the UGC Act regulations have been framed enabling the Commission to include affiliated colleges within its purview and a list of colleges under the various universities has been drawn up for this purpose. Colleges directly run by government and also Intermediate Colleges have been left out. These latter will either become secondary schools or full degree colleges where the three-year degree course scheme is introduced.²⁷

Thus, the different areas were found out by the UGC where the special attention was required in the process of reform.

The limitation of finance was a severe challenge for the plan and the government was closely watching the developments. The seriousness of the matter can be realised from a letter of Education Advisor to the Government of India, K. G. Saiyidain (1904-1971) to the Education Secretaries of States on March 31, 1956. He expressed dissatisfaction over the ineffective implementation of the educational recommendations of First Plan. He asked to modify the administrative procedure, both at the Centre and in the States and ensure a speedy implementation of projects. He further advised,

Since our resources are limited, it is imperative that we should make the maximum and the most efficient use of them. It will be an unpardonable lapse on our part if we

²⁵ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Second Five Year Plan (1956 – 1961)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/2nd/2planch23.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 25.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Report of the University Grants Commission (April 1957 – March 1958)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1959), 5.

fail to utilize every rupee of this allotment and to make it go as far as possible. This leads directly to the question of setting up, both in the States and the Centre, effective and 'streamlined' organizations to implement the Plan with speed and decisiveness.²⁸

For having the deep changes in the university system, the active role of States and university administration was required along with the policy guideline by the Central Government. While delivering the Welcome Address at the Conference of University Administration from 30 July to 1 August, 1957, Saiyidain also advocated that the States should provide possible financial aid to the Universities and the allocation of grants should not become an instrument of controlling the internal university administration. However, it is the responsibility of States to ensure the proper utilization of funds and to indicate the broad social aims and objectives of the national policy within which the university should function. For the healthy development of education, he further emphasized the greater role of universities and suggested to adopt 'administrative as well as academic measures which will transform them into vital centres of community living, where students can develop their intellectual talents and social and artistic interests and achieve a sense of social worthfulness.'²⁹

Despite coming up with various programmes for ameliorating standards of higher education, the government did not pay enough attention to generate an environment of competition among colleges and universities by institutionalising a ranking system. The demand of such a system was first raised in Lok Sabha by Dr. K. B. Menon (Badagara). He was speaking on the motion of Demands for Grants, Ministry of Education in 1957 and suggested to maintain uniformity in the standards of University education at this stage of the development of education for the ease of students to go from one university to another. He propounded,

Each university thinks that its teaching is the best and its standards are the highest. But if there is a classification of universities and if there is a grading of universities by government, I am quite sure that it will be easy for students from one university to go to another.³⁰

This idea might have impacted the growth of higher education in number of ways. Most significantly, it could help in maintaining quality in existing universities as well as ensuring

²⁸ K. G. Saiyidain, *Facets of Indian Education* (New Delhi: National Council of Educational research and Training, 1970), 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. III, Second Session, July 26, 1957 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957), 5355.

standard in the newly created colleges and universities. Most importantly, the teaching community was solely responsible for disseminating the advance knowledge and the drastic change in their condition may impact the education system. The legislatures and commissions continuously drew attention to work in this area and government took a long time in fulfilling the demands. Dr. K. L. Shrimali (1909-2000), the Union Education Minister, informed the house in the reply on the discussion of Demands for Grants on education in March 1958,

The government will continue to give the greatest importance to the improvement of the quality of the teachers at all levels. The teacher is working today under difficult conditions in the most impoverished and unpretentious surroundings. We must all admit that he belongs to that great profession which is toiling for the perfection of mankind. His cause may appear modest at first sight but in the words of a great educator, it is one of the greatest causes of history, a cause on which kingdoms and generations rest. The most important step which the Central Government has taken is to give financial assistance to the state governments for improving the salaries of teachers.³¹

He further apprised about the second step that was to introduce a scheme of national award for teachers against their valuable service and contribution. The objective of this scheme was to enhance the prestige of teacher.³²

The impact of government's policy and programmes was not visible on the ground and the standard of education was continuously deteriorating. During, the discussion on University Grants Commission Annual Report in 1958, numerous MPs raised the issues of declining quality of education and demanded to reorganise university education system and allocate more funds for the reconstruction of education system. The most important matter that called for attention was the poor condition of affiliated colleges, which were considered some years before by UGC to be the nucleus of higher education system. By highlighting the importance of affiliated colleges, D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur) viewed,

The State Universities are like a map. The reality behind that map is a territory, a population. Similarly, the State University is a name. The reality behind these State universities is the affiliated colleges. The affiliated colleges are the blood of the State Universities, are the life of the State Universities. Of course, the affiliated colleges may be leading a precarious life. An affiliated college may not be paying its staff as

³¹ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XIII, Fourth Session, March 21, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 6124-6125.

³² *Ibid.*, 6127.

adequately as possible. All these things may be there. But I should say that the University Grants Commission doing something for the State Universities without thinking in terms of affiliated colleges is a very unreal thing. The affiliated colleges are the backbone of the Universities. If you do not think about them, you are not moving in the right direction...³³

Apart from this, the growing number of failing students in the examinations also increased the tension within the government. When the government did not adopt a proper mechanism of assessing quality then it symbolised a flaw in the policy of government. During the discussion on the Demands for Grants Ministry of Education in 1959, Hem Barua (Gauhati) raised this issue. By demanding stipends and scholarships for the needy and deserving poor children, he focused on the quality of education and explained in economic terms. He said,

The number of failures is increasing every year. Why is it so? During the last year, the percentage of failure at the intermediate and graduate level was 54.7 and 48.7 respectively. When we have such a huge failure in this country and when we fail to see the causes of such failures, I feel that 50 per cent of our investment is being wasted. We are investing money in an economic system that only pays at a diminishing rate of intellectual return. That is what is happening in our country. The rate of intellectual return is diminishing...³⁴

Another defect in the policy of government was the imbalance between quality and quantity of education as the growth in number of institutions could not keep up with the growth in number of students' enrolments. During, the discussion on the Demands for Grants Ministry of Education in 1960, Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat), while supporting quality over quantity highlighted the need for reforming the education system and to provide nationalist and secular education in Universities. In her statement,

...there is the question of quantity versus quality. I am all for quality. But what happens to those students who get second division or third division in the examinations?... Suppose a boy of 15 or 16 has come out of the school and he is not a bad boy but gets division II in examination, what shall I do? It is a question that you have to answer now. Every time we say we want our boys to have education so you admit them in the colleges; you say: no, we want quality, we do not want quantity.

³³ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, April 29, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 12286-12287.

³⁴ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XXVII, Seventh Session, March 17, 1959 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1959), 6723-6724.

Then you have to give us enough apprenticeship opportunities, you have to give us vocational schools, you have to give enough places where we can put our boys.³⁵

Taking this problem further Renuka Ray (Malda) pointed out the issue of unemployment and wastage of education and offered a suggestion to create the employment opportunities for the trainees of vocational institutes. She viewed that we are talking of establishing more polytechnic institutes and looking at them as a source of immediate service after training but, the ground reality is completely different. She observed

When you go round the country, it is really a great tragedy to see the unemployment prevalent even among the trainees who have come out of such institutions... What prevents us from making a suitable arrangement at the higher secondary stage, by which all this could be obviated? I think it needs one of the highest priorities, not only in the Education Ministry, but in the whole governmental machinery that we should focus our attention on this problem of finding for every student a job when he goes out and give him proper training for that job, so that only those who have the capacity to benefit by higher education should go to the universities.³⁶

The government appeared to be on back foot during the time of discussion on standard of education. Despite this there was no churning for changing strategy and analysing the education policies. Moreover, the Union Minister for Education, Dr. K. L. Shrimali kicked the ball in the court of the universities for declining standard of education. While delivering the Inaugural Address in the Vice-Chancellors Conference in 1960, he expressed dismay on the feeling of helplessness and despair among students, teachers and parents over the growing criticism of the education system. On the basis of press reports and the views of some eminent scholar, he realised that the university system was facing a crisis. As a remedy, he advocated a collective effort and suggested,

the universities must make a proper diagnosis of the present situation and devise remedial measures. If we allow the present state of affairs to drift any longer, it will lead rapidly to an all-round deterioration of values and standards in our society. The universities. must accept the challenge of our time and take bold steps to reorient our educational system.³⁷

³⁵ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XL, Tenth Session, March 15, 1960 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1960), 5937-5938.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6063-6064.

³⁷ *Proceedings of the Vice-Chancellor Conference June 15 – 16, 1960* (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1961), 1.

In addition, he further proposed not to rely only on one solution of the whole problem. As improving the economic condition of the teachers had been suggested as a remedy, he rather suggested to at look the whole problem from a broader perspective:

The improvement of standards ultimately depends on a change of attitude on the part of teachers. They must realise that their primary responsibility is to teach and guide their students. While every-thing that is possible should be done to improve their economic status and prestige in society, the university authorities should also insist that the teachers give more time to teaching and less to all those activities which distract them from their academic pursuits and often tend to lower the dignity of the teaching profession.³⁸

The ideas of Shrimali clearly suggested that the government had not adopted a right approach for dealing the crisis situation. The accepted criteria of judging the quality of education by comparing the Indian degrees with foreign degrees also put a question mark on government efforts. As Dr. C. D. Deshmukh (1896-1982), then Chairman of UGC, highlighted in the same conference: ‘The present system of Indian higher education is both inadequate and sub-standard as compared with systems of higher education in most other countries that matter.’³⁹

The helplessness of government was also visible in containing the crisis. When the UGC reported difficulty in coordinating with State universities, the government took this opportunity to play the politics of blaming and shaming and tried to obscure its erroneous attitude responsible for the chaos. While introducing the report of University Grants Commission (April 1958 to March 1959) in August 1960, Dr. K. L. Shrimali said:

The University Grants Commission is giving assistance to the universities for certain development programmes and development schemes and for improving certain facilities so that the standards might be improved. The University Grants Commission is making an effort to persuade the Universities and the State governments to accept its policies and programmes. The report makes it clear that in some cases the State governments do not accept the advice. What is to be done? Under the Constitution, the Universities are created by an Act of the State Legislature and they are free to run them in the way they like. The only thing that the Central government and the U.G.C. can do is to tell the Universities if they do not follow the policies and programmes, they would not give financial assistance and in some cases

³⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁹ Ibid., 7.

the U. G. C. had refused to give financial assistance. That is the only thing that it can do.⁴⁰

However, participating in the same discussion, Harish Chandra Mathur (Pali) drew the attention of the house towards loopholes in the policies of government and blamed her for enacting them in a haphazard manner. He gave the example of pre-university classes in Rajasthan where only 11 per cent students could pass the examination, and also of the most unfortunate fact that 83 per cent of the boys had failed. Most amazingly, in one particular college out of seventy students only one could pass the exam.⁴¹ He advocated to reorganise the whole body of University Grants Commission in order to coordinate the function of Universities.⁴² The suggestion of Mathur to reorganise UGC was contrary to the approach of government where Education Minister was accusing the State governments and state universities for not implementing the advice as offered by UGC.

Amidst this confusion, the Third Five Year Plan observed a large increase in enrolment number in universities and colleges. The total enrolments of student for arts, science and commerce courses were 360,000 in 1950-51, 634,000 in 1955-56 and about 900,000 in 1960-61. On the other side, the growth recorded in the number of universities and colleges over the decade was 51.85 per cent and 81.66 per cent respectively, which was a third and a half of the growth in number of enrolments i.e., 150 per cent over the same period.⁴³ It simply showed that the number of colleges and universities did not increase in the proportion of students' enrolments. Therefore, a major focus of the plan remained to create larger facilities for diverting students to vocational and technological education. After taking into account these facilities, government had the challenge of adopting a suitable selection criterion for those seeking admissions to the courses of higher education in arts, science and commerce in a greater number. In addition to the provision in the Plan for expansion of facilities for higher education, the government was deliberating on the proposals for evening colleges, correspondence courses and the award of external degrees.

⁴⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XLIV, Eleventh Session, August 11, 1960 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1960), 2236.

⁴¹ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XLIV, Eleventh Session, August 12, 1960 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1960), 2393-2394.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Third Five Year Plan (1961 – 1966)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/3rd/3planch29.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 6.

Post-graduation studies and research were also identified for promotion.⁴⁴ At this juncture, a major challenge was also that of the availability of funds. The government could not invest enough amount to create basic facilities and implement the recommendations of Planning Commission. As a political thinker and educationist, Humayun Kabir (1906-1969) highlighted this problem:

Insufficiency of funds is responsible for not only poorly paid and therefore poorer teachers but poorer libraries, laboratories, classrooms and other essential amenities. The surroundings in a university are often such as to prevent any attempt at serious and sustained work. The gross disproportion of teachers to students also arises partly out of the lack of funds and partly out of a wrong attitude towards higher education.⁴⁵

K G. Saiyidain also believed that poor infrastructure and disgracefully inadequate libraries in colleges were one important cause of declining standards of education. He suggested to improve library facilities in universities and colleges. To meet the growing demands of books, he recommended to interlink the libraries of universities and colleges to exchange the books. He further opposed the narrow, unimaginative type of specialization and rigid binary between art and science and proposed to adopt general curricula for university students.⁴⁶ Thus, the government could have had a number of ideas to work on.

The Parliament remained an arena of debate, and discussions on the policy of education by MPs continuously pressurised the government to take bold steps to improve the quality of higher education. During his reply to the discussion on demands for grants in 1963, Dr. K. L. Shrimali explained out the plans of the government for improving the quality of education. He informed the house that the government had fulfilled its commitment of establishing the Centres of Advance Studies to encourage higher level research at the postgraduate stage. He said, ...four centres have already been established, two at the Delhi University in theoretical Physics and Chemistry, one in the collaboration with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and the Bombay University and one at the Calcutta University. During the next year, more such centres will be opened and in the Third Plan, we will have about 20 to 30 such centres functioning. The main purpose of these centres is to stimulate research at a higher level, to give opportunity to advanced scholars, to develop research programmes in various subjects.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid., para. 33.

⁴⁵ Humayun Kabir, *Education in New India*, 3rd ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1961), 99.

⁴⁶ K. G. Saiyidain, *Education, Culture and Social Order*, 2nd rep. ed. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 143-144.

⁴⁷ *Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. XV, Fourth Session, March 23, 1963 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1963), 5667.

He further accepted that the teachers were going to be the pivot of the whole educational system. Therefore, without improving the quality of teachers, no improvement in education could have taken place. He provided details of the measures that the Ministry had taken so far. It was including the lone scholarship scheme, enhancing salaries, in-service programme, extension service programme, refresher courses and summer schools for university teachers, etc.⁴⁸ But, these incentives could not satisfy the legislatures. During, the discussion on Demands for Grants in 1964, Chandrabhan Singh (Bilaspur) expressed anger on the deteriorating condition of education and the lingering status quo despite seventeen years of independence. He urged a change in thinking because the same method was being used as that of the British. If methods were not changed, the future would prove to be entirely dark. He strongly demanded to increase the expenditure on education and he was also the first to suggest making education a subject of Concurrent List.⁴⁹ The suggestion of Singh to make the education a subject of Concurrent List was widely reiterated by other members and government accepted it in late 1970s.

The anger of the members was natural when they observed the scarcity of funds on one hand and the discrimination in allocating funds to State Universities and affiliated colleges on the other hand. During, the discussion on the Annual Reports of UGC (1961-1962) and (1962-1963), D. C. Sharma expressed his anger over the functioning of UGC and suggested to scrap the University Grants Commission Act altogether and enact a new legislation where equal treatment could be given to the Central University, Residential University and Affiliating University. He said,

As I look at the educational landscape of my country, so far as higher, degree and post degree education are concerned I have a feeling of bewilderment. I feel that the universities of this country can be divided into three classes. There are the affluent universities, which are called the Central universities; there are the needy universities, which are the residential universities and then there are the indigent universities which are the affiliating universities, Lord Bacons Field said that England could not prosper if there were two nations there, one rich and the other poor. I say, Sir, the cause of higher education in this country cannot prosper if there are three nations amongst the universities in this country. Unless that is done away with, I think, the University Grants Commission is not fulfilling its functions.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5673.

⁴⁹ *Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. XXVII, Seventh Session, March 10, 1964 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1964), 5029.

⁵⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. XXXVI, Tenth Session, December 10, 1964 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1964), 4329-4306.

Participating in another discussion during the Demands for Grants, Ministry of Education in 1965, Gayatri Devi (Jaipur) touched upon various aspects of education and provided a criticism of the policy of the government. She supported the objective of the government's policy as the Education Minister stated that education should be production oriented with greater emphasis on science and technology. She pointed out multiple benefits from the policy as it would not only reduce the pressure on universities but it would also reduce the number of unemployed youth and fill the posts for skilled labour that the country needed in its industrial projects.⁵¹ Further, she highlighted various problems of cramming education system and emphasized on improving the quality of education. For this she suggested,

...if there were Career Masters in most schools who could watch the aptitude of students, study their tastes, evaluate their competence, and those who are not up to the standard could be given the right vocational guidance and immediate employment on completion of their higher secondary studies, and others who are deemed fit could go to university for higher education.⁵²

In between, the government also appointed an Education Commission under the Chairmanship of a scientist and educator D. S Kothari (1906-1993). The report of the Commission was published in 1966 and after his name the Commission came to be popularly known as the Kothari Commission. Before going into the details of the recommendations of the Commission, an important fact must be added that due to mounting pressure of reform, the government appointed a committee exclusively concerning the standard of university education in 1965. It submitted its report under the Chairmanship of N. K Sidhanta. The recommendations of the Committee were mostly similar to the views of intellectuals and legislatures. For enhancing the standards of universities and colleges, the Committee recommended several changes in the admission policy. It suggested to adopt a bold and imaginative policy and to deploy new methods and combination of methods suitable for admission. It also felt the need for expanding the facilities for vocational training, correspondence courses and part-time courses. School education must be suitably modified by introducing several terminal points from which the students could be diverted to vocational and technical courses.⁵³ The government did not seriously consider the recommendations of the Committee just like it did with opinions and

⁵¹ *Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. XLII, Eleventh Session, April 21, 1965, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1965), 10351.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10356.

⁵³ *Report on Standards of University Education* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1965), 108-109.

suggestions of MPs and intellectuals. In the Resolution for appointing Education Commission, the Union Government admitted errors in its policies due to which the equilibrium between quality and quantity was not being maintained. As stated in the resolution,

Quantitatively, education at all levels has shown a phenomenal development in the post-independence period. In spite of this expansion, however, there is widespread dissatisfaction about several aspects of educational development... It has not been possible to raise standards adequately at the secondary and university stages. The diversification of curricula in secondary and higher education has not kept pace with the times so that the problem of educated unemployment has been intensified on the one hand while, on the other, there is an equally acute shortage of trained manpower in several sectors. The remuneration and service conditions of teachers leave a great deal to be desired; and several important academic problems are still matter of intense controversies.⁵⁴

The Education Commission also observed numerous defects in the existing structure of university education. As it highlighted, the teachers were working in the poor physical and financial conditions. The intellectual passion of teachers was missing in the lectures and a serious effort was not being made from their side to experiment with bright teaching methods. Apart from this, little effort was being made to produce good research and it was not considered an integral part of the teacher's duty. In some institutions, there were additional factors which were responsible for not developing intellectual vitality. It included hierarchical concentration of authority within the departments and colleges, the atmosphere of distrust between senior and junior teachers, the cynicism about administrative authorities, the unseemly conflicts about offices and positions and the attitude of envy towards persons of superior attainments—all of which had contributed to the deadening of the spirit of intellectual curiosity and adventure.⁵⁵ Some social and structural problems also affected the students and their negative impact appeared on the education system. It was observed that most students were from illiterate homes and unprepared for university education. Many of them were facing the problem of medium of instruction and unsuited curricula. Apart from this, the inadequacy of finance further increased

⁵⁴ *Report of the Education Commission 1964 – 1966: Education and National Development* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education Government of India, 1966), 592.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 277-278.

their misery.⁵⁶ In the given circumstances, the Education Commission proposed a plan of action to protect, promote and strengthen the higher education system. In the first place, it adopted a strategy of concentrating scarce human resources and not to scatter them over too wide an area. It recommended,

The development of five or six of what we may call ‘major’ universities where conditions may be provided, both as to staff and students as well as to the necessary equipment and atmosphere, to make first class postgraduate work and research possible. The standards of these major universities should be comparable to the best institutions of their type in any part of the world so that really gifted and promising students need not normally have to go abroad for receiving postgraduate or research training.⁵⁷

Besides developing some eminent institutions for higher education, the Education Commission also made recommendations for enhancing the standards of other universities and colleges. To fulfil such an objective, it suggested first to induce talented students from the universities to join the teaching profession. They must be placed in the universities and colleges and that would help in raising standards further up. Second, the UGC must make arrangements to provide fellowship at three levels: lecturer, reader and professor. If outstanding persons lost the profession and joined teaching, this fellowship must be given to them and they should be appointed in permanent posts as early as possible. Third, universities and affiliated colleges should be encouraged as far as possible to preselect their new teachers and attach them with the major universities for a year.⁵⁸ The Education Commission further accepted a wider role for the UGC in fostering the whole process and suggested that for this purpose, first, the UGC must encourage to form inter-university relationship among the members of centres of advance studies, members of aspirant centres, leading university, departments and outstanding affiliated colleges etc. Second, invitation could be given to promising scientists and scholars of other universities and affiliated colleges to do research and conduct seminars.⁵⁹ Apart from this, the UGC may provide special grants for the assistance of the one or two departments of the other universities to develop into the centres of excellence. This process could be further extended and

⁵⁶ Ibid., 278.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 278-279.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 284-285.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 285.

other more centres can be created.⁶⁰ In addition, the Commission also recommended to improve the standards of affiliated colleges. To this purpose, it recommended to use the classification method and on the basis of ranking, they must be encouraged. Special attention must be given on the lower ranking colleges. Secondly, it asked to confirm the status of autonomous college into outstanding colleges. It also suggested to revoke the status of autonomous college if at any point of time the deterioration in the standards was observed.⁶¹

The Education Commission also paid attention upon improving the teaching standards of colleges and universities. To promote quality teaching, it recommended the following. First, more flexibility in the courses offered and more freedom of choice for students. Second, a marked reduction in the amount of formal instruction and increase in tutorial works, discussion groups, seminars and independent study. Third, a drastic change in the character of teaching by stimulating curiosity. It also suggested to encourage problem solving ability and original thinking.⁶² The examination reforms also acquired importance and a strategical action was recommended at two fronts: one, introduction of more frequent, periodical assessment and two, reform of evaluation techniques.⁶³ The Commission failed to provide any solution to the problem of medium of instruction and instead proposed to use English as a medium of instruction until Indian languages could be developed enough to serve this purpose.⁶⁴ The Education Commission further recommended an enrolment policy for next twenty years. It stated,

The expansion of facilities in Higher education should be planned broadly on the basis of general trends regarding manpower needs and employment opportunities. At present, there is an over-production of graduates in arts and commerce because of the adoption of this open-door policy: and consequently, there is a growing incidence of unemployment amongst them. On the other hand, there is a shortage of professional specialists and there is a consequent need to increase the facilities in professional courses such as agriculture, engineering, medicine, etc and especially at the postgraduate stage in science and arts.⁶⁵

To restrict uncontrolled expansion of affiliated colleges of arts and commerce, it gave emphasis upon the determination of seats in all affiliated colleges. The intake of students should be fixed

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 287.

⁶² Ibid. 287-288.

⁶³ Ibid., 290.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 293.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 302.

separately for each such institution and this sanctioned strength should form an integral part of the conditions of affiliation.⁶⁶ It also suggested to adopt a more liberal admission policy based on the principle of social justice.⁶⁷ In addition, it recommended to reorganise the courses of graduation and master degrees and to modify research degree course for producing the world class research. It also suggested to promote interdisciplinary studies and research by promoting various combinations in subjects of arts and sciences at university level.⁶⁸ But the implementation of recommendations was a challenge in a politically vitiated environment where even the recommendations of UEC were not fully integrated even after two decades had passed after they had been proposed.

Socialistic formation: demand for access, equity and quality

The government adopted a generous approach towards the recommendations of Education Commission and listed the report for discussion in Parliament. Intellectuals, legislatures and policymakers welcomed the recommendations of the commission. However, some members highlighted the varying character of the report by criticizing the Commission and the reluctant attitude of the government. During the discussion on the Education Commission Report (1964-1966) in Lok Sabha in 1967, Lobo Prabhu (Udupi) said that meagre factual information was available for the members of the commission so that the report dealt mainly with superstructural issues instead of their very foundation. He also highlighted the problem of wastage of education and while examining the report he said,

You would think that with 73.2 per cent of enrolment, we are doing very well. But you will be surprised to know that of the 73.2 per cent only 1/4th become literate. These are dropouts from the first to the fourth standard. Three-fourths of the students drop out: either they give up or they just do not complete the course. It means that 75 per cent of the expenditure on education is a waste. The Hon. Minister, no doubt, said that the government is not generous to education. May I suggest to him, if he wants some means of avoiding this waste of 75 per cent of the expenditure on education, there are ways of doing it? There could be a shift system so that the economic utilities are achieved; there can be a rotational system and all that.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid., 306.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 307.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 319-320.

⁶⁹ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. IX, Third Session, November 14, 1967 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), 475.

Participating in the same discussion, S. D. Somasundaram (Thanjavur), expressed his anger over appointing commissions and committees and the reluctant attitude of the leaders, bureaucrats and educationists towards implementing the valuable recommendations in order to change the character of the national education system and make it suitable for Indian socio-economic condition. Highlighting the defects of the reports of the commissions he said,

We are expanding the educational facilities, particularly at college and University level, without taking care to assess the impact of education on the economy and society. It is my firm belief that the resources are misallocated and as a consequence we are facing a crisis in education, namely, mass-scale educated unemployment, threat to law and order and potential threat to the peace of the society... This is not only uneconomical from the society's point of view but also misery from the individual's point of view.⁷⁰

Thus, the proposed education system would create a wide gulf in Indian society and stern action was required to bridge gaps.

Indian political scenario was rapidly changing after the Fourth General Election in 1967. The leading political organisation Indian National Congress lost its power and prestige. Several student movements also took place in different parts of India by demanding basic facilities essential for higher education. Apart from this, poor management of university education and continuous attacks on university autonomy and academic freedom were also important causes of student resistance during the period which have been dealt in a great detail in the next chapter. To bring a dynamic change in the education system of the country, the Union Government prepared a National Policy on Education in accordance with the recommendations of Education Commission. The unveiled draft of NPE in 1968 provided a detailed framework to take action in various key areas. To enhance the standard of university education, it emphasized to implement several points like to ensure library, laboratory and other facilities in the colleges and university departments. Second, provide adequate funds before founding any new university and ensure proper standards. Third, organize post-graduation courses and improve standards and training at this level. Fourth, strengthen the centres for advance studies and establish small cluster of centres aiming at the highest possible standards in research. Fifth, give increased support to research in

⁷⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. X, Third Session, December 6, 1967 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), 5159-5160.

universities.⁷¹ On the recommendations of Education Commission, the NPE principally resolved to promote the part-time and correspondence courses at the university stage in order to relieve the universities from overburden of students. It also suggested to develop such facilities for secondary school students, for teachers and for agricultural, industrial and other workers. Education through part-time and correspondence courses should be given the same status as full-time education.⁷² Thus, the NPE laid out a detailed programme of reform and reorganisation of higher education, but it did not provide any strategy about how these resolutions of NPE were to be implemented. Inadequate supply of funds remained a big hindrance for all government's policies and the same lacuna came forth while managing additional funds for the implementation of NPE.

On the other side, India was also facing a financial crisis due to widespread famine. The Planning Commission suffered a big jolt and the Fourth Five Year Plan was released only three years after the expiry of Third Plan. The Fourth Plan observed a tremendous enrolment growth at the university stage (for arts, science and commerce faculties) around 128 per cent in last eight years (1961-1969).⁷³ The suggestions of NPE were likely to be considered for formulating the recommendations of Fourth Plan. As it emphasized

on consolidation and improvement of higher education through the strengthening of staff and library and laboratory facilities. Affiliated colleges which provide education to more than 88 per cent of the university students will be helped. Assistance for fuller development will be given to a few colleges selected on the basis of their achievements, existing facilities and potentialities.⁷⁴

In addition, the Fourth Plan proposed to increase the facilities and improve the quality in the area of post graduate education and research.⁷⁵ Government and UGC appeared to be active and took various significant decisions to improve the standard of education. While introducing the University Grants Commission Amendment Bill and the motion on the Annual reports of University Grants Commission in 1970, the Minister of Education and Youth Services Dr. V. K.

⁷¹ *National Policy on Education 1968* (Delhi: Government of India, Department of Education, Ministry of Education, 1968), 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Fourth Five Year Plan (1969 – 1974)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/4th/4planch16.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 16.2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 16.16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 16.17.

R. V. Rao (1908-1991) informed the House about the steps which were taken by the UGC to maintain quality at the university level. First the reports of the review committees were sent to the universities to reform and restructure the courses, syllabus and studies. This led to the maintenance of standards on a uniform basis across all universities because the recommendations of the review panels of various disciplines also had an indirect effect of introducing a certain element of standardisation. Second, the UGC had started to allocate development grants to the universities for the purpose of establishing libraries, laboratories, new departments, strengthening the staff and increasing the number of professors, readers, etc. Third, a great academic importance was attached to the establishment of advanced centres of study. These advanced centres of study had been established and funded; there were 17 such in the field of natural sciences and 13 in the field of social sciences. Fourth, the UGC had organised a number of summer institutes, especially science institute in order to familiarise the teaching professionals about up-to-date theoretical teaching methods. They had a large number of such institutes; nearly 9,000 college teachers had been covered by the programme.⁷⁶

Despite having a detailed programme of reform in hands, the government did not succeed in implementing it with full potential. During the discussion on Annual Report of UGC (1968-1969), Somnath Chatterjee (Burdhwan) expressed dismay over the wastage of funds because substantial qualitative change did not appear on the ground and mere quantitative analysis did not fulfil the objectives for which the UGC was founded. He said that there was a lot of unrest and frustration among students due to the problem of increasing unemployment. He advocated for a job-oriented education and raised questions like ‘[...]what is it that we are giving them after they come out of the universities and colleges? What is the scope, what is the utility of this education? If a future is not assured; this will only be breeding discontent...’⁷⁷ Participating in the same Discussion, Y. S. Mahajan (Buldana), suggested to import the idea of students counselling in order to dilute the crowd towards other key areas of higher learning. In his words,

If we arrange for students counselling at the admission stage, we could divert some of the students to technical institutions, industrial training institutes, polytechnics and so on. Thereby we could reduce the rush of students to colleges. Higher education is

⁷⁶ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. XLI, Tenth Session, May 12, 1970 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1970), 218-219.

⁷⁷ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. II, Second Session, May 24, 1971 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1971), 215-216.

not a matter of right, the Commission had said somewhere. But it is a matter of right to those who are fit to receive it. As to who is fit to receive it or not, it is our duty to tell them through student counselling.⁷⁸

The failure of government in creating the infrastructure and facilities of library and laboratory discouraged the students and researchers. During the discussion on Annual Report of UGC (1969-1970), R. P. Das (Krishnagar), blamed government for not promoting the reciprocal development of ancillary facilities for students such as library, laboratory, hostel etc in order to encourage higher learning. He also charged that the social, economic and political life of the country was not being reflected in the sphere of the education while government expenditure on education was so meagre that the qualitative and quantitative improvement was only a distant dream.⁷⁹

To bring in a new direction and sharpen the process of reform in the governance of colleges and universities, the government appointed a large committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. P. B. Gajendragadkar (1901-1981), then Vice Chancellor of Bombay University. The Committee submitted its final report in 1971 and, after his name, the Report is popularly known as Gajendragadkar Committee Report. The GCR pinpointed the dual character of the goal of university education; first, the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of excellence in different disciplines, and second, the development of a sense of ethos which made the university community conscious of its obligations to the community at large of which it was an important segment.⁸⁰ But in the absence of basic facilities for higher education, these two objectives remained unfulfilled. The GCR significantly expanded the horizon of understanding about university education and provoked thinking about greater social transformation. It suggested,

There is a growing feeling that the universities must come out of the 'ivory tower,' not only because the intellectuals should have a commitment to social problems and the cause of humanism and justice, but also because knowledge should be related to social purposes and research should contribute materially to the transformation of society. This involves a radical change in the syllabi and structure of courses. Further it involves a continuous review of the educational system and a more careful

⁷⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁷⁹ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. VIII, Third Session, November 19, 1971 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1971), 251.

⁸⁰ *Report of the Committee on Governance of Universities and Colleges Part I: Governance of Universities* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1971), 6.

planning of the content of education. The university organisation should ever be responsive to these changing social needs.⁸¹

Apart from this, for qualitative improvement of higher education, the Committee emphasized on the reconstruction of education through establishing different committees at the various levels of university administration. It included the Students Council, Finance Committee, Committee for Advance Study and Research, Admission Committee, etc.⁸² Thus, The GCR opened up new possibilities of reforming and reorienting university education system and recommended to employ education as an instrument of social change. Without attaining and maintaining the standard education, the proposed ideas were not going to be accomplished.

The idea of utilising standard higher education for greater social objectives was widely discussed at various platforms. An administrator and educator, A. B. Shah analysed the role of education and its problems in India. He compared the quantitative expansion of schools with institutions of higher education and showed that in the given circumstances, the number of universities had not increased corresponding to the number of schools. It put universities under tremendous pressure and consequently, the quality was compromised. As for solution, he suggested to provide adequate facilities for good education to the growing number of young men and women from the socially disadvantage groups rather than imposing restriction on university admission by applying the criteria of certain percentage in the school qualifying certificate. He further viewed that these newly educated masses would play a crucial role in economic and social modernisation of Indian society. He suggested to abolish the separation between liberal and professional education in favour of general education in the light of the Indian situation.⁸³ He also explored the problems which the higher education system was facing at various fronts. It was widely accepted already that greater finance was a prerequisite for setting up and sustaining any system. In addition, Shah emphasized on the quality of mind that should function in the interest of ever rising standards of excellence and must not remain the monopoly of a privileged few. For the success of education system, support of the larger community was also required when the university values were threatened by the populist pressure or because of governments' interference. In his view, neither of these conditions were satisfied in Indian case and he gave the

⁸¹ Ibid., 8.

⁸² Ibid., 45-51.

⁸³ A. B. Shah, 'Education its Role and Problem', in *Climbing a Wall of Glass: Aspects of Educational Reform in India*, eds. J. W. Airan, T. Barbnas and A. B. Shah (Bombay: P. C. Manaktala and Sons Private LTD, 1965), 9-10.

example of the Bombay University, where educational reforms in the arts and social science faculty were counterproductive.⁸⁴ During the discussion on the Annual Report of UGC (1968-1969), Somnath Chatterjee Shared Shah's contention and remarked that

unless education is attuned to the objectives that this country has in view, namely a socialistic revolution education will lose its real content. Unless we evolve an educational policy, which will instil in the minds of the educated a real desire to bring about social and economic revolution and to make large strides in the progress of this country, the object of education will not be achieved, and we shall be wrongly groping in the dark and the maladies that are facing the university world will continue.⁸⁵

For encouraging and motivating the socially disadvantaged sections for higher education, there was a need of providing financial aid in the form of stipends and fellowships. By highlighting the importance of university education, during the Twenty-Ninth Convocation of Andhra University, Humayun Kabir suggested to graduates to not to look upon their university degrees as a token for employment. He believed that the university introduced students to values and ideals evolved by men and provided an opportunity to make those an essential element of their personality. He also opined to open the doors of university education for disabled and poor students by providing various types of merit scholarships. He further stated,

Student life is essentially a preparation for the future. In the modern world, that future is becoming continually more intricate and complex. Those who wish to play an important role in this world of interlacing economic, political and technological relations must have knowledge as well as judgement. A university is the best place to acquire knowledge and develop the power of judgement.⁸⁶

Due to unequal participation by masses, a privileged class had emerged which had a strong command on the education system and threatened the interest of socially disadvantaged section. The interference of government was required to control the crisis by reorganising the system as per socialist line. Giving voice to this notion, J P. Naik (1907-1981), an administrator and educationist, called for breaking up the close linkage between quality and privilege and introduced the element of social justice for the educational development. He suggested to

⁸⁴ Ibid., 14-15.

⁸⁵ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. II, Second Session, May 24, 1971, 217.

⁸⁶ Humayun Kabir, *Indian Philosophy of Education* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1971), 7-8.

provide access on an ever-increasing scale to talented but economically handicapped children in the selective sectors. He proposed,

In the non-selective sector, access will be free and larger than at present. But some concern will be shown for standards, at least to ensure that higher education is not a fraud or exploitation; the compulsion on the State to subsidize the education of the haves or the unfit will be done away with; and adequate financial support will be made available to ensure that the underprivileged groups are not prevented, on the ground of inability to pay fees, from availing themselves of this social service.⁸⁷

The government had contributed a lot in promoting the tendency of elitism in higher education because since independence, it had not taken stern steps to ensure equal participation of all in higher education. For long, it remained in a dilemma to decide about an appropriate admission policy and had failed in creating appropriate facilities and provide financial aid. As a result, the standard of education was continuously deteriorating and uneven growth of institutions further increased tension. In the previous section, the long debates have been explored on quality vs. quantity and policy dilemma of Union Government. Concluding this aspect, V. V. John, Vice-Chancellor of Jodhpur University, believed that the swelling number of students for admission in the universities and colleges was an important cause of deteriorating standards of education. The idea of selective admission was adopted as a remedy to deal with the problem, but it had resulted in adverse consequences. As John stated,

It is wrong to suppose that formerly we had selective admission on the basis of intellectual competence. Those who went to college were those whose parents could afford the expense. What we achieved therefore was not the production of an intellectual elite but the giving of an intellectual basis to pure privilege.⁸⁸

A series of commissions and committees and number of intellectuals suggested various ways to make education accessible and inclusive for all the deprived sections of society. J. P. Naik wrote an article “Educational Planning for a Poor Country” in 1960. He favoured a people-centric education and equal participation by both poor and rich. He also believed that the quality of education must be maintained but education should not become a privilege for few. As he stated,

⁸⁷ J. P. Naik, ‘Higher Education in India’, in *The Crisis in Higher Education: Proceedings of a Seminar held in Bombay, January 1972*, ed. G. D. Parik (Bombay: Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy, 1972), 51.

⁸⁸ V. V. John, ‘The Crisis in Higher Education’, in *The Crisis in Higher Education: Proceedings of a Seminar held in Bombay, January 1972*, ed. G. D. Parik (Bombay: Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy, 1972), 14-15.

