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Reforms in Higher Education in India: A Review of Recommendations of Commissions and Committees on Education

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Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education
National University of Educational Planning and Administration
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Reforms in Higher Education in India: A Review of Recommendations of Commissions and Committees on Education*

A. Mathew**

Abstract

The discourses on higher education system in India after Independence could be distinguished by four major trends. First trend is the reluctance to expansion and restriction to admission without improving current facilities available in higher education institutions (HEI) and diverse views on continuity and change in the ways in which research is organized in higher education. The second trend concerns academic improvement related to curriculum, content, assessment and evaluation. Different commissions and committees on education are united in marking the irrelevant content and curriculum, admissions far in excess of capacity of facilities and faculty, deficient teaching methods and an outdated examination system, which tests rote learning rather than real learning and subject knowledge, as the reasons. The third trend is concerned with the discourses on reorganization of governance of HEIs for purposes of greater accountability. Autonomy and reorganization of universities were approached differently by different committees. The fourth strand relates to the privatization and private participation in higher education. The paper argues that private engagement in HE is now gaining wider policy legitimacy.

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Introduction

India after Independence adopted a strategy of appointing Committees and Commissions to reform education. The very first Commission appointed in independent India was on higher education. There have been several Commissions/Committees appointed to make recommendations on higher education development at different points of time. The reports of these Commissions/Committees formed the basis for initiating many reforms in the higher education sector in India.

Even a cursory glance of the various Commissions and Committees on higher education cannot fail to notice the two extremely divergent views about higher education in India. One, it has been and continues to be viewed as the major instrument of national transformation, in terms of economic development, social progress and strengthening of political democracy, as seen from the various commissions and committees, right from Independence. The other view is that the system of higher education is in deep crisis, progressively deteriorating over the last six decades. As this paper would try to show, all the committees and commissions of higher education are one in suggesting two differentiated approaches, by way of their perceptions and recommendations, to deal with the deterioration in quality and standards and arresting the degeneration in the accountability of higher education institutions and the system as a whole.

In respect of one set of factors explaining the deterioration in standards and quality of higher education – the academic dimensions, the different commissions and committees are united in marking the irrelevant content and curriculum, admissions far in excess of capacity of facilities and faculty, deficient teaching methods and an examination system which tests rote learning rather than real learning and subject knowledge as the reasons. In respect of management of higher education institutions, a divergence of perceptions and recommendations could be noticed. While higher education institutions were of the view that external pressures and interferences

affected its autonomy, the socio-political set up pointed out that the degeneration and deterioration was far more serious, bringing the system of higher education into serious disrepute, and demanded its accountability. Thus, as this paper argues, the reasons that affected the credibility, reputation and standards of higher education turned out to be along two sets of factors – one which could be amenable for reform and improvement and one that required radical reorganization and overhaul. These trends, indicating a differentiation in perceptions and recommendations of the various commissions and committees on higher education, have not been explicit or self-evident reasons and solutions, but this distinction is a product of intensive study and comparison of the trends in perceptions and recommendations.

This paper is organized along five broad headings, excluding introductory section, viz., (1) Perception on Expansion and Research, (2) Quality and Teaching, (3) Governance and Re-organisation of higher education system, (4) Privatisation and Private higher education, and (5) Conclusion. Summary of major recommendations on critical issues of HE is given as annexure. It is to be noted that this paper covers only general higher education – university and collegiate – and does not deal with technical education in any significant degree.

Perceptions on Expansion and Research

Perceptions on Expansion

Unlike elementary education, which was considered as the right of every child with the government obliged to provide for it, higher education was considered to be meant for the talented. The one complaint that the University Education Commission (also known as Radhakrishnan Commission) had was that “some of the colleges we visited have, on their roles, 5-10 times the number of students that they could properly educate. Therefore, to avoid overcrowding at the universities and colleges, the maximum number in the Arts and Science faculties of a teaching university should be fixed at 3000, and in an affiliated colleges at 1500” (MOE, 1962, p.101). As regards PG

training and research in Arts and Sciences also, the sole concern of Radhakrishnan Commission was that “a high standard of scholarship, that has been traditional in our country, seems to have deserted us”, and that the “standards of our M.A. and M.Sc. degrees should be raised” (MOE, 1962, p.141), which implied that admissions should be regulated by the level of facilities to keep up the standard. Deterioration in quality and standards in higher education and, by implication, stricter norms for selecting the talented students was the recommendation of not only the Radhakrishnan Commission in 1948-49, but also the Education Commission (1964-66) 15 years later. The Education Commission emphasized that the expansion of facilities in higher education in the next 20 years should be planned broadly on the basis of trends of manpower needs and employment opportunities, unlike the prevailing trend of over-production and unemployment in subjects like arts and shortage of professional specialists in professional courses (Government of India, 1966 (NCERT, 1971, 552). The Commission recommended that the open-door access to admission in arts and commerce courses, followed in the first three Five Year Plans, should be replaced by a policy of selective admission according to the number of teachers and facilities available while selecting the best among eligible students (NCERT, 1971, p.557-58).

