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## Autonomy in Higher Education: Shifting Paradigm

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### Abstract:

*This article is related with paradigm shift of Indian higher education system last few years. Autonomy was an important issue in higher education since independence in India but now it is shifting to another level. In the present time autonomy significantly relates with the matter of accountability. The present article is just an effort to understand autonomy in the relation of accountability and the importance of autonomy in higher education in present scenario. The issues of academic freedom and university autonomy have re-emerged on the agenda in the last few years First of all, there is the spiraling increase in the number of students since the end of the Second World War with, as its corollary, the explosion in most countries whatever their political or social system of the number of higher education institutions, a phenomenon that has gained momentum over the years. Although the state retains control of higher education a wide range of accountability mechanisms (such as performance contracts and the introduction of a system for assessments of research production), it is evident that universities have gained more institutional autonomy. The apparent shift from individual to institutional autonomy provides more flexibility for universities to set strategic objectives. At the same time, universities become more open to societal demands.*

**Key words:** higher education, autonomy, shifting paradigm, India

## **Introduction**

We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century within the age of globalization. It is time to understand what we want from us. Fast changing technologies and pattern of social relationship is changing rapidly and it is important to society to understand these changes. Education is an important tool to understand these changes but education also needs to change according to changes in our society. So there is a question rise about education that which kind of education we want and what our need is. Education has always been seen as a key factor of development in every aspect of life. Now India has a great opportunity of demographic dividend but we will get benefit from that demographic dividend only then when we have got educated and skilled population. Indian government and educationist planning for the next generation have to make links between education and sustainable development of child in every level of education and make a connection between education and employment in higher education. Since independence India has been facing many of problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Education, living in a healthy environment and employment, these are the fundamental rights of any society but because of a large number of population, these rights become challenges for a big part of Indian society. From few decades aspects of human rights have to become part of the curricula of various schools and college level courses. Similarly, environmental issues ought to be included in the curricula. Population issues have to be studied at various levels so that a proper environment can be given to the youth of Indian society. There are no common educational objectives for all the nations of the world but there are some common issues related with education all over the world. So India has to need an educational system to

understand need of individuals and global priorities of development.

Education is a key factor for human life. The demand of education and educators has been increase continuously the world over and past few decades, Education becomes an important factor for human development. There has been an unprecedented demand of school education increased especially in developing countries. Education is a key factor of sustainable development and Teacher play an important role in Education. In present century we are facing many of challenges like poverty, peace and sustainable development etc... Educating the people to meet these challenges has become a priority of every society specially adolescents and young people. The young generation entering in a challenging and fast changing future, so it is important to make a knowledge-based society to face these challenges. International commission of Education also emphasize on Education for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In present time we are facing many of challenges related with political, social, economical and technological changes in our society. We can understand and face these challenges only through Education. If we want to make a knowledge-based society so we have to need to produce good quality teachers. Indian Educational system is the largest educational system in the world and in present time we are in the condition of demographic dividend but the condition of Indian Education system is not well because of some grass root problems. India has more than 60% of population in the age group 15 to 59 years. The international labour organization has predicted that by 2020, India will have 116 million workers in the age of 20 to 24 years. It would be a great opportunity to take advantage of this dividend. These data shows us a great opportunity of human resource but we will take this advantage only than when we will have a quality of Education. Quality of Education is a most important issue or question in Indian Education system. Education is the process by which human being learns facts and skills, develops some

abilities and a positive attitude towards society. Development of individuals is based on the healthy environment of institutions but how can institutions make a healthy environment in their surroundings, especially in higher education? When we talk about higher education and healthy environment of a higher education institution, we hear a word “Autonomy”. Autonomy is the condition of self-government; society and authorities gives autonomy to institutions to make a healthy and knowledgeable environment of institutions. The autonomy basically is providing freedom to all members of institution, who are responsible for their conduct to their stakeholders. Autonomy is often used the basis for determining moral responsibility and accountability. There are two facts related with autonomy-

- Self-government
- Accountability

Self government is the soul of autonomy and it deals with the flexibility of governance of institutions. Government authorities give flexibility to institutions to make their educational environment healthy and provide conditions to creation of knowledge in the institutions. The term of self government applied both to individual person and to a group or institution. An autonomous person is able to act according to his own direction and an autonomous institution is able to regulate its own affairs. The relation between an individual and an institution is really complicated by the need to distinguish between the collective self government of institution and the self direction of an individual member of institution. Ideas about self government of an individual basically relates with the freedom of individual to act according to his or her direction. Individual and institutional autonomy both are linked each other. To make higher education batter it is necessary to encourage the involvement and commitment of everyone, who engage in teaching learning process. Accountability relates with autonomy indirectly but now

accountability has emerged as a new face of autonomy. In the present scenario accountability is not just a word of discussion, now it is time to understand and make a practical plan of accountability system in education especially in higher education. Accountability is an ethical concept; it relates with the conduct of peoples to their stakeholders. It is social relation in which an actor feel obligation and justify his conduct to significant others.