I stand for quality, but the poor people also must have a share in this quality. I have no objection to someone eating cake every day provided I also get a bite at them now and then. But if I am not to get any cake at all, I will certainly be irritated, and try to see that no one will ever have cake. This revolt will come up amongst the poor people if quality and privilege are always allied. Remember that these ivory towers which we are creating are all built on sand because the common people have no stake in them. If this separation between the masses and quality continues, if privilege and quality always remain together, the people of this country will rise in revolt one day and will throw out both quality and privilege.⁸⁹

Thus, government's initiative was required to adopt a broad outlook at the time of formulating education policy.

Bitter questions related to the poor quality of education and widespread unemployment continuously puzzled the Union Government and heated debates took place on such issues in Lok Sabha. Samar Guha (Contai) raised the issue of growing unemployment during the discussion on Demands for Grants (1973-1974) of Ministry of Education and Social welfare and Culture in 1973. He asked the Minister in anger how long should this process of mass production of unemployed degree-holders and that too, nowadays, spurious degree-holders was going to continue in the name of education. Because of increasing unemployment, there was tensions, conflicts and frustrations and the education system was out of tune with the social life.⁹⁰ Participating in the same discussion, A. K. M. Ishaque (Basirhat) attacked the government for interfering in the functioning of the universities and encroaching upon their autonomy. He also questioned the education policy of the government and sought to reform the examination system, making education affordable for all and improve the teaching method. Therefore, after the completion of education, students could enter the life of reality and be the useful citizens of India.⁹¹ Apart from this, the role of UGC was also not appreciable in tackling the crisis and the bureaucratic system dampened the spirit of reform. During the discussion on the Annual Reports of UGC (1970-1971) and (1971-1972), H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta North-East), criticised the UGC for not maintaining and improving higher education standard and, in his view, the picture

⁸⁹ J. P. Naik, 'Educational Planning for a Poor Country', in *Collected Articles of Padmabhushan Prof. J. P. Naik: Policy Studies*, Vol. II, eds. Yeshwant R. Waghmare and A. Sai Babu (Delhi: Authorspress, 2008), 22.

⁹⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXVI, Seventh Session, April 5, 1973 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1973), 242.

⁹¹ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXVI, Seventh Session, April 6, 1973, 274-275.

of the education system was very dark, dismal and melancholic from the point of view of everybody, teachers, students, administration and so on. He also viewed,

In a free country, a country which has to go ahead and develop properly, knowledge is power, and knowledge of the forces operating in society alone can give us power to change society nearer to the heart's desires of everybody. That being so, since knowledge is power, I should expect that in a free country with a proper emotional atmosphere, there should be an emotional attachment to the whole idea of achievement of learning. But, on the contrary, we find the universities have become educational shops, trying to pervade some kind of learning by rote and the examination system has degenerated into something which hardly bears talking about. The general picture, quite apart from whatever little peaks of achievement which some of our top people might have reached in the creative sphere of learning, is so dismal that something has got to be done about it.⁹²

Continuing the debate on Annual Reports of UGC, a number of members advocated revolutionary reforms in the functioning of UGC. Uniformity of syllabus of university education and academic excellence were some important issues. They were raised energetically by Madhu Dandavate (Rajapur). He highlighted the lost inter-university mobility and suggested a greater degree of uniformity in the syllabus of different universities. In his words,

I do not want mechanisation but I want some sort of uniform attitude to the syllabi that are constructed in various universities so that if today I belong to the Bombay University and tomorrow if I move on to the Calcutta University and next year to the Kerala University, I must not suffer as far as academic excellence is concerned, and therefore in the interests of academic excellence as well as mobility and free mobility of university life, it is necessary that a greater degree of uniformity in university syllabi is brought about.⁹³

To placate the anger of intellectuals and legislatures, the government released another draft of National Policy on Education in 1974. It resolved to make strenuous efforts to equalise educational opportunities and provide educational facilities in rural and other areas in order to correct the approach of regional imbalances in the provision of facilities. It also emphasized upon the educational aids on the grounds of social justice which could accelerate social transformation. Most importantly, it suggested to extend educational facilities for tribal people

⁹² *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXXII, Ninth Session, November 20, 1973 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1973), 255-256.

⁹³ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXXII, Ninth Session, November 23, 1973, 260-261.

and physically and mentally handicapped.⁹⁴ It also recommended to be cautious at the time of establishing new universities about the availability of adequate funds and maintaining standards. It advised to pay special attention to organize post-graduation courses and improvement of the standards of training. It suggested to strengthen the various centres for advance studies, provide research facilities and develop part-time and correspondence courses at large scale.⁹⁵ Thus, the NPE 1974 offered a new objective of social transformation through educational reforms. Moreover, it was introduced in a haphazard manner when the numerous important recommendations of NPE 1968 were not yet implemented.

The debilitating approach of the government towards educational reforms significantly contributed towards a political crisis in India. A movement namely '*Navnirman*' Movement for Regeneration arose in Gujarat. It was a students' movement which engulfed the government of Chaman Bhai Patel in January 1974.⁹⁶ Soon it spread in different parts of India and Bihar emerged as a new centre of student unrest where Chatra Sangharsh Samiti was established and Patna University acquired central stage. Jay Prakash Narayan (1902-1979), a Gandhian and socialist, was a face of the movement and he gave the slogan of '*Sampurna Kranti*' (Total Revolution). His agenda consisted of overhauling the educational system along with numerous other social and political reforms.⁹⁷ The Union Government miscalculated the whole situation and did not take any serious steps to tackle the crisis. Consequently, it became a pan-India Movement and the government imposed National Emergency in June 1975. The twenty-one months long emergency period witnessed numerous administrative, constitutional and political reform and education could not remain untouched from the process. While introducing a motion to discuss the Annual Report of UGC (1972-1973) in 1975, the Minister of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, S. Nurul Hasan (1921-1993) informed about the various new schemes and measures to reform the higher education system. First, he highlighted about the College Science Improvement Programme under which 111 college had benefited and that he sought to double this number. Second was the College Humanities and Social Sciences Improvement Programme,

⁹⁴ *National Policy on Education 1974* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social welfare, Government of India, 1974), 4-5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁶ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New Delhi: Picador, 2007), 477.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 479.

which provided opportunities for changes and innovation within the framework of existing system for modernising and upgrading the syllabus in co-operation with the concerned academic bodies and it was hoped that these would heavily lean on the development of courses relevant to national and regional priorities to the needs of the student community. The third programme was initiated for examination reforms. This included internal assessment grading, abolition of the system of pass and fail and the introduction of the system of question banks.⁹⁸ The situation of affiliated colleges was also deteriorating and it was important to pay attention on them for restructuring and strengthening. Government did not propose any plans for increasing funds for newly created colleges and providing additional funds to old colleges for furnishing advance facilities. In his address, S Nurul Hasan announced the scheme of autonomous colleges which was initiated on the recommendations of Education Commission. Accordingly, colleges were given autonomy to experiment with new types of courses which were more relevant to the needs of the society and the standards of examination was modified and improved. By underlining the reason of ameliorating the condition of affiliated colleges, the Minister said that 89 percent of university students were studying in the colleges rather than in the universities. Thereby, the colleges could not have been ignored in order to have a total impact on the entire education scene.⁹⁹ In addition, he informed about the establishment of Books Banks medical health centres and the introduction of part-time vocational courses. The Minister concluded that 'consultation and quality improvement are the two watch words of the University Grants Commission in addition to the question of expanding the frontiers of knowledge and supporting research.'¹⁰⁰ The most significant step of the Union government was the introduction of Forty Second Constitutional Amendment in 1976, by which education was transferred from State List to Concurrent List. Thus, education now became the joint responsibility of State and Union Government. The change in government's attitude was pre-requisite for the success of any reform. The election of 1977 proved disastrous for INC and for first time a non-Congress government was elected at the centre from which there were lot of expectations. It did not appoint any commission and committee for educational reforms but a non-government incentive was taken up by the intellectuals under a society namely Citizens for Democracy. The panel for

⁹⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. LIV, Fourteenth Session, August 6, 1975 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1975), 91-92.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

educational reforms was Chaired by J. P. Naik and it proposed a plan for educational reconstruction for ten years (1978-1987). It highlighted the importance of standard education, the Report of the Committee on Education for our People commented,

Education is a double-edged tool. If it is of good quality, it helps individual growth, social transformation, and national development. But if proper standards are not maintained, it can lead both individuals and societies down the hill to personal disaster or social disintegration. Maintaining the quality of education thus becomes a task of supreme importance...¹⁰¹

The Report of the Committee on Education for our People laid out a detailed plan for reforming and reorienting higher education. It emphasized that universities and colleges should evolve integrated programmes of teaching, research, and extension, all of which should have an equal status. There was a need for restructuring and raising the status of undergraduate course. In the same vein, the system of grants-in-aid to affiliated colleges and the machinery for its administration at the State level required considerable reforms. To fill the gaps in postgraduate level education, it recommended that teaching be expanded and improved, moreover, both fundamental and applied research should be promoted. For higher education, to address changing social requirements and increasing number of students, a diversification in its structure and courses was proposed to include the newly emerging interdisciplinary areas, and consequently, choices available to students would be substantially expanded.¹⁰² It also called for the semester system to be implemented. The entire university system should function on a thoroughly decentralized basis and autonomy (which the state should maintain, and academics exercise increasingly to provide an objective critique of society) should be passed on from universities to departments and affiliated colleges which should, in turn, share it with teachers and students. This system had become highly dysfunctional so hard political decisions and firm actions were needed to address the situation and develop higher education to meet the national needs and aspirations.¹⁰³ It also supported socialistic ideals for making education accessible to all and recommended an extra political effort to introduce the system of double pricing in which the poor would get free education and others would have to pay fee according to their ability. Subsidies to rich should be reduced directly and indirectly and increased for the poor. It also

¹⁰¹ J. P. Naik, *Education for our People: A Policy Frame for the Development of Education over the Next Ten Years (1978 – 87)* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers PVT LTD, 1978), 21-22.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

advised to implement the policy of selective admission with necessary safeguards for the weak.¹⁰⁴ The impact of this non-governmental efforts could be felt on the policies and programmes of the government. The Union Government published a draft of National Policy on Education in 1979, which stressed on vocationalization of secondary education and enacting a new recruitment policy based on pre-service training programmes and tests appropriate for specific job requirements. It also underscored improvement of the quality of education by adopting part-time and correspondence courses, implementing selective admission policy, exercising great restraint in establishing new institutions and providing extra safeguard to the first-generation learners of Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes and other socially disadvantaged groups.¹⁰⁵

Before the government could materialize the recommendations of NPE 1979, the alliance government of Janta Party lost majority and India witnessed seventh general election in 1980. The Sixth Five Year Plan informed about the future plan of action of the government and it emphasized on utilizing the existing infrastructure of higher education. It advocated to create better employment facilities for the first-generation learners, particularly for the socially disadvantage groups.¹⁰⁶ The Sixth Plan also envisaged to provide new technology on regional basis and focused on qualitative improvement of higher education by redesigning under-graduate courses to improve employment orientation. It was also suggested to develop post-graduate education and research in the new emerging areas relevant to national development objectives.¹⁰⁷ The growth of higher education remained low in subsequent years and numerous students' movements took place at various prominent centres of higher learning. During the discussion on Demands for Grants Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in 1984, Saifuddin Choudhury (Katwa), highlighted the policy dilemma of government and said,

Today, the higher education is in the decline. What do we see in the UGC report for 1982-1983? In recent years, efforts have been made to regulate the growth of higher education, but on what plea. They say that quantity is harming quality and we can

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 50-51.

¹⁰⁵ *Draft National Policy on Education 1979* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, 1979), 10-11.

¹⁰⁶ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Sixth Five Year Plan (1980–1985)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/6th/6planch21.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 21.29.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., para. 21.30.

never understand this formula. We always know that quantity makes for quality and now here we have a government which says that in order to make for quality; we should cut down on quantity. They say that according to manpower needs, we will have to have higher education. But in this manner, there would be no higher education, necessary to meet manpower needs.¹⁰⁸

In the prevailing circumstances, a two-days discussion of academicians and scientists of leading institutions and agencies took place in November, 1983. They proposed a series of recommendations for UGC to improve research in universities and most of them were accepted by the Commission for implementation. The Report of Policies and Programmes for the Improvement of Research 1984 informed about them and significantly focused on the universities for developing and strengthening advance facilities of research. But colleges were not included under this programme, even though they were the main centres of promoting higher learning. The Report informed about the steps taken in the couple of years for fostering the standards of higher education such as regulating the qualification of teachers at the time of appointment, providing guidelines for minimum examination reforms and raising number of days for laboratory work above 180 in a year. It also included the modernisation of syllabus, use of effective teaching method, and start and strengthening journals of sciences and humanities.¹⁰⁹

Since its inception, the UGC had limited success in raising the standards of higher education and research. Indian academia was still struggling from many new and old problems. For improving the quality of research, the Commission provided

a number of policy decisions to make more money available to expand the base, for example in minor and major research projects, and to improve the infrastructure in selected institutions in order to enable them to raise standards of postgraduate education and attract projects from many national agencies in relation to areas of national importance. A cadre of Research Scientists in all subjects in the Lecturers', Readers' and Professors' grade has also been created so as to make research and excellence-oriented careers an attractive proposition for talented young men and women.¹¹⁰

It also accepted to provide an environment of freedom for research, but warned against undermining disciplined hard work, or citing limitations of time to produce unimaginative and

¹⁰⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates Seventh Series*, Vol. XLVII, Fourteenth Session, April 11, 1984 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1984), 407.

¹⁰⁹ *UGC's Policy and Programme for Improvement of Research in the Universities* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1984), 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

inconsequential research.¹¹¹ The UGC suggested the universities to be conscientious about producing quality research and expressed worry on the over-production of Ph.Ds. With insistence on excellence, it recommended to curtail enrolment without hesitation wherever quality could not be maintained.¹¹² The Commission stressed upon improving the educational foundation of the scholars and suggested to overhaul the graduation, post-graduation and correspondence courses in line with foreign degrees. It also focused on promoting creativity by including problem-solving exercises through tutorials involving varying degree of complexities requiring reflection, planning, designing, execution and critical evaluation of the result of the work in addition with the internal assessment of the ability of the students at the department level.¹¹³ For the purpose of improving quality of infrastructure, special book grants, audio visual aids, reprographic facilities and the strengthening of other infrastructure were proposed. It also recommended to organise summer schools for talented students with suitable audio-visual support.¹¹⁴ The UGC further projected to carefully select those that were awarded research funding under university research programme in an attempt to eliminate those unsuitable for research in the university, it recommended a national test for granting funding through Junior Research Fellowship for this.¹¹⁵ It also focused on providing better working conditions and made extra effort to provide living facilities, health facilities and contingency grant for all type of accidental expenditure, additionally. It recommended to improve the quality of supervision and suitable working environment for the research and to provide employment to trained researchers in order to stop 'brain drain'.¹¹⁶

In due course, numerous students' movement also exposed the weakness of the higher education system. The enacted policies of government were not student-centric and demand was continuously raised to give more space to the voice of teachers, students and non-teaching staff in the decisions of the university. The UGC was also concerned with the matter and appointed a Committee in January 1982 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Madhuri R. Shah to inquire into the functioning of then seven Central Universities and to suggest ways to control the situation. The

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

Committee submitted its Report in 1984 and emphasized the need of a peaceful environment for the smooth functioning of universities. Though, the Report of the Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities exclusively dealt with administrative reforms in the universities, it also provided suggestions to improve the standards of university education. It observed that the central universities were not fulfilling the objectives in regard of persuading excellence, national integration and social and economic development etc. as laid out in the Universities' Acts and Statutes.¹¹⁷ It expressed dissatisfaction that none of the Central Universities could acquire an all-India character. Moreover, the problem of growing number of local students adversely affected the normal functioning of Banaras Hindu University. In solution, it did not suggest to undertake the task of establishing more colleges and university in the particular area with the financial aid of UGC and the cooperation of central and state governments. Contrary to that, it completely passed the responsibility to the government of Uttar Pradesh and recommended that the Central government should pursue the matter with the U. P. government.¹¹⁸ The Committee also highlighted that for raising the standards of education the UGC had prescribed minimum qualifications for recruitment to the posts of Lecturers, but Delhi University was the only Central University, which did not yet follow these guidelines.

Instead of prescribing M. Phil/Ph. D qualifications as essential in accordance with policy laid down by the UGC, Delhi University dealt with them as desirable only. Similarly, the requirement of a high second-class M. A. was lowered to 50 per cent. It is hoped that the situation will be rectified since the UGC has promulgated Regulations in this regard.¹¹⁹

The CEWCU aimed at holistic development of the university and asserted that the universities should have facilities, structures, management, and above all, programmes available in sufficient variety so that each student could learn according to their inclination, aptitude and need. In accordance with the Committee, it was the only way that the student could get the best out of the university and the nation could get sustenance from its human resource.¹²⁰ The Committee advocated urgent need of reform in the structure of courses, mode of evaluation and method of teaching. It highlighted that the earlier set ideals and goals were not being fulfilled

¹¹⁷ *Report of the Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities 1984*, rep. ed. (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1993), 1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

and the courses and programmes of the universities had remained, to a large extent, traditional and unimaginative. Therefore,

there is no excitement about learning, no thrust towards innovation and enterprise which should be of prime value to a rapidly changing society as ours. There is very little relationship of these programmes with employment opportunity. Everywhere the link with environment and society is weak. This lends a largely peripheral or irrelevant character to education and is perhaps responsible for the pursuit of a degree rather than of the education. The insensitivity of the teacher and the administrator towards the lack of authenticity of the process in which they participate leads to the lack of respect for them on the part of the student, and the result is indiscipline.¹²¹

The problem of 'student unrest' in different universities was also surveyed and the role of Student Union was explored. It expressed deep anguish on the misuse of the students' welfare body in taking up of populist causes and try to mobilise support. To deal with the situation, it directed to reduce the power of student body and proposed to frame some rules to curb the violence in the name of agitations. It also suggested the violation of such rules should be entitled of disciplinary action. No student of the university shall, (A) disrupt academic, administrative and teaching work; (B) damage and deface any property of the university; (C) engage in any conduct which is or is reasonably likely to be clearly detrimental to the university's purposes.¹²² Thus, CEWCU exclusively considered the Central Universities for investigation and proposed recommendations to introduce reforms in them. The affiliated colleges and State universities were not undertaken by the UGC appointed Committee which showed the intention of the higher regulatory agency from the reform process. Hence, fruitful results cannot be achieved by merely treating the super structure.

The Union Government was seeking various other alternatives too to deal the problem of growing number of students' enrolments and to fulfil the demand of modernising the university education in accordance with the requirement of time. The Seventh Five Year Plan recommended to build a network of facilities and provide through open universities correspondence courses and part-time education in order to meet social demand and the need of

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 67-68.

continuing education.¹²³ It also stressed to restructure the undergraduate courses and some well-recognised key words of reform programme were application orientation, flexibility and diversification.¹²⁴ The government promptly acted to enact the idea of open university. The United Kingdom was the first country to establish an open university in 1969 and the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh experimented with it in 1983. The Indira Gandhi National Open University was the first central funded open university. The enacting legislation was placed before Lok Sabha in 1985 by Union Minister of Education, K. C. Pant (1931-2012). He underlined the need for introducing and promoting an open university and distance education in the education pattern of the country for coordination and determination of standards in such system. He projected the proposed bill as fulfilling the needs of the contemporary society and suggested,

There is today an unprecedented explosion of knowledge, the frontiers of which are rapidly expanding. The application of communication technology in the field of education promises to open up new possibilities. New methods of teaching-learning are being advocated, which would replace the teacher-centred education. We are awakening at the dawn of a new educational order. The old system of education has become rigid and over centralised, mainly because of its increasing magnitude. We are, therefore, in search of a system that would be capable of resilience, responsive to the changing needs of today and tomorrow.¹²⁵

Apart from this, he further pointed out the objective behind establishing an open university to provide an opportunity and the benefit of education to the economically weaker and marginalised sections of the society. Another motive was to promote and foster a learning society in which there would be no barriers to vertical and horizontal mobility which was essential for the expansion of horizons and enhancement of the general and professional capability for all.¹²⁶

The parliamentarians welcomed the legislation for establishing IGNOU. Anand Gajapathi Raju (Bobbili), supported the idea of a national open university and urged the government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Open University. Defective instruments should

¹²³ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/7th/vol2/7v2ch10.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 10.48.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series*, Vol. IX, Third Session, August 26, 1985 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1985), 41-42.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 42.

not be employed in communicating the skills otherwise, he warned, it would be a quantitative jump alone and the very purpose of the Open University would be lost.¹²⁷ Participating in the same discussion, Satyendra Narayan Sinha (Aurangabad), explained the foundation of IGNOU as a step for universalisation of higher education.¹²⁸ He further argued,

...(c)campus troubles have become almost endemic, there is a lot of wastage of resources in the universities and there is deterioration in standards. One big objective of this Open University will be that it will improve the standards of other universities also by providing a quality material: The success of this system will depend upon the assembling together the best men, the experts... Secondly, I would like this university to develop into a learning and resource production centre. Material prepared for this university can be used by other universities and other institutions also, thereby the standard of those universities also will be improved. Thus, this Open University in a sense will act like a catalyst, will act like a pace-setter and provide an example to others so that the deterioration in the standards will be checked and standard will improve.¹²⁹

K. C. Pant responded to the discussion and expressed the commitment of the Ministry to concentrate on quality in the system. In his view, its success would depend on the large number of people benefiting from the quality education.¹³⁰ For implementing other changes in the education system of the country, the Union Government prepared another draft of National Policy on Education in 1986. It suggested the need of radical reforms in the education system and focused on tackling the problems of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay.¹³¹ It laid stress on the consolidation and expansion of facilities in the higher education institutions. It proposed to take urgent steps to protect the system from degradation. Most importantly, it admitted errors of the past and suggested replacing the policy of affiliation of colleges with freer and more creative association of universities with colleges.¹³²

To augment the quality of higher education at the state level, the NPE 1986 precisely provided that the State level planning and coordination of higher education would be done through the Councils of Higher Education and the UGC, and these Councils would develop a

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹³¹ *National Policy on Education 1986* (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 1986), 2.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

coordinative method to watch on standard.¹³³ Apart from this, it recommended to make provisions to provide minimum facilities, regulate admission according to capacity, facilitate higher institutions with new technology and promote quality research in science, technology and humanities.¹³⁴ The impact of a socialist formation on the standard education was also visible in the recommendations of NPE 1986. The government reiterated its promise for the removal of disparities and equalise educational opportunities by creating specific facilities for those were denied equality so far such as women, SCs, STs, physically and mentally handicapped etc.¹³⁵ However, the government repeated the same errors as was visible in earlier policies and in its agenda of reforms it did not provide any detail about how the recommendations would be implemented and progress would be assessed. For providing additional facilities, it did not mention how the increasing funds would be mobilized and distributed in different sectors for expenditure. Thus, the action of government was concentrated towards a politics of reform where a series of commissions and committees and draft of policies would be publicized containing all suggestions available for reform and reorient higher education. However, substantial changes were not evident on ground and the Indian academia continued to struggle with numerous serious problems. It clearly indicated the faulty implementation of government's policies and a lack of mechanism to fix accountability for tackling the prevailing disarray. The UGC also failed to meet the expectation for maintenance and determination of standards. During the discussion on the Demands for Grants Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1988, A. E. T. Barrow (Nominated Anglo-Indian) underlined problems due to uncontrolled expansion of substandard affiliated colleges and criticised the UGC for fostering this crisis. He stated,

One of the duties of the University Grants Commission is to lay down criteria, norms and requirements for the establishment of colleges. So far, the University Grants Commission has not done anything in this regard. This is a matter of grave national concern. Once colleges are established some means, I do not know how, persuasive or otherwise, they are affiliated. Once they are affiliated, because they are sub-standard colleges, our standards of education are diluted.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid., 12.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 5-7.

¹³⁶ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series*, Vol. XXXVII, Tenth Session, March 29, 1988 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1988), 290.

Conclusion

A detailed study of the quality of higher education in post-Independence India shows that following a series of Commissions and Committees, there have been myriad suggestions and recommendations to maintain the standards of education, but only a few of them have ever got translated into practice. Several discrepancies at the time of executing education policy further contributed to deteriorating standards. As India inherited the colonial system of higher education with only slight modifications, it was bound to be unsatisfactory. When structural changes were sought to be introduced in higher education, its deteriorating standard was not considered seriously. The decade of 1950s and 1960s witnessed huge debates among intellectuals, policy-makers and legislatures about whether to expand the system or consolidate it. Higher education, however, continued to expand in an unplanned manner. Even the UGC, institutionalised in 1956 to maintain and determine the standards of higher education, could not manage the immanent crisis. Besides, the decade of 1970s and 1980s saw huge debates regarding access, equity and quality in higher education. Intellectuals and legislators like A. B. Shah, Somnath Chatterjee, Humayun Kabir, J. P. Naik deem recommended to reorganise the education system on socialist patterns and raised the issues of access, equity and quality. Some impact of their discourse was felt on the policies of the government, like in recommendations to give special protection to the first-generation learners of SCs, STs and physically and mentally handicapped. Given limited financial resources and the growing demands of higher education, the Union Government fathomed the idea of an Open University. Thus, IGNOU came into existence in 1985. During the discussion on the IGNOU Bill, several MPs welcomed this move by the government and urged not to employ defective instruments in propagating the idea, otherwise it would be a quantitative jump alone. The government subsequently released NPE in 1986 which proposed a remedy to address the issues of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay. Thus, the socialistic formation of the education system was realised after the intervention of intellectuals and legislatures. To effect changes on the ground, the Union Government was showered with a number of suggestions and policy guidelines. However, most policies were implemented in a haphazard manner and no serious effort was made to implement them. Therefore, substantial changes could not take place and the Indian academia continues to struggling with numerous old and new challenges.

CHAPTER 3: GOVERNING HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

The modern system of higher education was first developed in India during the colonial period. The British exercised strict control over the system—from deciding curricula to administering governance related issues. The ideas of university autonomy and academic freedom were some of the most important questions of this period and they remained unresolved even after the continuous agitation of intellectuals and nationalist leaders. With the independence of India in 1947, a new phase in the evolution of higher education began. The new sovereign, democratic, republic encountered numerous old and new challenges in reconstructing the education system, corresponding to those that India was facing at the sites of economy, polity and society. Under those circumstances, the government had opted for a planned economy to ensure rapid growth in all sectors. Given the critical importance of universities for any country in supplying skilled labour, the Union government decided to improve the working of an inherited university education system rather than establish a new one. The first Five Year Plan provided insights into their reasoning. It observed that the old system was indeed capable of good yields and, despite its grave flaws, the existing universities remained the only repositories of organised knowledge. The enactment of a new system (or systems) more suited to India's national needs presented challenges while planning its relationship with various systems and co-existing with them.¹ In the course of this undertaking, the universities had several external and internal issues and the government needed a proper mechanism to deal them and suggest reforms. Like its colonial predecessors, it appointed commissions and committees to resolve issues and formulate policies. The foremost subject of discussion was the governance of universities which was directly linked with university autonomy and academic freedom.

This chapter will explore the governance system of universities in the post-colonial era through exploring the various commissions and reports of the committees which played a crucial role in shaping, expanding and implementing idea of university autonomy and academic

¹ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'First Five Year Plan (1951 – 1956)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/1st/1planch33.html> (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 40.

freedom. It will also analyse the grass-root execution of the recommendations and heated debates in the Parliament on such matters with the reference of writings and speeches of intelligentsia. In conclusion, it is argued that after having a series of commissions and committees and a great discussion on the various aspects of the concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom, India could not evolve a uniform system of university governance. Rapid privatisation made the issue more complex and it is still being debated.

Imagining university autonomy: ideas, practice and debates

The first three universities at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were established in 1857. The colonial government exercised strict control over them in all matters ranging from designing curricula to university governance. The infamous controversy over the Indian Universities Act of 1904 during the time of Viceroy Lord Curzon (1899-1905) raised a number of questions on the intentions of government. The enacted legislation introduced significant changes in the university system and gave statutory recognition to the university syndicates to make provision for university teachers on these executive bodies.

Formerly, only the senates of the universities could make regulations although the government could veto any regulation passed by the senate. But now, by virtue of the Act of 1904, the government assumed the power not only to make additions and alternations to the regulations passed by the senates but also to make new regulations on its own.... The Act of 1904, far from strengthening the autonomy of universities, increased the stranglehold of the government on them. Most of the fellows were nominated by the government; the government had the final say in the affiliation of colleges and the government could introduce any new regulation, the universities, thus, became state department.²

Indian intellectuals opposed the Indian Universities Act proposing rather the idea of a 'national education and exclusively under national control.'³ This endeavour by Indians could not produce desired results and it finally collapsed. Meanwhile, however, they exerted pressure on the colonial government to reform the system and, in 1917, forced it to constitute a commission to assess the university system by considering Calcutta University as a model. The Commission,

² J. N. Kaul, *Governance of Universities: Autonomy of the University Community* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1988), 77-78.

³ The national Council of Education, Bengal, unveiled a memorandum on 23 May 1906 with the objective to give space to the voice of Indians in education system in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya et al., eds. *Educating the Nation: Documents on the Discourse of National Education in India (1880 - 1920)* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publisher, Distributors, 2003), 9.

popularly known as Calcutta University Commission, submitted a voluminous report in 1919 with extensive suggestions inter alia to reform the governance system of the universities. However, the colonial government remained unsympathetic towards the demands of Indians to grant autonomy and freedom to universities. Thus, between 1921 to 1947, a reluctant government did not take vigorous steps to transfer power to universities.⁴

The significant attempt of exploring, defining and understanding the concept of university autonomy was undertaken by the University Education Commission which was appointed in 1948 under the Chairmanship of an educator and philosopher, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1888–1975). The Commission highlighted the vital role of universities in constructing a democratic nation, an egalitarian society and a knowledge superpower. For achieving the goal, it advocated,

...[T]hey have to provide leadership in politics and administration, the profession, industry and commerce. They have to meet the increasing demand for every type of higher education, literary and scientific, technical and professional. They must enable the country to attain, in as short a time as possible, freedom from want, disease and ignorance, by the application and development of scientific and technical knowledge.⁵

The Commission underlined key constitutional values such as democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity to found, develop and promote the education system of the country.⁶ It further gave emphasis on university autonomy and accepted the freedom of individual development as the basis of democracy. It compared the exclusive control of state agencies on higher education institutions with ‘mercenaries’ who can be utilised to promote the political purposes of the State, make them acceptable to an increasing number of their populations and supply them with the requisite weapons. Thus, it recommended resisting government’s domination of the educational process in the interest of democracy.⁷ The UEC did not mark a sharp distinction between the concept of university autonomy and academic freedom and thus, it suggested,

⁴ Kaul, *Governance of Universities*, 83.

⁵ *The Report of the University Education Commission (December 1948 – August 1949)* Volume I, 1st rep. ed. (Simla: Manager Government of India Press, 1963), 28-29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

Higher education is, undoubtedly, an obligation of the State but State aid is not to be confused with State control over academic policies and practices. Intellectual progress demands the maintenance of the spirit of free inquiry. The pursuit and practice of truth regardless of consequences has been the ambition of universities.⁸

It also recommended placing education in the Concurrent List in order to ensure an all-India character of higher education, improve governance system and maintain minimum standards of efficiency. It discarded the model of affiliating universities and suggested that the Government Colleges would be gradually transformed into the constituent colleges of the universities. The fate of private colleges would be determined if they were to satisfy the university that they were eligible for, grants aids and were able to undertake student's assessment related works.⁹ Thus, the UEC provided a detailed outline on the basis of past experience to reorient, reorganise and reform the university education system and to lay the final ball in the court of the government.

The detailed recommendations of the UEC were never discussed in parliament while formulating education policy and introducing reforms in the system. The government considered her own priorities, ideas and agenda. Continuing with the colonial legacy, education remained the subject of State List and the Union Government exclusively took upon the responsibility of coordinating of the facilities and the task of determining standards in higher education institutions.¹⁰ Initiating the reconstruction process of universities, the government started to amend the legislations of some old eminent universities and granted them the status of 'Institution of National Importance.' It included four institutions—Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University, Visva Bharati University and Delhi University.¹¹ During the discussion on amending legislations, the issue of university autonomy was widely debated in Parliament and the Government and opposition seemed to collide with each other. When the Visva Bharati University Bill was considered for amendment in 1951, majority of members raised questions on the intention of the government because in the enacting legislation, President of India was proposed as a Visitor of the university with the powers of supervision and inquiry into the affairs of the university. This provision was widely accepted by the parliamentarians as a

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 380-381.

¹⁰ *Report of the Committee of Members of Parliament on Higher Education* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1964), 5.

¹¹ Humayun Kabir, *Progress of Education in India (1947 – 1952): Quinquennial Review with an Introductory Survey* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1953), 110.

loophole to interfere with the affairs of university. Opposing members demanded to strengthen the internal administrative bodies of the University such as Executive Council (Senate) and the Court (Syndicate). Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (1917-1980), (Bihar), spoke on the issue, asserting that excessive powers were conferred to the Visitor. He assumed that the Karma Samiti¹² or the Education Committee will have the wider knowledge of the institution and therefore the executive committee should be vested maximum powers of the character, if the members of Executive Committee and Karma Samiti do not like the orders of the visitor, they may reject them. Though, eventually, he agreed to give some powers to visitor.¹³

Expanding the debate, A. C. Guha (West Bengal) expressed doubts on the ideals and purpose attached with the bill in order to convert the Visva Bharati University into a formal institution. The earlier UEC had recommended that ‘this should be converted into a university and a rural bias should be developed in this rural university.’ He further raised the issue of functioning of Visitor and suggested to strengthen the Karma Samiti by proposing that ‘In the Karma Samiti, the Visitor may nominate any number of members; -no number is fixed. It may develop a sort of officialdom. This has to be guarded against.’¹⁴ By highlighting numerous defects in the administrative setup as proposed in the Visva Bharati University Bill, borrowed from the Acts of different universities, Dr. R. U. Singh (Uttar Pradesh) raised objection on the departure of the decision of more particular matters of extreme importance to executive. For instance, he threw light on the clause 27 of the Bill which provided that the first statutes shall be framed by the central government. The importance of the issue lay in the fact that a great number of matters were being ordinarily covered by the statutes, and even then, it was contrary to the Act of Lucknow University and the Act of Delhi University from which the borrowing had been made. The second issue of immense importance was related to the supreme governing body of the university that is, the Court. In this case, uniformity was not maintained in the Acts of different universities and a similar glitch was noted in the Bill Clause 19, due to which the Court could not be a supreme governing body.¹⁵ Giving an extremely different twist to the whole

¹² Modern Executive Council

¹³ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XI, Third Session, April 28, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 7735-7736.

¹⁴ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XI, Third Session, April 30, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 7752-7753.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7759-7760.

discussion, Dr. Deshmukh (Madhya Pradesh) put forth the concept of absolute autonomy for the Visva Bharati University by proposing,

If it was necessary that the leaders of this institution should have sufficient opportunity and powers to look after the students who are admitted, then let this be created into a separate University to which the West Bengal and Central Governments may give whatever funds they want, but for the administration of this institution there should be a National Trust over which no Government can have any control whatsoever...¹⁶

Participating in the same discussion, some members like Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee (1901– 1953) (West Bengal) referred to the popular idea of Rabindranath Tagore, the founder of the institution, as ‘a bird which was kept in a golden cage’, and suggested to grant complete academic freedom to the university.¹⁷ Similar ideas in favour of academic freedom were expressed by K. T. Shah (1888–1953), who proposed amendments in the Bill of Visva Bharati University and opined to keep academic matters sacrosanct and free from interference. He suggested that,

The Visitor should have no right to interfere in purely academic matters. For example, he should have no right to go into complaints about the honesty of the conduct of examinations, or the propriety of certain courses, or the composition of certain syllabi, or the prescription of standards of attainment, or of textbooks. He is entitled morally to intervene, to safeguard the general administration of the University and because Government makes a financial grant, he is entitled to intervene in financial matters. But he should not intervene on the purely academic side even if there is a request.¹⁸

Between these voices of dissent, Union Government also proposed similar amendments in the Banaras Hindu University Act 1915 and Aligarh Muslim University Act 1920. The government had to once again face the vehement opposition of members during the discussion on these two bills in Lok Sabha. Speaking on the Bills in 1951, a member, Hussain Imam (Bihar) raised the issue of university autonomy and academic freedom. He proposed that the idea of independence was the very first stepping stone for the movement of freedom struggle and by amending the Acts, these institutions should not be deprived of their freedom. He opposed the centralisation of

¹⁶ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XI, Third Session, May 1, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 7854.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7867.

¹⁸ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XI, Third Session, May 2, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 7923.

institutions, to place everything before the government and to run everything only with its permission. He further urged,

If possible, the powers should be left in the hands of these very institutions... I believe that politics is a necessary evil, but I am not very fond of it. I believe it is at times necessary and so we have to engraft it. From this view point it is good if there is least political interference. These are places with an academic atmosphere. The atmosphere there should be purely academic and cultural. Permitting politics and access into them would prove harmful...¹⁹

Considering the suggestions of members, while introducing amendments in Banaras Hindu University Act in 1951, Union Minister for Education, Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958) clarified the government's take on the powers provided to the Visitor,

The object of provision for such powers is not interference in the internal administration of the university. University is an autonomous body and it should remain as such. It cannot be denied, however that in certain cases, such defects can arise that cannot be set right by the University by itself, because the defects can arise of account of those very people who are responsible for the administration of the university. If such a situation arises, there should be some provision for setting things right by intervention from above. If this door is not left open, there will be no check by which matters can be set right.²⁰

He further assured the House on behalf of the Ministers that the policy of government was to give full freedom to the institution and maintain flexibility so that each institution may develop and make progress on its own patterns.²¹ Finally, the majority government managed to get all the university amendment bills passed. This whole episode exhibited that the policymakers were cautious to develop a university system which would be free from any external political interference. But they could not mark a sharp distinction between the concepts – university autonomy and academic freedom. In addition, they were confused whether the internal university bodies should be strong enough to meet any outside challenge and the academic freedom should be a cardinal principal of any reform in the universities.

¹⁹ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XIV, Fourth Session, August 25, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 1303-1304.

²⁰ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, September 26, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 3367.

²¹ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, September 27, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 3499.

With the closing of this chapter, the debate on university autonomy did not end. Abul Kalam Azad further tried to expand upon its horizon. Once, speaking in the Conference of State Education Ministers and the Vice Chancellor of the universities on April 18, 1953, Azad emphasized the role of society in determining the character of the university and the duty of government to adhere the community sentiment. In his words,

university autonomy is not an end in itself but a means to an end. That end is the achievement of satisfactory academic standards and the maintenance of the high dignity of the universities as seats of learning and culture. If therefore these ends are not fulfilled, the community has a right to demand such changes as will make their achievement possible. To resist measures for the purpose in the name of university autonomy is therefore totally unjustified. The universities do not exist in dignified isolation but are components of society and hence society has a right to determine what will be the character and aims of the university...²²

This idea was far away from taking a decisive shape at the policy level and the government hardly took a serious note of the sentiments of society and community while drafting early legislation to improve the university education.