In respect of expansion, the Commission suggested that while the undergraduate (UG) enrolment should increase from 1,55,000 to 3,20,000, i.e. nearly double the number, by 1985-86, the enrolment at Post-Graduate (PG) and research level should increase from 45,000 to 7,50,000, i.e. more than a dozen-fold, but contingent on the facilities and staff (NCERT, 1970, p. 567-68). With regard to new Universities in the metropolis, the Education Commission diagnosed the situation in Calcutta University and found “very serious shortcomings” -- half a dozen affiliated colleges with more than 50,000 students -- unmanageable undergraduate population, with not even a modicum of essential facilities; and considerable time lag between the examination and announcement of results. The Commission accepted the need for a second university in the four metropolises, but felt that this could be done by

regrouping of colleges under a new university (NCERT, 1971, p. 573). It also felt that the demand for additional universities in states, which already had one, was justified. But “it is essential”, said the Commission, to ensure that (i) establishment of these universities leads to substantial improvement in standards and raises the output and level of research; and (ii) competent men and physical facilities are provided. The Commission was firm that no university should be started without UGC agreement, sanction and funds (NCERT, 1971, p. 574-75).

Reviewing the scene 20 years later, the *Challenge of Education* (1985) was more disturbed by the “uneven nature of development of higher education” along regional, social and gender lines. It noticed that the norms for starting colleges and universities were flouted, but they kept absorbing resources without attaining minimum standards and the Central Government preferred compromise than confrontation with the State Governments, with the latter making some token amends (MOE, 1985, p. 48). Expansion with conformity to the norms of the UGC (University Grants Commission) and AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education) was seen as impossible. Therefore, the one unequivocal advocacy of *Challenge* was that expansion should stop, and reforming the system must become the agenda.

No wonder that in the sector of higher education, the strategy, according to the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA), was on be consolidation of institutions. The NPE’s POA saw that “Many of the 150 Universities and 5000 Colleges have not been provided with minimum level of infrastructure. Provision of these facilities is essential to protect the system from degeneration” (GOI, 1986, p. 38-39). Looking at the scene six years later, the NPE’s Revised POA, 1992 struck to the same strategy of consolidation and improvement of facilities rather than quantitative expansion. The POA was proud that “we have one of the largest systems of higher education in the world”, but, at the same time, “the spread and development in this sector have been uneven” in infrastructure facilities resulting in wide variation in the quality of teaching and research (GOI, 1996, p. 116).

Despite NPE, 1986's firm position that the main emphasis would be on consolidation of the existing institutions and increase of facilities in them, the unplanned proliferation of institutions of higher learning continued unabated. Thus, the number of universities had gone up from 149 to 176, the number of colleges from 5816 to 7121 and enrolment of students from about 36 lakh to over 44 lakh during 1985-86 to 1990-91. Similarly, despite NPE's firm view that "admissions will be regulated according to capacity and urgent steps will be taken to protect the system from degradation... in most parts of the country existing institutions of higher education are still constrained to admit students beyond their capacity without commensurate provision of physical and academic facilities. There is no institutional or other mechanism to ensure that admissions to universities and colleges are restricted to capacity" (GOI, 1996, p. 97).

Protecting the university education from degeneration was the foremost concern rather than expansion of higher education. Increasing access and opportunities to more and more students was decidedly accorded lesser preference to limiting the admission according to available facilities and faculty.

It was only since the beginning of the century, the expansion of higher education so as to meet the educational aspirations of ever increasing pass-outs of senior secondary education, as a necessary and legitimate agenda of the higher education sector, was recognized. Although slow to gain currency, comparison of GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) in higher education with advanced and other developing countries was used as a means of drawing attention to India's lag in this regard.