Theoretically autonomy relates with the self government and decentralization of power but now it is sifting to its practical phase called accountability. When autonomy exercised with the sense of responsibility and obligation of an individual or institution then it is called accountability. Now universities are not just educating the people. The role of higher education institutions has been changed in some new manners, now they are called doorway of development. The universities have to perform many roles, like creating new knowledge, producing an intellectual and knowledge based society, make connection between society and institutions. A paradigm shift has been noticed in higher education now days, from national education to global education and one time education for few to lifelong education to all. The changes make new demands and want professional commitment from institutions and professionals. The university grant commission had done nationwide discussion on the issues related with higher education on its golden jubilee year, 2003. The seminar topics have been suitably divided and presented in three sections:

- Management of higher education
- Reorientation of higher education
- Quality assurance in higher education

To make good management in higher education seminar recommended getting fuscous on public private partnership and reduce governmental control in the university. Seminar also recommended that higher education should be developed as an

infrastructure for social and economical growth of country. The shift of national education to global education has changed the basic objectives of higher education. India is the second largest educational system of world after USA. Researches approved that good higher education is the key of development but enrolment in higher education in India is very low in the comparison of developed countries. So it important to be a develop nation to round up enrolment in higher education. Health consciousness and physical fitness is another issue, which relates with our higher education system. The suffer ill-health as our more population live in unhealthy surroundings, and this is because they cannot afford to live in more healthy environment. If we want to make a batter higher education system so we have to need more professional persons who make our evaluation system batter. The last issue of that seminar was quality assurance in higher education system. Quality is typical word in the relation of higher education. Quality up gradation is not onetime phenomena. First of all we have to round up enrolment in higher education and make batter accesses of secondary and higher education to them than after we should talk about quality in higher education. This seminar gave a clear map to maintain higher education according to change of 21<sup>st</sup> century and demographic condition comes later on in India.

Autonomy and accountability both are basically two side of a coin. Autonomy of institution broadly emphasize on freedom to academic, administrative and financial matter. Many of commission and committees recommended autonomy of institutions since independence. The higher education system of India includes both public and private universities. Public universities are supported by the government of India and private universities are supported by various independent bodies and societies. Universities of India are recognized by the university grant commission (UGC). 16 professional councils are established to support the Indian higher and professional

education system. There are some statistics show current status of Indian higher education and autonomy.

**Total number of universities and colleges in India as on 26/11/2014**

S. N.	UNIVERSITIES	TOTAL No.
•	State universities	325
•	Central universities	45
•	Deemed universities	128
•	Private universities	195
•	<b>Total</b>	<b>693</b>
•	No. of colleges in India	35539

\*Source: ugc.ac.in

**Status of autonomous colleges in India as on 01/08/2014**

S. N.	STATUS	NO.
•	Total number of states, where autonomous colleges established	24
•	No. of universities	93
•	No. of colleges	487

\*Source: ugc.ac.in

The university grant commission (UGC) has recommended enhancement of the triple objectives of accesses, equity and quality in the higher education sector under the XII five year plan. Last few years, higher education in India found unexpected expansion, marked by a huge increase in the volume of students, a large increase in the number of institutions and a quantum jump in the level of public funding. Now we have to see higher education as a long term social investment for the promotion of economic growth, social development, justice and equity. To meet the aim of inclusive growth and sustainable development along with social justice and equity, higher education sector play a pivotal role. The main focus of higher education to make knowledge based society in the basis of research and developing an educated and skilled mass. The present time wants to develop higher education in such new manner; balance development. With the launch of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan Indian higher

education system is going to another level and the issue of autonomy has also emerged in some new manner. Since independence every commission and committee emphasis on the autonomy of higher education institutions but now we have just 487 autonomous colleges in India. It is a question, that every commission and committee recommends autonomy but authority was not giving freedom to government institution as well as private institutions. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan also emphasizes on must be given greater autonomy to institutions but RUSA also focus on accountability in to the relation of autonomy. Under the scheme of RUSA autonomy defined under these titles-

Administrative  
Academics  
Faculty  
Students

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India was set up the committee of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in 2004 on “Autonomy of Higher Education Institution”. The committee suggested their recommendation under these titles-

- **Academics matters:** designing of curriculum, selection of students, accountability of faculty to their stakeholders, adaptation of choice-based credit course along with semester system, research, internal quality assurance, development of code of professional ethics, collaboration with other agencies, evaluation of student performance etc.

- **Administrative matters:** good governance, outsourcing of non academic activities, norms of accountability for individual and institutions, expeditious disposal of litigation on service matter, charter of responsibilities etc.

- **Financial matters:** funds, mechanism of designing fee structure, scholarship to minorities and deserving students coming from low economic status from the society, Undertaking consultancy assignments and sponsored research projects, including user agencies to contribute to the growth and development of the university system.

University grant commission is the main authority of Indian higher education system and it has allowed autonomy to institutions for the fulfillment of national objectives and sustainable development in every aspect of life. Since independence Indian higher education system has been growing rapidly but development of universities and environment of institutions in higher education did not developed according to need of nation. There is no one Indian university find place in top 100 universities all over the world. Mushrooming of higher education institutions is one most burning issue related with quality of education. Autonomy gives flexibility to institutions to make their educational environment batter but institutions have used autonomy in incorrectly manner. Now the matter of autonomy of intuitions is sifting to make this system to accountable to their stakeholders. This is a big sift for the matter of quality and equity in society. The present time is really crucial for India to understand his demographic situation. The demographic dividend of India makes it a developed country but it will depend on our higher education system and what is the condition of Indian higher education system everyone knows about that. It is time to understand that what are we, what are our needs and how can we make a knowledge based society and educated & skilled youth. If India wants to be a developed country so the responsibility to make him developed is on the shoulders of Indian higher education system. It is not time to think about autonomy to make just a discussing issue; now Indian higher education makes a practice

plan to become accountable for nation, society and all persons who pay tax for the growth and development.

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