The problem of financing university education was also an important arena of debate and discussion. Without resolving it, the real motive from the university education could not be accomplished. Attracting attention towards this serious matter Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee adopted quite a realistic approach. He was aware of the poor financial condition of the universities and his firm belief was that the state aid was a prerequisite to thrive and revive the academics in the old universities. Speaking on the topic during the convocation of Mysore University on November 3, 1949, he suggested that the State should finance the universities without encroaching upon their autonomy. In his words,

The financial position of our universities is far from satisfactory... A remedy for the situation must be found out if university education is to progress on right lines and if the universities in India have to take their full share in the responsible task of building up the structure of Indian education. The State should recognise its responsibility for the financing of higher education. Financial help, however, should in no case lead to any restriction of the independent outlook of the universities. Should there be any need for periodical survey of the progress made by the universities and their financial position, commissions or reviewing committees can be appointed for the purpose. But the autonomy of the university must be preserved

²² Abul Kalam Azad, *Speeches of Maulana Azad (1947 – 1955)* (Delhi: Publications Division, 1956), 244-245.

at all cost and no attempt should be made to treat it as a department of the Secretariat. It is true that education in all its stages is an obligation of the State but State aid should not be confused with State control.²³

Meanwhile, the UEC recommended to set up University Grants Commission as an autonomous body for the dispersal of funds.²⁴

During the deliberation on Banaras Hindu University amendment Bill in 1951, some members talked about how to further empower universities. Touching upon this notion, K. T. Shah drew attention towards the adopted concept of autonomy. He stated that the Indian universities were not autonomous in their character as observable in the foreign lands. He believed that the fundamental reason of such disparity was the lack of control of universities on property and power to add to their income and to make their own income. When the universities are dependent on the grants from government, it has an obligation to spend the grant according to the government and, therefore, the universities were not in the position to deny their right to see how the grants are utilised, how the money is spent. He gave the example of the New York Universities which possess enormous property and enormous income of their own, making it possible for them to say no to grants by the state and, therefore, independently go their own way.²⁵ Thus, financial autonomy along with administrative autonomy was important for the independent growth of the Universities. The government was aware of the gravity of the matter. Therefore, in 1953, by promulgating an ordinance, the University Grants Commission was established as an apex body.

When the Government tabled the UGC Bill for discussion in Lok Sabha in 1955, numerous members were suspicious at the enactment of UGC. They believed that the Commission should not become a mechanism to establish an indirect control on universities. M. S. Gurupadaswami (Mysore) emerged as an important voice expressing doubt over the intentions of the government. While examining the dual objectives of the Bill, he urged the government to define with exactitude terms such as 'co-ordination and determination of standards.' He said,

²³ Prof. O. Anantharamaiah and Dr. K. S. Shivanna, *Convocation Addresses of the Mysore University: Platinum Jubilee Year 1993* (Mysuru: Mysore University Press, 1993), 392.

²⁴ *The Report of the University Education Commission*, 398.

²⁵ *Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, September 26, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 3435-3436.

To me the most important question is: what type of relationship should exist between the University and the Government? Is it a relationship on the basis of partnership or is it a relationship of one of subordination of the University to the Government? I am a believer in the autonomy of the Universities. This autonomy does not mean complete independence of the educational or higher educational institutions from Government control and supervision. But it means the autonomy should be such as to provide sufficient scope for the management to guide the day-to-day affairs of the Universities. But, here, on the plea of providing funds for the Universities, the Government is taking up other powers, powers of executive control. This control does not stop at the level of control only, but it goes beyond that. It tries to impose the will of the executive on the various Universities in matters such as standards of education...²⁶

Some members like Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat) suggested to make the UGC an independent body which would be free from the pressures of government. She was against absolute autonomy for universities but she supported autonomy to allow free scope for the evolution of university education according to the need and tradition of a particular university. She felt the term 'determination of standards' was very vague and warned of its danger that it must not lead to uniformity. She further suggested that the scope and important functions of the Commission such as exploring the question of expansion of the University education, coordination of Universities and facilitation of research, ensuring the minimum levels of attainment in examinations, and ensuring of the minimum standard of living for teachers and staff etc.²⁷

An important aspect of the discussion was that the members were cautious to guard the federal structure of the governance. S. S. More (Sholapur) believed that by the UGC Bill, the government was trying to curtail the autonomy of both the provinces and the Universities. He argued that

Universities can play a great role only if it is appreciated both by the public and the Government that they function as autonomous Units and are free to develop along well-established standards uncontrolled and uninfluenced by the changing waves of democratic passion. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the autonomy claimed by the University should be understood as implying a greater amount of self-control and self-discipline and a sincere desire to work for the higher standards of

²⁶ *Lok Sabha Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. I, No. 2, February 22, 1955 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1955), 74.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

intellectual integrity and morality. But now this Government out to centralise all power are trying to put their thumb in the pot of jam of Universities autonomy.²⁸

During the whole discussion, the questions of autonomy and academic freedom were prime concern of all the members of parliament. They widely gave the reference of the UEC Report on the matter such as autonomy, finance and the function of UGC. Though the report was not even thoroughly discussed in the parliament. Dr. M. M. Das, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education, replied on the discussion and assured the house that the government had drafted the Grants Commission Bill on the line of the recommendations of UEC. He quoted various sections of the report in order to satisfy members. He further assured the house that the government had no ill-will to encroach upon the autonomy of the Universities in the name of supervising the function of UGC in matters of providing fund and administrative measures.²⁹ Finally, the Bill got passed without finding appropriate answer of the raised doubts and, thus, got transmitted to Rajya Sabha for further discussion.

A time-tested conflict arose in Banaras Hindu University in the years of 1957-1958, when the situation became grim due to administrative mismanagement. There were strikes and unrest in the campus on certain demands of the students. The Union Government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of an educationist and physicist, Dr. Lakshmana Swami Mudaliar (1887-1974) to inquire into this matter, and it recommended to take immediate steps to 'set things right'. The government took measures by issuing an ordinance which was promulgated by the President on 14th June, 1958. When the discussion was held on the Banaras Hindu University Amendment Ordinance and Banaras Hindu University Amendment Bill in August 1958, the report of the inquiry committee was discussed and the members of Lok Sabha criticised the government for intervening in the internal affairs of the University. The Union Education Minister, Dr. K. L. Shrimali (1909–2000) defended the government's action saying,

Banaras Hindu University is a great national university. Universities can become powerful instruments for building up our country and social reconstruction. If there is anything wrong inside the University it is the duty of the Government to intervene and set the University right. I greatly respect the autonomy of the University, but autonomy has a certain purpose. Freedom should not degenerate into licence and that

²⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. I, No. 6, February 28, 1955 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1955), 539-540.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 597.

is what was happening in the Banaras Hindu University. Freedom was being misused. It is my desire as soon as possible normal conditions should be restored inside the University and the professors, teachers and the students should be engaged in their normal duties of pursuing truth and knowledge.³⁰

The adverse situation in BHU was a predicted crisis towards which the members of parliament were indicating earlier in 1951. Dr. K. L. Shrimali gave referred to ‘the spirit of liberalism and respect for ordinary processes of law’ as the root and branch of university life. He urged the members to support the proposed amendments such as the first change in the constitution of the Selection Committee and the second change in the Screening Committee and the later was proposed to rename as Reviewing Committee. He further clarified that the objective of such action was to tackle prevailing crisis situation in the University.³¹ Participating in the same discussion, majority of members suggested to take some mild steps to deal with such situation and a number of members welcomed the move of the government, and finally the amendments were passed. However, after the more than one and a half months, the chaotic situation did not rapidly improve and the university administration had to declare a shutdown of the university from 7th October, 1958 till indefinite period. Opposing the action of government and university authority, Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Sasaram) submitted a notice to discuss the closure of BHU and brought the whole matter under the notice of Parliament. While speaking on the issue, he explained the whole scenario where not only the provision of the University Act of appointing an Inquiry Committee was violated but also about the presence of the Vice Chancellor V. S. Jha remained before the Mudaliar Committee wherein he levied all sorts of charges of moral turpitude against students.³²

The entire incident of BHU highlighted that the government had erroneously interpreted the crisis from purely administrative point of view. However, a different aspect was also involved in it. Criticising the actions of government and university authority, Hem Barua (Gauhati) compared the sudden closure of BHU by Executive Council with the attitude of industrialists. He charged that the democratic attitude did not extend to the problem whereas it

³⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XVIII, Fifth Session, August 16, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 1183-1184.

³¹ *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XIX, Fifth Session, September 1, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 4016-4017.

³² *Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XXII, Sixth Session, November 20, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 794-795.

betrayed only a bureaucratic attitude on the part of the Executive Council as also on the part of the government.³³ He further drew the attention of the government towards the poor facilities at the portals of University. In his view it was also due to student's agitation throughout the year. He said,

The students were denied even the commonest amenities that they must have. Now, the hostels are overcrowded. Please do not forget that fact. Again, what about the playgrounds? Every evening, in the playgrounds, we get the appearance of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village". There are no organised sports activities for the students. There is no organisation of cultural life for the students. Then, there is water scarcity. There is scarcity of electric power. The students are thus subjected to enormous odds and enormous difficulties. And these are the conditions that create a sense of frustration in the students. And it is these factors that have contributed to the conditions of discipline accumulating dirt and dross in the University during all these years.³⁴

Many other members criticised the government and the university authority to deal the situation in that way and treating the students like criminal. They all favoured to open the university as soon as possible. While replying on the same discussion, Dr. K. L. Shrimali justified the decision of the Executive Council and urged the Members of Parliament to not only blame the government and university authority but also to criticise the conduct of students. Taking a contradictory stand and rushing away from his responsibility to 'set things right', he kicked the ball in the university court and suggested that the Executive Council would take the decision to reopen the University when it seemed appropriate.³⁵

The BHU seems to have been an example which was extensively debated in Parliament. Several such incidents of 'student unrest' took place over the years in different parts of India and government was blamed for interfering in the internal affairs of the university. This vicious scenario gave birth to a debate to analyse the relation of government and state agencies with universities and raised fundamental questions such as did the concept of university autonomy provide absolute power to universities. Was there any restraint in exercising academic freedom? Exploring these questions, Dr. K. L. Shrimali, serving then as Deputy Education Minister, stated in Rajya Sabha on 7 December 1955,

³³ Ibid., 836.

³⁴ Ibid., 837-838.

³⁵ Ibid., 879.

The autonomy of the universities should certainly be maintained. But freedom always depends on responsibility. If the universities wish to safeguard their academic freedom, they must also show a certain sense of responsibility. It is their duty to give leadership to society. Can we say with certainty that the universities in our country have done their duty? Education not only preserves social values, but also creates and recreates those social values. Have the universities performed this important function?³⁶

He further referred to financial bungling, bad appointments, a fall in standards and lack of discipline in universities and suggested to guard them from this rut.³⁷ Dr. Zakir Husain (1897–1969), an administrator and educationist, elaborated upon the speech by Shrimali and emphasized the active role of teachers, students and administrators in promoting and protecting the academic freedom. He was speaking on the topic ‘National Education under National Control’ during the convocation of University of Lucknow on January 28, 1958, he argued,

academic freedom, like all freedom, cannot be absolute. But the only limitations and restraints on it should be those of decency and decorum and those of social responsibility; and these it is the duty and the privilege of all connected with a university—students, teachers and administrators alike—to cherish and develop. Freedom is never given, it is earned, and kept only by those who continue to earn it every minute of their active life.³⁸

Thus, the certain conditions were attached with different rights and in return of every right, there were certain duties to be performed and responsibilities to be adhered to.

The relation of government and state agencies with universities also acquired central stage during the Vice Chancellor Conference on 15 June 1960. Dr. K. L. Shrimali emphasized in his inaugural address that the universities must fulfil two conditions to function as an autonomous body. First, they must maintain a high standard of just and efficient administration and take every possible care to ensure the proper use of public funds. Second, they must be responsive to the needs of the community and the concept of the university as an ivory tower was not applicable.³⁹ He further argued,

³⁶ DR. K. L. Shrimali, *Problems of Education in India: Selected Speeches (1955 – 1960)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1961), 115-116.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Zakir Husain, *The Dynamic University* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 6.

³⁹ *Proceedings of the Vice-Chancellor Conference June 15 – 16, 1960* (New Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1961), 5-6.

The relationship of the Government and the universities is of a delicate nature and while Government will have to exercise considerable self-restraint in dealing with the universities, the universities on their part must show greater flexibility and responsiveness to national needs. There should be no occasion for conflict between the Government and the universities if both respect each other and work for a common purpose, that is, service to society, and constant advancement of human welfare.⁴⁰

In the same address, he highlighted the vital role of UGC in determining the standards and coordinating the functions of universities. He was firm to not reduce the role of UGC to merely a bank, which would facilitate drawing money from the treasury and issued cheques to the universities.⁴¹ The financial power must not become an instrument of government control and interference in the affairs of the university. Contrary to the approach of Education Minister, V. K. R. V. Rao (1908–1991), then Vice Chancellor of Delhi University, proposed that the UGC must function like a ‘senior member’ of the family and not as a ‘super body’. He advocated to treat the UGC as a part of university in the educational terms and that it must evolve a close link with the Vice Chancellor. His intention was to discern the moral ties between the university and UGC and to stop UGC from becoming a police authority.⁴² Hence, the concept of university autonomy and academic freedom were not seen to be absolute in nature and a need was felt to evolve a reciprocity in the relation between the government, state agencies and university authority.

The attempt of redefining and reframing the concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom also continued under various commissions and committees. The government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of educationist and scientist, Dr. D. S. Kothari (1906–1993) in December 1961 to consider the organisational structure of the universities in India and proposed an outline of a model Act suited to their role and function in the fast-developing society.⁴³ However, a diversity in pattern and organisation was required for the development and progress of higher education in a large country like India. Therefore, instead of proposing a model Act, the Committee offered general principles for reorienting the governance

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

⁴² Ibid., 21-22.

⁴³ *Report of the Committee on Model Act for Universities* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1964), 1.

system of the universities.⁴⁴ The Model Committee did not differentiate between autonomy and academic freedom and bluntly rejected the old notions and suggested,

Autonomy for a university is not a matter of fundamental right as it were, but is a condition for its efficient functioning and for enabling it to achieve the true ideals and aims of a university. A university needs autonomy if it is to discharge properly its functions and obligations to society and play an effective part in the development and progress of the country.⁴⁵

It further defined university as a community of teachers and students and advocated their ‘real and meaningful’ participation in the affairs of the university rather than just being ‘formal and constitutional. Adopting a balanced approach, it proposed, ‘Autonomy from external control is important, but it is equally or even more important that the administration internally is not autocratic or bureaucratic and insensitive to the real needs and interests of the academic community (staff and students).’⁴⁶ Thus, the Model Act Committee gave a different colour to a whole discussion and recommended, the active participation of teachers and students in the affairs of the university. However, it could not leave a deep imprint at policy level.

In order to invite detailed suggestions and ideas on the various contested issues of education, the Union Government appointed another commission, namely Education Commission, under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari, which is popularly known after his name as Kothari Commission (1964–1966). In the resolution of appointing Education Commission in 1964, the government accepted its failure to not have evolved an effective education system in accordance with the need of the time and accept that ‘a wide and distressing gulf continues to persist between thought and action in several sectors of this crucial field of national activity.’⁴⁷ The Commission considered inter alia the governance and administrative structure of the universities to improve and tried to reorient the concept of university autonomy. It suggested that the proper sphere of university autonomy lay principally in three fields: first, selection of students; second, appointment and promotion of the teachers; and third, determination of courses of study and the methods of teaching and selection of areas and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Education Commission 1964 – 1966: Education and National Development* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education Government of India, 1966), 592.

problem of research.⁴⁸ It clearly distinguished university autonomy from academic freedom and by highlighting the purpose of autonomy, it proposed,

...without it, universities cannot discharge effectively their principal functions of teaching, research and service to the community; and that only an autonomous institution, free from regimentation of ideas and pressure of party or power politics, can pursue truth fearlessly and build up, in its teachers and students, habits of independent thinking and a spirit of enquiry unfettered by the limitations and prejudices of the near and the immediate which is so essential for the development of a free society.⁴⁹

The Kothari Commission was the first which proposed a framework to understand the idea of autonomy at different level of governance system such as autonomy within the university, the relation with departments and offices, autonomy of the university at structural level and its relation with UGC, Inter University Board and other universities, autonomy of the university at external level and its relation with agencies such as central and state government.⁵⁰ This proposition further helped in strengthening the pillars of autonomy at various level of governance system.

The Kothari Commission also recommended several measures to invigorate the understanding of autonomy. First, the representation of the social elements in the university could be justified in view of the nature of relationship between university and society. Second, the university should be vigilant to not become administration or administrator dominated. Its main function should be to serve the academic interest. Third, good ideas emerged at the lower level of hierarchy that should be respected and recognized. Fourth, the wider academic and financial powers should be delegated to each department. Fifth, the autonomy and freedom of the colleges should be recognized. Sixth, the university should be visualised as an integrated community where teachers are senior scholars, students are junior scholars and administration is the service agency to both. All attempts of polarization between teachers, students and administration should be avoided. Seventh, the students should be encouraged to take part in the governance of the university and make them realise the responsibility in day to day

⁴⁸ Ibid., 325.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 326.

functioning.⁵¹ Most importantly, the Commission also emphasized on the financial autonomy and stated, ‘University autonomy cannot become real and effective unless adequate provision is made to meet the financial requirements of universities and colleges.’⁵² It recommended the joint responsibility of university, state and UGC to maintain autonomy and suggested,

It is our view that universities should not only be immune from direct governmental intervention but also from direct public accountability. In the interest of the autonomy of the universities, their financial affairs should not be made either a subject of public controversy or an issue in party politics which is likely to be the case if they are placed before Parliament. Secondly, control over universities should be indirect and in keeping with their position in the national life.⁵³

Thus, the Kothari Commission offered detailed recommendations to overhaul the governance system of the universities and make revolutionary changes in the basic structure accordance with the socio, economic and political requirements of the country.

Before the report of Kothari Commission could be materialised at policy level, the attitude of Union Government remained a subject of criticism because the situation of university education was continuously growing critical and the government could neither take effective steps nor frame policy to deal the crisis. Speaking in Lok Sabha on a motion of ‘Students Unrest and Trouble in Recent Months’ in 1966, Renu Chakravartty cited various examples of students unrest prevailing across India and urged to maintain the autonomy of Universities and respect the established convention that the precincts of the university campuses and educational institutions were the arena of academic freedom under the control and supervision of head of the institutions. The police and certainly the military should not enter inside institutions without the expressed desire of the head of institution. She further blamed the government for this chaotic condition and pleaded that

the socio-economic policies of the government are largely responsible-these are very important factors. You may have commissions, but with respect, I say to you that you are not going to implement what they say. Therefore, let us not have any more commissions. Let us really try to implement the demands of the Vice Chancellors the demands of the heads of educational institutions, and let us have education with a

⁵¹ Ibid., 326-327.

⁵² Ibid., 330-331.

⁵³ Ibid., 333.

national ideal and which fits in with the scientific and modern needs of society and which will not lead to a large number of educated unemployed persons.⁵⁴

The government finally proposed the Report of Kothari Commission for discussion in Parliament, and it had to face the anger of the members on the various unresolved issues of education. Replying on the motion of discussing ‘the Report of Education Commission 1964–1966 and the Report of the Committee of Members of Parliament on Education,’ then Union Education Minister Dr. Triguna Sen (1905–1998) assured to transformed the recommendations of the Kothari Commission into a national policy and on the issue of autonomy, he clarified,

The Universities can no longer live in an ivory tower of isolation. They have to provide leadership in social, economic, political and cultural spheres and the more they tried to do so, the more would they be required to interpret their autonomy in the larger context of their obligation and responsibilities to the nation.⁵⁵

After the fourth general election, the political map of the country suddenly looked different as the leading political organisation Indian National Congress lost its unchallenged supremacy and the central government could not be as authoritative as much as it was in the fifties. Describing the whole scenario, J. N. Kaul wrote that the INC lost power in ten states, including West Bengal, U.P., Punjab and Orissa.

It was possible to travel from Amritsar to Calcutta without passing through any state ruled by the Congress. Power shifted temporarily, as it turned out later, from the central to the state governments and simultaneously from the campus to outside agencies whose primary affiliation was to anti-university, anti-establishment forces. The problem of university governance got more and more exacerbated as student and non-student violence turned the campuses into arenas where the combatants (students, teachers and karamcharis) settled their scores with no holds barred.⁵⁶

The government took initiative to draft the first ever national policy on education in 1968 in line with Kothari Commission for dynamic change. The Government of India resolved to work on the development of the education with some principles. One of them guaranteed to protect the academic freedom of teachers to pursue and publish independent studies and researches and write and talk about the significant national and international matters. The NPE also promises to

⁵⁴ *Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. LXI, Sixteenth Session, November 23, 1966 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1966), 5124-5125.

⁵⁵ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. X, Third Session, December 6, 1967 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), 5169-5170.

⁵⁶ Kaul, *Governance of Universities*, 96.

provide a conducive environment to teachers.⁵⁷ The government further miscalculated the distressing situation and did not take pragmatic steps to deal the crisis situation. Even some members like Tara Sapre (Bombay North East) tried to attract attention towards the real issue and urged for immediate action during the discussion on the demands for grants Ministry of Education and Culture in 1968. She highlighted that the universities were infected with groupism and their conservative attitude aggravated the tension. Educated unemployment was an emerging challenge to our country and the government must realise the undercurrent frustration and despair among students. She cited the inquiry reports and suggested,

Almost every inquiry into the problems of student unrest has laid stress mainly on the more obvious factors such as indifferent quality of teachers, overcrowded class rooms, unsatisfactory conditions in hostels, lack of suitable text-books and facilities and poor prospects of employment and so many other things.⁵⁸

The most debatable issue of that time was the problem of ‘student unrest’ and how to resolve it. The Kothari Commission recommended the active participation of students in the affairs of the universities as a solution of the problem. It also suggested to accelerate the student’s welfare activities and establish Student Union.⁵⁹ This proposal required a detail deliberation at different platforms. In due course, a motion was introduced in Lok Sabha in 1968 by R. K. Amin (Dhandhuka) to discuss ‘student unrest’ and violence at BHU in Uttar Pradesh and in the other states such as Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and so on. He posed various questions based on prevailing circumstances and the indecisive attitude of the Union Education Minister while urging to diagnose the whole problem so that a remedy could be found. He further linked this issue with university autonomy and gave reference to the levied charges on the political parties for interfering in the functioning of the universities. He viewed that the politicians must respect the autonomy of the higher education institutions.⁶⁰ He also emphasized on the two important causes responsible for the student indiscipline in the country. First was the poor quality of teachers and, second was the overcrowding in universities. Unless, resolving these two

⁵⁷ *National Policy on Education 1968* (Delhi: Government of India, Department of Education, Ministry of Education, 1968), 2.

⁵⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. XV, Fourth Session, April 2, 1968 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1968), 1759-1760.

⁵⁹ *Report of the Education Commission 1964 – 1966*, 295.

⁶⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. XXIII, Sixth Session, December 14, 1968 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1968), 54-56.

key issues, the problem of ‘student unrest’ cannot be solved.⁶¹ Participating in the discussion, Bedabrata Barua (Kaliabor) suggested to reform the society and seek the answers of all the problems in the existing framework.⁶² The debate on this crucial issue was enough to awake the government and take stern and urgent step to protect the higher education system. Dr. Tirguna Sen replied the motion and exhibited government’s attitude of blaming and shaming. He indirectly charged the teachers and stated,

I agree there are several instances or causes of dissent in the institution among the students. But, I feel, the duty of the teacher is to make that dissent a disciplined dissent. This is the crux of the whole thing. How should a teacher work in the university? I can only say that the distinctive role of the university is to teach in such a way that the pupils learn the discipline of dissent, the dissent that is the by-product of critical and creative thinking. I agree that if such a discipline of dissent is to be practised, a climate of academic freedom is essential. On the other hand, this concept of academic freedom is possible only if universities use this freedom to pursue truth and do not turn aside to seek power.⁶³

The most significant intervention for generating a discourse to reform the governance system was made by Madhu Limay (1922–1995), a Socialist leader, whose private legislation titled ‘Central Universities (Students’ Participation) Bill’ was first discussed in Lok Sabha on 21 March 1969. A mixed response followed its presentation, with Bal Raj Madhok (South-Delhi) supporting the legislation with some reservations. He believed that the students’ participations in the affairs of the universities and colleges was the need of the hour. It was essential to establish a well-defined Student Union with efficient functioning in all colleges and universities. The viewpoint of the students should be seriously considered by the college and university authorities. He also advocated cooperation between students and teachers, in his view both were two wheels of the same chariot. However, the purely academic matters such as to what kind of examination papers should be set and as to when the examination is to be held, should be sacrosanct and students should not have any interference.⁶⁴ A slightly different idea was proposed by Dr. M. Santosham (Tiruchendur). He appreciated the intention of the proposed legislation but he was against the participation of students in the administrative function of the

⁶¹ Ibid., 57-58.

⁶² Ibid., 60-61.

⁶³ Ibid., 104.

⁶⁴ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. XXVI, Seventh Session, March 21, 1969 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1969), 300-301.

University. He strongly favoured the full participation of students in the extracurricular activities. He also opposed the formation of Student Unions as a remedy to tackle the problem of students' indiscipline.⁶⁵ Participating in the discussion, Chintamani Panigrahi (Bhubaneswar) highlighted the lack of contact between teachers and students as an important cause of 'student unrest.' Blaming the college and university authority, he emphasized that a sense of understanding, a sense of appreciation of the difficulties of students like a father was most absent in the educational institutions. He further urged,

There should be more and more participation of the students in the universities and the policy-making bodies of the educational institutions. The students must have a promise with regard to their employment after they leave colleges and universities... In the developing countries today, youth and national development are connected. We cannot have a national development programme without having a programme for the welfare of the youth.⁶⁶

During the detailed debate on the Bill, there emerged a consensus among the members that they needed to expand the horizon of the governance system and provide space to both students and teachers in the decision-making bodies of the colleges and universities. A rattled government did not consider the suggestions seriously and Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao, then Minister of Education and Youth Services, turned down the proposal. While responding on the discussion, he supported the Bill with certain amendments and reservations and opposed the view to keep the students away from politics. However, he emphasized the need of a national debate on students' participation in universities. Finally, the Bill failed to pass and was elicited for further opinion of students and universities.⁶⁷ Hence, the government lost a crucial chance of reforming the higher education and make the governance system of the university more inclusive and cater to the needs of students and society. The academicians were also wary of the deteriorating situation. They were convinced to maintain a harmonious relation between state and universities and incorporate the voices of dissent in the university to make university education more effective, inclusive and progressive. V. V. John, Vice Chancellor of Jodhpur University, expressed such opinion to respect the intelligent criticism and viewed,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 320.

⁶⁶ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. XXVII, Seventh Session, April 3, 1969, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1969), 341-342.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 401.

A university is a centre of independent thought. While most people would accept this idea in general terms, they often find its implications uncomfortable. For, one of the implications is the right of dissent. Society may not be civilized enough to tolerate the nonconformist at any given moment, but the university would fail in its mission if it were not hospitable to dissent. A university that is afraid of opinions, cannot be a university for long.⁶⁸

Frank D. van Aalst also proposed to reorient the higher education and make it more student-centric. He also suggested to revise the old university curricula, change in the teaching method, add more extracurricular activities, establish more unitary universities etc.⁶⁹ Ignoring several other available alternatives, Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao suggested in the thirty-fifth meeting of Central Advisory Board of Education, in 1970 to Implement the recommendations of Shri Prakash Committee which proposed to introduce moral and spiritual values in our educational institutions to fight with the problem of students indiscipline.⁷⁰ Thus, the Vice Chancellor Conference on 21–24 April, 1969 deliberated on various items of higher education and finally resolved to appoint a committee to consider exclusively the governance system of universities, students participation and other related matters.

Encroaching upon the university autonomy: conflicts and solutions

The decades of 1970s and 1980s were very critical for university education and several instances of encroaching university autonomy took place. The subsequent political events also influenced the course of change in the education system. The Committee on Governance of Universities and Colleges, appointed in June 1969, boosted the debate for reforming the Governance system. It was chaired by Dr. P. B. Gajendragadkar (1901–1981), then vice Chancellor of Bombay University. The committee submitted its report in 1971 and was popularly known as Gajendragadkar Committee Report. It significantly highlighted the two-fold function of university education during the time of rapid national development and social change. The report suggested,

⁶⁸ V. V. John, 'The State and the University', in *Indian Education Today Prospects and Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Mohan Sinha Mehta*, eds. Daya Krishna, V. V. John and P. S. Sundaram (Jaipur: Rajasthan University Press, 1970), 37-38.

⁶⁹ Frank D. van Aalst, 'Students Oriented Higher Education', in *Indian Education Today Prospects and Perspectives*, 30-32.

⁷⁰ Arabinda Biswas and Suren Agrawal, *Indian Educational Documents since Independence: Committees, Commissions, Conferences* (New Delhi: Academic Publishers, 1971), 106.

The task of creating a new social order which has assumed paramount importance today cannot be overlooked by the university community. Thus, the goal of university education has a dual character; firstly, the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of excellence in different disciplines, and secondly, the development of a sense of ethos which makes the university community conscious of its obligations to the community at large of which it is an important segment.⁷¹

It also advocated that the 'ivory tower' approach of university was not applicable in that context and recommended a wider role for universities in transforming society. For the purpose, it suggested a radical change in the syllabi and structure of courses and it further involves a continuous review of the educational system and a more careful planning of the content of education.⁷²

The GCR significantly contributed to understand the concept of university autonomy and marked a notable departure from the earlier notions and definitions of the concept proposed by different Commissions and Committees. It explicitly highlighted that autonomy was not a legal or a constitutional concept but an ethical and academic concept in a democratic society like India where the legislations were sovereign and could determine the structure of universities, their rights and obligations. It stated,

University autonomy does not suggest that the universities are a state within a state, and a law unto themselves. The concept of university autonomy, however, means that it would be appropriate on the part of democratic legislatures not to interfere with the administration of university life, both academic and non-academic. The claim for autonomy is made by the universities not as a matter of privilege, but on the ground that such an autonomy is a condition precedent if the universities are to discharge their duties and obligations effectively and efficiently as regards imparting and advancement of knowledge, and also making their unique contribution to the life and development of the nation.⁷³

It also accepted academic freedom as an important aspect of autonomy. By giving emphasis on the academic freedom, it stated,

On the university campus teachers and students are jointly engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and the search of truth. This pursuit must not be affected by a fear of public disapproval or criticism. Academics must enjoy full freedom to express their

⁷¹ *Report of the Committee on Governance of Universities and Colleges Part I: Governance of Universities* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1971), 6.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

views on all matters with which they are concerned, independently of any consideration as to whether their views would receive public approval or not.⁷⁴

The autonomy within university and autonomy in relation to authorities and agencies external to it were considered as two important aspects of autonomy and the UGC was assigned greater responsibilities to protect, guard and maintain the autonomy of university and it was also advised to act as a guide, philosopher and friend of the university system.⁷⁵

The GCR also suggested numerous functional and structural changes to enable universities and colleges to discharge their duty efficiently. By proposing an outline of University Act, it clearly rejected any space for violence or any act of instigating violence in the campus by the teachers, students and non-teaching staff.⁷⁶ It clarified the much-debated powers and functions of Visitor. It suggested the President of India and the state Governors as Visitors for Central and State Universities respectively. It recommended supervisory powers for the visitors but not the powers exercised by the heads of a university. It also eliminated the possibility of direct intervention of the governments' officials in the affairs of the universities by making essential that the authority of the state would be exercised through the President or the Governor in his capacity as the visitor.⁷⁷ The Committee also gave its opinion on the highly contested issue of students' participation in the affairs of the university. It justified the demands and recommended to give them representation in the Court.⁷⁸ It also advocated to constitute a Students Council for the purpose.⁷⁹ Since, in suggest as much, the GCR believed developing a sense of belonging among students, therefore, it viewed that the students' participation in university affairs was an evolving academic concept and based on the assumption that the process of learning in the university was a joint adventure or quest of the teachers and taught. It was not a unilateral process in which the teachers taught or instructed, and the students learnt or received knowledge. Thus, the participation of students in the academic life of the university involved a continuous dialogue between the teachers and the taught.⁸⁰ The Committee was critical towards the incidents of 'student unrest' but accepted them as a part of world-wide

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 71.

phenomenon. However, it did not reject neither the social and political factors outside academia nor the situation prevailing within universities as important causes. According the Committee, the students' movement acquired political overtones if there was a feeling of destroying the existing social order. 'Fortunately, this trend is present in our country in only a very few places. This dissatisfaction with the entire establishment is negative and nihilistic in character. It seeks to destroy without determining what new social order has to be constructed and how.'⁸¹ Hence, the Gajendragadkar Committee provide a new outlook to the whole debate on the governance system of universities.

The Report of Governance of Universities and colleges was not discussed at great length in the Lok Sabha, but the members continued to refer to it for introducing remarkable changes in the higher education system. During the discussion on the Annual Report of UGC (1969–1970), J. M. Gowder (Nilgiris) attracted the attention of the house towards the problem of 'student unrest' and highlighted that nothing tangible had been done so far to improve the situation. He suggested to take the students and teachers in confidence while formulating education policy and implementing a new scheme. He advised to ensure the participation of students in administrating the university and gave the reference of GCR which had recommended to give representation to students in the Senates and Courts to the extent of 15 per cent of the total strength of such bodies. He urged the government not to forget the report of this committee unlike other commissions and committees.⁸² Charged with a resounding victory in 1971 election, the Union Government initiated to amend the Acts of different universities. While introducing the Aligarh Muslim University Amendment Bill in 1972, S. Nurul Hasan (1921–1993), then Minister of Education and Social welfare and Culture, introduced changes so that the University could declare a department of studies to be an autonomous department. The power of the University to affiliate colleges under Section 12(A) was curtailed by deletion of the same section. This was done in accordance with the recommendation of the GCR which suggested the unitary teaching character for the Central Universities except for Delhi University. In the case of Banaras Hindu University, the same principle was adopted in 1966. For historical reasons four colleges were affiliated to

⁸¹ Ibid., 72.

⁸² *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. VIII, Third Session, November 19, 1971 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1971), 264-265.

that University.⁸³ Students' participation was also given assent and a provision for that was laid in the AMU Amendment Act to introduce a new statutory body in the University that would become the Students' Council. A provision was laid to be consulted by Executive Council and Academic Council while making any rule, regulations and ordinance which affected the corporate life of the University or which deeply affected the students of the University.⁸⁴

A heated debate took place on the various aspects of the AMU amending legislation. Most importantly, the members favoured to give participation to the students in the university administrative bodies but they had a problem regarding excessive representation of students. Giving voice to this impression, Y. S. Mahajan (Buldana) opposed to give students a representation of around 15 per cent.⁸⁵ Another member, G. T. Dhandapani (Dhara Puram) supported the participation of students in the activities of university but he opposed the representation of students in the Academic Council on the ground that the main function of the Academic Council was the determination of standard, teaching instruction, syllabus and courses. Therefore, the teachers possessed the necessary qualification to be there.⁸⁶ However, he and other members overlooked the fact that the students were not merely the recipients of the knowledge and, moreover, they were in the role of a partner of larger university community. They had equal share in the process of knowledge production and its dissemination. Therefore, the students should have active participation in the academic matters. S. Nurul Hasan took a pragmatic stand on the raised issue. While replying on the AMU Amendment Bill, he expressed commitment for granting and maintaining university autonomy and academic freedom. As he viewed,

academic institutions should be given autonomy in academic matters and that there is no dichotomy between the two, between the right and authority and in fact the duty of Parliament to the people of India and at the same time, the desire of Parliament to ensure the academic autonomy of the educational institutions and research institutions, because without an atmosphere of freedom and liberty, our knowledge will not prosper and research and creativity will not go forward.⁸⁷

⁸³ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, May 31, 1972 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 250.

⁸⁴ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, June 1, 1972, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

Thus, the amending legislation introduced significant changes in the administration of the AMU.

The road to amend university legislation was not smooth and clear in all matters. The Union Government also proposed number of reforms in the Delhi University Act 1922. S. Nurul Hasan introduced the amendments in Lok Sabha in 1972 and highlighted that the first change was proposed to declare some colleges like those conducting professional courses as autonomous. The consent of the colleges would be taken and the Academic Council would specify the manner to determine the whole process. The Minister clarified that neither the Ministry nor this House would interfere in whatever manner it was going to be determined nor how the consent was going to be obtained. He left the whole matter for the teachers' bodies and the Academic Council. Thus, the principle of autonomy was respected. In the same address, the Minister said,

The autonomous colleges concept was recommended by Kothari Commission, by Gajendragadkar Committee: it has been recommended by the University Grants Commission. There are innumerable teachers throughout the length and breadth of the country including Delhi who feel that a certain degree of experimentation should be permitted to each of the colleges, because, after all, academic autonomy is basically an autonomy of the teacher, and the researcher and the student to learn the research and to conduct research.⁸⁸

The second major change was introduced in the process of making statutes. Originally, the Executive Council had the power to making statutes with the approval of the Court and the Visitor. Now, by the proposed amendment, the Executive Council could make statutes or make or amend statutes with the concurrence of Academic Council. He clarified that the same principle was adopted while passing the Jawaharlal Nehru University Act and amending the Banaras Hindu University, Viswa Bharati and Aligarh Muslim University Acts.⁸⁹

During the discussion on Delhi University Amendment Bill in Lok Sabha, several teachers, students and non-teaching staff were on the streets to oppose the provisions of decentralisation in the Act. Numerous members raised this issue and questioned the hurry of Minister. They suggested to take in confidence the students, teachers and non-academic staff, while introducing the amendments which would have made wide changes in the structure of the

⁸⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XIX, Fifth Session, August 30, 1972 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 314.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 315-316.

university. Expressing such an idea, G. Viswanathan (Wandi Wash) spoke on the matter in detail and advised the Minister to meet the teachers and settle the issue. He said,

There are genuine apprehensions among the teachers of Delhi University. They think that the constitution of college administrative councils will lead to delinking the colleges from the University and teachers will be divided according to a two-tier system; one will be elevated to the university level and the other will be assigned to the autonomous colleges. They think this will be discrimination. I am glad to hear from the Minister that these things will not happen after the Bill is passed. But I want to know from him why so far government have not taken any steps to meet the teaching staff and the non-teaching staff and come to a settlement. Government think they have taken a stand on which they want to stand as a matter of false prestige. I would tell Prof. Hasan that it is not too late. He can still make an approach, meet the teachers and come to a settlement.⁹⁰

In between, the government did not make an attempt to resolve the issue by dialogue. The next day, while speaking in the discussion on the 'Disapproval of Delhi University Ordinance and Delhi University Amendment Bill,' Samar Guha (Contai), raised questions on the intention of the government if it really was pushing for democratisation and decentralisation behind the amendment. He argued in the context of the recommendations of GCR, which suggested adequate representation of students and teachers in the administrative bodies of the University. Guha asked that there were the three tiers of administrative bodies the Court, Academic Council and Executive Council. In none of these bodies, why students and *Karamcharis* were not included? He further highlighted that the college teachers were not given sufficient representation in the Academic Council. When Ministry was proposing Academic Council as a body to check the proposal passed by the Executive Council. In the absence of an effective representation of teachers, how could the meaningful involvement of teachers in the affairs of the university be ensured?⁹¹

Participating in the same discussion, Birender Singh Rao (Mahendragarh) opposed the proposed amendments in the Bill. First, he blamed the conduct of teachers as irresponsible and deplorable. He then urged the government to draft a model Act for all universities. In addition, he was against giving excessive powers to the Executive Council. In his view, it was against the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 336.