The Special Subject Group on Policy Framework for Private Investment in Education, Health and Rural Development constituted by the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry in 2000 (known as Ambani Group) said that "Education is becoming even more vital in the new world of information. Knowledge is rapidly replacing raw materials and labour as the most critical input for survival and success. Knowledge has

become the new asset”. The Ambani Group went on to suggest that the vision for education in India would be “to create a competitive, yet co-operative, knowledge-based society”. Elaborating the “guiding principle of the strategy”, the Group recommended provision of UEE (Universal Elementary Education) in the RTE (Right to Education) Act perspective, and a healthy mix of state and private initiatives in education at other levels. In respect of higher education, the Group was particular that the “user pays principle to be enforced strictly”, supplemented by loan schemes and financial grants for economically and socially backward sections of society” (GOI, 2000, p. 14-15). With regard to the roles in the educational development, the Group said that the Government must focus strongly on primary and secondary education and leave higher and professional education to the private sector (GOI, 2000, p.17).

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in 2006 was constrained to note “The proportion of our population, in the age group 18-24, that enters the world of higher education is around seven per cent, which is only one-half the average for Asia. The opportunities for higher education, in terms of the number of places in universities, are simply not enough in relation to our needs. The challenges that confront higher education in India are clear. It needs a massive expansion of opportunities for higher education, to 1500 universities nationwide, that would enable India to attain a gross enrolment ratio of at least 15 per cent by 2015. We need to create more appropriately scaled and more nimble universities” (NKC, 2006, p. 1, 3). The NKC was forthright in saying that “the moral of the story is not only that we need a much larger number of universities, say 1500 nationwide by 2015, but also that we need smaller universities which are responsive to change and easier to manage”.

Summarising the recommendations of *the National Knowledge Commission’s Note on Higher Education*, its Chairman, Sam Pitroda, wrote to the Prime Minister saying: “We recommend the creation of 50 National Universities that can provide education of the highest standard. As exemplars for the rest of the nation, these universities shall train students in a variety of disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, basic

sciences, commerce and professional subjects, at both the undergraduate (UG) and post-graduate (PG) levels. The number 50 is a long-term objective. In the short run, it is important to begin with at least 10 such universities in the next three years. National Universities can be established in two ways- by the government, or by a private sponsoring body that sets up a Society, Charitable Trust or Section 25 Company” (NKC, 2006, p. 3). Having suggested a massive increase in the number of universities, the Commission broadly outlined the measures for achieving it, including upgradation of deserving colleges into deemed universities, besides the 50 National Universities, establishment of new universities by the State and Central Governments, and establishment of new universities by private providers (Swamy, n.d., p. 4).

As the name itself indicates, the *Yashpal Committee on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education (2009)* laid less focus on expansion and more on restoring “the idea of a university, as a place of germinating new ideas, striking roots and growing tall and sturdy, as a unique space which covers the entire universe of knowledge, and as a place where creative minds converge, interact with each other and construct visions of new realities. To be able to do all this, universities have to be autonomous spaces. They are diverse in their design and organisation, reflecting the unique historical and socio-cultural settings on which they have grown” (MHRD, 2009, p.9). The Yashpal Committee noted that “the slow but increasing democratization of higher education in India has meant that the university is no longer the preserve of the children of the elite, or of the educated/professional middle-class. As more youngsters from different segments of society enter the universities, they look at higher education as a means to transcend the class barriers” (MHRD, 2009, p.9). The NKC and the Yashpal Committees stood diametrically opposite to the pre-2000 viewpoint on expansion, viz. admissions being restricted to facilities and capacity.

In its Report, the *NR Narayana Murthy Committee on Corporate Participation in Higher Education (2012)* said that among the several problems that plague higher education, the foremost is “inadequate number of institutions to educate eligible

students”. It took note of India’s “low GER of 20% compared to 84% in the US, 59% in the UK, 55% in Japan, and 28% in China”. Its focus is also more on creating a world-class higher education” and “a sharp improvement in the quality and quantity of institutions of higher education to match standards in a globalized modern higher education system”, with significant investment and focus on faculty and research (GOI, 2012, p.1).

The Narayana Murthy Committee saw less gain but more “serious challenges” in the government’s efforts for the expansion of higher education, equity through inclusion, and excellence in higher education. Based on the enrolment trend, which increased from 8.4 million in 2000-02 to 14.6 million in 2009-10, the Committee felt that higher education system would need an additional capacity of 26 million seats over the next decade. But as regards the strategy for meeting this target, the Narayana Murthy Committee had a different take, i.e. the corporate participation as a major means, and removing all the barriers for their free operation, in setting up new universities and higher education institutions, and managing them with total freedom (GOI, 2012, p. 2-3).

Two trends stand out from the survey of Commissions’/Committees’ perceptions and perspectives on higher education since Independence, with regard to expansion. One is the concern about deterioration of quality and standards in higher education and the need to pay serious and immediate attention as the first priority. Expansion of the opportunities for higher education as a conscious and concerted policy was nowhere in the discourses for 50 years post-Independence. Every commission/committee report on higher education had one standard commentary, viz. deterioration and degeneration in the standards and quality due to the failure to restrict admissions to the capacity, outdated curriculum and syllabus, the domination of end-of-the-year examinations, laying premium on memory and rote learning than understanding of the subject, and, more importantly, the governance system in the university and higher education set-up that thwarted improvements. Expansion was a far cry in the prevailing milieu of such systemic hurdles, and the commissions,

naturally, were disinclined to advocate expansion of the system of higher education and enrolments in colleges and universities. This was the trend and tenor in the perception and recommendations of commissions and committees till the close of the century.

It was the emergence of un-aided private colleges – known as the capitation fee colleges, and Deemed Universities by the private sector from 1980s and, especially, from late 1990s and 2000s that altered the policy milieu. Starting from the Ambani report in 2000, the National Knowledge Commission 2006, the Narayana Murthy Committee 2012 and FICCI Higher Education Summit 2013, expansion of higher education became a specific policy focus in the recommendations of these committees. The auspices apart, (i.e., State or Private sector participation, either in part or total) – expanding the opportunities for higher education from the XI Plan, to students of all sections of society, in the perspective of equity, inclusion and excellence, as contrasted with the selective approach (of restricting admission to the talented few) became a specific policy agenda governing UGC approach and strategy.

Withholding expansion till improvement in facilities and restricting admission to capacity was the watchword till about 2000. Continuing and further acceleration of the expansion of institutions and enrolment in institutions of higher education became the approach of the post-2000 era.

Perceptions on Research

In the discourses of Commissions and Committees on education and also higher education including the universities, a discussion on research was necessary because it was seen as an extension of PG education, i.e. in the scope of expansion. For the purpose of envisioning and planning, research leading to Ph.D in a university was seen as an extension of PG education and this was seen as a core function of a university, whether affiliating or unitary. One was seen as incomplete without the other. A discussion on research was also important as in the initial years after Independence.



Research in Science and Technology came to be undertaken in purely research institutes outside the university system and without any connection with teaching and research as an integral part of the academic work. As would be evident, such kinds of research institutions and research work also came under serious criticism for depriving the universities of their natural functions, and the call for not starving universities of the functions and funds.

It is also necessary to explore the newer subject areas to be covered under research and also the best possible approaches and strategies to promote research within and outside the university system and research institutions. The treatment here is more about the views of the commissions/committees on higher education as extension of education beyond the PG level for the purpose of a doctorate degree rather than the different subject as research either within or outside the university education system. The University Education Commission viewed that the training for the Ph.D. degree should extend over a period of at least two years. A Ph.D. student should not become a narrow specialist, but his grasp of his subject should be characterized both by breadth and depth. The examination should include a thesis and a viva-voce examination to test the candidate's general knowledge of the whole field of the subject. Admission to Ph. D. courses should be made with great care and should be on an all-India basis. Teaching universities should develop research training in as many branches of knowledge as they can, while the affiliating universities should develop post-graduate and research departments in subjects in which they can secure services of scholars of high quality. The Commission felt that there should be a certain number of Research Fellowships in each university for students who have taken the Ph.D. degree and wish to pursue a career of scholarship and research. These Fellowships should be awarded only to those Ph.Ds. who have shown a high degree of scholarship and competence for research. The D.Litt. and D.Sc. degrees should be awarded on published work of outstanding quality and conspicuous originality (MOE, 1962, p.133).

The Radhakrishnan Commission also surveyed the position of scientific research vis-a-vis the Scientific Manpower Committee (also known as Sarcar Committee, 1946) estimate of personnel required and prevalent shortage in the output of scientific research. It endorsed the Sarcar Committee recommendations that the shortage needs to be made up through a large number of Post-Graduation and research scholarships in universities and upgrading salaries of teachers. The Commission recommended to the Ministry of Education to set up a machinery to select best students from all over the country and offer scholarships and admission in the universities (MOE 1962, p. 157-158).

The Education Commission's views on doctoral study seemed to be a reiteration of the Radhakrishnan Commission's suggestions. The Education Commission said that a student should be expected to work for 2-3 years for a Ph.D. It should involve one year training in research methodology, comprehension of secondary literature, ability in analysis, drawing inferences and presenting findings in a logical and scientific way, besides advanced training in the subject. It said that the evaluation of a doctoral dissertation should be improved; and a positive report of all the examiners and a viva voce exam in defending the thesis are essential requirements for award of research degree. Much like Radhakrishnan Commission, the Education Commission also felt it desirable to establish a degree higher than Ph.D viz., Doctor of Science for a work of research of an international standing and quality (NCERT, 1971, p.580-81).