⁹¹ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XIX, Fifth Session, September 1, 1972 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 199-200.

spirit of the parent Act which made the Court supreme governing body. He explained this amendment with the analogy,

Imagine this Parliament being the supreme body, the supreme legislative body with all the powers in the country for legislation, what would happen if the Cabinet which is an executive body is given all the powers of the Parliament and Parliament is reduced to a non-entity. This is what is being done exactly.⁹²

S. Nurul Hasan raised to reply on the motion and he successfully tried to explain all the points and suggested the members to pass the Bill in favour of DU. After a heated discussion, the Bill was finally passed.⁹³ Thus, the administrative function of different universities was reorganised in accordance with the revised legislations. But they failed to provide remedy for the most burning issue of ‘student unrest’ and posed several tough questions such as: were these amendments in the university Acts enough to sow, nurture and strengthen the democratic culture in the university campuses? Did the government or university authorities require extra efforts to hasten the process of decentralisation of power? Could the administrative changes in the university, satisfy the other demands such as employment, quality education, good library and laboratory facilities and many more? Without seeking the answers of these questions, the spectacular growth of higher education was not possible and in the absence of peaceful environment, the concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom were meaningless.

The sequel of events clearly suggested that the governments did not find any satisfactory solutions for numerous old and newly emerging problems. Immediately after the amendments in the Act of DU, the university students started protests against the university administration and submitted a memorandum to the Vice Chancellor on 4 December 1972 containing five specific demands –

1. Democratisation in the structure of the University, 2. Taking over of sick colleges by the University, especially Delhi College of Engineering and Delhi College of Arts, 3. Admission of all those who had passed the Pre-Medical examination in the First Division to Medical Courses, 4. Opening of a Library for students of out-campus Colleges and 5. Withdrawal of Police cases against students involved in the students movement.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid., 206-207.

⁹³ Ibid., 236.

⁹⁴ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXI, Sixth Session, December 6, 1972 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 197-198.

Apart from this, the memorandum ended with a 48 hours ultimatum to meet the above mentioned demands which showed the aggression of students. Instead of taking it seriously, S. Nurul Hasan smelled politics in it though he demonstrated satisfactory progress on the above submitted demands. Referring to university authority, he informed in Lok Sabha,

The students who were responsible for unprecedented violence in the campus have sought to create confusion by trying to suddenly raise some demands in order to divert attention from the acts of violence on 14th and 15th November, 1972. Their basic demand now is the withdrawal of rustication orders passed by the Vice Chancellor on the basis of findings of an Enquiry Committee on November 21, 1972 against four students who were involved in the incidents on November 14 and 15.⁹⁵

The members of Lok Sabha gave critical comments on the statement of Hasan. Participating in the discussion, Birender Singh Rao expressed his anger towards the university authority, government and politicians and accused them to adopt double standards in dealing the situation. In his words,

All the blame has been laid by the hon. Minister on the students. I beg to differ from him. To my mind, Government and university authorities are very much responsible for this deteriorating situation. The students had very legitimate demands which they had been raising for a long time. The hon. Minister has himself stated that all those demands are being looked into. The question is, why did the University and the Government fail to meet the demands of the students earlier if they were justified. If teaching was sub-standard in certain institutions, why did the students have to say that so-and-so teacher was incompetent? Last year two teachers were removed because of the agitation of students. In two colleges students wanted good teaching but the University failed to provide any relief...⁹⁶

The echo of DU incidents and other student movements continued in Lok Sabha, with a long discussion taking place on exploring the causes and finding the remedy of prevailing 'student unrest' in the country. Like the GCR, numerous members widely linked it with the trends in world arena. But, the demand of the hour was to analyse the whole problem in the larger socio, economic and political situation of the country. C. J. C. Chandrappan (Tellicherry) sought the reasons of present crisis in the educational system and the turmoil amongst the student community in the socio-economic and political milieu. He proposed,

⁹⁵ Ibid., 199-200.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 219-220.

At the very outset, I would like to say that the present situation is the result of the sad failure on the part of the government to bring about meaningful reforms in the field of education during the last 25 years after independence. And it is also a fact that the students who are in the educational institutions do not know what they should do after completing their education. The growing unemployment makes their future dark, and in their hopelessness and frustration, they become sometimes violent. It is understandable. And this situation, the failure in the field of education and the failure in the field of economy and particularly, in providing employment, the worsening unemployment situation-these are all the results of the greater failure of the Government in various fields...⁹⁷

Thus, a contradiction in the words and practice of government was observed at various occasion and it came on surface, when speaking in the same discussion, Jyotirmoy Bosu (Diamond Harbour), referred to the Home Ministry Consultative Committee Meeting on December 12, 1972 which circulated an analysis on the whole situation. He highlighted that

according to analysis of the incidents in the current academic session, it was found that nearly a third of the instances of students unrest were related to demands for better academic facilities like posting of adequate qualified staff, admission of students in particular courses, takeover of mismanaged institutions by government, better transport etc. Another third of the incidents were attributed to issues like claims of failed students, college union elections, protest against dismissed staff etc: rest are instances of students taking up larger issues ranging from the domestic economic problems.⁹⁸

While responding on the same discussion, S. Nurul Hasan defended the action of his Ministry and emphasized on two points, first, we should go ahead to change the education system and second, the violence, the intimidation and threat of violence must not be tolerated in the university campuses.⁹⁹

The Aligarh Muslim University also acquired attention, when the University authority took the repressive measures against the Student Union and suspended it. On 27 July 1973, Pilo Mody (Godhra) called attention to the matter of urgent public importance on the reported repressive measures by the Aligarh Muslim University authorities. He blamed the Union Government for repressive actions that were initiated by the university authorities at the behest

⁹⁷ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXII, Sixth Session, December 14, 1972 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 228.

⁹⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXII, Sixth Session, December 15, 1972, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972), 340.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 386.

of government against the students. S. Nurul Hasan denied all the charges and provided all the factual information. He also informed that action was taken by the Vice Chancellor and Discipline Committee by exercising power given by the Aligarh Muslim University Amendment Act 1972. He asserted,

The university has acted with due restraint in accordance with its procedures and has not adopted repressive measures. The university is an autonomous body. The question of its acting on the behest of Government has, however no reason to disagree with the steps taken by the University authorities in the given situation.¹⁰⁰

While replying to Hasan, Pilloo Mody expressed his deep anger and observed,

There are certain patent discrepancies in the statement of the Minister. First of all, he started by saying somewhere that the University is an autonomous body. I would like to remind the Minister that the University was an autonomous body and, thanks to him and the ugly Act that he bull-dozed through Parliament, it ceases to be an autonomous body. Now, it is merely a political plaything of the Education Ministry. Then, the Minister has twice in his statement talked about repressive measures not being there. I think, it was rather his conscience, guilty or otherwise, that was speaking than a statement of facts concerning the Aligarh University. If it were not so, why did he imagine that there were repressive measures going on? When he says, there are no repressive measures going on and he gives us a statement, this long, full of all goody-goody things that this Government is capable of doing, there is a total silence to mention that at least three students and one clerk have been detained in jail under the blackest Act that this Parliament has ever passed, that is, the Maintenance of Internal Security Act...¹⁰¹

The members were not ready to take even one step back on this issue. Pilloo Mody and others demanded a high-powered inquiry in the matter and asked the reasons of suspending Student Union. In reply, the Education Minister said that the University had suspended the Student Union due to financial irregularities and in this matter the inquiry was under going on.

Therefore, I am unable to accept the demand for either a high-powered inquiry or for directing the university to withdraw the action especially because the matters in which the government can intervene are only those which can come under something which would attract the various provisions of the university Act where the Visitor can order an inquiry; and the cases that have been referred to, do not attract those provisions... at my command that it is a totally unacceptable view that the university

¹⁰⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXIX, Eighth Session, July 27, 1973, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1973), 224-225.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

has ceased to be autonomous. The university is very much an autonomous organisation and is in no case being subjected to any pressure from this Ministry.¹⁰²

Thus, this epic incident of AMU and other such occurrences in other parts of the country sent a clear message that, on one hand, the government had failed to control the crisis situation in higher education and, on the other, the subsequent amendments in the university legislation could not make a dynamic change in the university administration and failed to assuage the anger of students, teachers and non-teaching staff. The simmering tension could perhaps have been controlled if the suggestions of Shriman Narayan, a Gandhian and educationist, were considered for deliberation. He advocated the adoption of a multilateral approach for resolving the problem of 'student unrest.' As he stated,

The responsibility for the situation could not be unilateral; it has to be multilateral. The students, parents, teachers, political parties and the Government must share the responsibility for this unhappy state of affairs, and they must find proper solutions in a collective spirit, without trying to lay the blame at one another's door. If there is proper linkage between educational expansion and additional employment opportunities, if the teachers discharge their responsibilities with a greater sense of responsibility and scholarship, if the students steer clear of narrow party politics, and if the Government provides adequate finances to the Universities without interfering with their academic freedom and autonomy, it does not require a prophet to declare that the present unrest among students would gradually wither away and yield place to a constructive atmosphere for nation-building on healthy lines.¹⁰³

The government miscalculated the whole situation and did not enact any of the suggestions of Commissions and Committees and academicians. Only a spark was enough to kindle fire, and so the crisis in higher education culminated into a full-fledged national student movement when, on 20 December 1973, the students of an engineering college in Ahmedabad started to protest against the 20 per cent fee hike in hostel food. Afterwards, the State wide protest was organised by the students in Gujrat against the Congress led-government in January 1974. It called itself '*Navnirman*' movement for regeneration and it ended with the resignation of then Chief Minister Chaman Bhai Patel.¹⁰⁴ It further gained strength in Bihar where the *Chatra Sangharsh Samiti* was formed and Patna University acquired central stage. After a violent clash on 18 march 1974, students met Jay Prakash Narayan (1902–1979), a Gandhian and a Socialist,

¹⁰² Ibid., 235-236.

¹⁰³ Shriman Narayan, *Education of the Future* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co PVT LTD, 1973), 44.

¹⁰⁴ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New Delhi: Picador, 2007), 477.

and asked him to lead the movement on 19 March. He accepted the request with two promise, first, to maintain the non-violent nature of the movement and second, not to keep the movement confine in Bihar alone. He suggested further 'to fight with corruption and misgovernment and black marketing, profiteering and hoarding, to fight for the overhaul of the educational system, and for a real people's democracy.'¹⁰⁵ He also gave the slogan of '*Sampurna Kranti*' – total revolution and soon it became a pan-India movement. Consequently, it became an important cause for toppling the INC government from the centre and India witnessed a twenty-one months long tyrannic rule of National Emergency. A slew of constitutional amendments was introduced during the period and some significant changes were made in the administrative set up of the various departments of national importance. Through the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976, education was transferred from State List to Concurrent List. Thus, education became the joint responsibility of State and Union Government and a new beginning was expected from this constitutional amendment.

The state governments also displayed a bureaucratic attitude and they essentially did not differ much from the line of Union Government. Several instances of subverting the university autonomy took place in various states. The Vice Chancellors were made scapegoat in many cases. A few examples can be cited. The new Statute of Lucknow University was made in accordance with the amendments in Uttar Pradesh University Act in 1975. The new legislation empowered the Chancellor to remove the Vice Chancellor from his office if the latter refused to carry out the provisions of the Act or abused the powers vested in him.¹⁰⁶ It covertly provided scope for the manipulation and harassment of the Vice Chancellor. In the neighbouring State of Bihar, the government promulgated two Ordinances in 1976 which empowered the State to transfer the Vice Chancellor and to direct him to resign from Office under certain circumstances. The most glaring implication of this Act was seen in 1985 when the Vice Chancellors of all the eight State universities had to resign without providing any reason.¹⁰⁷ In other states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal the State Governments tried to take over the administration of the universities and further weaken the internal administration of the universities by promulgating Ordinances and amending the university legislations. The Orissa

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 479.

¹⁰⁶ *Report of the U.G.C. Committee towards new Educational Management* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1990), 332.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Universities Laws Amendment Act of 1976 was an important example to understand the mentality of the State Government. The new legislation gave power to the State Government of Orissa to supersede the administration of any university within State and appoint an officer as the administrator of the university for one year and it could be further extended for up to 3 years if the university was found failing to carry on its normal function in accordance with the provisions of the Act.¹⁰⁸ Thus, these examples and many others clearly suggested that there was an urgent need of revolutionary change in the government's attitude along with an urgent need to expedite the process of democratisation and decentralisation in the university administration.

The deteriorating situation did not improve further with the installation of new regime at the centre. The issues and challenges were similar and the new approach as envisaged for education system by the slogan of 'Total Revolution' was completely missing. The politicians and intellectuals, who were influenced from the socialist ideas of Jay Prakash Narayan took an independent initiative to prepare a blueprint for reforming the education system of the country. A panel of experts was constituted under the aegis of a society namely, Citizens for Democracy. It marked an important intervention in the process of reorganising university and college education. It proposed a ten-year plan document (1978–1987) for nationwide discussion and deliberation. It recommended,

The universities and colleges should evolve integrated programmes of teaching, research, and extension, all of which should have an equal status. The undergraduate course needs to be restructured and its status raised. The system of grants-in-aid to affiliated colleges and the machinery for its administration at the State level needs considerable reform... The entire university system should function on a thoroughly decentralized basis and autonomy (which the state should respect, and academics exercise increasingly to provide an objective critique of society) should be passed on from the universities to the departments and affiliated colleges which should, in turn, share it with teachers and students. The system has become highly dysfunctional and hard political decisions and firm action are needed to retrieve the situation and develop higher education to meet the national needs and aspirations.¹⁰⁹

This contributed immensely to expanding the understanding of university autonomy and accentuated the further process to instil autonomy at the lower level of the university administration that is departments/centres and affiliated colleges. The panel also advocated extra

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ J. P. Naik, *Education for our People: A Policy Frame for the Development of Education over the Next Ten Years (1978 – 87)* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers PVT LTD, 1978), 5.

political efforts and suggested remedies for the greater changes which including, first, introducing the system of double pricing and both direct and indirect subsidies to rich should be reduced side by side, increase in those go to the poor; second, implementing the policy of selective admission with the necessary safeguard for the weaker; third, adopting the measures to eventually delink jobs from degrees; fourth, maintaining discipline, and fifth, protecting university autonomy with full political support and without political interference. It also recommended active participation of teachers and students in university affairs and implementing important suggestions such as decentralization of university autonomy, exercise academic freedom and function as an objective critic of society, making radical changes in the content, teaching method and evaluation etc.¹¹⁰

For the better and efficient management of the university administration it was essential to reduce the size of universities by granting autonomy to affiliated colleges. This idea was first formally proposed by the Kothari Commission and latter endorsed by the GCR. The government could not take this idea on the ground and declining condition of the affiliated colleges and the poor job prospect after getting education from there also lead dissatisfaction among students and subsequently, contributed towards ‘student unrest.’ J. P. Naik (1907–1981), an administrator and educationist, spoke and wrote vocally on this issue. In his article, “Education for our People: An Agenda for Immediate Action” 1979, he suggested relieving the universities from the responsibility of colleges and grant autonomy to them. In his words,

The grant of autonomy to all colleges will relieve the universities from other administrative responsibilities (including the holding of external examinations) and create the necessary atmosphere for the pursuit of knowledge and excellence through the joint and dedicated efforts of teachers and students. In this, the greatest responsibility lies on the management of universities and the teachers who, we trust, will rise to the occasion. To assist their efforts, gheraos, strikes and such other unacademic and violent means should be totally eschewed and made illegal by declaring education? an essential service. Such methods have no place in academic life where problems and disputes have to be resolved through discussion, mutual goodwill, and the democratic process of give and take for which joint councils of teachers and students should be constituted and assisted to function actively.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 50-51.

¹¹¹ Yeshwent R. Waghmare and A. Sai Babu, *Collected Articles of Padmabhushan Prof. J. P. Naik: Policy Studies*, Vol. II (Delhi: Authors press, 2008), 320.

His idea gave a new proposition to think about the autonomous colleges and self-governed colleges. The detailed outline for autonomous colleges, their constitution and functions, was missing in the Naik suggestions and it required an extraneous exercise to perform, before giving it a shape of a policy. Back on the ground, the government did not bring substantial changes and the normal university function remain disrupted by the student protests. Speaking on the notice to discuss the matter of urgent public interest in 1982, 'Reported Growing Unrest and Strikes in some Central Universities Particularly Delhi University,' Sheila Kaul (1915–2015), the Minister of State and Ministries of Education and Social Welfare, briefed about the cases of Banaras Hindu University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University where some incidences of 'student unrest' were reported.¹¹²

The continuous disruption in the academic and administrative function of the universities was a major headache of the days. The UGC was also concerned with this problem and it appointed a committee in January 1982 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Madhuri R. Shah to inquire into the functioning of then existing seven central Universities and to suggest ways to control the situation. The Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities submitted its Report in 1984, and emphasized the need of a peaceful environment for the smooth functioning of universities. It stated,

While the Central Universities have to some extent pursued their academic objectives within the resources available, they could have done better if they were allowed to function in a peaceful atmosphere free from agitations and strikes by the different sections of the university community —students, *karamcharis* and in some cases even teachers.¹¹³

It suggested developing vibrant facilities, structure and management with abundance number of programmes in universities. This would aid in evolving an academic culture and provide students with an opportunity to take courses according to his inclination, aptitude and need. 'It is only thus that the student could get the best out of the university and the nation could get sustenance from its human resource.'¹¹⁴ The Committee provided a detailed survey of the 'student unrest' in

¹¹² *Lok Sabha Debates Seventh Series*, Vol. XXXII, Tenth Session, October 13, 1982 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1982), 263-264.

¹¹³ *Report of the Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities 1984*, rep. ed. (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1993), 42.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

different universities and explored the role of Student Union. It expressed deep anguish on the misuse of the student welfare body and concluded,

Agitations in the universities are launched by the Student Unions. The Unions instead of taking up academic or genuine causes, or of contributing to the corporate life of the universities, take up populist causes and try to mobilise support. In an objective sense, their main aim gets reduced to disruption of the normal functioning of the universities. Most of those who get into the leadership of the Unions are not persons of academic merit, but those who have either a long stay on the campus or have an eye on a political career for themselves... The Student Union and its activities, therefore, are considered by them as a stepping stone for their own careers in the outside world.¹¹⁵

The CEWCU further suggested to curtail the power of Student Union as a remedy to stop the misuse of the student's welfare body. It also proposed some other measures for solving the problem of 'student unrest' in universities such as to frame some rules to subdue violence in the name of agitations. The violation of such rules must entitle of disciplinary action. No student of the university shall, (A) disrupt academic, administrative and teaching work; (B) damage and deface any property of the university; (C) engage in any conduct which is or is reasonably likely to be clearly detrimental to the universities purposes.¹¹⁶ It also recommended to ban certain mode of agitation such as '*gherao*, camping inside the boundaries of houses of teachers or officers, use of derogatory slogans, abuses and propaganda to incite hatred and violence, preparation for and resort to violence or destruction of property.'¹¹⁷ The Committee also expressed dissatisfaction about not providing adequate facilities to develop corporate life in the universities and blamed the Student Union, teachers and the university administration in this regard. As it stated,

the class room is not the exclusive focus of learning and there is a very important role for corporate life in the universities. Facilities for corporate life therefore serve a singular educational purpose and cannot be taken merely as amenities for students. It is essential that initiative in this respect is taken by the university administration, teachers as well as student associations. In a university, teachers are expected to be the natural leaders and guides of the student community. It is unfortunate that teachers, by and large, have ceased to perform this crucial role as an integral part of their responsibilities, as a consequence of which the leadership of students has passed into the hands of a small minority of those who dominate the students unions.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 67-68.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 68.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

For evolving a corporate life, it recommended to grant adequate funds to universities to

(a) encourage sports and games; (b) support drama and film-clubs, cultural activities, and hobby centres; (c) encourage institution of evening diploma courses in different technical, scientific and literary fields so that regular students in the faculties may add to their knowledge and skills; (d) participation in adult and extension programmes. Teachers should not only encourage but guide students in these activities. It may be ensured that all students participate in one or the other activity.¹¹⁹

The need for reforming the university administration also drew attention and the CEWCU suggested to take urgent steps for some revolutionary changes. After the amendments in various Acts of universities in 1972, the process of declining the role of Court began. The Committee recognised this fact and suggested to delete its provision from the Acts of Central universities having no practical utility. It highlighted the growing role of parliament as a link between university and society, wherein the annual reports and audited accounts of the universities were previously laid and discussed. It emphasized to strengthen this tie rather than revive old one.¹²⁰ It further suggested to make the Executive Council as the main decision-making body and put the Academic Council on a higher pedestal in coordinating and exercising general supervision in all the academic matters of the university. It recommended to ensure the representation of all the faculties and affiliated colleges through deans of faculties, heads of departments, professors, readers and lecturer and principals and college teachers. This representation should have been only through rotation and in no case through election.¹²¹ The suggestion of bypassing the election process was against democratic and constitutional values and it differed from the path as earlier shown by Kothari Commission and Gajendragadkar Committee for reforming higher education. It advocated higher decentralisation for making the university governance system more accountable, flexible and smooth. It recommended to establish different committees and boards at various levels for efficient administration, for example, as in the constitution of separate board of studies, departmental committees, and finance committees. However, it did not propose a proper mechanism for monitoring the decentralisation process. The Committee further observed the lack of planning and evaluation mechanism to implement the scheme and assess the progress, therefore, it suggested to constitute a planning board which would be the principal

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 86.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 96-97.

¹²¹ Ibid., 99-100.

body of university and responsible for the supervision of the development of university in the line of objectives as laid in the University Act.¹²² Thus, the Report of the Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities provided a comprehensive proposal for exclusively reforming the governance system of central universities. It systematically blamed the students, teachers and university administrative authority for the deteriorating condition and did not mark the role of UGC and government in fostering the prevailing condition. The state universities remained outside of its purview whereas they need of equal treatment to develop an effective administrative system to become the centre of excellence and contribute in the growth of State and country.

The government and UGC did not take any interest in framing broad policy outline based on the Report of the CEWCU and numerous instances of breaching the university autonomy continuously took place in state universities as well as in central universities. While speaking on the Pondicherry University Bill in 1985, S. M. Bhattam (Visakhapatnam), cited various examples such as the Governor of Bihar demanding the resignation of the Vice Chancellors of Bihar Universities for certain reasons. If they had resigning, it would have amounted to their vacation from the office under certain statute of the universities.¹²³ Another incident was related to irregularity in appointments in DU where the Vice Chancellor had made procedural violations and did not conform to the regulations of the University. A similar case was also reported in the Kashi Vidyapeeth where 37 new teaching departments were created in 1983 and 153 teachers were appointed. All such appointments were against the provisions of the university statute.¹²⁴ He finally urged,

...such things are happening in the universities. What is the remedy? On the one hand we find universities which are resorting to all sorts of things which are unhealthy and on the other, the government takes an extreme position and tries to curb the autonomy of the universities. There must be something, in between, which the government must be able to do.¹²⁵

¹²² Ibid., 103-104.

¹²³ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series*, Vol. IX, Third Session, August 28, 1985 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1985), 119.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 120.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

The mass resignation of Vice Chancellors in Bihar became the central point and the Association of Indian Universities,¹²⁶ an autonomous organisation had to intervene, thereby submitted a Memorandum to then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 to bring into his notice the cases of attacks on university autonomy. Before putting its demands, the Association gave the reference of mass resignation of Vice Chancellors in Bihar and the suspension of Vice Chancellor in Rohtak. It further highlighted the amendments in the university legislations of Bihar and Karnataka which made the tenure of Vice Chancellor subject to the whims and caprices of the Chancellor. This symbolised a complete deterioration of university autonomy, and in its memorandum, the AIU inter-alia demanded,

- (a) functional autonomy for the Chancellors and Vice Chancellors, (b) a uniform procedure for selection of Vice Chancellors, (c) the provision for a fixed tenure of office of the Vice Chancellor, unhindered by the whims and caprices of the Chancellor and (d) the deletion of powers to suspend a Vice- Chancellor whose term of office is in any case statutorily specified. In addition, there is need for such legislation to provide equitable and efficient norms for resource allocation, including the routine grants-in-aid to the universities, since the present diversity of discretionary funding procedures is also a potent and continuing source of frustration of university autonomy.¹²⁷

The change in the attitude of government was appeared, when the nomenclature of the Central Ministry of Education was changed to Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1985 and several departments of youth welfare such as Education, Culture, Sports, Youth Affairs, Women's Welfare, Integrated Child Development and Censorship of Films, were merged into one. The government exhibited the desire to utilise the rapidly developing technology in training and enhancing the skills of youth so that their full potential could be materialised for the economic development of the country. The government also unveiled another National Policy on Education in 1986 and proposed a plan of action. The NPE 1986 laid stress on the consolidation and expansion of facilities in higher education institutions. It first proposed to replace the affiliation system with autonomous colleges and recommended to establish autonomous post-graduation departments in universities. It gave a passing reference to

¹²⁶ The Association of Indian Universities is a successor organisation of the Inter-University board which was founded on 23 March 1925. In the Post-independent India, it was registered as a society under Societies Registration Act in 1967.

¹²⁷ *Report of the U.G.C. Committee towards new Educational Management* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1990), 300.

university autonomy and academic freedom and suggested that these be accompanied by accountability.¹²⁸ Nothing tangible, though, came out of NPE. Speaking in the discussion on ‘Demands for Grants Ministry of Human Resource Development’ in 1988, Dr. Sudhir Roy (Burdwan), highlighted duality in the words and practise of the government and blamed it and the UGC for not adopting democratic ideas while formulating policies. He stated,

We find that UGC has sent a circular that for getting its grants, the University Courts, Syndicates should consist mainly of ex-officio or nominated members. Teachers must not send elective representatives. Students should have no representation. Not only this, the Vice Chancellor should be selected by the Chancellor’s nominee, UGC’s nominee etc. and the Chancellor should have the overriding power of vetoing any resolution passed by the University authorities. Because the Vidyasagar University at Midnapore has not agreed to all these conditions, grants are not being released to that University, though the State Government has spent more than Rs. 3 crores for that University.¹²⁹

The proposal of government to establish autonomous colleges was also a subject of criticism and solicited long deliberation and discussion. Speaking on the problem of granting autonomy to colleges, Dr. Sudhir Roy opposed the government’s move of establishing autonomous colleges. Citing his experience, he expressed concerns on such a proposal,

I am a college teacher myself. We college and university teachers are dead against autonomy, because we find that good colleges like Calcutta Presidency College or St. Stephen College Bombay and Delhi are granted autonomous status. Then what will follow? The degrees of the universities will be devalued and the students reading in other colleges will not find employment opportunities. Not only this, taking advantage of these autonomous colleges, some academic record holders will start new colleges; they will charge high tuition fees and the academic standards would be diluted.¹³⁰

In 1986, a committee to review the NPE was appointed under the chairmanship of a social activist and educationist, Acharya Ramamurti (1913–2010), which made critical remarks on the policy of government and suggested, ‘Grant of autonomy to colleges is a process of decentralisation. However, this process will not materialise into tangible results unless there is

¹²⁸ *National Policy on Education 1986* (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 1986), 11-12.

¹²⁹ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series*, Vol. XXXVII, Tenth Session, March 30, 1988 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1988), 253.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 253-254.

unreserved participation on the part of the entire academic community.’¹³¹ Raising question on the whole scheme, then Chairman of UGC observed during his interactions with the Committee that ‘autonomy is a matter of unobjectionable necessity but that, however, it should not be construed in terms of physical targets’.¹³² According to him, ‘a programme for establishing 500 autonomous colleges is somebody's assessment; that autonomy cannot be brought out by such assessment but also by being an accepted way of academic management.’¹³³ Based on suggestions and deliberation on the issue, the government unveiled the modified draft of NPE in 1992 which stressed the need to consolidate the higher education system. It suggested to promote autonomous colleges and establish autonomous departments. It recommended,

In view of mixed experiences with the system of affiliation, autonomous colleges will be helped to develop in large numbers until the affiliating system is replaced by a freer and more creative association of universities with colleges. Similarly, the creation of autonomous departments within universities on a selective basis will be encouraged. Autonomy and freedom will be accompanied by accountability.¹³⁴

Thus, the Government put forward significant policy proposals and the recommendations of different Commissions and Committees for introducing changes in the governance of universities and colleges, but it displayed a lack of will to implement such proposals and recommendations. The challenge became giant in the last decade of twentieth century when the wave of globalisation touched every aspect of human life and higher education was looked first for making ‘knowledge society’ and latter for ‘knowledge economy’.

Conclusion

This exploration of the governance system of universities and colleges shows that in post-Independence India the issues of university autonomy and academic freedom were widely debated at various platforms. They reflected the diverse viewpoints of the state, the intellectuals and the politicians on matters which contributed to expand the horizon of the idea of university autonomy and academic freedom. In this chapter we have seen that in the two decades

¹³¹ *Report of the Committee for Review of National Policy on Education 1986* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1990), 196.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 197.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992) with National Policy on Education 1968* (New Delhi: Department of Education Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998), 18.

immediately after Independence the ideas of university autonomy and academic freedom were conjured up, but a sharp distinction between these two concepts could not be marked till the publication of the Report of Kothari Commission in 1966. When the Union Government revised the Acts of different centrally funded universities, it did not implement the recommendations of UEC 1949 despite continuous demand by Members in Parliament. Moreover, it rejected their suggestions by arguing that it did not believe in the idea of absolute autonomy. The subsequent foundation of UGC in 1956 and students' protest movements at pioneer centres of learning such as BHU, AMU and DU gave birth to a debate of exploring the relationship of universities with the government and state agencies. The reluctant attitude of the government towards implementing the recommendations of various commissions and committees and national policies on Education and other allied problems made the situation worse. The decade of 1970s and 1980s saw instances wherein the autonomy of the universities was encroached upon. The state governments also exhibited a similar attitude after education became a part of Concurrent List in 1976. The Vice Chancellors were made scapegoat. This is illustrated by the case of Bihar where eight Vice Chancellors were made to resign in 1985. The AIU submitted a Memorandum to then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 by demanding inter alia to protect the dignity of the office of Vice Chancellor. But the government remained reluctant to take exemplary action. Hence, during a long span of period from 1949-1990 a deep transition in the understanding of the concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom took place, but a lasting solution could not be provided to reorganise the governance system of the universities. Thus, it can be said that the debate on the issue is still going on.

CHAPTER 4: EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

India was dealing with numerous problems and issues at various fronts post-independence – social, economic, and political – and the matter of an education system was a critical one. Although the British can be credited with first introducing and tremendously expanding higher education, they failed to fulfil the increasing demands of the Indian population. The education system may have transitioned from imperialist rulers to the Indian hands but very little changed in reality – since the system itself was inherited from the British. Despite many amendments, the real issues remained side-lined and ad-hoc policies and programmes were adopted without incorporating the recommendations of academics, intellectuals as well as various commissions and committees.

In the present chapter, we examine in detail the debates in Parliament, the aforementioned recommendations of the Committees along with the statistical data to get a full view of the reality. We will also delve into the long withstanding debate on quality versus quantity that has existed in the context of higher education. In conclusion, we find that the Indian higher education system might have emerged as the largest networks quantitatively but, several divides prevailed – on regional lines, enrolments on gender lines and the subject selected, and so on.

Expansion of higher education: growth and debates

The first three universities in the country were established at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras in 1857 which initially started as examining bodies while the crucial function of teaching was performed by the affiliated colleges.¹ Towards the end of the 19th century, the number had increased to five universities with the establishment of universities in Punjab and Allahabad, in 1882 and 1887 respectively. To meet the increasing demands, several universities and colleges were also constituted by Indian leaders independently. However, the British framework of

¹R. Littlehales, *Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in India (1922 – 1927) Vol. (Calcutta: Government of India, Central Publication, 1929)*, 52.

affiliation was proving to be inefficient in controlling and supervising the universities. In large parts across the country, the growing number of students along with the inadequate provisions stood as a challenge for the British as they failed to incorporate most of the students within their system. The British appointed two successive commissions namely, the Indian Universities Commission in 1902 and the Calcutta University Commission in 1919. The Calcutta University Commission observed,

The growing demand of the people of Bengal for educational facilities is one of the most impressive features of British age. It is in itself altogether healthy and admirable. It is increasing in strength and volume every year. But, owing in part to social conditions, and in part to the educational methods which the traditions of the last half-century have established, this powerful movement is following unhealthy and unprofitable channels; and unless new courses can be cut for it, the flood may devastate instead of fertilising the country... Thus, the problem with which we have to deal is by no means purely academic or intellectual. It is a social, political, and economic problem of the most complex and difficult character; and the longer the solution is postponed., the more difficult it will be.²

The situation of Bengal can be realised in other parts of India because Lord Reading (1921 – 1926), Indian Viceroy, emphasized to generalise the observation of the report of CUC while addressing the University Conference in 1924. He commented, ‘...The highest praise for the labours of the members is to be found in the fact that, though only dealing with the Calcutta University, their conclusions were at once recognised as applicable or adaptable to the whole of India...’³

However, almost no improvements were made despite the observation of the Calcutta University Commission. The Report of Central Advisory Board of Education 1944 reported a large number of students who had failed in the university exams. Out of 20,502 students, who appeared for the B.A. and B.Sc. examinations in all the British universities in (1940 – 1941), only 11, 185 students could.⁴ While the number of universities and colleges had expanded to an extent, the British administration did not consider the pressing need for fund allocation. Due to that, both the older as well as newly established universities were largely handicapped in

²*Calcutta University Commission, 1917 – 1919, Report, Vol. I Part I, Analysis of Present Conditions (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919), 28.*

³*Report of the Universities' Conference held at Simla from May the 19th to the 24th, 1924, (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1924), 4.*

⁴*Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education (Sergeant Committee Report), (Simla: Manager Government of India Press, 1944), 30.*

adopting essential reforms. With the government failing to generate employment for the young graduates, the quality of higher education was compromised.

After the partition of India, there were 21 universities and 459 colleges of arts and science in 1947-48.⁵ Nevertheless, there were huge regional variations in terms of the distribution of higher educational institutions. If one divided the then existing states into three groups and group A included the states of Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Orrisa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, then these states collectively boasted of a share of around 76.19 per cent universities and 97.82 per cent arts and science colleges. The remaining states included in groups B and C held a scanty share of 19.05 per cent universities and 0 per cent arts and science colleges and 4.76 per cent universities and 2.18 per cent arts and science colleges respectively. (see Table, 4.1). The States under group A dominated over the larger share because they had been the active centres of wide political activities. Accordingly, a larger sum of money was invested, and consequently, they were better developed in comparison to other parts of India.

A wide gender gap also existed in total enrolments of the students between 1947-48. There were 89.23 per cent boys and 10.77 per cent girls. Most significantly, even group A states which had a large number of institutions consisted of a total of 89.4 per cent boys and 10.6 per cent girls. (see Table 4.2). On that account, the government of independent India was responsible for not only re-organising the university education system but also adopting a more focused approach to bridge the glaring gaps that existed on regional and gender lines.

⁵ John Sargent, *Decennial Review On the Progress of Education in India (1937 – 1947)* Vol. I (Delhi: Central Bureau of Education, 1948), 108-110.

Table 4.1: Region wise distribution of universities and colleges (1947-48 to 1951-52)

States	Universities		Arts and Science Colleges	
	1947-48	1951-52	1947-48	1951-52
A States				
Assam	1	1	16	17
Bihar	1	2	23	35
Bombay	1	6	35	49
Madhya Pradesh	2	2	15	† ⁶
Madras	3	3	82	77
Orrisa	1	1	14	14
Punjab	1	1	29	45
Uttar Pradesh	5	6	180	50
West Bengal	1	2	55	88
Group-wise Total‡	16	24	449	375
B States				
Hyderabad	1	1	†	†
Jammu and Kashmir	0	1	†	†
Madhya Bharat	0	0	†	18
Mysore	1	1	†	21
Pepsu	0	0	†	10
Rajasthan	1	1	†	35
Saurashtra	0	0	†	†
Travancore-Cochin	1	1	†	†
Group-wise Total‡	4	5	†	84
C States				
Ajmer	0	0	5	7
A&N Islands	0	0	0	0
Bhopal	0	0	†	†
Bilaspur	0	0	0	0
Coorg	0	0	0	1
Delhi	1	1	5	13
Himanchal Pradesh	0	0	0	2
Kutch	0	0	0	0
Manipur	0	0	†	1
Tripura	0	0	†	2
Vindhya Pradesh	0	0	†	3
Group-wise Total‡	1	1	10	29
Total	21	30	459	488

Source: Humayun Kabir, *Progress of Education in India (1947 – 1952): Quinquennial Review with an Introductory Survey* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1953), 111.

⁶ †: Data not available.

‡: Added for Reference, not part of original source.

The Union government relied on the report of University Education Commission before drafting any concrete action plan. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), an administrator and educationist, chaired the University Education Commission. The report of UEC 1949 inter alia recommended the consolidation of the existing structure of higher education while planning new universities, 'both urban and rural, an effort must be made to get as good a distribution as possible concerning the total educational needs of the country'.⁷ The report expressed dismay at the disorganisation which could have been avoided if the distribution at the regional level was handled properly while introducing rural universities. It suggested 'In establishing new universities consideration should be given to regional needs, whether the region is linguistic, cultural or economic... By careful planning, rural universities may be located so as largely to serve both linguistic areas and areas with similarity as to crops, industrial resources'.⁸ It also proposed an inclusive set-up of the university,

A university should be free from communal exclusiveness, and its services should be available to students regardless of caste, religious affiliation or social origin. It should be a place of free inquiry, with its windows open to the knowledge and culture of the world. Its spirit should be that of free, sincere search for truth, not of indoctrination in any closed cult.⁹

The Commission also laid an emphasis on the quality of education and proposed that the institutions which were doing perfunctory or mediocre work should not be granted university status. It further recommended,

There should be no arbitrary rule against more than one university in a given area, for the functions of two universities may be so different that they may complement, rather than compete with, each other. However, duplication of similar facilities in an area already reasonably well- served, should be avoided. In case some area or some wide field of interest does not have adequate attention, then in some cases, the encouragement of a new university may be in order.¹⁰

Further, the University Education Commission highlighted the need to focus on the education of women. It referred to the comment of a woman educator who had written to it that

⁷*The Report of the University Education Commission (December 1948 – August 1949) Volume I*, 1st rep. ed. (Simla: Manager Government of India Press, 1963), 479.

⁸*Ibid.*, 478.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 479.

there had been no planning of women's education. It had just happened.¹¹ It strongly recommended the establishment of co-educational institutions saying,

that where new colleges are established to serve both men and women students, they should be truly coeducational institutions, with as much thought and consideration given to the life needs of women as to those of men. Except as such colleges come into existence there are no valid criteria for comparing segregated education with co-education.¹²

Thus, the University Education Commission had an explicit vision for the expansion of higher education without regional and gendered divides. However, there is a lack of actual data for an accurate comparison of the figures of 1947-48 which were quoted earlier. Based on available provisional figures of 1951-52, it can be concluded that the earlier trend continued with some fluctuation. The states under Group A category continued to remain dominant in terms of expansion and had 80 per cent universities and 76.84 per cent arts and science colleges. Contrary to the earlier position, the States under group B category reported a record increase of arts and science colleges around 17.21 per cent and slightest increase of around 5.94 per cent under group C category (see Table 4.1). During the same period, the enrolment of girls increased around an unsatisfactory 1 per cent. In juxtaposition to the former data, we observe that there were 88.45 per cent boys and 11.55 per cent girls (see Table 4.2), which indicates the necessity of taking effective measures in order to reorient the higher education system to the vision of the University Education Commission.

¹¹ibid., 351.

¹²ibid., 352.

Table 4.2 Gender wise enrolment in universities and colleges (1947-48 to 1951-52)

States	Boys		Girls		Total	
	1947-48	1951-52	1947-48	1951-52	1947-48	1951-52
A States						
Assam	4515	5865	582	931	5097	6796
Bihar	14518	19057	482	1098	15000	20155
Bombay	22391	33904	5263	7904	27654	41808
Madhya Pradesh	5057	† ¹³	823	†	5880	†
Madras	31774	40444	3670	5111	35444	45555
Orrisa	3642	4903	198	358	3840	5261
Punjab	13278	19918	1157	1950	14435	21868
Uttar Pradesh	30952	85487	2731	7891	33683	93378
West Bengal	34055	41667	4085	6691	38140	48358
Group-wise Total‡	160182	251245	18991	31934	179173	283179
B States						
Hyderabad	†	†	†	†	†	†
Mysore	†	12364	†	2195	†	14559
Jammu and Kashmir	†	†	†	†	†	†
Madhya Bharat	†	4134	†	669	†	4803
Pepsu	†	2735	†	294	†	3029
Rajasthan	†	6512	†	840	†	7352
Saurashtra	†	†	†	†	†	†
Travancore-Cochin	†	†	†	†	†	†
Group-wise Total‡	†	25745	†	3998	†	29743
C States						
Ajmer	714	1237	79	167	793	1404
A&N Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bhopal	†	215	†	60	†	275
Bilaspur	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coorg	0	165	0	33	0	198
Delhi	2615	6197	657	1088	3272	7285
Himanchal Pradesh	0	215	0	16	0	231
Kutch	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manipur	†	301	†	11	†	312
Tripura	†	552	†	61	†	613
Vindhya Pradesh	†	614	†	28	†	642
Group-wise Total‡	3329	9496	736	1464	4065	10960
Total	163511	286486	19727	37396	183238	323882

Source: Kabir, Progress of Education in India (1947 – 1952), 112.

¹³ †: Data not available.

‡: Added for Reference, not part of original source.

The Union government adopted the course of planning to deal with this complex issue. It felt that being a newly independent country, this method was better suited to India as it lacked the financial resources to invest in all areas. The First Five Year Plan was prepared and unveiled in 1951 which highlighted the poor-quality of management and inadequate facilities of education in India. The access to education was limited to only 40.0 per cent of the children of the age-group 6-11 and 10.0 per cent of the persons of the age-group 11-17 and 0.9 per cent to those of the age-group 17-23. It endorsed the expansion of the education system to meet the growing requirements and stress was specifically laid on expanding social and technical education to fulfil the needs of the country.¹⁴ It also highlighted multiple defects in the education system, one of which was that it was top-heavy. The provision at the secondary stage was in proportion to that of the primary stage, but the proportion of the university stage was larger than the base structure could profitably support. The broad problem at the secondary, as well as university level, was consolidation rather than expansion. It also identified disproportionate expenditure on facilities in different states to the total revenue and population. There was a huge contrast in the distribution of infrastructure and facilities between rural and urban areas and the inequitable provisions of educational facilities for different sections of society further added fuel to the fire.¹⁵ The Union Minister for Education, Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) was enthusiastic about the plans and not only looking forward to the proper utilisation of existing resources but also the creation of a new type of mind. He wanted in India, of the future men and women of vision, courage and honesty of purpose who would be able to play their worthy part in every field or national activity.¹⁶ However, there was a dilemma in the implementation of policy – they had to choose between an expansion or the consolidation of the education system. During the Convocation of Banaras Hindu University on December 22 1953, an administrator and scientist, Dr. Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar (1894-1955) advised to adopt the idea of consolidating the existing department of studies rather than establishing new ones.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the government

¹⁴Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'First Five Year Plan (1951 – 1956)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/1st/1planch33.html> (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 3.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Arabinda Biswas and Suren Agrawal, *Indian Educational Documents since Independence: Committees, Commissions, Conferences* (New Delhi: Academic Publishers, 1971), 25.

¹⁷*Banaras Hindu University Convocation and Important Addresses: 100 Years (1916 – 2016)* Vol. 1 (Varanasi: Malviya Moolya Anusheelan Kendra and Mahamana Archive, 2017), 281.

needed to balance its policies by establishing newer educational institutions while equally supervising the existing ones and maintain their standards.

The Union government introduced significant changes in the administrative set-up of the universities of Aligarh, Banaras, Delhi, and Visva-Bharati in 1951. These were recognised as 'Institution of National Importance'. It was during the discussions in Parliament on the amendment of Banaras Hindu University Act 1915 and Aligarh Muslim University Act 1920 including the numerous points related to university education when a politician, Jayashri (Bombay Suburban) highlighted the education of women as an important issue. She advocated providing equal opportunities for higher education to female students. She drew the attention of the Education Minister towards the practice of allowing students to appear in the examinations in the universities as private students. She exemplified Bombay University, the Nathubhai University, and the Karve University and suggested the inclusion of such provisions in the Statutes of these two universities. She elucidated that it would provide women who are unable to attend colleges and institutions regularly, an opportunity to continue their studies along with their household work,¹⁸ During the discussion on the BHU Act 1915, another member Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Bihar) also grilled the government on its educational policy and expressed dissatisfaction over the limited progress. He underlined the flaws in the policy by saying,

The government should do is to state their clear-cut policy with regard to the expansion of education. If more expansion of education in the country is desired, new universities for the pursuance of this aim should be established and appropriate reforms introduced in the existing universities. If these things were there, I would not have had any objection. But, just contrarily, the government is today placing an additional burden on those universities also that have till today been serving the country. The government may say that it is putting this additional burden on them for the sake of the expansion of education in the country. But no mention has been made as to how the education will be expanded. Therefore, I oppose that any burden should be imposed on them.¹⁹

It can be deduced that an obligation was felt to bolster the educational institutions, especially for the socially backward groups who did not get the benefit in most areas.

¹⁸*Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. XIV, Fourth Session, August 25, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 1312.*

¹⁹*Parliamentary Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, September 26, 1951 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1951), 3421-3422.*

Instead of taking adequate measures focusing on the expansion of the higher education system, the government focused on the determination and maintenance of higher standards. A permanent body called the University Grants Commission was created in 1953 by an ordinance. When the UGC legislation was presented in 1956 for discussion in Parliament, many members welcomed the step while several members raised doubts on the intention of the government. Highlighting the flaws in the Bill, Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat) advocated making University Grants Commission an independent body that would be free from the pressures of the government. She felt that the term 'determination of standards' was very vague and warned of its danger that it must not lead to stereotyping. She further suggested the scope and important functions of the Commission such as exploring the question of expansion of the University education, coordination of Universities and facilitation of research, ensuring the minimum levels of attainment in examinations, and ensuring the minimum standard of living for teachers and staff.²⁰ Her suggestions were not given due consideration for further deliberation and the university system was continuously expanded in a haphazard manner. Participating in the same discussion, N. M. Lingam (Coimbatore) gave his general views on the UGC Bill and criticised the business of appointing commissions and committees and organising Conferences and Seminars. In his words,

I regret to say, we have not evolved a national pattern of education. In other words, we do not have definite objectives. We do not have goals that will subserve the national ideals by developing what I call the national character in our young men. We have launched the First Five Year Plan and are on the eve of initiating the Second Five Year Plan. We may achieve economic independence. If the system of education is not improved, all achievements of the Five Years Plan will be of no avail. That University education is anything but satisfactory can be seen not only from the low standard of education at all levels but also student indiscipline and the drifting that the students are having...²¹

Following a heated debate, the UGC Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha but a model framework for promoting university education was not framed by the government.

The UGC gave attention to the affiliated colleges in its plan for raising the standards of higher education. It recommended that a dual focus be put on the post-graduate studies and

²⁰*Lok Sabha Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. 1, No. 2, February 22, 1955, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1955), 98-99.*

²¹*Ibid.*, 102.

research through university departments as well as providing sufficient financial support to the affiliated colleges. Informing about this, it stated,

it is necessary to assist in the improvement of standards in the colleges by making grants to them. As required by the U.G.C. Act regulations have been framed enabling the Commission to include affiliated colleges within its purview and a list of colleges under the various universities has been drawn up for this purpose. Colleges are directly run by government and also Intermediate Colleges have been left out. These latter will either become secondary schools or full degree colleges where the three-year degree course scheme is introduced.²²

Although this scheme assisted the increase in the number of affiliated colleges which initially met the rising demands but in the long run the foundation of substandard colleges adversely affected the quality of education. India recorded steady progress in the establishment of new universities and colleges and by 1956 the number of universities had risen to 32 in the Indian Union. 'In 1948, the total number of colleges in the major States was 578. Of these, the colleges devoted to General education numbered 449. Figures for 1956 were 844 and 516 respectively'.²³ Apart from this, the gender gap still existed as it had and in 1956-57, there were 86.08 per cent boys and 13.92 per cent girls out of total enrolments. This trend continued in the coming years and in 1960-61, there were 82.68 per cent boys and 17.32 per cent girls. A remarkable increase in the growth in female enrolments was observed between the period 1956-57 to 1960-61, which was 62.26 per cent in comparison to male 24.77 per cent and the total enrolment growth was 29.9 per cent (see Table 4.3). The growth in the number of female enrolments could be interpreted as a hopeful prospect that came with increased awareness and opportunities but there still remained a lot to be done for bridging the gender gap and make education accessible to all.

²²*Report of the University Grants Commission (April 1957 – March 1958)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1959), 5.

²³*Ten Years of Freedom* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1957), 11.

Table 4.3: Gender wise enrolment in universities and colleges (1956-57 to 1960-61)

Gender	Enrolment in 1956-57(in lakhs)	Enrolments in 1960-61(in lakhs)
Male	6.62	8.26
Female	1.06	1.72
Total	7.69	9.99

Source: *University Grants Commission Annual report (April 1960 – March 1961)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1962). 11.

The Second Five Year plan reported on the deteriorating standards of university education due to the exponential rise of students' enrolment in the universities and colleges. According to the source, the number of qualifying students in the examination of arts and science degree had increased during each year of the First Five Year Plan from 41,000 to 58,000. While at the end of the First Plan, the total increase of students' enrolment was expected to be 7,20,000 as compared to 4,20,000 five years ago.²⁴ For ameliorating the quality of higher education and for reducing the wastage and stagnation of unqualified students, the UGC took various steps such as the introduction of three-year degree courses, organisation of tutorials and seminars, improvement of buildings, laboratories, and libraries, provision of hostel facilities, stipends for meritorious students, scholarships for research and increase in salaries of university teachers and so on. In the course of the Second Five Year Plan, it proposed to establish seven new universities.²⁵ It also provided the minutiae of expenditure on higher education and enormous funding was approved to invest in scientific and technical education. Nevertheless, additional funds were required for the development of essential facilities in the universities and recently established colleges. The Union Deputy Education Minister Dr. K. L. Shrimali (1909-2000) highlighted the circumstances under which the Ministry of Education was functioning. In 1956, while responding to a question during the discussion on demands for grants he reiterated the issue of limited resources behind most of the prevailing problems in the expansion of education. He stated,

²⁴ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Second Five Year Plan (1956 – 1961)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/2nd/2planch23.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 27.

²⁵ Ibid.

Government is fully conscious of the fact that Education must also get top priority. But the situation in the country, the economic conditions, the international situation, etc. demand that we cannot cut down our expenditure. Take for instance the question of Defence. The Ministry and the government are fully conscious of the fact that internal defences through the spread of education and other social welfare activities are as important as external defences. We must educate our people so that they might be able to face any situation which confronts them. Even for the very purposes of defence, it is essential that our people should be educated. But the difficulty is that the government have limited resources.²⁶

Contrary to the recommendations of UEC, education remained under the State list and, the Union government reserved the role of expansion and quality control to itself. The increasing number of enrolments exerted pressure on the states. There was a contradiction in the policy and action of the Union government. Dr. K. L. Srimali admitted this during the reply on the discussion of Education and Scientific Research in March 1958. The Minister said,

The states are today confronted with a great dilemma. There is great pressure for the expansion of education at all levels... At the University stage, our policy has been to restrict rapid expansion. But despite this, the number of universities is swelling. The dilemma before the State government is whether they should finance the expansion of education or improve the quality of education. I do not think they can, neglect either. The expansion has to take place both at the elementary and the secondary stage. At the same time, if we are to meet the challenge of the changing society and if we are to reconstruct a new society, a qualitative improvement must also take place.²⁷

At this stage, the scant number of institutions of higher learning was also considered as an important cause of deteriorating standards of education. During the discussion on the Demands for Grants Ministry of Education in 1959, Hem Barua (Gauhati), gave the reference to the report which was submitted by the Ministry of Education and expressed dismay on the absence of a basic attitude of educational reconstruction and a consolidated pattern. He argued,

I do not think that we have tried to assess the social needs of our country, because all educational policies are to be fitted into the social pattern... That is why we find overcrowding in the universities today. About a million students are rushing on into the portals of the 39 universities. Shri Deshmukh, Chairman of the University Grants Commission has rightly, I mean, complained that the 39 Universities are not

²⁶*Lok Sabha Debates, Part 2 Proceedings, Other than Questions and Answers, Official Report, Vol. III, Twelfth Session, April 16, 1956 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1956), 5465-5466.*

²⁷*Lok Sabha Debates Second Series, Vol. XIII, Fourth Session, March 21, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 6124.*

adequate because every year the number is mounting up to the tune of 50,000. He says that there should be at least 200 universities in India in order to meet the total needs of the people or the student population desirous of higher education.²⁸

Additionally, Hem Barua recommended that more opportunities should be created for vocational and technical education aimed at younger people to reduce overcrowding in universities.²⁹ Renuka Ray (Malda), further pitched into what Hem Barua had said and included the issue of unemployment and wastage of education during the discussion on Demands for Grants in 1960. She was of the view that the ground reality of establishing more polytechnic institutes is radically different from the theoretical viewpoint, which churns out a large number of unemployed trainees. She appealed for more rigidity in the system and recommended that only those who have the capacity to benefit from higher education should go to the universities.³⁰ Her viewpoint is not an acceptable approach since it aims to restrict admission to people and that goes against the principle of social justice. During the discussion on the Report of UGC (1958 – 1959), N. R. Muniswami (Vellore) opposed her viewpoint by underlining that it would waste manpower of a developing, newly independent country saying,

As regards the admission of students to colleges if the boys are denied admission, it will be creating disappointment and frustration... I would suggest that instead of denying them admission we should have some more universities, at the instance of private persons or government. If they do not have the money, they should find the money for it; just as we are investing money for the development of industries, we must find money also for mental development by establishing more universities. We should find the money by borrowing or getting grants from other countries...³¹

With this, the government opted to set up more institutions. The mounting pressure for constituting more Universities and colleges for vocational and professional education further increased pressure on the rattled government. Maintaining a balance between the growth of education, in general, and technical education was a point of concern. The government was not very successful in its endeavours of utilising education as a tool to push industrialisation into the country.

²⁸*Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XXVII, Seventh Session, March 17, 1959 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1959), 6719-6720.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 6721-6722.

³⁰*Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XL, Tenth Session, March 15, 1960 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1960), 6063-6064.

³¹*Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XLIV, Eleventh Session, August 12, 1960 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1960), 2428-2429.

D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur) highlighted the passive role that the UGC played in managing the crisis during the discussion on the UGC Report in 1958. He considered the affiliated colleges acutely crucial to the state universities but, the UGC fell flat in bringing any significant improvement to the salaries of teachers, in the conditions of their service, and in raising the educational standards in these colleges.³² Participating in the discussion on the report of UGC in 1960, Hem Barua also criticised the UGC for not designing a pattern to develop centres of educational institutions in an orderly manner that would be consistent across regions. He argued,

Despite the anxiety of the University Grants Commission, higher education in this country sprawls in an unplanned way and new universities are being born, it is a fact in a very haphazard way. Possibly to satisfy the regional egos... Therefore, I say that the University Grants Commission must have a co-ordinated pattern and if necessary, must make a survey of the educational and socio-economic needs of the country and plan the establishment of universities in that particular way.³³

The UGC was unable to work in the capacity it was supposed to, which is evident of the trends that continued. In 1961-62, around 70 per cent increase in the number of universities was reported in comparison to the figures of 1951-52. The majority of the universities were located in the mainland of the country and numerous facilities were not extended to the areas of the north-east, south, and western parts (see Table 4.4). There were 51 universities and out of them, 35 were affiliated universities. Conforming to the trends, one of the most noticeable features remain that about 86 per cent of the total number of university students in the country were enrolled in the affiliated (or constituent) colleges which provided facilities for instruction in most cases for the bachelor's degree, and in some cases up to the postgraduate level. The total number of colleges was 1783 and out of these colleges, 1223 were run by private managements, 453 were government-managed and the remaining 107 were university colleges. Of the total number of colleges functioning in 1961-62, only 589 were professional colleges which included engineering, medical, agricultural, and teacher's training colleges, and the others were the arts, science, and commerce colleges. By then, there had been a consistent rise in the number of colleges for women which were now 211 in strength.³⁴

³²*Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XVI, Fourth Session, April 29, 1958 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958), 12286-12287.

³³*Lok Sabha Debates Second Series*, Vol. XLIV, Eleventh Session, August 12, 1960, 2445.

³⁴*University Grants Commission Annual report (April 1961 – March 1962)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1963), 11.

Table 4.4: State wise number of universities (1961-62)

State	Number of University	Number of University students per thousand of population
Uttar Pradesh	9	1.4
West Bengal	7	3.7
Bihar	6	1.7
Maharashtra	5	2.7
Madhya Pradesh	4	1.3
Punjab	4	3.1
Andhra Pradesh	3	1.6
Gujarat	3	2.2
Madras	2	1.7
Mysore	2	2.0
Assam	1	2.2
Delhi	1	7.8
Jammu & Kashmir	1	2.7
Kerala	1	2.5
Orissa	1	0.9
Rajasthan	1	1.4

Source: *University Grants Commission Annual report (April 1961 – March 1962)*, 2.

The Third Five Year Plan recommended the provision of special assistance in the field of vocational training and scientific studies. It envisaged an increase of 400,000 students at the university stage, of whom about 60 per cent should be in respect of science classes, bringing the proportion of students taking science courses to over 42 per cent.³⁵ Apart from this, the Third Plan suggested arranging larger facilities to divert students towards vocational and technical education. One standing obligation was to adopt a suitable criterion that would be applied during the selection of those seeking admissions to the courses of higher education in arts, science, and commerce streams. In addition to the provision in the Plan for expansion of facilities for higher education, proposals for evening colleges, correspondence courses, and the award of external degrees were also deliberated upon.³⁶

³⁵Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Third Five Year Plan (1961 – 1966)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/3rd/3planch29.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 6.

³⁶Ibid.

The recommendations of the Third Plan were perceived with optimism by the government and commenting on the formulation of the Third Plan Dr. K. L. Shrimali said, 'How good a plan is, depends entirely on how effectively it is implemented and implementation, in turn, depends on the spirit with which we approach the task.'³⁷ The government remained unaffected in its approach even while dealing with this unfamiliar situation. Highlighting this attitude of the government during the discussion on Demands for Grants, Ministry for Education in 1962, S. N. Chaturvedi (Firozabad), criticised the integral policy of the Union government which was not focused on the implementation of the reforms at the very foundation but only at the superstructure. He admitted that although the government had made numerous efforts for expanding education and tried to solve various problems concerning textbooks, training of teachers, and the provision of technical school,

The expansion that appears on paper is also not a true index of the actual state of affairs. There are institutions which it will be difficult to call by the name of educational institutions. They are almost commercialised shops in which the primary aim is not to impart instruction, but to earn money from the students in one way or another.³⁸

Several members of Lok Sabha thought that the government should change the strategy of expanding and planning higher education. They were convinced that old methods and techniques could not produce new results. During the discussion on Demands for Grants Ministry for Education in 1964, Chandrabhan Singh (Bilaspur), emphasized this viewpoint and expressed dismay on the status quo even after seventeen years of independence. He demanded an increase in the expenditure on education and made it the subject of the Concurrent List. He said,

I plead with the Education Minister to say that he must turn a new leaf. He has got a bunch of secretariat staff. They are bred and brought up in the old tradition. Our thinking is in a mess, still in the same method that the British used to think. Let us change our methods. If we do not change our methods, our future is entirely dark. This is a very important point and I must plead that education must become a Concurrent subject and this excuse that it is a State subject should not hold good any further.³⁹

³⁷K. L. Shrimali, *Education in Changing India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 106.

³⁸*Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. IV, First Session, May 28, 1962 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1962), 7235-7236.

³⁹*Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. XXVII, Seventh Session, March 10, 1964 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1964), 5029.

The criticism of the government's policy was valid since the implementation on the ground was shoddy for which both the government and bureaucracy were equally responsible. During the discussion on the annual reports of UGC (1961 – 1962) and (1962 – 1963), U. M. Trivedi (Mandsaur), scrutinized the report and blamed the government for wasting funds, and accused the UGC of not looking beyond Delhi. He was angry about the atrocious condition of the recently established Vikramshila and Jabalpur University where buildings could not be constructed even after the allocation of funds. In his speech, another member, Ranga (Chittoor), interrupted and mentioned the government's plan of establishing a second University in Delhi. On that, Trivedi commented,

They may have it. I do not object to it. Let them have four universities if they like; but let so many other sons be treated alike. If a man wants to marry many wives, let him do so; but let him be honest and treat them all well and alike.⁴⁰

The Union government set out to re-orient the existing education system and appointed the Education Commission in 1964 under the Chairmanship of an administrator and scientist, D. S. Kothari (1906-1993). The Commission submitted an extensive report in 1966 which came to be later popularly known as Kothari Commission Report. According to the Resolution to Appoint the Education in 1964, the government admitted that there were flaws in its approach to reforming the system. Due to that 'the educational system has not generally evolved in accordance with the needs of the times, and a wide and distressing gulf continues to persist between thought and action in several sectors of this crucial field of national activity'.⁴¹ Although quantitatively, phenomenal development took place at various levels, there was a widespread dissatisfaction about the numerous aspects of the ongoing development on the national level. Therefore, the Education Commission inter alia emphasized on the 'expansion of higher education to meet the rising expectation of manpower needs of national reconstruction and the rising social expectation and ambition of the people'.⁴² The Commission further outlined an enrolment policy for the next two decades. It stated that

⁴⁰*Lok Sabha Debates Third Series*, Vol. XXXVI, Tenth Session, December 10, 1964 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1964), 4327-4328.

⁴¹*Report of the Education Commission 1964 – 1966: Education and National Development* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education Government of India, 1966), 592.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 277.

The expansion of facilities in higher education should be planned broadly on the basis of general trends regarding manpower needs and employment opportunities. At present, there is an over-production of graduates in arts and commerce because of the adoption of this open-door policy: and consequently, there is a growing incidence of unemployment amongst them. On the other hand, there is a shortage of professional specialists and there is a consequent need to increase the facilities in professional courses such as agriculture, engineering, medicine, etc and especially at the postgraduate stage in science and arts.⁴³

It also underlined that the colleges of arts and commerce did not fix the issue with the number of enrolments, as a result of which an uncontrolled expansion took place. Thereafter, the enrolments proved to be a major cause of deteriorating standards. To tackle this issue, the Commission suggested laying special emphasis on the determination of the number of enrolments in all affiliated colleges and courses in arts and commerce. 'It is imperative that the intake of students be fixed separately for each such institution and that this sanctioned strength should form an integral part of the conditions of affiliation.'⁴⁴

The Education Commission endorsed the consolidation of the existing system of colleges rather than the unplanned constitution of newer and mediocre colleges. As it suggested,

We recommend that, in granting affiliation to colleges, the universities should emphasize the expansion of existing colleges, rather than the establishment of new ones. Unless there are strong reasons to the contrary, a college should have a minimum enrolment of 500 and it would be preferable to raise the enrolment in as many colleges as possible to 1,000 or more. In granting affiliation to a new college, care should be taken to see that its location is properly planned so as not to interfere with the proper growth of an existing institution and there should be a reasonable chance that it would grow into an institution of an adequate size within a period of about five years.⁴⁵

However, it still felt the need of establishing new universities but preferred an approach with precaution, and suggested,

It is necessary to concentrate on the adoption of essential measures to ensure that their establishment leads to a substantial improvement in standards and raises the output and level of research. It must further be pointed out that the establishment of new universities can be justified only when competent men and physical facilities required for the purpose are available and can be secured and that it would be wrong

⁴³Ibid., 302.

⁴⁴Ibid., 306.

⁴⁵Ibid., 309.

to create a situation in which there could be an undue dispersal of intellectual talent, funds, and administrative ability, all of which are in scarce supply at present.⁴⁶

Apart from this, the gender gap in enrolments still prevailed and the Education Commission advised to manage the crisis by amplifying the participation of women in different occupations and professions. By highlighting the difference in the enrolments of men and women it concluded that the inadequately low participation of women was not suited to the changing needs of the Indian society nor with the needs of economic and social development. It advised that given these needs, the proportion of women students to the total enrolment at this stage should be increased to 33 per cent during the next ten years to meet the requirements for educated women in different fields.⁴⁷ For encouraging women to take up further tertiary-level education, the Commission proposed to establish provisional and economic hostels, co-ed and separate only-women hostels, and to modify the curricula by adding some elements of technical and vocational courses. It also suggested giving them more favourable opportunities in medical, engineering, and other professional courses.⁴⁸

To put it in a nutshell, the Education Commission was more keen on the consolidation of existing Universities and colleges rather than expansion. However, it did not give much importance to the matter of the increasing rural and urban divide in the establishment of newer universities and colleges. It failed to propose any measures of creating avenues of employment to utilise the massive number of unemployed degree holders. The proposed recommendations were a matter of long-term planning and not applicable and for short-term fixes. The execution of these recommendations demanded the active coordination, cooperation, and support between government, bureaucracy, and state agencies. Subsequently, the Union government listed the Report of Education Commission for discussion in Lok Sabha. The members in the House demanded to implement the recommendations of the Commission for overhauling the education system of the country. During the discussion on the report of the Education Commission (1964 – 1966), a member, S. D. Somasundaram (Thanjavur), expressed his exasperation over appointing commissions and committees and the unenthusiastic attitude of the leaders, bureaucrats, and educationists towards implementing the recommendations in order to change the character of the

⁴⁶Ibid., 315-316.

⁴⁷Ibid., 313.

⁴⁸Ibid., 313-314.

national education system and make it suitable for Indian socio-economic condition. By stressing the defects of the reports of the commissions he said,

We are expanding the educational facilities, particularly at college and University level, without taking care to assess the impact of education on the economy and society. It is my firm belief that the resources are misallocated and as a consequence, we are facing a crisis in education, namely, mass-scale educated unemployment, threat to law and order, and potential threat to the peace of the society... This is not only uneconomical from the society's point of view but also misery from the individual's point of view.⁴⁹

Professional education and expansion of higher education

The Union government gauged the simmering apprehension and uneasiness in a large number of unemployed young people with college degrees. It was in this context that the first National Policy on Education was unveiled in 1968. According to it, the Report of Education Commission (1964 – 1966) was recognised as an important document for a radical reconstruction of the education system for the economic and cultural development of the country, for national integration, and for realising the ideal of a socialistic pattern of society.⁵⁰ Firstly, it emphasized the re-organisation of university education and suggested ensuring the provision of libraries, laboratories, and other facilities in the colleges and the university departments. Secondly, it aimed to provide adequate funds before founding any new universities and ensure proper standards. Thirdly, it aimed to organize post-graduation courses and improve standards and training at this level. Fourth, it aimed to strengthen the Centres for Advanced Studies and to establish a small cluster of centres aiming to reach the zenith in research and serve as an example. Fifth, it intended to give increased support to conducting research in universities.⁵¹ For relieving the universities and colleges from the overburden of enrolments and increasing educational opportunities, it also principally resolved to promote part-time and correspondence courses. As it suggested,

Part-time education and correspondence courses should be developed on a large scale at the university stage. Such facilities should also be developed for secondary school

⁴⁹*Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. X, Third Session, December 6, 1967 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), 5159-5160.

⁵⁰*National Policy on Education 1968* (Delhi: Government of India, Department of Education, Ministry of Education, 1968), 1-2.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 6.

students, for teachers and agricultural, industrial and other workers. Education through part-time and correspondence courses should be given the same status as full-time education. Such facilities will ease the transition from school to work, promote the ideal and cause of education and provide opportunities to the large number of people who have the desire to educate themselves further but cannot do so on a full-time basis.⁵²

The resolutions of NPE 1968, thus, focused on the consolidation of the education system of the country, while noticeably neglecting the strategy for balancing the approach of expansion and promoting standard by enacting this new scheme of education.

India was then going through an economic crisis and simultaneously hit by a wide-spread famine that further increased the burden on the resources of the country. Due to impoverished conditions, the government could not meet the targets of the Third Plan, and the Fourth Plan was released in 1969, three years after the Third Plan had expired. The reflection of NPE 1968 is reflected in the recommendations of the Fourth Plan which stressed on consolidation and improvement of higher education through the strengthening of staff and library and laboratory facilities. Affiliated colleges which provided education to more than 88 per cent of the university students would be supported. Assistance for fuller development would be given to a few colleges selected on the basis of their achievements, existing facilities and potentialities.⁵³ It also recognised that the post-graduate courses occupied a significant position in the university system and if facilities for post-graduate education and research would be increased, the quality would of tertiary education also would be improved. The centres of advanced studies intended to encourage the pursuit of excellence would be developed. It was also proposed to assist a few other promising university departments to grow as advanced centres. In order to develop inter-disciplinary research, clusters of advanced centres would be set-up in the inter-related subjects. The Indian Council of Social Science Research had been constituted to promote research in social sciences.⁵⁴ The government had a number of drafts formed to bring a substantial change in the educational system but the challenge of managing funds and an equal distribution in different sectors remained. In addition, there was a mounting pressure for reforming the educational

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Fourth Five Year Plan (1969 – 1974)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/4th/4planch16.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 16.16.

⁵⁴Ibid., 16.17.

system. During the discussion on the Demands for Grants Ministry of Education in 1968, D.C. Sharma (Gurdaspur), addressed the Education Minister and said,

If you cannot take our education much forward, I would like you take our education at least one step forward. Have one central university in every State of India, whether it is north, south, east or west... Unless this is done, I think this jungle of education will be a wilderness and this wilderness will become a desert but I want the desert to gloom. I want the jungle to become a garden and the wilderness to become a paradise and that can only become if we do that.⁵⁵

During the 1960s, a substantial increase was recorded at the various levels of higher education. The enrolments of students nearly tripled in ten years. According to the actual data provided, there was an increase in enrolments from 11.55 lakhs in 1961-62 to 32.62 lakhs in 1971-72. However, the average rate of increase in the years 1970-71 and 1971-72 declined perceptibly. This was largely due to changes in the statutes of a number of universities permitting students to appear privately at various examinations.⁵⁶ ‘The enrolment for science and allied courses namely engineering and technology, medicine, agriculture, and veterinary science was 37.5 per cent of the total student enrolment in 1971-72. In pure science, the enrolment rose from 9.15 lakhs in 1969-70 to 9.88 lakhs in 1971-72.’⁵⁷ There was a tremendous increase in enrolments at the postgraduate and research levels.

At the postgraduate stage, the number of students rose from 1.47 lakhs in 1969-70 to 1.80 lakhs in 1971-72. The percentage of students at this level increased from 5.3 to 5.5 during this period. At the research level, the overall percentage of students increased from 0.4 to 0.5 as the actual number of students rose from 12,474 in 1969-70 to 14,995 in 1971-72.⁵⁸

Considering the expansion of the numbers of universities, a noticeable pattern emerged between 1961-62 to 1966-67, and about 57.14 per cent growth of universities was recorded and it declined to 23.38 per cent between 1766-67 to 1971-72. Contrary to this, the growth in the number of colleges was less in comparison of universities, between 1961-62 to 1966-67, it was about 35.14 per cent and it increased to 41.72 per cent between (1766-67 to 1971-72). (See Table

⁵⁵ *Lok Sabha Debates Fourth Series*, Vol. XV, Fourth Session, April 3, 1968 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1968), 2034-2035.

⁵⁶ *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (1 April 1971 – 31 March 1972)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1972), 2-3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

4.5). It showed that the government had taken incentives to control the hasty expansion of colleges and universities however, it was not entirely successful. During the period of five years from 1967-68 to 1971-72, approximately 1,000 new colleges were constituted and the number of colleges rose from 2,899 in 1967-68 to 3,896 in 1971-72.⁵⁹ This pattern of accelerated growth was quite disappointing if juxtaposed with the recommendations of the Kothari Commission and NPE 1968. The Commission had emphasized to concentrate on the consolidation of already existing colleges and universities, and to expand cautiously only if the need arises in the existing colleges and the universities.

Table 4.5: Number of student enrolments, universities, colleges and teachers (1961-62 to 1971-72)

Year	Number of Universities* ⁶⁰	Number of Colleges**	Number of Teachers**	Number of student Enrolments***
1961-62	49	1783	63053	1155380
1966-67	77	2749	93251	1949012
1971-72	95	3896	139204	3262314

Source: *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (1 April 1971 – 31 March 1972)*. (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1972), 2.

An exponential growth was also observed in the total strength of the teaching staff in the university departments and colleges. It rose from 63,053 in 1961-62 to 93,251 in 1966-67 and to 1,39,204 in 1971-72.⁶¹ This consequently amounts to about 120.77 per cent growth in the number of teaching staff which indicates an elevation in the quality of education and increasing resources. Apart from this, the colleges were playing a crucial role in disseminating information and education, and therefore, the majority of students were enrolled there. According to an estimate, around 88.3 per cent of the student population was receiving instruction in the affiliated colleges during the year 1971-72. Over 90 per cent of the students were receiving instruction in the affiliated colleges particularly in the courses of science, commerce, and medicine. Over 90 per cent of the students at the graduate level, and 49.3 per cent and 11.1 per cent at the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁰ *Including institutes deemed to be universities under Section 3 of UGC Act 1956

**Excluding intermediate colleges of UP

***Including enrolment in the intermediate classes under the Board of High School and Intermediate Education UP

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

postgraduate and research levels respectively were enrolled in the affiliated colleges.⁶² Keeping these facts in mind, it would be appropriate to discern the pattern in the development of the colleges of arts, science and commerce, and professional courses. In the last section, the long debate that took place in the Parliament for promoting job-oriented education has been analysed. Besides, the Five-Year Plan Reports and Kothari Commission also emphasized the need to establish new institutions and departments for the professional courses so that a large number of students would be re-directed towards them. Between 1967-1972, there was a growth of around 36.22 per cent in the colleges of arts, science, and commerce and 20.04 per cent in the colleges of professional courses. (See Table 4.6). This glaring divide persisted throughout the years as we see that in 1967, there were 70.85 per cent colleges of arts, science, and commerce and at only 29.15 per cent, a meagre number of colleges of professional education including engineering, medicine, agriculture existed. In comparison to that in 1972, there were 71.81 per cent colleges of arts, science, and commerce whereas a slight decline in the number of colleges of professional courses was observed and only 28.19 per cent such colleges were there. (See Table 4.6). This situation remained so even after the suggestions of the Kothari Commission which advocated to establish more professional colleges and departments for the supply of trained workforce for the speedy industrialisation in the country and also to fix the number of places in arts and Commerce colleges to revise the system to prevent it from being crammed of unemployed degree holders and maintain standards of higher education.

⁶²Ibid., 19.

Table 4.6: Course wise number of colleges (1967-68 to 1971-72)

Courses of Study	Number of Colleges				
	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72
Arts, Science & Commerce	2054	2219	2361	2587	2798
Engineering & Technology	106	105	106	107	108
Medicine, Pharmacy, Ayurveda, Nursing & Dentistry	141	157	167	176	186
Law	66	77	85	91	95
Agriculture	54	53	54	57	57
Veterinary Science	21	21	23	23	23
Education	202	224	235	258	269
Oriental Learning	179	179	188	226	272
Others (Physical Education, Music & Fine Arts)	76	77	78	79	88
Total	2899	3112	3297	3604	3896

Source: *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (1 April 1971 – 31 March 1972)*, 48.

Owing to the higher percentage of the colleges of arts, commerce and science, there was a skyrocketing number of graduates and degree holders from such institutions. However, job opportunities had not been created for these graduates in their respective fields corresponding to that number. Job creation was not an easy task for the government which was struggling at various fronts and managing affairs with limited resources. The issue of widespread unemployment was raised by multiple members in the Lok Sabha. During the discussion on the Annual Report of UGC (1968-1969), Somnath Chatterjee (Burdwan), expressed dismay over the wastage of funds because substantial qualitative change did not appear on the ground and mere quantitative analysis did not fulfil the objectives for which the UGC was founded. He further advocated for a job-oriented education system and said,

There is a lot of unrest and frustration among students. One of the reasons is this. I am sorry to use this term, but it seems today, we are only manufacturing graduates without considering as to what their future would be. The purpose will not be served unless we evolved a scheme of job-oriented education. We should provide them with jobs, with a future. They should have something to look up to. What is it that we are giving them after they come out of the universities and colleges? What is the scope,

what is the utility of this education? If a future is not assured; this will only be breeding discontent...⁶³

He further put forward the idea of an overhaul of the education system designed on the socialistic pattern and argued, 'Unless we evolve an educational policy which will instil in the minds of the educated a real desire to bring about social and economic revolution and to make large strides in the progress of this country, the object of education will not be achieved...'⁶⁴ Participating in the same discussion, Y. S. Mahajan (Buldana) recommended that the government change the policy of restrictions around establishing new universities. He suggested the constitution of more universities in the proportion to the increment in the number of students. In the institutions with students more than the allotted seats, there was overcrowding which contributed to the lack of cohesion. In turn, strong leadership failed to emerge, which could not control the factionalism beset the affairs of the universities.⁶⁵ Contrary to the UGC report he was of the opinion that resources should be increased. In his words,

After all, educational planning like economic planning not only involves a proper utilisation of resources but also an increase or development of our resources. If there are not enough men, we should get them trained and if there are not enough resources, we should collect them and see that the proper needs of education are fulfilled in this country.⁶⁶

In the same speech, Mahajan suggested the adoption of the idea of students' counselling before admissions, in order to divert the crowd towards other key areas of higher learning such as technical institutions, industrial training institutes, polytechnics and so on.⁶⁷ He did not highlight that there were a meagre number of such institutes and there was an urgent need to establish more such institutions for professional education.

The most glaring defect in the policy of the Union government was that it was indifferent towards self-employment and skill enhancement. The government's Report on Planning widely focused on creating useful citizens of a high moral character through higher education for working in industries as efficient manpower. Criticising the government for the prevailing

⁶³ *Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. II, Second Session, May 24, 1971 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1971), 215-216.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 233-234.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

chaotic conditions in the education sector during the discussion the Demands for Grants Ministry of Education in 1973, Narain Chand Parashar (Hamirpur), compared the situation of the Education Ministry with the situation described by Lord Tennyson in his poem Lady of Shallot. According to him,

where the lady looks at reality through a mirror and not directly. Instead of looking at the fields, flowers, gardens, deserts, rivers and mountains directly she looks at them through a mirror. Our Minister for Education and the UGC looks at the educational scene through the wisdom of old ages... Looking through old age, like looking through the mirror at the reality, is hardly sufficient to give any effective direction or healthy coordination to the activity that is called education in our country...⁶⁸

This criticism of the government's attitude stood valid due to the existing problems of the urban and rural divide which remained unsolved by the government even after 25 years of independence. Participating in the discussion on the Annual Reports of UGC (1970 – 71) and (1971 – 72), Madhu Dandavate (Rajapur), highlighted the wide gaps in the development of universities. He urged the government to reduce the gaps by rationalising the rapid expansion of universities in terms of size and the facilities that are needed for speedy and balanced growth of the universities. In his words,

The entire university life is today compartmentalised between the urban centres of education and the mofussil centres. If you look at the disbursal of the resources that have been allocated to the UGC you will find that major emphasis is laid on the development of universities in the urban areas to the detriment of the development of universities in the rural areas. This imbalance in our academic life will have to be completely eliminated. We find in places like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras universities which can rightly be called monster universities. I am using the word 'monster' in the context of the size and not in the context of the content of the universities. This particular disability or disparity has to be removed...⁶⁹

Amidst the adverse circumstances, the Union government released another draft of National Policy on Education in 1974 although the targets of NPE 1968 remained unaccomplished. Instead of proposing something novel to tackle the situation, the NPE 1974 focused on expanding the earlier policy. It also recommended taking a precaution at the time of establishing new universities for the availability of adequate funds and maintaining standards. It

⁶⁸*Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXXII, Ninth Session, November 19, 1973 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1973), 335-336.

⁶⁹*Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. XXXII, Ninth Session, November 23, 1973 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1973), 257.

also advised to pay special attention on the organization of post-graduation courses and improvement of the standards of training. Besides, it suggested to strengthen the Centres of Advanced Studies, provide research facilities and develop the part-time and correspondence courses at large scale.⁷⁰ The shadow of the NPE 1974 can be viewed in the recommendations of the fifth Five Year Plan which informed about the initiative at a vocational thrust on the secondary stage and proposed to implement the well-conceived and fully-thought out programmes in selected areas.⁷¹ Apart from this, the Fifth Plan also suggested,

The main emphasis in university education is on consolidation and improvement. Provision is, however, being made to provide additional educational facilities to weaker sections of society and in the backward areas. Facilities through evening colleges, correspondence courses and private study will be expanded. Post-graduate education and research will continue to be strengthened through the development of centres of advanced study, science service centres, common computer facilities and regional instrumentation workshops. Programmes of faculty development, like summer institutes, seminars and orientation courses will be stepped up.⁷²

The government was aiming to push for a planned expansion in the backward areas where the attention would be directed towards the socially deprived sections. During a debate on an Annual Report of UGC (1972 – 1973), C. K. Chandrappan (Tellichery), criticised the higher education expansion policy of the Union government and argued that the UGC had failed in the expansion of higher education in a manner that could help all sections of the society and in a way to aid the social progress.⁷³

Participating in the same discussion, M. G. Vishwanathan (Wandiwash), highlighted the lack of sincerity in the planning of education and demanded the establishment of a university in Pondicherry, (a Union Territory in the far south which was then under President's rule). He stated,

When we take the problem of Education, it has become quantity versus quality. If you see the figures given by the University Grants Commission for the last one

⁷⁰*National Policy on Education 1974* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social welfare, Government of India, 1974), 7.

⁷¹Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Fifth Five Year Plan (1974 – 1979)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/welcome.html>. (accessed January 27, 2021), para. 5.141.

⁷²*Ibid.*, para. 5.142.

⁷³*Lok Sabha Debates Fifth Series*, Vol. LIV, Fourteenth Session, August 6, 1975 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1975), 96.

decade, you will find that it has jumped from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 35 lakhs. But the number of colleges is increasing every year just like opening a paan shop. Colleges are being opened more on business principles than on education principles. Whether there is any building, hostel facility, library, laboratory and other equipment's or not, they start colleges and apply for the grant from the UGC...⁷⁴

Expanding on the notion of Vishwanathan, another member P. Anthony Reddy (Anantpur), spoke in the context of the statistical data provided by an Annual Report of UGC about the increasing number of colleges and enrolments of university students and the number of teachers. He viewed to look beyond the quantitative jump and suggested,

this huge quantitative improvement does not tell us everything. Quantitative improvement naturally brings in other problems like accommodation for school, colleges and hostels; facilities like scientific equipment, library has cropped up. And these problems naturally involve an expenditure. The government and the Commission could not cope up with the actual qualitative improvement of these colleges and universities... Therefore, I suggest to the Minister of Education and the UGC to declare a holiday for increasing the number of colleges and universities in order to improve the quality of education, standard of education and to provide with better scientific equipment's in the colleges and the universities which are already functioning now. More facilities like library, accommodation etc. also be provided in the colleges and hostels to improve standards.⁷⁵

It was a remark of importance that highlighted the imbalance when the standards were measured in terms of quantity and quality and it was a grave defect in the educational policy. Instead of putting forward a plan for a radical change in the educational system, the Minister of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, S. Nurul Hasan (1921-1993) informed inter alia during the same discussion about the establishment of book banks, medical health centres and the introduction of part-time vocational courses. He defended the UGC and argued, 'consultation and quality improvement are the two watch words of the University Grants Commission in addition to the question of expanding the frontiers of knowledge and supporting research.'⁷⁶

For bringing a radical change in the educational system of the country, the Union government took an important decision by introducing the 42nd constitutional amendment in 1976. The subject of education was then transferred from the State List to the Concurrent List and thus, it became the joint responsibility of the State and Union government. This

⁷⁴Ibid., 118.

⁷⁵Ibid., 154.

⁷⁶Ibid., 93-94.

constitutional change was earlier recommended by the University Education Commission in 1949 and also advocated by intellectuals and the legislature at various occasions. The country was forced to bear a huge price for the delay and consequently a uniform pattern of institutional growth could not evolve in India. Apart from this, the details of the expansion of colleges of arts, science and commerce and their comparison with the colleges of professional education is important to highlight. On comparison, there was a sharp decline in the earlier average growth of these colleges between 1966-67 to 1971-72 than in the average growth of such institutions during the five years i.e., 1972-73 to 1976-77 recorded subsequently. According to the details in Table 4.7, there was an average growth of 9.34 per cent in the colleges of arts, science and commerce and the average growth in the number of professional colleges was nearly double around 18.06 per cent during 1972-73 to 1976-77. Despite having such a significant growth in the number of colleges for professional courses, the impact was limited because the rate of growth was slowing down. Thus, a flourishing trend could not emerge and a gulf remained between the number of arts, science and commerce colleges and the ones for professional education. In 1972-73 there were 72.10 per cent colleges of arts, science and commerce and 27.90 per cent colleges of professional courses and this position prevailed and after five years, there were 71.74 per cent colleges of arts, science and commerce and 28.26 per cent colleges which offered professional courses. (See Table 4.7). The government had a long way to go if it intended to bridge this gulf.

Table 4.7: Course wise number of colleges (1972-73 to 1976-77)

Courses of Study	Number of Colleges				
	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
Arts, Science & Commerce	2998	3126	3172	3257	3278
Engineering & Technology	110	109	109	109	112
Medicine, Pharmacy, Ayurveda, Nursing & Dentistry	210	217	226	232	257
Law	107	110	122	132	138
Agriculture	54	55	57	56	53
Veterinary Science	24	25	25	23	23
Education	287	295	307	315	317
Oriental Learning	275	274	269	271	268
Others (Physical Education, Music & Fine Arts)	93	97	101	113	123
Total	4158	4308	4388	4508	4569

Source: *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (1 April 1976 – 31 March 1977)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1977), 147.

The Indian National Congress had a humiliating defeat in the elections which came after 21 months of national emergency. With the installation of a new regime under the Janta Party, the people had expectations of change. An independent organisation named Citizens for Democracy prepared an outline of a ten years programme (1978-1987) for the transformation of the education system of the country under the supervision of an administrator and educationist, J. P Naik (1907 – 1981). The proposed draft entitled ‘Education for Our People’ observed that most of the vocational courses were school-based and a large proportion of students had joined them on an experimental basis before they had definitely made up their minds about a career or had been selected for a specific job. Therefore, this process, while essential in some cases, was equally wasteful and less efficient.⁷⁷ It recommended,

⁷⁷J. P. Naik, *Education for our People: A Policy Frame for the Development of Education over the Next Ten Years (1978 – 87)* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers PVT LTD, 1978), 48.

Wherever possible, we should try to provide post-decision (i.e., after the young person definitely decides upon a career for himself) or post selection (i.e., after a person has been definitely selected for a job) vocational courses. In all such cases, there is good motivation and an optimum utilization of available scarce resources. Secondly, there should be a considerable increase in industry-based vocational courses so that vocations are 'educationalized' instead of vocationalizing education. Such a programme may even be made obligatory on industries and certain grant-in-aid made available to them for the purpose if necessary. Thirdly, there should be an adequate provision for sandwich courses and for regular apprenticeship training.⁷⁸

In view of the prevailing circumstances, the Union government released another draft of National Policy of Education in 1979. The NPE 1979 emphasized to promote self-employment through vocational training. To relieve pressure off the universities and colleges, it further suggested to lay stress on the vocational side of secondary education and enacting a new recruitment policy based on pre-service training programme and tests appropriate to specific job requirement.⁷⁹ It further emphasized on the improvement of the quality of education by adopting part-time and correspondence courses, selective admission policy, exercising great restraint in establishing new institutions and providing extra safeguard to the first-generation learners of the Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes and other socially disadvantaged groups.⁸⁰

Before the recommendations of the NPE 1979 could be implemented with effect, the Janta Party lost majority in the Lok Sabha and the Indian National Congress returned to form government. The issues and challenges were old in the arena of higher education and a novel approach was necessary. The sixth Five Year Plan proposed to restrain the expansion of higher education system and emphasized on the utilisation of the existing infrastructure. It advocated to create better employment facilities for the first-generation learners particularly the socially disadvantaged groups. It suggested,

The existing imbalances in the level of development of universities among themselves as well as in relation to colleges would have to be examined for suitable remedial programmes and selective support in keeping with their requirements, potential and scope. The problem of non-viable institutions, with low enrolments and inadequate provision of facilities, as well as proliferation of such institutions, offering general academic courses, would need to be tackled with determination,

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *Draft National Policy on Education 1979* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, 1979), 10.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 11.

both in order to avoid increasing unemployment among the graduates as well as to make better use of the available, economic resources for educational development.⁸¹

The Sixth Plan also envisaged to employ new technologies and focus on the qualitative improvement of the higher education by redesigning the undergraduate courses and restructuring to improve the orientation towards employment. The postgraduate degrees should place emphasis on research and development of the capability of the university system and on interdisciplinary studies in new emerging areas.⁸² The slow pace of reform did not help matters in the following years and the situation became more complicated. However, the higher education system was expanding quantitatively in the 1970s. There were 86 universities, 9 deemed-to-be universities and 3,896 colleges in 1971-72 and it increased up to 118 universities, 13 deemed-to-be universities and 4,886 colleges in 1981-82. To discern the pattern of growth, the decade of 1970s can be divided into two equal parts of 5 years. Between 1971-72 to 1976-77, an average growth in the numbers of universities, deemed-to-be universities and colleges was 22.09 per cent, 11.11 per cent and 10.08 per cent respectively. (See Table 4.8). In comparison, between 1976-77 to 1981-82, there was an average growth in the number of deemed-to-be universities of around 30 per cent. However, in the number of colleges, there was a slight increase in the average growth of around 13.18 per cent and a sharp decline in an average growth in the number of universities of around 12.38 per cent. (See Table 4.8).

⁸¹Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Sixth Five Year Plan (1980 – 1985)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/6th/6planch21.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 21.29.

⁸²Ibid.

Table 4.8: Number of universities, colleges and students (1971-72 to 1981-82)

Year	Number of Universities	Number of Colleges	Number of students
1971-72	86+9 institutions deemed to be universities	3,896	20,65,041
1972-73	90+9 institutions deemed to be universities	4,158	21,68,107
1973-74	95+9 institutions deemed to be universities	4,308	22,34,385
1974-75	102+9 institutions deemed to be universities	4,170	23,66,541
1975-76	102+9 institutions deemed to be universities	4,272	24,26,109
1976-77	105+10 institutions deemed to be universities	4,317	24,31,563
1977-78	105+10 institutions deemed to be universities	4,375	25,64,972
1978-79	108+10 institutions deemed to be universities	4,460	26,18,228
1979-80	108+11 institutions deemed to be universities	4,558	26,48,579
1980-81	112+11 institutions deemed to be universities	4,722	27,52,437
1981-82	118+13 institutions deemed to be universities	4,886	29,52,066

Source: *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1981 – March 1982)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1982), 1-2.

During the early years of the 1980s, the issues with regard to the expansion of higher education was not much discussed in the Lok Sabha and on other platforms. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, there were some important issues of university autonomy and academic freedom and standards of higher education which dominated the discussions. Besides, the important issue of the gender gap in total enrolments has also been highlighted. Since independence, it was a critical challenge for the government and educationists alike to evolve a somewhat egalitarian system of education. The Kothari Commission recommended in 1966 to achieve the target of 33 per cent women enrolments at the higher level of education within the next decade. Nevertheless, the old maladies continued and in 1981-82, there were only 27.7 per cent women in the higher education system. A vast difference in the enrolments of men and women can be seen clearly in Table 4.9. However, an average growth of women enrolments in the decade of 1970s being higher than the men was a hopeful indication even if it soon declined subsequently. There was an average growth in the enrolments of men around 13.02 per cent between 1971-72 to 1976-77 and during the same period, there was an average growth in the enrolments of women around 33.85 per cent. (See Table 4.9). A swift change was observed between 1976-77 to 1981-82, when an average enrolment of men was increased to 18.35 per cent and in sharp contrast, during the same period, the average enrolment of women declined to 30.18 per cent. (See Table 4.9). Thus, for promoting equity and inclusion in accessing education, there was a pressing need for the government to take prompt action on various fronts. Additionally, it was also important to spread

awareness about education, create occupational opportunities and promote an environment of equality at the workplace.

Table 4.9: Gender wise distribution of student enrolments (1971-72 to 1981-82)

Year	TOTAL		
	T ⁸³	W	%
1971-72	20,65,041	4,68,696	22.7
1972-73	21,68,197	N.A.	N.A.
1973-74	22,34,385	5,20,825	23.3
1974-75	23,66,541	5,53,009	23.4
1975-76	24,26,109	5,95,162	24.5
1976-77	24,31,563	6,27,346	25.8
1979-80	26,48,579	6,19,042	26.0
1980-81	27,52,437	7,48,525	27.2
1981-82	29,52,066	8,16,704	27.7

Source: *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1981 – March 1982)*, 154.

With the release of seventh Five Year Plan, the emphasis was laid on consolidation and improving the standards of higher education. It was also considered to make education appropriate to the national needs and to forge forward and backward linkages of higher education with employment and economic development.⁸⁴ The Seventh Plan also suggested to provide reservation, scholarships and hostel facilities for the first-generation learners of backward sections of the society. Most importantly, it aimed to provide the network of facilities through open universities, correspondence courses and part-time education to meet the social demands and the need of a continuing education.⁸⁵ It further laid stress on restructuring the under-graduate courses and design them in accordance to the demand of local and regional needs. The application-oriented courses were accepted to be promoted at the graduation level and the degrees of science and technology were stressed on for better development at the post-graduation and research level.⁸⁶ The Union government subsequently accepted the idea of an open

⁸³ T = Total Enrolment
W = Women Enrolment
NA = Not Available

⁸⁴ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Seventh Five Year Plan (1985 – 1990)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/7th/vol2/7v2ch10.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 10.48.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

university and an enacting legislation for Indira Gandhi National Open University was tabled in Lok Sabha in 1985. In fact, the first open university was constituted in 1969 in United Kingdom and in India, it was experimented upon in Andhra Pradesh in 1983. While introducing the bill, the Minister of Education, K. C. Pant (1931 – 2012), highlighted the objective and stated,

The purpose of this bill which provides for the establishment of a national open university, is to promote and foster a learning society in which there would be no barriers to vertical and horizontal mobility which is essential for the expansion of horizons and enhancement of the general and professional capability for all those who have the ambition and the will to do so... Education has so far remained confined to people who can pursue it on a whole-time basis. An open learning system which provides access to systematic education to house-wives, to workers in factories and farmers in the rural areas gives a new meaning to the concept of democratisation of educational opportunity. By endorsing this bill the House would establish an institution which would make it possible to provide continuing education to the workforce, who can avail of learning opportunities during leisure time and contribute to overall modernisation of the socio-economic system.⁸⁷

Thus, the idea of an open university was approved by the members in the House but, they emphasized the need to promote quality side by side and increase efficiency and effectiveness of the open university and they warned, that if the remedial measures were not taken at regular intervals then it would be a quantitative jump.

Conclusion

This chapter covering the expansion of higher education in a post-independent India shows that though the realm of higher education system may have undergone significant expansion, but the huge demand of the masses have not been fully met. Numerous gaps still exist on the lines of regional distribution of colleges and universities, enrolments on the basis of gender and course wise enrolments, as has been discussed. Numerous debates in the decades of 1950s and 1960s on the expansion of higher education were centred around the idea of expansion verses consolidation. Instead of taking the advice of intellectuals and parliamentarians seriously, the government wasted away its energy in establishing the UGC and the Commission subsequently focused on establishing and promoting departments for post-graduate degrees and research. Nevertheless, the execution of the Commission's plan did not produce desired results and the creation of substandard affiliated colleges with increasing numbers of mediocre degree holders

⁸⁷ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series*, Vol. IX, Third Session, August 26, 1985 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1985) 42.

further increased the misery of the government. The reluctant attitude of the government towards enacting the advice of intellectuals and its own commissions at policy level further made the situation worse. Later on, only under tremendous pressure the rising demands of constituting new vocational and technical institutes and generate employment opportunities was conceded to, though only partially. The state faced a major challenge of balancing between the growth of professional courses and general courses. Statistical details of the decade of 1970s show that a wide gap still existed between the number of arts, science and commerce colleges and colleges for professional education, even after the Report of the Education Commission was implemented. In the decade of 1980s, the Union Government adopted measures to relieve the universities from overcrowding. Moreover, the idea of an open university was employed by the Union Government in 1985, when the IGNOU was constituted. An important objective of the National Open University was to extend the benefit of higher education to the deprived sections of the society. The legislature approved the stand of the government during the discussion on the bill. It urged the government to promote quality and equality side by side and to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the open universities. MPs further warned that if the remedial measures were not taken periodically then it would result in merely a quantitative addition. Thus, a substantial change could not take place in the expansionist policy of the Government. The issues of regional imbalance, gender-wise gaps in the enrolment, distribution of courses and mismatch between education and employment still continued even after a series of commissions and committees.

CHAPTER 5: HIGHER EDUCATION AND NEOLIBERALISM

Introduction

In the post-independence period, India witnessed numerous modifications in the higher education system, but the basic structure remained similar to the colonial days overall. It was due to this reticent attitude of the Governments towards reform, and bureaucratic hurdles which prevented implementation of the recommendations by various commissions formed for the purpose. The last decade of twentieth century was a crucial phase in the history of education wherein, the impact of the newly embraced liberalisation was not only confined to the economic reorganisation of the country, but also deeply influenced the education system from top to bottom. The Government looked at the new model as a remedy to fight various ills plaguing education. On the contrary, rapidly increasing privatisation gave birth to newer problems even as numerous unresolved issues were still a challenge. The period witnessed a swift transition with private universities and colleges coming into existence and the introduction of self-finance courses. The issues of access, equity, expansion, inclusion etc were the central focus of discussion. The critics of the government's policy termed the restructuring as commodification of education and instead pressed on the protection, maintenance and consolidation of the public educational institutions. The present chapter has dealt primarily with the problems relating to the expansion of higher education during the period between 1990-2009. The reports of various government commissions, parliamentary debates and other sources pertaining to discussion around quality, access and administration of higher education has been explored and the views of eminent educationists particularly highlighted.

Finally, it is argued that in the neoliberal era, privatisation acquired a pivotal position in the process of reorganising the higher education system of the country. The Government considered it a handy tool to relinquish its responsibility to impart quality education. Commissions and Committees, right from the Gnanam Committee in 1990 to the Yashpal Committee Report of 2009 sought to refine the national collective understanding and improve rapidly. However, we have seen little in the way of progress, as older malaise persist and newer grow with the new government policies.

Reorienting quality of higher education: a neoliberal approach

The last decade of twentieth century witnessed numerous changes in the economic structure of the country and its impact was felt upon all aspects of human life. Neoliberalism became the guiding principle for reforming general administration as well as education system. However, the process of it began earlier when the nomenclature of Ministry of Education was changed to Ministry of Human Resource Development. It was a significant transformation in government's approach where the motivation from education was to make useful citizen and now human resource for the economic development of the country. While introducing the motion to reconsider Challenge of Education: 'A Policy Perspective' in 1985, the first person as MHRD, P. V. Narasimha Rao (1921-2004) gave an outline of the newly created Ministry and said,

A new Ministry of Human Resource Development has been formed by combining Education, Culture, Sports, Youth Affairs, Women's Welfare, Integrated Child Development and Censorship of Films. The conceptual framework of this Ministry consists in building up the all-round personality of man and to this end, integrating as many activities as possible with a view to evolving a package of inputs and delivering them. The process is not merely one of coordination, but real integration so that all components are woven into a single, continuous, harmonious programme...¹

With this idea, the government started to take various incentives to appropriate the Indian academia according the global market. A quality assessment mechanism had been long desired to introspect, find gaps and change strategy for maintaining the standard. While, an ambiguous method was adopted for measuring quality according to that main parameters were difference between the number of university graduates and available employment opportunities, absence of essential facilities of library and laboratory, unsatisfactory increase in the number of standard colleges and universities, etc. The National Policy on Education 1986 first recommended to create a system of performance appraisals of institutions according to standards and norms set at the National or State levels.² The University Grants Commission further appointed committees to offer suggestions to prepare an outline of such a body. Most importantly, the Report of the UGC Committee Towards New Educational Management was appointed under the chairmanship of a reputed administrator and biotechnologist, A. Gnanam (1932-2017) and after his name the report

¹ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series*, Vol. XI, Fourth Session, 10 December 1985, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1985), 319-320.

² *National Policy on Education 1986* (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 1986), 16.

is popularly known as Gnanam Committee Report. It recommended that the management of universities should be based on the cardinal principles of participation, decentralisation, autonomy and accountability. It emphasized the need to evaluate the performance of an academic institution, (say a department / faculty/college/ university) at least after every three years, by Autonomous bodies comprising of experts.³

Beyond the deliberation on establishing an all-India body for assessing the quality of higher education, the Union government appointed yet another committee to review the achievements of NPE 1986 and proposed suggestions to amend the policy. The committee was chaired by a social activist and educator, Acharya Ramamurti (1913-2010) and in his name, the report is popularly known as Ramamurti Committee Report. It highlighted the glaring defects in the planning and execution of government's policy. It noticed numerous ills in the system of higher education to be tackled and expressed dissatisfaction, 'we do not have many colleges today which can pride themselves of imparting under-graduate education of the highest quality, comparable to some of the well-known institutions in the world.'⁴ It attracted the attention of government towards the unplanned proliferation of the universities in different states which further contributed to deteriorate the academic standards. The committee recommended to initiate action against such universities according the established laws. In addition, The UGC proved to be a toothless body in dealing with the crisis and according to the Committee, there was a need of an extra-political will to check it.⁵ It also recommended, 'Universities should involve themselves in development issues in the concerned regions. They should become instruments of development in the respective regions. Consistent with this concept, curriculum, course development etc. should undergo significant changes.'⁶ The Narsimha Rao government took the suggestions of RCR seriously and unveiled an amended draft of NPE 1986 in the year 1992. It pointed out that after the 42nd Constitutional Amendment, the role and responsibility of states had not changed with regard to education, therefore,

³ *Report of the U.G.C. Committee towards new Educational Management* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1990), 4.

⁴ *Report of the Committee for Review of National Policy on Education 1986* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1990), 192.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

the Union government would accept a larger responsibility to reinforce the national and integrative character of education, to maintain quality and standards (including those of the teaching profession at all levels), to study and monitor the educational requirements of the country as a whole in regard to manpower for development, to cater to the needs of research and advanced study, to look after the international aspects of education, culture and Human Resource Development and, in general, to promote excellence at all levels of the educational pyramid throughout the country.⁷

Thus, the Union Government had a greater responsibility of reorienting the higher education.

A major step to establish a body for assessing the quality of higher education was taken after a great discussion on different aspects. An autonomous council was constituted under UGC on 7 September 1994 with the name National Assessment and Accreditation Council. It was to be located in Bangalore and for assessing the quality, the methods of UK, USA, Canada, Australia and scenario of India were considered. The vision of NAAC was 'to make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives.'⁸ However, it was a formidable task to conceptualise national assurance system and operationalise the process, and the NAAC could initiate the assessment process only after four years of its establishment. A limited number of institutions were assessed by adopting a predetermined criterion that combined self-study and peer-review that was valid for a specific period of time. On the basis of this, it evolved a unique model of assessment that combined three basic approaches to quality assurance namely, accreditation, assessment and audit.⁹ It also incentivised the accreditation and certified the external quality of institutions on a 9-point scale on 7 criteria (earlier there used to be 10 criteria for assessment), viz., 'curricular aspects, teaching, learning and evaluation, research, consultancy and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, student support and progression, organization and management and healthy practices.'¹⁰ An important objective behind enacting the NAAC was to generate an environment of competition among institutions and meet the

⁷ *National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992) with National Policy on Education 1968* (New Delhi: Department of Education Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1998), 7.

⁸ NAAC – Resources, 'NAAC: A Decade of Dedication to Quality Assurance,' National Assessment and accreditation Council, <http://naac.gov.in/docs/Books/NAAC%20A%20Decade%20of%20Dedication%20to%20Quality%20Assurance.pdf>. (accessed January 05, 2021), p. 29.

⁹ Pawan Agarwal, *Indian Higher Education: Invisioning the Future* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India PVT. LTD, 2009), 363.

¹⁰ Sudhanshu Bhushan, *Restructuring Higher Education in India* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2009), 52-53.

global standards so that the Indian market could be opened for private investors and the foreign investment could be attracted. As an impact of NAAC assessment, some institutions realised their responsibility and made numerous changes to fulfil the aims and goal of the university, like introduction of new co-curricular courses, research started to gain priority in colleges, and other more effective teaching methods were experimented etc.¹¹ But, the new system also had some shortcomings and highlighting about these, Sudhanshu Bhushan commented,

accreditation developed in US in response to internal demand of the system, whereas in India, the recent quality assurance mechanism was external and purely government controlled. It did not evolve from within the system. As a result, competitive pressure to maintain the quality did not evolve in terms of essential feature of the higher education system.¹²

On the other hand, it was always going to be a challenge for the government to ensure standard higher education to socially deprived section by adopting the idea of neoliberalism. As we have seen in the second chapter, there was a long debate for making standard higher education accessible and equitable for them. The government introduced various policies and programmes for their inclusion but they could not produce desired result. As the Eighth Five Year Plan provided information that in 1991-92, there was students' enrolment of around 44.25 lakh out of that 36.93 lakh were in affiliated colleges and 7.32 lakh were in university departments. The representation of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes in the total enrolment was about 10 per cent which was unsatisfactory. Probably, in the absence of adequate facilities, number of failed women students was 14.37 lakh (34.2 per cent).¹³ It also observed a fall in students' enrolment during the Seventh Plan, as the growth of students' enrolments which was 5 per cent per annual up to 1985-86, declined from 1986-87 onwards to around 4.1 per cent.¹⁴ The Eighth Plan did not propose any concrete plan to increase the enrolments of deprived sections. It suggested to lay stress on modernisation and restructuring of the management of university system which entails vigorous pursuit of the programmes of autonomous colleges and

¹¹ NAAC – Resources, 'NAAC: A Decade of Dedication to Quality Assurance,' National Assessment and accreditation Council, <http://naac.gov.in/docs/Books/NAAC%20A%20Decade%20of%20Dedication%20to%20Quality%20Assurance.pdf>. (accessed January 05, 2021), pp. 74-75.

¹² Bhushan, *Restructuring Higher Education in India*, 53-54.

¹³ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Eighth Five Year Plan (1992 – 1997)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/8th/vol2/8v2ch11.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 11.6.1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

autonomous university departments. 'Facilities in universities and colleges, including research facilities, would be consolidated and strengthened. The schemes of redesigning and restructuring of courses to meet the developmental needs of the country, examination reforms and teachers' training would be expanded.'¹⁵ An adequate supply of fund was still a challenge for implementing the reforms and during the discussion on Demands for Grants, MHRD in 1994, Dr. Sudhir Ray (Burdwan), raised the issue of meagre resources available for retaining quality at higher education. according an estimate around fifty per cent of the colleges were not receiving any rants from UGC. In the situation of resource crunch Ray stated,

the State universities and colleges are suffering heavily. How can we retain the quality of higher education if universities and colleges cannot purchase books? They cannot purchase quality international journals; the libraries remain ill-equipped and the laboratories have no apparatus or chemicals. Therefore, higher education is completely in doldrums.¹⁶

On the eve of Ninth Five Year Plan, the Steering Committee on University Learning, Open Learning System, Technical and Management Education reviewed the achievements of last plan and pointed towards a number of key areas where special attention during the Ninth Plan was needed. It included 1. Relevance and quality of education; 2. Access and equity; and 3. University and social change.¹⁷ It found numerous gaps in the implementation of valuable recommendations of recently drafted policies and appointed commissions and committees and emphasized to execute the recommendations of NPE 1986, Plan of Action 1986 and the Gnanam Committee for the improvement of the university education during the Ninth Five Years Plan. It also suggested to promote the academic decentralization and increase autonomy for higher education.¹⁸ An impact of neoliberalism was also felt in the policies and programmes of UGC, and for promoting privatisation it was essential to control finance and fee structure. An era of self-financed courses began and the Ninth Plan informed that with a view to enhancing the relevance of higher education, the UGC initiated a scheme of career orientation for students at the first-degree level by equipping them with competence for moving into job markets and self-

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 11.7.1.

¹⁶ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Tenth Series*, Vol. XXX, Ninth Session, May 3, 1994 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1994), 444.

¹⁷ *Report of the Steering Committee on University Learning, Open Learning System, Technical and Management Education* (New Delhi: Education Division Planning Commission, 1997), 5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

employment. The scheme had been introduced in 31 universities and about 1000 colleges covering about 40,000 students. Restructuring of courses was also taken up in order to relate the course content to the needs of society and economy.¹⁹ It gave the detail about a number of programmes those were introduced to improve the quality of higher education. But, none of them were implemented vigorously and delivery system was under tremendous pressure. The Union Government was investing only 3.9 per cent out of the total Gross Domestic Product for educational development and was, therefore, seeking other alternatives to increase the investment. To reset the quality of higher education the Ninth Plan recommended, first, that vocational education should be expanded at the under-graduation level which had strong linkages with industry and increased employability. The courses of UG would be restructured by the UGC in collaboration with universities and industrial houses would be actively involved in the development of curriculum; second, teaching in post-graduation, doctoral programme and research would be oriented towards applied fields so as to promote need-based specialisation and market-driven skill generation; third, faculty improvement scheme would be strengthened through incentives, self-development, sponsored research, in service through distance mode etc; and fourth, faculty exchange between industrial houses and universities would be encouraged in technical discipline so as to enrich the content of education.²⁰ Thus, market forces were set to gain momentum.

Higher education in India had failed to realise the social cause and now, government looked towards creating a knowledge economy. An extremely important intervention for pushing the privatisation in higher education was made by the Report on a Policy Frame Work for Reforms in Education. It was submitted by a special subject group in April 2000 which was convened by two business tycoons, Mukesh Ambani and Kumarmangalam Birla, therefore, the report came to be known as Ambani-Birla Committee Report. The objective of the committee was to provide an outline for the private investment in education and to boost the development of education system through government and private initiatives with direct participation of both. Most importantly, it emphasized on the changing circumstances in an era of globalization and neoliberal capitalist development. Education had acquired a new shape in the new world of

¹⁹ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Ninth Five Year Plan (1997 – 2002)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/9th/vol2/v2c3-3.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 3.3.24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 3.3.82.

information and technology and knowledge had replaced labour and raw material as the most critical input for survival and success: ‘Knowledge has become the new asset. More than half of GDP in the major OECD countries is now knowledge based. About two thirds of the future growth of world GDP is expected to come from knowledge led businesses.’²¹ The ABCR rightly observed the prevailing disparity in growth of education, accordingly, literacy rate in India was not only low but also highly skewed in terms of gender, state-wise spread and rural and urban spread. To improve the education system and increase literacy rate, the Union Government and state governments launched various schemes which could not produce desired results. The Report underlined that the wider world had adopted new techniques and methods of learning whereas India was suffering from internal weaknesses and found surviving difficult:

One world includes only a fortunate few with access to modern institutions, computers, Internet access and expensive overseas education. A second world wants to maintain status quo—teachers, administrators, textbook publishers, students—all have reasons to prefer things to remain as they are or change only gradually. The third world struggles with fundamental issues such as no books, wrong books, teachers desperately in need of training, teachers with poor commitment, rote learning of irrelevant material, classrooms with hundred students, dirty floors and no toilets. India cannot hope to succeed in the information age on the back of such three disparate worlds.²²

The above mentioned three disparate worlds existed as a consequence of government’s failures because since independence, education had been treated as an instrument for economic development and industrialisation. Serious efforts were not made to touch the social aspect of education and moreover different educational policies and valuable recommendations of various commissions and committees remained unimplemented. In addition, the suggestions of educationist and intellectuals were not listened to open-heartedly to fill the gaps between educational policy and execution. Several other factors were also responsible for this chaos. Now, the ABCR did provide a glimpse of three unequal worlds but it did not offer any details about how it would bridge the existing gap between three worlds. Thus, it was doubtful that the proposed public private partnership model could produce desired results because in those countries where private investment in education had been introduced earlier, more or less similar features were found. The Committee further envisaged to make India a knowledge economy. Its

²¹ *Report on a Policy Frame Work for Reforms in Education* (New Delhi: Prime Minister’s Council on Trade and Industry Government of India, 2000), 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

objective was not to produce labour and industrial workers but to foster knowledge-based resources. More attention was shown to point out the tradition of co-operation and coexistence in India among diverse communities, religions and languages and regions. Hence, it suggested that the vision for education in India would be to create a competitive yet cooperative, knowledge-based society.²³ It emphasized on increasing investment in education sector and accelerate the process of strengthening the education system.

This is not the time for just reforms. It is time for a revolution—an information revolution. The Green Revolution in agriculture had ushered in high productivity and prosperity through the use of technology. Likewise, a revolution in education that embraced information and communications technologies, fosters freedom and innovation and induced a market oriented competitive environment was vital for progress and prosperity in the information era. The need of the hour was taking bold steps, and not marginal and tentative ones.²⁴

It further recommended a broader programme of educational reconstruction from primary to higher level of education. For revolutionising higher education sector, it proposed, first, to enact a Private University Bill for encouraging the establishment of private universities in the field of science and technology, management and finance. Second, to institutionalise a system of periodical rating for schools, colleges and universities by an independent agency. Third, to allow foreign direct investment in education sector mainly science and technology. Fourth, to establish the institutions of international reputation and attract the overseas students. Fifth, to keep away political parties from the university campuses, etc.²⁵

The ABCR was not released in public domain for long, but, rapid process of promoting private investment in the area of higher education made that inevitable. Criticising the approach of ABCR, Vijender Sharma wrote,

Ambani-Birla Report sought to convert the entire system of higher education in the country in to a market where profit making will be the only consideration. Only those who will be able to pay exorbitant amount of fee will enrol in higher education. For Ambani and Birla, education is a very profitable market over which they must have full control...²⁶

²³ Ibid., 2-3.

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 6.

²⁶ Vijender Sharma, 'Commercialisation of Higher Education in India', *Social Scientist* 33, no. 9/10 (September - October 2005): 71.

Thus, the recommendations of the ABCR could have proved disastrous in a context wherein the government was still struggling to implement the ideas of accessibility, equality and inclusion. However, new ideas gave birth to new hopes and expectations. Hence, the private institutions were defined for quality education. The UGC took prompt action on the recommendations of ABCR and issued regulations for establishing and maintaining standards in private universities in 2003.²⁷ It was an explicit recognition of the proliferation of private universities, though the industrialists did not welcome ‘over-regulation’ by UGC. On the other hand, academicians also raised questions on the intentions of the government. One of them emphasized that there was no option of public institutions to strengthen national intelligence, increase contacts with the scientific and intellectual community of the world, increase capabilities and upgrade knowledge for further development. Citizens had greater responsibility to ensure that the government would take care of public interest and promote essential services like health and education.²⁸ With the turn of twentieth century, the Tenth Five Year Plan informed about the growth of the universities. Over the past 50 years, there had been a significant growth in the number of new universities and institutions of higher learning in specialised areas. There were then 273 universities/deemed to be universities (including 18 medical universities and 40 agricultural universities) and 12,300 colleges (of which 4,683 are in the rural areas).²⁹ However, the issues of access and equity were major challenges for the university education. Only about 6 per cent of the estimated population between the age group 18 to 23 years had access to higher education.³⁰ For overhauling the university system, the Committee recommended, ‘The basic issue of quality improvement would be addressed through the modernisation of syllabi, increased research, networking of universities and departments and increased allocation of funds...’³¹

In a rapidly changing world, where numerous new ideas were emerging to disseminate higher education, enhancing human capacity and promoting economic development of the countries was important. The ICT based tools and techniques revolutionised the approach of

²⁷ UGC: (*Establishment of and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities*) Regulations 2003 (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 2003), 1.

²⁸ Sharma, ‘Commercialisation of Higher Education in India’, 74.

²⁹ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, ‘Tenth Five Year Plan (2002 – 2007)’, Planning Commission, https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/v2_ch2_5.pdf. (accessed on April 27, 2020), para. 2.5.2.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.5.10.

³¹ Ibid.

people and exerted pressure to rethink about the existing system. In this context, the issues of autonomy and academic freedom were important which had a direct impact on the quality of higher education. The Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions was significant one which was constituted by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 2005 under the Chairmanship of Kanti Bishwas, Minister of Education, West Bengal government. The Committee observed high discrepancies in the education system where higher education was continuously expanding, mostly in an unplanned manner, without even minimum levels of checks and balances. Many universities were burdened with unmanageable number of affiliated colleges. Some had more than 300 colleges affiliated to them. New universities were being carved out of existing ones to reduce the number of affiliated colleges. This situation posed a serious challenge when government depended upon autonomy as an instrument to improve quality of such a huge size of higher education system.³² It acknowledged increasing vitality of open universities and informed that these institutions offered various academic programmes such as certificate, diploma and degree. IGNOU had become a premier institution and as an apex body, it was coordinating and monitoring distance education system in higher education throughout the country. It had constituted a statutory Distance Education Council and provided expertise and assistance to other open and distance learning institutions in the country. Approximately 22 per cent of the enrolment in higher education could safely be covered under distance education programmes.³³ To reorient the system of university governance and administration for promoting quality, it recommended that the freedom of dissent which happens to be the crux of the academic autonomy should be cornerstone of the university system. It was so because in the 21st century,

University is the place where knowledge is not only imparted but it is also created through research. Therefore, research is considered as important as teaching in the universities. However, knowledge produced through research has not only to be new but also to be valid in order to enhance the adaptive capability of the human society. Therefore, originality, creativity, intellectual honesty and integrity need to be considered important values in good universities. These values, therefore, are to be consciously promoted on the campuses of the universities and colleges...³⁴

³² *Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions* (New Delhi: Department of Secondary and Higher Education Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2005), 19.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

The CAHEI marked a sharp distinction from the traditional understanding of the concept of university autonomy in which different elements such as administrative, academic and financial autonomy were separately treated. On the contrary it suggested to look at academic, administrative and financial autonomy as an inclusive setup and not in isolation. It also added, 'Higher Education should not be made a prisoner of either bureaucracy or ideology. It must develop on the foundations of professional excellence and intellectual integrity.'³⁵ For maintaining the standard of higher education, the recommendations of CAHEI were quite attractive in regard of academic autonomy and they were opposed to excess regulation of by UGC and government. It emphasized freedom in terms of admitting students, designing and revising curricula and syllabus, regulation of courses, choosing suitable pedagogy and evaluation method, recruiting and promoting teachers, opening of new programmes of study and terminating obsolete ones and most importantly, providing a conducive environment for the pursuit of truth.³⁶ The Committee also realised the need of the hour and suggested financial autonomy for the higher education institutions. It provided,

The higher education institutions should decide their own course of action for income and expenditure, but shall be accountable to funding agencies including the state government and UGC subject to audit rules. In fact, no control would be desirable either to augment the income from multiple sources or to expenditure in terms of budget provision. Even the authority for re-appropriation of budget heads of accounts should be vested with the higher education institutions as and when the financial functioning of the institutions so required.³⁷

The suggested partial control of government and UGC could not stop private investors from making profit out of investment in education sector. The other recommendations of the government's chosen Committee explicitly indicated to push privatisation for assuring quality in higher education. It called for giving autonomy to each institution for designing its own procedure for selection of research fellows with due regard to merit. Faculty members should not suffer from want of funds and new frontier areas should be included in the revised curriculum. Universities and colleges should equally focus on creating job-oriented courses. Universities and colleges should have the autonomy to start self-finance courses in new areas. All universities should shift towards adoption of choice-based credit course along with the semester system for

³⁵ Ibid., 48-49.

³⁶ Ibid., 44.

³⁷ Ibid., 54.

bringing flexibility and accelerating the implementation of autonomy.³⁸ Thus, promoting privatisation was a lived reality to meet the challenges of new millennium.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan brought a welcome news for India that by the end of the Tenth Plan, the Indian higher education system had grown into one of the largest in the world with 378 universities, 18064 colleges, faculty strength of 4.92 lakh, and an estimated enrolment of 140 lakh students. Higher education institutions included 23 Central universities, 216 State universities, 110 deemed universities, 11 private universities, and 33 institutions of national importance established through central legislation and another 5 institutions established through State legislations.³⁹ But, none of them could match the standard of world class universities and colleges and did not acquire any place in global rankings. The Eleventh Plan further informed that government had set the target to grant autonomous status to 10 per cent of the colleges. At that time, there were 132 autonomous colleges under 29 universities. The Eleventh Plan further suggested various measures to improve the quality of higher education with greater emphasis on restructuring academic programmes to ensure their relevance to modern market demands and domestic and global linkages with employers and external advisory resource support groups and tracer studies.⁴⁰ The policies and programmes of government could be further improvised with the suggestions of National Knowledge Commission which was constituted in June 2006 by then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. It was Chaired by Sam Pitroda, a telecom engineer and entrepreneur. The NKC widely focused on five key areas such as access, concepts, creation, applications and services. In the context of higher education, it emphasized to work in three specific areas of expansion, excellence and inclusion. The objective of the Commission was to expand and reform the school system so that no child could remain aloof from higher education. After wide consultation with all stakeholders, the commission reached the conclusion that higher education needed a systematic overhaul, so that India could educate much larger numbers without diluting academic standards. Indeed, that was essential because the transformation of economy and society in the 21st century would depend, in significant part, on the spread and the quality of education among our people, particularly in the sphere of higher education. Thus, an

³⁸ Ibid., 61.

³⁹ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007 – 2012)', Planning Commission, https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/11th/11_v2/11v2_ch1.pdf. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 1.3.1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., para. 1.3.26.

inclusive society alone could provide the foundations for a knowledge society.⁴¹ For maintaining excellence in higher education, the NKC recommended to revise the curricula at least once in three years, to introduce choice-based credit assessment system, to introduce changes in resource allocation, reward system and mindsets for attracting large number of researchers and teachers and to upgrade and monitor the library, laboratory and other facilities etc.⁴²

Considering the case of India, there was a gradual intrusion of technology in the field of knowledge production. The NKC recommended to gear up the process of modernising higher education system by adopting ICT in different areas. It also realised the need of reforms to make education accessible. For example, it recommended to strengthen the libraries in India and evolved them into a hub of information. It also suggested to adopt the PPP model for their development and in due course, government could include libraries in the Concurrent List to providing for them a financial backing and legal support.⁴³ To expand knowledge network in India, it recommended to connect all universities, libraries, laboratories, hospitals and agriculture institutions through high-speed broad band network. It would help in building a national Knowledge Network with gigabit capabilities and enable to share data and resources across the country. Highlighting the objective, it proposed, ‘The key to successful research today is live consultations, data sharing and resource sharing. Therefore, it is essential to provide broadband connectivity to our knowledge institutions to improve access, quality and quantity of R&D activities.’⁴⁴

For the smooth functioning of higher education institutions and implementing the reforms, the NKC stressed the need to reform the structure of governance and make it more result-oriented and accountable. It also expressed the urgent need of reform and restructure the system of affiliated colleges for the education of UG. It recommended to provide autonomy to colleges either on individual basis or in clusters, to modify colleges as community colleges for imparting both vocational and formal education and to establish a Central Board of under Graduate Education as an all-purpose body from setting up curricula to check quality of

⁴¹ *National Knowledge Commission: Report to the Nation 2006 – 2009*, (New Delhi: Government of India, 2009), 60.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

education.⁴⁵ The idea of inclusion acquired a central place and the Commission suggested to provide equal opportunity of education to all. It believed that poor economic conditions should not become a barrier for talented youngsters. As for a solution, it recommended adopting a need-blind policy and implement a well-funded national scholarship scheme for economically underprivileged sections. It further recommended for expanding the horizon of affirmative action and addressed the disparities at the levels of gender, region, income and place of residence.⁴⁶ Thus, the NKC provided a series of recommendations for modernising the higher education system and make it the hub of knowledge generation.

Other side, the Report of the Committee to Advise on the Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education provided a detail analysis of prevailing condition. It was appointed under the chairmanship of an administrator and scientist, Yashpal (1926-2017) and in his name it came to be known as Yashpal Committee Report. Instead of promoting the establishment of exclusive centres of research, the YCR emphasized on the holistic nature of universities where teaching and research went together. It expressed disenchantment on the separation of research from the universities because a large number of universities had emerged as teaching and examining bodies alone and research was considered as an elite undertaking. Thus, several higher education bodies had had sprung up where researchers had no opportunity to engage with young minds. For resolving this crisis, the Committee recommended, 'it should be necessary for all research bodies to connect with universities in their vicinity and create teaching opportunities for their researchers and for all universities to be teaching and research universities.'⁴⁷ It drew attention towards the poor quality of education and absence of skills and efficiency among the young graduates. To address the problem, it suggested to reform the curriculum according to local needs. Evaluation and examination process would have to change. The pedagogic practices will have to alter.⁴⁸ Like other Commissions and Committees, the YCR also stressed to impart higher education oriented to economic development and skill enhancement. It appreciated the establishment of a skill-development council at the Central level and seek the inclusion of professional courses in the universities and promote acquiring skills and efficiency for the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Committee to Advise on the Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education* (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2009), 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 17.

speedy economic development of India.⁴⁹ The Committee did not oppose increasing privatisation of higher education but it recommended embracing the new phenomenon with certain modifications. It suggested that profit-making should not be sole motive of privatisation and therefore, the investors should not confine themselves only to ‘commercially viable’ sectors of education, such as management, accountancy and medicine etc. but should also encompass areas of social and natural sciences by establishing comprehensive universities. It recommended to amend the legal framework under which such entities were operated.⁵⁰ Unlike NKC, it recommended to ensure the access of higher education to everyone who entered into the portals of higher education. No student should be deprived of education for want of money. It should be the duty of the state and the institution to provide the means of finance either through scholarship or loans.⁵¹ To determine the quality of an institution, the YCR emphasized not only to assess the quality of institutions but the quality of teachers as well because, ‘Quality of teaching is the best indicator and a key determinant of the overall quality of institutional life.’⁵²

To sum up, different commissions and committees in the neoliberal phase recommended to embrace privatisation in the sector of higher education for quality enhancement. The government also looked upon it as an inexpensive and effective instrument to find solution to a number of problems. This did not ameliorate the quality as per the expectations but unexpectedly promoted commodification of higher education. Several voices in favour of public education raised by politicians and intellectuals at various platforms. During the discussion on Central University Amendment Bill in 2009, P. K. Biju (Alathur) attacked on the policy of excessive privatisation of higher education. He said,

The HRD Minister has announced that a Bill would be introduced in the Parliament for setting up off-campus centres for foreign universities in the country. It is clear that the government has not learnt any lesson from its earlier mistake of setting up private deemed universities. Though it was argued that private universities would help improve the quality of education, our experience has not been satisfactory. The Yashpal Committee has called for a review of the system. Yashpal Committee’s recommendation, which is to permit setting up of foreign universities within the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 32-33.

⁵¹ Ibid., 36.

⁵² Ibid., 40-41.

framework of strict regulations, appears to be misplaced. Such a step would not help improve the quality of education...⁵³

Participating in the same discussion, Dr. Tarun Mandal (Jaynagar), also opposed the growing privatisation and argued,

Privatisation of education, making money out of education is a crime and our country cannot afford it. The policy of globalisation, commercialisation should be withdrawn from the education sector... I would like to request the Hon. Minister for Human Resource Development to recall the recommendations of the Kothari Commission of the 1960s which clearly directed that education should be free in free India and this should be done in a phased manner from the primary level to the university level... I strongly oppose such an idea. All sorts of self-financing institutions promulgated by the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) and Yashpal Committee are deviation from the thoughts of our great nation builders...⁵⁴

Despite having a contradictory opinion on the privatisation of higher education, it was a reality that the public and private institutions were functioning side by side. Thus, in the words of Jandhyala B. G. Tilik, the educational policy of government was hanging between state and market.⁵⁵

Autonomy of university and neoliberalism

The last decade of twentieth century witnessed a tremendous growth of higher education institutions. The number of colleges had increased from 7513 in 1991–1992 to 13,150 in 2001–2002. The number of universities also increased from 180 to 253 including deemed to be universities recognized by UGC.⁵⁶ The idea of treating human beings as human resource further invigorated after introducing changes in the economic structure of the country in 1991. With this, India entered into the phase of neoliberalism where market forces initiated to supersede the governmental control and a new term ‘managerialism’ was coined to reform the education system. By highlighting the features of the neo-liberalism, Sudhanshu Bhushan wrote,

⁵³ *Lok Sabha Debates (Original Version) Fifteenth Series*, Vol. V, Third Session, December 1, 2009 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2009), 745-746.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 763.

⁵⁵ Jandhyala B. G. Tilik, ‘Higher Education in 'Trishanku': Hanging between State and Market’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 37 (September 2005): 4030.

⁵⁶ *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 2001 – March 2002) in compliance with the Section 18 of the UGC Act 1956*, (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 2002), 31.

Bureaucracy is to be replaced by new doctrine of managerialism, contracting and performance appraisal. It is assumed that the self-interest of bureaucrats leads to corruption and inefficiency as there is nothing called collective self-interest. An individual as part of the state needs to be manipulated in such a manner that it becomes responsive to market signals and performance orientation.⁵⁷

The government seemed to be serious at the initial stage of liberalisation regarding the recommendations of Gnanam Committee 1990. It was further deliberated by CAGE in its forty-sixth meeting held on March 8-9, 1991. The Chairman of CAGE decided to consider the Gnanam Committee in the light of comments of the states and present a report in the next meeting. Dr. Karshandas Soneri, Minister of Education in Gujarat Government, was appointed as the chairman of the CAGE Committee. He was asked to consider the Gnanam Committee in the light of the views of state governments, UGC, NPE 1986 and the development took place after the formulation of NPE. He was also assigned the task to suggest the modalities for implementing the recommendations and to advise policy guideline for establishing new Central Universities and converting the State Universities into the Central Universities.⁵⁸

Considering the centrality of the matter, it would be appropriate to explore the recommendations of the Gnanam Committee at this place and answer, how far the report further expanded the idea of university autonomy and academic freedom. The Committee proposed four cardinal principles such as participation, decentralisation, autonomy and accountability for managing the affairs of the university. It emphasized to increase the participation of teachers and students in the functioning of the university. Like the Report of the Committee to Enquire into the Working of Central Universities 1984, it recommended to keep elections at a bare minimum for appointing teachers as representatives in different universities bodies. The selection should be made according the nomination based on seniority and rotation or on the basis of criteria laid down by the university concerned. Similarly, the student representatives should be nominated at various university bodies on the basis of their excellence in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities.⁵⁹ The Committee considered changing socio cultural and socio-economic patterns for the revolutionary changes in the role and function of the universities. The New Education Policy of 1986 also advocated to reorient the higher education system to become

⁵⁷ Bhushan, *Restructuring Higher Education in India*, 148.

⁵⁸ *Report of the CAGE Committee on Gnanam Committee Report 1992*, rep. ed. (New Delhi: Department of Education Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1992), 1-2.

⁵⁹ *Report of the U.G.C. Committee towards new Educational Management*, 2.

an effective instrument of socio, cultural, scientific and technical change in the country. Accepting the socio and cultural plurality of the nation, the Committee recommended that the drafted legislations must give liberty to each university to frame the detail of statutes and ordinance in accordance with its particular role, functions and objectives. The objectives and traditions of the universities must be accepted while evolving a detail of administrative, management system and structure. It further added,

The recruitment of administrative personnel should be done with reference to educational administration and not general administration. The people with good academic qualifications combined with aptitude for administration should be recruited and treated on par with teaching staff, at different levels. Automatic promotion in the administrative style of the Governments is not desirable.⁶⁰

Thus, the Gnanam Committee showed a path to evolve autonomous universities which would be free from the regimentation of the government and would be able to change and introduce the curricula in accordance with market need.

The idea of university autonomy as a right of the university bound by certain duties and responsibilities took a full shape under Gnanam Committee which clearly highlighted that accountability was integral to university autonomy. According the Committee, the autonomy of university emphasized on the freedom to achieve academic excellence and administer the university through its own rules and regulations. It maintained that the Centre/States may not exercise their influence on the universities except to ensure that the funds were utilised for the purpose they are given. It further said, 'The autonomy pleaded for the University should, of course, percolate down to the various organs of the University system. The ultimate objective of management of higher education system should be that every university department becomes autonomous and every college is able to exercise meaningful autonomy.'⁶¹ Here, the term 'meaningful autonomy' seemed ambiguous and did not provide ideal situation for developing autonomous colleges. It also appeared that on the one hand, the Committee was in favour of instilling autonomy from top to bottom of the university administration and on the other hand, it supported the indirect control of government on universities. The Committee recommended the States Councils of Higher Education as earlier envisaged by the Plan of Action 1986 to minimise

⁶⁰ Ibid., 77-78.

⁶¹ Ibid., 80.

direct interference through governmental, political and any other channel in the functioning of the university. It may also be utilised to keep constant vigilance on the functioning of the higher institutes.⁶² For understanding the mentality behind reforms, the definition of autonomy is enough which was proposed by the committee,

autonomy means the freedom to do what universities are expected to do and not what they like to do and certainly not to do what they are not expected to do. The mere assurance that autonomy of the universities should not be interfered with or taken away is in itself not sufficient...⁶³

The idea of accountability linked with autonomy was not exclusively confined only to the proper utilisation of funds but, accepted larger social expectations. The Committee recommended to ensure the accountability of the universities at two levels such as the university should clarify to the society each year about the accomplishment of its objectives. Likewise, the functionaries of the university should explain to the Management Board each year about the work done towards accomplishment of the objectives of the universities.⁶⁴ For fixing the accountability individually and collectively, it suggested to adopt the strategies such as academic and administrative auditing, annual and periodic reporting, and Vice Chancellors, teaching departments and individual teachers should contribute to assess the academic performance of the universities.⁶⁵

The Gnanam Committee had considered the numerous instances of breaching the university autonomy and conflicts that had arisen between the government and university administration in previous years. Thus, it analysed in great detail the relationship between the government and universities. It observed that the universities were constituted in India through the Act in the legislature. The role of the government could never be undermined in drafting and implementing the legislation. Therefore, the universities were accountable to their respective governments and legislatures. The universities were also dependent on the governments for funds from public exchequer and it was the responsibility of government to ensure that the grants provided them were utilised properly.⁶⁶ Thus, the government could evolve as a partner that

⁶² Ibid., 81-82.

⁶³ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 233.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 233-237.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 92.

would enable the universities to adequately discharge their responsibilities and achieve their goals. The relation of government and universities was not an easy one. The universities had to perform certain functions as incorporated in the legislature. For their smooth functioning, academic judgement had to be exercised which exclusively fell under the domain of the university. At this juncture, the question of autonomy became vital and contest has been seen over to 'draw sharp distinction between the issues which are academic and which are non-academic. Decision on non-academic issues like authorising expenditure of specified purposes can and do influence academic decisions.'⁶⁷ The clash further increased when the demand of accountability was widely considered by the universities as interference in their functional autonomy. For resolving the issue, the Committee highlighted the role and difference between the power and duties of the President as the Visitor of the Central Universities and Governors as the Chancellors of the State Universities. It further suggested that first, the government should play supervisory role through the Visitor of State Council for Higher Education and the Council for Central Universities. Second, in the academic and administrative matters, the universities should have complete autonomy. The financial autonomy should be given as per the approved guideline. Third, the universities should have statutes making power with certain exceptions. Fourth, the universities should have the power of affiliation and disaffiliation of the colleges etc.⁶⁸

The Gnanam Committee also recommended to overhaul the governance system of the universities by introducing various reforms in the different administrative units. It advocated decentralisation and boosting the process as recommended by the Report of the Committee to inquire into the Working of Central Universities 1984. It observed that the Vice Chancellor was too much occupied in the daily routine administrative works and had no time left for to assess and observe the academic excellence in the university. The Committee recommended the change in this condition by suggesting,

The Vice- Chancellor is kept out of the routine matters and is made free to concentrate largely on review and monitoring of the existing activities and plan development of the university. It is thus, necessary that the Directors of Institutes, Deans of Faculties/Heads of Departments be given authority and powers and their

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 97-98.

offices be adequately strengthened to enable them to handle their tasks effectively subsequent to appropriate delegation of the powers.⁶⁹

It also recommended to grant autonomy to the lower units of the university and suggested,

1. Delegation of power to Departments; 2. Faculty Councils to deliberate and decide on academic issues; 3. Conferring autonomy to Departments under special Assistance Programmes (CAS/DSA etc.); 4. Creation of Autonomous Institutes in the Universities by re-grouping of Departments wherever possible and 5. Decentralisation for collegiate management.⁷⁰

It was also to be a priority of the Committee to Minimise the conflict of college and university administration with students, teachers and administrative staff. For that purpose, it recommended to constitute a Grievance Redressal Machinery for settling the conflicts at the university level. It also suggested to constitute a Joint Consultative Committee of students, teachers and non-teaching staff for the redressal of grievances in a fixed time frame. To that end, therefore, there should have been a separate Consultative Committee at university and college levels.⁷¹ Hence, the recommendations of the Gnanam Committee tried to provide a new outlook to the administration of colleges and universities and make it appropriate to fulfil the emerging needs of the market. It clearly underlined that the university autonomy was not an absolute concept and in the case of public funding, the government would exercise her control in the name of fixing accountability for ensuring the better utilisation of funds.

The recommendations of Gnanam Committee were widely discussed by the government and academicians for reorganising the higher education system. For the first time, a detailed outline was prepared for the systematic implementation of the recommendations at various levels. The Report of the CAGE Committee on Gnanam Committee Report 1992 provided a concrete plan and observed that the education system suffered widely because earlier even the good recommendations of different Commissions and Committees were not implemented. It suggested the modalities and recommended, first, to place the suggestions of this Committee along with Gnanam Committee before the CAGE which would consist of Education Ministers of every State and renowned educationists. If CAGE will approve this report then the centre and state Governments would be morally bound to implement its recommendations. Second, the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 213.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 213-214.

⁷¹ Ibid., 195-196.

UGC should prepare a statement indicating which recommendations were to be implemented by which agency and this statement should be circulated to all the concerned agencies after the consideration of the Gnanam Committee Report by the CAGE. It was envisaged so as to avoid conflict and confusion among the agencies concerned its implementation include; central government, UGC, state governments, universities and colleges. Third, the Committee recommended to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Gnanam Committee at all levels. Therefore, it suggested to constitute different Committees at the level of Central Government/UGC, State Governments/ State Councils of Higher Education, Universities and Colleges. Fourth, it also emphasized to monitor the progress of implementing the recommendations of the Gnanam Committee at all levels by a Standing Committee which would be appointed by the CAGE.⁷² The formulation of policy based on the recommendations of CAGE Committee was the next step where the government was lacking and no speedy change in the functioning of the universities was visible. Speaking on the motion of Demands for Grants MHRD in 1994 in Lok Sabha, S. P. Yadav (Sambhal) highlighted the cases of malpractice in higher education and gave the reference of the Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Commission which appointed an ineligible candidate at the post of Principal in the NKPMB College, Chandrausi. He believed that such irregularities were observed in other States as well and the non-interference of Central Government in the matters of education was an important cause responsible for this. He also argued 'Education system cannot be improved unless a uniform National Education Policy is framed. In absence of a uniform policy various States are functioning arbitrarily.'⁷³ Thus, it proved to be a sad failure on part of the government that it could not evolve a common pattern for governing higher education after having a series of Commission and Committees.

The Union Government also started vigorously to mould higher education policy keeping in mind the global changes and liberal policy of the country and consequently, the new thrusts and demand expected from the education system. As India approached to Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002), it was said that 'the issues have been examined broadly from the point of view of consolidation, access, equity and expansion, quality and achievements of excellence,

⁷² *Report of the CAGE Committee on Gnanam Committee Report 1992*, 3-5.

⁷³ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Tenth Series*, Vol. XXX, Ninth Session, May 3, 1994 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1994), 410.

accountability and upholding of the value orientation of education.’⁷⁴ For reorienting the governance system of universities and colleges to suit the market needs, the government appointed back-to-back commissions and committees. The Report on a Policy Frame Work for Reforms in Education 2000 is especially considered here. The objective of the ABCR was to provide an outline for the private investment in education and to recommend boosting the development of education system through the government and private initiatives with direct participation of both.⁷⁵ The Committee advocated revolutionary reforms at all levels of education. For the speedy change, it recommended to enact a Private University Bill for encouraging the establishment of private universities in the field of science and technology, management and finance.⁷⁶ There was a motive of making money out of educational reforms as industrialists do not believe in any regulation similarly, the ABCR also recommended to ban all union activities and keep away political parties from the university campuses.⁷⁷ Thus, there was a need of a strategy to ensure the participation of students, teachers and non-teaching staff in the affairs of the university under private management and the implication of the concept of university autonomy and academic freedom was to depend on the regulation of the government. The propagators of public education vehemently criticised the action and motives of the government. During the discussion on the Delhi University Amendment Bill in 2002, Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh (Vaishali), commented on the privatisation of higher education and highlighted the motive of the government by appointing a Commission under Ambani and Birla. He viewed,

Hon’ble Prime Minister constituted a committee comprising capitalists like Birla of Birla Group and Ambani of Reliance Group of Industries. They have submitted their report. However, I would like to know whether people engaged in money making are right persons to formulate a policy on education. They have been appointed advisors and they have recommended privatisation and commercialisation of education. With privatisation of education, the poor will not be able to afford education particularly higher education to their wards... this is a racket and we must ponder over it.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Report of the Steering Committee on University Learning, Open Learning System, Technical and Management Education*, 1.

⁷⁵ *Report on a Policy Frame Work for Reforms in Education*, 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Thirteenth Series*, Vol. XXVII, Tenth Session, July 30, 2002 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2002), 581.

With the turn of twenty-first century, India had new challenges and opportunities. Amidst growing privatisation and changing global needs, there was a need to reassess the university system of the country and prepared an outline for changes. The Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions 2005 was significant. The Committee observed high discrepancies in the education system where due to unplanned growth of the institutions without minimal level of checks and balances, the universities were burdened with large number of affiliated colleges. This situation posed a serious challenge when the government was dependent on autonomy as a means to improve quality of such a huge size of higher education system.⁷⁹ It suggested not to look at autonomy as an instrument for maintaining quality, and it further broke the traditional notion of autonomy which emphasized mainly the functional aspect of the university. It gave a new colour to the concept and suggested,

The concept of autonomy is a structural solution intended mainly to provide an enabling environment to improve and strengthen the teaching and learning process. Autonomy alone may not guarantee higher quality, just as non-autonomy need not preclude better performance. The essential factors for high quality education are the calibre and attitudes of students towards learning, the competence and commitment of teachers towards educational processes, the flexibility and foresightedness of the governance system and the social credibility of the educational outcome. The autonomy is expected to provide a better framework for fostering these factors than the affiliation system with all its constraining conditions hanging as a dead weight on the higher education system. Even the limited evidence so far suggests that autonomous colleges have by and large fulfilled the expectations of them.⁸⁰

In the rapidly changing Indian society and economy, the CAHEI also emphasized academic freedom and to understand its utility in the new conception of university. Higher education was widely accepted as a tool for development and institutions as hubs of knowledge generation in 21st century. It was not only engaged in imparting advanced knowledge but, also in creating a new one through research.

Therefore, research was considered as important as teaching. However, knowledge produced through research had not only to be new but also to be valid in order to enhance the adaptive capability of the human society. Therefore, originality, creativity, intellectual honesty and integrity were to be considered important values in good universities. These values, therefore, were to be consciously promoted on the

⁷⁹ *Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions*, 19.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

campuses of the universities and colleges. These, however, necessitated the freedom to differ from traditional or established authority, freedom of expression, and freedom from any kind of fear. Therefore, the freedom of dissent which happens to be the crux of the academic autonomy was seen as a cornerstone of the university system.⁸¹

The Committee also suggested ways to ensure academic autonomy by providing space for dissent and creativity, a conducive environment for research and freedom from monetary benefits. The autonomy must protect three stakeholders' students, faculty and society.⁸² On the other hand, the Committee suggested to treat the academic, administrative and financial autonomy in an inclusive setup and not in isolation which stood in a sharp contradiction to the traditional approach according to which the various elements of university autonomy were to be dealt with separately. It further stressed that higher education must develop on the foundations of professional excellence and intellectual integrity and should not be made a prisoner of either bureaucracy or ideology. Colleges should be an important unit for administrative autonomy and the colleges could come together to form universities. The college should have the autonomy to lay down most of the rules based on those laid down by a larger unit, that is, the university.⁸³ Without granting financial autonomy, the autonomous colleges and universities could not be erected. This idea acquired central focus and the Committee suggested that it was the need of the hour that

the higher education institutions should decide their own course of action for income and expenditure, but shall be accountable to funding agencies including the state government and UGC subject to audit rules. In fact, no control would be desirable either to augment the income from multiple sources or to expenditure in terms of budget provision. Even the authority for re-appropriation of budget heads of accounts should be vested with the higher education institutions as and when the financial functioning of the institutions so required.⁸⁴

The administrative and academic autonomy also accepted equal importance for fulfilling the market needs. The CAHEI recommended to give autonomy to each institution for designing its own procedure for selection of research fellows with due regard to merit. Faculty members need not suffer from want of fund and new frontier areas should be included in the revised

⁸¹ Ibid., 44.

⁸² Ibid., 45.

⁸³ Ibid., 48-49.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 54.

curriculum. The universities and colleges should equally focus on creating job-oriented courses and should have the autonomy to start self-finance courses in the new areas. All universities should shift towards adoption of choice-based credit course along with the semester system for bringing flexibility and accelerating the implementation of autonomy.⁸⁵ For making the administration appropriate, bring flexibility and speed in decision making, the Committee recommended:

Acts, statutes and ordinances of the universities should be reviewed for their better management as also for granting autonomous status to affiliating colleges. There is a need to reduce number of levels in decision making and greater empowerment at different levels to allow the system to become more dynamic and result oriented. Higher education institutions are to be driven by forces such as managerial efficiency, cost effectiveness, leadership and strategic control. The new form of management in the university should encourage best practices of governance, speedy decision making, networking, team effort and collective responsibility to meet the challenges of the new millennium.⁸⁶

Thus, the Report of the CAGE Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions provided detailed suggestions to reorganise the governance system of the universities and colleges to suit the growing market. It also provided ways to promote privatisation within existing structure by introducing self-finance courses and establishing self-finance colleges and universities. It also laid down policy not only to grant administrative and academic autonomy but, financial autonomy also. Subsequently, the Eleventh Five Year Plan informed that the government should set target to grant autonomous status to the ten per cent of the colleges. Regarding the achievements of the tenth plan, it highlighted that during the Tenth Plan period (2002-2007), the target was to accord autonomous status to 10 per cent of eligible colleges. There were then 132 autonomous colleges under 29 universities. However, the number of institutions that had utilized their autonomous status in launching new courses and innovative methods either in teaching or management appeared to be extremely limited.⁸⁷

The National Knowledge Commission and the Yashpal Committee Report further contributed to expand the horizon of the debate on university autonomy and provoked rapid

⁸⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁷ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007 – 2012)', Planning Commission, https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/11th/11_v2/11v2_ch1.pdf. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 1.3.15.

change in the higher education system so that the Indian academia could follow the foot print of international development. The NKC focused on the five key areas: access, concepts, creation, applications and services. It acknowledged the vital role of higher education in the economic development, social progress and political democracy in independent India. The universities were to be the nucleus of all developmental activities, therefore the Commission called the universities as ‘life blood of higher education.’ In due course of time, a need for wider reforms was felt and some major and minor changes took place. But the Commission recommended to modify the higher education system to beat the older and new challenges.

It is clear that the system of higher education in India faces serious challenges. It needs a systematic overhaul, so that we can educate much larger numbers without diluting academic standards. This is imperative because the transformation of economy and society in the 21st century would depend, in significant part, on the spread and the quality of education among our people, particularly in the sphere of higher education. It is only an inclusive society that can provide the foundations for a knowledge society.⁸⁸

The NKC focused on the immediate problems and seek solutions in the speedy, transparent and efficient governance system. It stated,

There is an acute need for reform in the structures of governance of universities that do not preserve autonomy and do not promote accountability. Much needs to be done, but two important points deserve mention. The appointments of Vice Chancellors must be freed from direct or indirect interventions on the part of governments, for these should be based on search processes and peer judgment alone. The size and composition of University Courts, Academic Councils and Executive Councils, which slow down decision-making processes and sometimes constitute an impediment to change, need to be reconsidered on a priority basis.⁸⁹

The objective of NKC was to give a new outlook to the higher education structure and promote privatisation in the selective areas. For managing finance, it suggested, to increase the public funding on higher education up to 1.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, out of a total of 6 per cent of GDP for education overall. In addition, it was essential to explore other opportunities that could complement the increase in the public expenditure. It further suggested to give excessive powers of regulation to a new Independent Regulatory Authority.⁹⁰ This

⁸⁸ *National Knowledge Commission: Report to the Nation 2006 – 2009*, 64.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

attempted to undermine the role of UGC which not only had the acceptability in wide Indian academia but carried a deeply rooted traditional function to coordinate and determine standards. The proposal of IRA was quite problematic because there was no developed culture of private universities in India and excessive regulation of an independent agency would minimise governmental control as a result the private players would govern the system. The Indian academia was hanging between liberalisation and post-liberalisation and in the situation of policy dilemma, there was a need of detailed recommendations to guide the reform process of higher education structure. The strenuous exercise to explore the governance system of universities and colleges was also performed by the Yashpal Committee Report. The Committee favoured to embrace privatisation for overhauling the higher education system. It did not believe that the university was merely a centre of producing knowledge but, it accepted that teaching and research were an integral part of the higher learning. The Committee also emphasized that one of the objectives of university was to serve the society as a whole. It gave the reference of deeply rooted tradition and suggested,

The principle of moral and intellectual autonomy from political authority and economic power is ingrained in the very idea of the university. This autonomy ensures freedom in research and training and it is expected that the governments and the society would respect this fundamental principle. Teaching and research have to be inseparable, because the task of the university is not only to impart knowledge to young people but also to give them opportunities to create their own knowledge. Active and constant engagement with the young minds and hearts of the society also implies that the universities are to serve the society as a whole, and in order to achieve this, considerable investment in continuing education is essential.⁹¹

The YCR suggested to treat the university as a universe where general and professional education were imparted and created side by side. Its objective was to evolve an environment for the transition from disciplinary to interdisciplinary and then multidisciplinary education therefore it recommended to destroy the 'invisible walls.' The curricular reform was a central focus of the Committee and it observed the discrepancies in the system where the undergraduate and graduate courses were devoid of practical experiences and laid excessive stress on the theoretical understanding. The implication of such an education led the confusion and it was essential to reform curricula by adopting a curricular approach which treated knowledge in a holistic manner and created exciting opportunities for different kinds of interfaces between the disciplines. It also

⁹¹ *Report of the Committee to Advise on the Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education*, 8.

suggested that instead of outside agencies, the universities must have greater control in reforming curricula and include the problems of real world which were yet kept outside from the higher academia and the basic knowledge system remained unproductive for the workers, artisans and peasants.⁹² The erosion of democratic spaces from the university campuses was also a cause of worry for the Committee. Like other Commissions and Committees, it also recommended to protect, maintain and guard such spaces and considered universities as a space of free inquiry and liberal democracy where the discussion and dialogue took place between rival social forces and ideologies in a peaceful atmosphere. In addition, it suggested to adopt a world-view and respect the geo-cultural diversity and not to homogenize everything.⁹³ Without reforming the management of higher education institution, the prevailing crisis cannot be contained. As it observed that the recent trends were quite deplorable where growing centralisation of decision making and low participation of students and faculty in the bodies were affecting academic. The Committee expanded the academic autonomy and enabled teachers and students to exercise it. For that purpose, it recommended:

In academic matters, the teacher should have complete autonomy to frame her/his course and the way she/he would like to assess her/his students. This autonomy should also be available to the students who should be allowed to take courses of their choice in a relaxed manner from different universities and then be awarded a degree on the basis of the credits they have earned.⁹⁴

Thus, it proposed a system where not only the university and different administrative units and academic bodies would be autonomous but, the students and teachers would be an active agent of the system.

The university and its relation with States and agencies was also a matter of heated debate and it was desirable from the YCR to throw light on this when NKC has already proposed to establish IRA for new educational management. Instead of reforming the existing system, it also provided a detailed outline for a single mechanism namely National Commission for Higher Education and Research for greater coordination, regulation and integration in the planning and development of higher education system which would include research.⁹⁵ Unlike NKC, it did not

⁹² Ibid., 11.

⁹³ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 48.

recommend granting excessive supervisory power to the new authority and reduce the role of UGC to only fund-raising body. It vigorously expressed to guard the federal structure that would be in the interest of States and education. Thus, it recommended to constitute Higher Education Councils in the States with the objective to create a comparable national system of higher education which could respect regional diversity and also allow different kind of institutions establish by the States and the Centre.⁹⁶ By highlighting the salient features of the new Commission, it stated:

The National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) would perform its regulatory function without interfering with academic freedom and institutional autonomy. It would not take recourse to inspection-based approval method. From the current inspection-approval method, it would move to a verification and authentication system. As a matter of fact, we envisage universities and institutions to put out self-declarations mandatorily in the public domain for scrutiny. Universities are to be seen as self-regulatory bodies and the Commission is to be seen as a catalytic agency which is more interested in creating more and more space for the individuality of each university and protecting their autonomy.⁹⁷

Hence, the YCR also adopted a humanist and scientific outlook to make suggestions for reforming the system. The approach of treating university education as a social response and adopting a concept of universal knowledge system seemed to be quite impractical when the privatisation of higher education was in full swing. Controlling the private colleges and universities was an emerging challenge for the government. Contrary to YCR, The NKC suggested the education as a merit good and response to market. Thus, there is an urgent need of adopting a balance view to proceed for the renovation and rejuvenation of higher education.

Expansion of higher education: a quantitative jump

The Government's expansionist policy of higher education networks did not remain untouched from the wave of Neoliberalism. The proposed draft of NPE in 1986 and it inter alia recommended to consolidate and expand the facilities in the existing institutions. Keeping in mind the issues with the system of affiliation, it recommended the establishment of autonomous colleges and departments. It strongly suggested to take urgent steps to protect the system from degradation.⁹⁸ The government acted as it had previously done and did not show vigorous

⁹⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 50-51.

⁹⁸ *National Policy on Education 1986*, 11-12.

enthusiasm in executing the recommendations of the NPE 1986. The Ramamurti Committee was appointed in 1990 which was assigned the task of assessment of the implementation of the NPE 1986 and to propose suggestions for reforms. The committee observed,

The proliferation of universities and colleges has been rather unplanned. Infrastructure facilities are seriously inadequate. There is marked mismatch between education and employment. Wastage in the system in terms of failures and order of low pass percentages is very high. Examination reforms have been slow. There are serious complaints at all levels about the, lack of responsiveness in the system.⁹⁹

The unplanned proliferation of the universities in different states was a serious issue and it led the problem of deteriorating academic standards. The Ramamurti Committee Report had recommended to initiate action against such universities according to the established laws. It highlighted that the UGC had proved to be a toothless body in managing this problem. It further emphasized on the lack of political will to take stern action against such institutions. According to it, the State Council for Higher Education as proposed by the NPE 1986 could be an effective instrument to bring about discipline by their role in the areas of coordination and consolidation.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the Committee further suggested that the NPE 1986 had categorically advised not to establish new universities and had emphasized on consolidation. The Union government had violated the draft policy by establishing two central universities in Assam and Nagaland in 1989. Actions of this nature would not maintain discipline in the establishment of universities on the state level.

Pressures for opening new colleges and universities being very intense, and the political system reacting to such pressures in different ways, in different states, it would only be appropriate for the government to re-examine the feasibility of national level statutory mechanism for strongly discouraging non- standard/sub-standard colleges and universities being established. In the process of this examination, no doubt, the Central government should have necessary prior consultations with the State governments.¹⁰¹

There was an increased need of coordination between Union government and State governments for the planned growth of higher education institutions. The misuse of funds was an important

⁹⁹*Report of the Committee for Review of National Policy on Education 1986*, 192.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 194-195.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 195.

issue. During the discussion on the Nagaland University Bill in 1989, Saifuddin Soz (Baramulla), raised this issue by saying,

There is a system of proliferation. We have more colleges and more universities, but there is no consolidation. There is wastage of resources. You do not know that ninety per cent of funds goes waste in research at universities. our universities are not conducting researches. We offer hundreds of PhDs in languages whose PhD theses are not worth anything.¹⁰²

The government under P. V Narasimha Rao introduced an amendment draft of NPE 1986 in 1992. The revised draft of NPE highlighted that after the 42nd constitutional amendment, a significant transition in the roles and responsibilities of the states with regard to education had not come about. Thereby, the draft NPE suggested that the Union government would accept a larger responsibility of reorganising the educational pyramid throughout the country.¹⁰³ As had been previously done, this draft as well emphasized to consolidate, promote the autonomous colleges and establish autonomous departments. The autonomy and freedom would be accompanied by accountability.¹⁰⁴ A noticeable development of the time was that the Central Advisory Board of Education in its 46th meeting held on March 8 – 9, 1991 deliberated on the Report of Gnanam Committee. The committee mainly dealt with the management of the universities and colleges and recommended four cardinal principles namely participation, decentralisation, autonomy and accountability on which the management of higher education institutions would be based.¹⁰⁵ The Chairman of CABE decided to consider the Gnanam Committee in the context of the views received from the states and present a report in the next meeting. Dr. Karshandas Soneri, Minister of Education in the Gujarat government, was appointed as the chairman of the CABE Committee. He was additionally assigned the task to suggest modalities for implementing the recommendations and to advise policy guidelines for constituting new central universities and converting the state universities into the central universities.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² *Lok Sabha Debates (English Version) Eighth Series Second Part*, Vol. LIII, Fourteenth Session, October 13, 1989, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1989), 93.

¹⁰³ *National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992) with National Policy on Education 1968*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Report of the U.G.C. Committee towards new Educational Management*, 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Report of the CABE Committee on Gnanam Committee Report 1992*, 1-2.

The Report of the CABE Committee on Gnanam Committee Report deeply analysed the existing policy to establish new central universities and converting the state universities into the central ones. The final report was submitted in 1992 and the recommendations were as follows: Firstly, the new university should be enacted only after the well establish need of it felt. It should also be supported by the education survey and such a proposal has been accepted by UGC. Secondly, the central university should not merely be established to satisfy the demand of each state that it should have a central university. Third, there should be a balanced growth of higher education in all parts of the country and while starting new universities it should be considered to correct regional imbalance or to cover large gaps in the educational map of the country. In addition to that, it supported to constitute a central university to serve the educational needs of the tribal population. Fourth, the central universities should have an all-India character and maintain high standards so it can serve as a model for other universities.¹⁰⁷ It also explored the reasons for the growing demands of states for a central university and it found two primary reasons: First, the states had a shortage of funds and second, a larger amount of funds were provided to the central universities by the UGC. Keeping this view in mind, the committee further added,

Instead of opening new central universities or converting existing universities to central universities, the commission should provide special assistance to at least one good university in each state and try to develop it and bring it on par with a central university in terms of academic and physical infrastructure and level of education. The commission may formulate criteria for selecting such universities and the conditions for intensive development funding, including changes in the management structure of the university in consultation the concerned state government. Continuation of such additional funding should be linked with the performance of the university.¹⁰⁸

A performance-oriented approach was accepted that would determine the funding of the institutions, which was believed to be another measure to maintain standards by creating an environment of healthy competition. In accordance with the recommendations of NPE 1986, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council was established in 1994 for assessing external quality of the higher education institutions.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 11.

The higher education system of the country had expanded rapidly during the decade of 1981-82 to 1991-92 and a significant change had occurred. While in 1981-82, there were 118 Universities, 13 institutions deemed-to-be universities and 4,886 colleges,¹⁰⁹ it increased up to 149 universities, 31 institutions deemed-to-be universities and 7513 colleges by 1991-92.¹¹⁰ The prominent feature was the highest ever average growth of 138.46 per cent which was recorded in the numbers of deemed-to-be universities. The new colleges had also expanded during this period and their average growth was around 53.76 per cent. The universities had the lowest average growth which was around 26.27 per cent. There were 44.25 lakhs students enrolled in higher education and in 1991-92 out of them, 36.93 lakhs were in affiliated colleges and 7.32 lakhs were in university departments.¹¹¹ This had proven that colleges were the nucleus of higher learning in India. The eighth Five Year Plan endorsed the policy of the Union government and laid stress on modernisation and restructuring of the management of the university system which entailed a vigorous pursuit of the programmes of autonomous colleges and autonomous university departments. It further proposed, 'Facilities in universities and colleges, including research facilities, would be consolidated and strengthened. The schemes of redesigning and restructuring of courses to meet the developmental needs of the country, examination reforms and teachers' training would be expanded.'¹¹² At this juncture, one must be aware that the Union government had adopted the principle of Neoliberalism for economic reorganisation of the country and the field of education was not left immune either. To hasten the economic development of the country and competition with the global market, there was the need for a large number of skilled workers and it was the higher education institutes that were viewed as a hub of knowledge generation. 'Brain drain' was a buzzword during the time because the job opportunities created in India were not in correspondence to the number of degree holders from colleges and universities. It was a possibility for the young graduates to approach the developed nations for better employment opportunities and lifestyles. The government had the challenge to retain the most efficient, trained and skilled graduates for the economic

¹⁰⁹ *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1981 – March 1982)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1982), 1.

¹¹⁰ *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1991 – March 1992)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1992), 3.

¹¹¹ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, '*Eighth Five Year Plan (1992 – 1997)*', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/8th/vol2/8v2ch11.html>. (accessed 27 April 2020), para. 11.6.1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, para. 11.7.1.

development of the home country by creating attractive job opportunities and promote self-employment and innovation.

On the other side, the most glaring defect in the policy of the government was the imbalance in the enrolments of arts, science, commerce and professional courses. Out of the total enrolments in the University Teaching Departments, University Colleges and Affiliated College in the years 1992-93, around 80 per cent were enrolled in arts including oriental learning, science and commerce and around 18.1 per cent were enrolled in professional courses. During the years, around 40 per cent enrolments were in arts including oriental learning, which was the highest as opposed to the professional course of law which saw the highest enrolments of 5.3 per cent among professional courses. (See Table 5.1). In the following years, this trend continued and at the end of the Eighth Plan in 1997 the situation became stagnant. (See Table 5.1). There also had been a tremendous build-up of institutions on various levels. In 1997, there were 224 universities and 8613 affiliated colleges at the university level. Since the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University during the Seventh Plan, the concept of distance education had taken a more concrete shape and the system presently consisted of the IGNOU, three state open universities and about 50 dual mode institutions within the traditional university system.¹¹³

¹¹³*Report of the Steering Committee on University Learning, Open Learning System, Technical and Management Education, 2.*

Table 5.1: Student Enrolment In the Universities: Faculty Wise* 1992-93 To 1996-97

Faculty	1992-93 Enrolment	% of Total	1993-94 Enrolments	% of Total	1994-95 Enrolment	% of Total	1995-96 Enrolment	% of Total	1996-97 Enrolment	% of Total
Arts including Oriental Learning	22,38,626	40.4	23,52,970	40.4	24,73,027	40.4	25,92,925	40.4	27,29,204	40.4
Science	10,86,353	19.6	11,41,680	19.6	11,99,830	19.6	12,60,200	19.6	13,24,069	19.6
Commerce	12,13,688	21.9	12,75,478	21.9	13,40,560	21.9	14,10,119	21.9	14,79,445	21.9
Education	1,27,304	2.3	1,33,797	2.3	1,40,620	2.3	1,47,720	2.3	1,55,375	2.3
Eng./ Technology	2,71,213	4.9	2,85,045	4.9	2,99,583	4.9	3,15,720	4.9	3,31,017	4.9
Medicine	1,88,189	3.4	1,97,786	3.4	2,07,874	3.4	2,19,918	3.4	2,29,685	3.4
Agriculture	58,120	1.1	61,091	1.1	64,200	1.1	67,990	1.1	74,310	1.1
Veterinary Science	13,840	0.3	14,550	0.3	15,285	0.3	16,201	0.3	20,267	0.3
Law	2,93,353	5.3	3,08,314	5.3	3,24,038	5.3	3,42,440	5.3	3,58,039	5.3
Others	44,280	0.8	46,538	0.8	48,912	0.8	52,401	0.8	54,044	0.8
Total	55,34,966	100	58,17,249	100	61,13,929	100	64,25,634	100	67,55,455	100

Source: University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1996 – March 1997) (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1997), 205.

* University Teaching Department/ University Colleges and Affiliated Colleges Combined

The Report of the Steering Committee on University Learning, Open Learning System, Technical and Management Education provided the details of the progress made to promote access of higher education during the eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997). According to it,

The Central government started several new universities during the Eighth Plan mainly in the north eastern sector. While the funds were limited, these universities have opened up new facilities for students in these regions, special efforts have been made to provide equity for special categories including women, the reserved categories and the minority groups.¹¹⁴

It further informed that the special efforts had been made to increase the number and capacity of women's hostels so that women even from remote areas were enabled to get higher education.¹¹⁵ A significant outcome of the governments' policy was felt when the total enrolments of the students in 1996-97 was reported to be 67,55,455 and out of this, there were 23,03,161 women.¹¹⁶ In terms of percentage, there were 34.1 per cent women and thus, the target for increasing the women enrolments up to 33 per cent in higher education as proposed by Kothari Commission, was finally accomplished after thirty years of the publication of the report. Even with this development, there was still considerable work left to be done in order to cover an area so large that every woman could have an access to higher education. There still remained a marked difference in the faculty wise enrolments of women on which the attention of policy makers was required. Out of the total enrolments of women in 1996-97, around 54.4 per cent were enrolled for arts including humanities; it was followed by 20.1 per cent in science and by 14.1 per cent in commerce, which implied that the remainder of the women were enrolled in professional courses. (See Table 5.2). Amongst the courses of professional education, there was a highest enrolment of around 3.9 per cent in education while there were 1.8 per cent women enrolled in law and a measly 1.2 per cent women enrolled in engineering and technology. Evidently, the government needed to take effective measures aimed at increasing the participation of women in professional courses and create employment opportunities.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1996 – March 1997)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1997), 206.

Table 5.2. Women's Enrolment 1996-97 by Faculty

Faculty	Enrolment	Percent
Arts	12,52,689	54.4
Commerce	3,25,667	14.1
Science	4,62,935	20.1
Education	90,054	3.9
Law	41,687	1.8
Engineering & Technology	27,638	1.2
Others (including Medicine, Agriculture, Vet Science, Music/Fine Arts, Social Work, Physical Education etc.)	1,02,491	4.5
Total	23,03,161	100.00

Source: *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 1996 – March 1997)*, 161.

The Union government approached the ninth Five Year Plan by being mindful of the global changes and the liberalisation policy within the country. The issues of education were analysed in the light of consolidation, academic excellence, access, equity and expansion. The Ninth Plan informed about the policies and programmes of the UGC for increasing self-employment and job opportunities,

With a view to enhancing the relevance of higher education, the University Grants Commission initiated a scheme of career orientation for students at the first-degree level by equipping them with competencies for moving into job markets and self-employment. The scheme has been introduced in 31 universities and about 1000 colleges covering about 40,000 students. Restructuring of courses was also taken up in order to relate the course content to the needs of society.¹¹⁷

For an effective implementation of the Neoliberal agenda in the education sector, the recommendations of ABCR were significant. The objective of the committee was to provide an outline for private investment in education and it recommended to boost the development of the education system through several government and private initiatives with direct participation of both. Most importantly, it emphasized on the changing circumstances in an era of globalization and the neoliberal capitalist developments. Education had acquired a new shape in the new world of information and technology, and knowledge had replaced labour and raw material as the two

¹¹⁷Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Ninth Five Year Plan (1997 – 2002)', Planning Commission, <https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/9th/vol2/v2c3-3.html>. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 3.3.24.

most critical inputs for survival and success.¹¹⁸ It recommended a broad programme of educational reconstruction beginning from the primary and concluding with the tertiary level of education. In the area of higher education it proposed, firstly, to enact a Private University Bill in order to encourage the establishment of private universities in the field of science and technology, management and finance. Second, to institutionalise a system of periodical rating of schools, colleges and universities by an independent agency. Third, to allow the scope of foreign direct investment in the education sector mainly science and technology. Fourth, to establish institutions of international reputation that would attract the overseas students.¹¹⁹ This was the genesis of the saga of private institutions in the country.

With the turn of the twentieth century, the map of higher education stood significantly changed. An exponential growth in the number of universities and colleges had happened in the 1990s. There were 180 universities including deemed-to-be universities and 7,513 colleges in 1991-92 and it swelled up to 253 including deemed-to-be universities recognized by the UGC and 13,150 colleges in 2001-02.¹²⁰ A rapid growth of around 75.03 per cent in the number of colleges and around 40.5 per cent in the number of universities including deemed-to-be universities had happened between 1991-92 and 2001-02. However, the issues of access, equity and quality remained the major challenges for the higher education system. Only 6 per cent of the estimated population between the age group 18 to 23 years was privileged enough to have the access to higher education.¹²¹ The rural areas still had a meagre number of colleges and universities and in comparison, to the urban centres they were kept distant from higher education.

To overhaul the university education system and meet the existing gaps, the tenth Five Year Plan recommended the modernisation of syllabi, increased research, networking of universities and departments and increased allocation of funds for addressing the basic issues concerning

¹¹⁸ *Report on a Policy Frame Work for Reforms in Education*, 1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁰ *University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 2001 – March 2002)* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 2002), 31.

¹²¹ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Tenth Five Year Plan (2002 – 2007)', Planning Commission, https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume2/v2_ch2_5.pdf. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 2.5.10.

quality.¹²² The model of distance learning was widely acknowledged as a viable solution for extending higher educational facilities to the backward and the remote and inaccessible areas of the north-east region as well as the illiterate women blocks in some of the eastern states. For promoting such a model, an active role of IGNOU was recognised which had established a Distance Education Council to act as the nodal agency for distance education at the higher levels. It was also envisaged to utilise the evolving information and communication technology-based tools and technics in disseminating the course content.¹²³ The Tenth Plan also endorsed the role of private investments in increasing educational amenities and while supporting the idea, it proposed that,

Higher education, whether in the general or the technical stream, must have links with all national goals and endeavours. To this end, a large number of centres for excellence to turn out quality manpower in areas relevant to industry and society need to be established with the triangular partnership of academia, industry and government. These institutes of excellence are essential to make India a knowledge superpower and would help in retaining our competitive edge in the global economy.¹²⁴

The rapid proliferation of the colleges had exerted tremendous pressure upon the universities and it had led to the deteriorating standards of higher education. This was a problem from which the Indian academia had been struggling with, since independence and a series of commissions and committees and intellectuals had proposed valuable suggestions to remove the defects for the smooth functioning of the higher education system. The CAFE Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions 2005 exclusively explored the issues of university governance and it found flaws in the policy of the government itself which was focused on converting the unmanageable number of colleges into universities. As the CAHEI suggested,

Higher education is continuing to expand, mostly in an unplanned manner, without even minimum levels of checks and balances. Many universities are burdened with unmanageable number of affiliated colleges. Some have more than 300 colleges affiliated to them. New universities are being carved out of existing ones to reduce the number of affiliated colleges. Under these circumstances, our dependence on

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

autonomy as the means to improve quality of such a huge size of higher education system poses serious challenges.¹²⁵

Thus, there was a pressing need for a policy which would plan the expansion of higher education system and yet ensure quality, access and equity. The NKC laid greater emphasis on three key areas such as expansion, excellence and inclusion for reforming the higher education system. By the end of the Tenth Plan in 2007,

the Indian higher education system had grown into one of the largest in the world with 378 universities, 18064 colleges, faculty strength of 4.92 lakh, and an estimated enrolment of 140 lakh students. The higher education institutions include 23 central universities (CU), 216 state universities, 110 deemed universities, 11 private universities, and 33 institutions of national importance established through central legislation and another 5 institutions established through State legislations.¹²⁶

Despite a largest network of educational institutions, the existing challenges of Indian academia did not perish. The expansion of colleges and universities was merely a quantitative jump and qualitatively, the Indian universities were nowhere near the universities abroad and failed to secure any global ranking. There was also a sharp contrast in the expansion of facilities and the previously existing gap widened, particularly, in the areas of regional distribution, gender wise enrolments, course wise distribution of teaching departments, universities and colleges. For addressing these issues related to the expansion of higher education, the eleventh Five Year Plan came up with measures for increasing the enrolments. As it stated,

Quantitative expansion in enrolment will be achieved through: expansion of existing institutions, both government and private; creation of new government (Central and States) funded universities and colleges; facilitating/removing barriers in creation of new universities and colleges; special programmes for targeted expansion in CU; support to state universities and colleges, and additional assistance to under-funded institutions.¹²⁷

To enable a major change in the system, the Eleventh Plan focused on access and affordability in SCs, STs, Other Backward Classes and minority concentration districts.¹²⁸ The NKC also took

¹²⁵ *Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions*, 19.

¹²⁶ Planning Commission, Government of India: Five Year Plans, 'Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007 – 2012)', Planning Commission, https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/plans/planrel/fiveyr/11th/11_v2/11v2_ch1.pdf. (accessed April 27, 2020), para. 1.3.1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

up expansion related issues and envisaged to create a knowledge network in India by connecting all universities, libraries, laboratories, hospitals and agriculture institutions through high-speed broadband network. Accordingly, it would help in building a national knowledge network with gigabit capabilities and enable to share data and resources across the country.

The purpose of such a knowledge network goes to the very heart of the country's quest to build quality institutions with requisite research facilities and to create a pool of highly trained persons. Considering the magnitude of the challenge, NKC believes an immediate objective of the network will be to share the existing content, coursework, expertise, ideas, innovations, equipment and facilities available in the limited number of centres of excellence, with a wider group of institutions, educators and students. Globally, research and development activities and innovations are increasingly multidisciplinary, and collaborative, and require substantial computational power. The key to successful research today is live consultations, data sharing and resource sharing. Therefore, it is essential to provide broadband connectivity to our knowledge institutions to improve access, quality and quantity of R&D activities.¹²⁹

Along with the proposal of modernising the higher education system in accordance with the global market's demands, the NKC also suggested the massive expansion of the higher education network. It advocated that firstly, around 1500 universities should be established nationwide to attain the gross enrolment ratio of at least 15 per cent by 2015. For fulfilling this, some cluster of affiliated colleges could be converted into universities. Secondly, an independent regulatory authority should be established which would be in-charge of regulation. Thirdly, public funding on higher education should be increased up to 1.5 per cent of the GDP, out of a total of 6 per cent of GDP for education overall. Additionally, it was also essential to explore other opportunities that could complement the increase in public expenditure. Fourth, it recommended that 50 national universities be established for providing higher standards of education in the variety of disciplines including humanities, social sciences, basic sciences, commerce and professional subjects at graduation and post-graduation levels. It also envisaged the creation of national universities by government funding and the private funding body.¹³⁰ The NKC also emphasized reform and restructure of the collegiate system for undergraduate degrees. It encouraged autonomous colleges either as individuals or as clusters of colleges, and to modify the colleges as community colleges for imparting both vocational and formal education and to

¹²⁹ *National Knowledge Commission: Report to the Nation 2006 – 2009*, 32-33.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

establish a Central Board of Undergraduate Education as an all-purpose body which would look after setting up of curricula to checks on the quality of education.¹³¹ The NKC had set an ambitious target to achieve. It unhesitatingly suggested the adoption of privatisation to fulfil the objectives ignoring the factual reality of the commodification of education. Observing the state of expansion in the higher education system in the first decade of the 21st century, a noticeable jump took place in the number of universities and colleges,

At the time of Independence of India, there were only 20 Universities and 500 Colleges in the country with 2.1 lakhs students in higher education. The numbers now are increased to 29 times in the case of the Universities, 71 times in the case of Colleges and the student's enrolment has gone up to 97 times in the formal system of higher education in comparison to the figures at the time of independence. As on 31.03.2012, the number of Universities had gone up to 574 universities - (44 Central, 286 State, 111 State Private, 129 Deemed to be Universities, four Institutions established under State Legislation) and 35,539 colleges in the Higher Education sector.¹³²

So far as the number of universities is concerned, the most of the universities were established in the developed states of North and South accordingly, Tamil Nadu topped the list with 55 universities, followed by Uttar Pradesh (54), Rajasthan (47), Andhra Pradesh (43), and so on.¹³³ The aforementioned data here, stands as a standing reference to the consistently prevailing issue of an uneven distribution of universities between the well-developed and under-developed states. This shows the lack of a focused educational policy which addresses the gaps in the higher education system.

Conclusion

The detailed study of quality, governance and expansion of higher education in the neo-liberal phase shows that this was a period of deep seeded transition in all spheres. The establishment of NAAC in 1994 was a major success, however, it required numerous modifications in set parameters and that was to take place in subsequent years. The Ramamurti Committee 1990 characterised UGC as a 'toothless body', and emphasized on political will to take action against

¹³¹Ibid., 62.

¹³²*University Grants Commission: Annual Report (April 2011 – March 2012) in compliance with the Section 18 of the UGC Act 1956* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 2012), 3-4.

¹³³Ibid.

mediocre institutions. Contrary to that, the government displayed political will in promoting privatisation alone. Numerous self-financed courses were introduced and private universities and colleges were established to promote standard education. Since the reluctant attitude of the state continues even in the present century, the debate on higher education is centred between the state and the market, where it is ready to embrace neither complete privatisation nor willing to increase investment on public institutions to promote quality. Similarly, the discussion on the governance related issues took a swift turn and the term 'managerialism' was coined to manage the governance of universities. The recommendations of Gnanam Committee 1990 have been discussed in this regard. Privatisation became the living reality of the days and the government vigorously promoted it to make the education system more result oriented. On the other hand, the various Commissions and Committees during this period recommended modernization of the education system in accordance with global trends and to adopt an inclusive approach in order to reform, reorganise and renovate higher education. However, the Indian higher education network kept expanding in a haphazard manner. By the end of the Tenth Five Year plan in 2007, it had made a huge quantitative jump to become one of the largest higher education systems in the world. However, the issues of regional imbalance, gender-wise gaps in the enrolments, distribution of courses and mismatch between education and employment still continued even after a series of commissions and committees and reports which were responsible for a stagnant qualitative growth of the education system. Hence, the Ambani-Birla Committee Report 2000, Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions 2005, National Knowledge Commission 2009, Yashpal Committee Report 2009 form an integral part of government's thinking about education. Thus, the intellectuals, legislatures and policymakers raised voices against the commodification of education and advocated to protect, promote and maintain the public education system and democratic spaces. The issues of access, equity, expansion, governance, inclusion, etc. were essential to address, but they were expected to be on the back seat under private institutions.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Following the independence of India in 1947, the Union government initiated a process of reform aimed at a thorough reorganisation of the higher education system. However, it chose to rely on the British mechanism of appointing commissions and committees instead of devising a suitable approach. The enthusiasm of the government soon fizzled out and it seemed reluctant to implement the recommendations put forward by these committees. One could argue that the underlying purpose in appointing these committees was the appeasement of the dissatisfied intelligentsia and divert the mainstream discourse. The existing research, published books and articles have provided merely a generalized description of the development in the higher education while the reports of the commissions and committees along with the proceedings of parliament, and the writings by eminent people have gone mostly ignored. This study attempts to bridge that gap by exploring in depth the discourse that was dominant amongst the politicians, policy makers and intellectuals of that time. To accomplish that, we focus on the years 1949-2009 (i.e., from University Education Commission to Yashpal Committee Report). This highlights the transition that this period has brought about in the higher education system, especially with the phenomenon of neoliberalism gaining ground in the educational sector. This study delves into not only the debates around the approach that needed to be taken to elevate the standards of higher education but also the recommendations of the UEC in 1949 that suggested the adoption of a multifaceted approach to reform the existing system.

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed intellectuals as well as policy makers debating on whether to expand the system or consolidate it. S. S. Bhatnagar was one of those who favoured consolidation within the existing departments in universities and colleges. Despite the constitution of University Grants Commission in 1956, the higher education system went on to expand haphazardly to fulfil the demands as the number of students kept increasing. In spite of that, the government failed to create employment opportunities for university graduates. K. G. Saiyidain advocated that state governments and university administration needed to cooperate fully in order to execute the plans of the Union government. K. B. Menon, Renu Chakravarty and Renuka Ray were engaged in coming up with solutions but the Union government did not heed their advice. The Union Education Minister, Dr. K. L. Shrimali blamed the universities, the

teachers and state governments for deteriorating standards of education. Although he later announced schemes such as establishing a centre of advanced studies, refresher courses and summer schools along with evening classes and part-time classes, these measures could not satisfy the demands of the states or the legislature.

To assess the standards of education, a committee was appointed which submitted its report in 1965. Before the recommendations of the committee could be deliberated upon, the Kothari Commission also submitted its report in 1966. It consisted of inter alia recommendations in order to improve the quality of education. Subsequently, the Union government unveiled drafts on National Policy on Education in 1968, 1974 and 1979, but none of them were implemented appropriately. The Gajendragadkar Committee Report 1971 underlined that the transformation of society was also a primary objective of university education, and found that the education system needed crucial modifications to be in accordance with the social needs of the university system. Intellectuals namely A. B. Shah, Somnath Chatterjee, Humayun Kabir, J. P. Naik raised the issues of access, equity and quality and advocated the education system to be reorganized on socialist patterns. Safeguards would be given to first-generation students of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes along with the physically and mentally challenged. The *Navnirman* movement of Gujarat in 1974 movement began because of the chaos in the education system and the struggle of students. It subsequently spread to other regions in the country. The Union government declared national emergency in June 1975 to contain the agitations, which lasted for 21 months. Education as a subject was transferred from the state list to concurrent list but that accomplished very little. The 1980s saw numerous protest movements led by students and taking into consideration the increasing number of students, the government decided to launch open universities. This is how the Indira Gandhi National Open University came into existence in 1985. The government released another draft of NPE in 1986 which proposed to address issues of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay.

The governance system within universities and the issues related to academic freedom and university autonomy was another controversial topic in the higher academic circle. In Chapter 3 we underlined diverse viewpoints of the Union government, intellectuals and politicians on the question of the expansion of university autonomy and academic freedom. The discussion began from the UEC in 1949 which inter alia recommended democratic principles to

as a framework of the governance system in universities. A revision in the administrative setup of universities was the first priority of the Union government and witnessed a heated debate in the Parliament in 1951. The root of the controversy lay with the clause regarding the central funded institutes that declared the President of India as the Visitor of the universities and granted him an extraordinary power of inquiry into the affairs of the universities under the garb of 'setting things right'. The members in the opposition interpreted it as an invention of opportunity to legally interfere in the affairs of the universities. They demanded that the internal bodies of the universities such as the executive council be strengthened. The government rejected these demands with the rationale that it did not believe in absolute autonomy. The ensuing foundation of the UGC in 1956 was perceived as another instrument that the government would use to meddle in the affairs of the universities. The subsequent debates with respect to the relation between the state, educational institutes and state agencies have been studied. The approach the government took in handling numerous 'student protests' also hinted at the intentions of the government. A case study of a students' movement in Banaras Hindu University was discussed in detail in the study. Opposing members in the Lok Sabha such as Hem Barua drew attention towards the defects in the existent system which was the chief cause of student agitations particularly in BHU. The government refuted the claims and alluded to the misconduct of students involved. The Model Act Committee 1964 and Kothari Commission (1964-1966) added more fuel to the whole debate. The former defined university as a community of students and teachers and the latter asserted that autonomy should be granted to all the administrative units of universities from top to bottom.

The National Policy on Education, 1968 similarly recommended autonomy in higher educational institutions. The released draft of GCR 1971 rejected the treatment of academic freedom and university autonomy as fundamental rights and declared them to be academic and ethical concepts. Despite the Union government making an effort to make amendments in the governance system of the universities by changing the acts of universities, several instances of 'student unrest' were reported at prominent centres of higher learning including Aligarh Muslim University and Delhi University in the 1970s and 1980s. One of the prominent ones was the *Navnirman* Movement of Gujarat which became a pan-India movement under Jay Prakash Narayan as different national issues merged under his fold. The government failed to suppress the movement and declared National Emergency. When education as a subject was transferred

from the State List to the Concurrent List in 1976, massive changes were expected but the state governments were equally apathetic towards university autonomy. Several instances of encroachment upon the autonomy of state universities were reported at Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal where the Vice Chancellors were forced to bear the brunt. Decentralisation and democratisation are the two fundamental principles for the success of any reform process in the governance of a university system. The infamous event of the mass resignation of eight Vice Chancellors of Bihar State universities in 1985 is an indication that the government did not consider these principles essential. The Association of Indian Universities submitted a Memorandum to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 by demanding inter alia to fix the tenure in order to maintain the dignity of the office of Vice-Chancellor. The NPE which was drafted and then revised again, along the recommendations of Ramamurti Committee Report 1990 could not translate into any de facto transformation. From 1949-1990, very little other than the change in perception to university autonomy and academic was achieved.

There remained continuing gaps in the expansion of higher education on the lines of regional distribution of colleges and universities, enrolments on the basis of gender and course wise enrolments. Chapter 4 observed that even with the expansion the requirements of the people could not be met. The challenges faced by the British persisted even in the democratic republic of India. The intervening voices of intellectuals, politicians, commissions and committees were disregarded and not taken into account during the formulation or implementation of policies. The debate revolved around the choice of either expansion or consolidation. Intellectuals like S. S. Bhatnagar were in favour of consolidation and members such as Jayashri and Ram Subhag Singh suggested that new universities be established to minimize burden and initiate reform. They also advocated for the provision of special facilities for socially backward communities. The government focused on the establishment of the UGC and the commission subsequently emphasized on introducing and promoting departments for post-graduate degrees and research. It aimed at getting more colleges affiliated and apportioning them financial aid. Nevertheless, implementing what the commission had strategized only led to the creation of substandard affiliated colleges. The government found itself in a conundrum where it had to create an equilibrium between technical, vocational, professional and general courses and also generate

employment opportunities. The government acquired limited success and struggled in utilising education the mode to propel industrialisation.

The Kothari Commission registered a discontinuity between the word and the action taken by the government. It advised that a long-term enrolment policy be made in accordance with the trends of manpower needs and employment opportunities. It set a target of increasing the enrolment of women up to 33 per cent within the next decade and provide them opportunities in the field of technical and science education. The chapter consisted of statistical data from the 1970s which indicated that a wide gap still existed between the number of arts, science and commerce colleges and colleges for professional education even after the Report of the Education Commission. The decade of 1980s witnessed several students' protest movements and the views on education were dominated by governance related issues and the declining standards of education. Moreover, the reports of the Planning Commission emphasized to utilise newer technologies in disseminating higher education. The idea of an open university was employed by the Union government in 1985 when IGNOU was constituted. An important objective of the National Open University was to extend the benefit of higher education to the deprived sections of the society. The legislature approved the mandate of the government during the discussion on the bill. To drive reform in the education system, the Union government proposed the drafting of NPE in 1986 which recommended consolidation and expansion in the facilities of the existing universities and the creation of autonomous colleges and departments. The Ramamurti Committee Report 1990 highlighted the flaws in execution of the policy and the government's nonchalance to tackle the crisis head-on. Despite continuing deliberations on the expansion of higher education system in post-independent India, a lasting solution could not be found.

Chapter 5 of this study explored the issues of higher education against the backdrop of the time that coincided with the proliferation of neoliberal principles. It proceeded to be a period of transition where a metamorphosis occurred in the attitude and policies of the government. The adopted economic liberalisation widely affected the education system of the country and the neoliberalism became the norm in reorganising the university system. This alteration was experienced when the nomenclature of the union Ministry of Education was changed with Ministry of Human Resource Development 1985. The impact of neoliberal policy of the Government was observed on the debates of quality education. Most importantly, for assessing

the external quality of higher education institutions, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council was constituted in 1994 on the basis of the recommendation of NPE 1986. However, it required numerous modifications in set parameters and that took place in subsequent years. The criticism of UGC was essential at this juncture because it proved to be a ‘toothless body’ in the words of Ramamurti Committee 1990 which could not play a significant role in coordination and determination of standard. The Committee emphasized on an extra political will to take action against mediocre institutions. Contrary to that, the government displayed extra political will in promoting privatisation. Numerous self-finance courses were introduced and private universities and colleges were established to promote standard education. The Ambani-Birla Committee Report 2000, Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions 2005, National Knowledge Commission 2009, Yashpal Committee Report 2009 are the integral part of government’s intention from education. thus, the intellectuals, legislatures and policymakers raised voices against the commodification of education and advocated to protect, promote and maintain a public education system. The issues of access, equity, inclusion, etc. were essential to address, but they were expected to be on the back seat under private institutions. Thus, in the present century, the debates on quality higher education are found hanging between state and the market where it neither embraced complete privatisation nor increase the investment on the public institutions for maintaining and determining quality institutions.

For administering the governance system of the universities, the term ‘managerialism’ was coined during the said period. Other side, certain responsibilities and duties were integrated to the idea of autonomy further developed under the Gnanam Committee 1990. It suggested four cardinal principles such as participation, decentralisation, autonomy and accountability for managing the affairs of the universities. The Central Advisory Board of Education discussed the recommendations of Gnanam Committee in 1991, however the general progress in regard of implementing the recommendations did not take place. The said Commission and Committees also marked a deeper transition in the understanding of university autonomy and academic freedom. These reports recommended to modernise the governance system of the universities suitably to the market signals and dynamic and result oriented. Thus, privatisation became a living reality of those days and the critics of the government’s policy advocated to promote, protect and maintain the democratic spaces in the public universities. In the realm of expanding higher education, A gradual but positive development in the sector of higher education was felt

when the women enrolments was reported around 34.1 per cent out of total enrolments of students in the colleges and universities in 1996-97. Though, this target could have been achieved much earlier if the recommendations of Kothari Commissions were vigorously implemented. The problems of access, equity, quality and expansion were the most important issues of discussion in this time period. The different Commissions and Committees recommended to reorganise the educational system in accordance with global trends and adopt an inclusive approach in order to reform, rejuvenate and renovate the higher education system. However, the Indian higher education network kept continuously expanding in a haphazard manner. By the end of Tenth Five Year plan, it had made a huge quantitative jump to become one of the largest higher education systems in the world. But the issues of regional imbalance, gender wise gaps in the enrolments, distribution of courses and mismatch between education and employment still continued even after a series of commissions and committees and reports which was responsible for a stagnant qualitative growth of the education system.

In the present century, the higher education system is still struggling with the problems of the past. Wide discrepancies and gaps have remained in gender wise enrolments, in the regional distribution of colleges and universities, and between the institutions of arts, science and commerce and professional courses. Many commissions and committees were set up consecutively (i.e., from University Education Commission 1949 to Yashpal Committee 2009) and their recommendations were implemented by governments with mild fervour and strong apathy. The members of these commissions along with the intellectuals and opposition members of Parliament went largely ignored by the government. The implementation of policies was haphazard which was evident from the expansion that took place in universities and vocational and technical colleges, along with affiliated universities but that merely created a large percentage of graduates with unexceptional college degrees and without certainty of employment. Actual challenges on the ground were not addressed and the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the government made matters worse. With excessive privatisation in all sectors of post-independent India, the situation became more knotted and the issues related to access, equity, quality, expansion and university governance remained unresolved. Hence, the apathetic attitude of the government towards implementing the recommendations of various commissions and committees could be called only 'commissioning higher education'. The limitations of the study could be that the education systems of individual states and the analysis of the reports of

commissions and committees at the state level were not looked into in this study. The legislative assembly debates could serve as an important source for future studies in order to create a discourse. Separate case studies of distinct universities and colleges could be analysed in detail to understand the continuing issues of university autonomy and academic freedom. Considering the fact that language is a medium of imparting knowledge from one generation to another, future studies could investigate on this aspect. With the flourishing of neoliberalism in the educational sector, the economic component becomes an important and relevant question in contemporary India.

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