The Education Commission was clear that the bulk of the PG and research work should be organized in the universities or university 'centres' where good programmes could be developed by 3-4 local good affiliated colleges under university guidance. The university and university centres should shoulder the task of 80% of the PG and research work.

In respect of educational research, the Education Commission noted the inadequacy of facilities and competent people to guide it, the very low quality and

narrow focus of research and the absence of a clearing house like documentation and a journal on educational research. It recommended to the NCERT the starting of a documentation and national clearing house and a journal devoted to educational research. It also suggested setting up of a National Academy of Education and Research Council (NCERT, 1971, p. 587-88).

The *Challenge of Education* saw research in the university system as widespread and cost-effective, but major national inputs had gone to labs outside the universities, which explained the “great deprivation in terms of facilities for frontline work”. The *Challenge* was clear on the “need to correct the situation” as without it, neither the quality of PG education nor quality of research can be improved (MOE, 1985, 49). Taking note of these sentiments, the NPE, 1986 declared that research in the universities will be provided increased support and staff (MHRD, 1986, p.13). The NPE’s POA was forthright in recognizing the demerits of a large number of research institutions being set up outside the university system. It said that the process of higher education has to develop in close contact with first class research in frontier areas of science, technology, humanities and social sciences. If higher education has to become relevant and solve the most difficult problems, universities must come centre-stage. They should grapple with significant scientific problems of industry and national agencies (GOI, 1986, p.43).

The NPE’s Revised POA, 1992 also declared that higher education and research in university must get greater priority and resources. It commended the cooperative research actively promoted by the UGC in the Seventh Five Year Plan and the MOUs signed to promote research with CSIR (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research), and other such bodies like DST (Department of Science and Technology), ICSSR (Indian Council of Social Science Research) and ICHR (Indian Council of Historical Research), and lauded this approach as the future roadmap (GOI, 1996, p. 105-06).

Fifteen years is a not a long enough period in the evolution of the higher education system in India for changes taking roots and becoming institutionalized even though the period has witnessed changes in the Central Government many times. Nothing much seems to have changed even after signing of MOUs for cooperative research that broke the insularity of research from the university system. Surveying the situation, the NKC said that as a country, we attempted to create stand-alone research institutions, pampered with resources, in the belief that research should be moved out of universities. In the process, we forgot an essential principle of synergies between teaching and research that enrich each other, and that it is the universities which are the natural home for research. The NKC held that it is time to reverse what happened in the past and make universities the hub of research once again. This would need changes in resource-allocation, reward-systems and mindsets. Substantial grants should be allocated for research (NKC, 2006, p.4).

The Yashpal Committee was harsher than even the NKC about the growing tendency to treat teaching and research as two separate activities, backed by separate policies, programmes and structures. It held that this disjoint between teaching and research had led to a situation where most of the universities have been reduced to centres that teach and examine masses, with more and more elite bodies being created where researchers had no occasion to engage with young minds. Therefore, 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 (MHRD, 2009, p.14).

The Narayana Murthy Committee also supported the NKC and Yashpal Committees' advocacy to strengthen research in the university sector, albeit in a university and corporate sector tie up mode for this purpose. It made its conviction known that for India's higher education institutions to be truly world-class, research should be fostered in addition to teaching. It said that this is also a huge opportunity for the corporate sector to participate in research by supporting doctoral programmes

and providing funding for research. A fund to be called ‘The Indian Corporate R&D (Research and Development) Fund’ should be set up with a corpus of Rs. 5,000 crores, funded by the Central Government and the corporate. Access to this fund should be available to all (corporates, individual researchers, academic institutions, collaborations). The R&D fund should be administered transparently. Tax exemption to corporates to the extent of 300% of their contribution should be provided by the government. Doctoral programmes should be launched to enable the corporate practitioners to pursue these programmes, and Research should also be encouraged by corporations by providing sponsored research sabbaticals for their employees (GOI, 2012, p.9-10).

The FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) document, *Vision 2030* projects itself in the year 2030 and visualises the scene of higher education as it would have developed by that time. It speaks of 15 years of conscious policy, leading to a mammoth enrolment of 40 million students in higher education in three categories of institutions, viz. highly selective elite research universities at the top, comprehensive universities and specialized institutions in the middle, and an array of highly-accessible and high-quality colleges at the bottom. Top-tier research universities are centers of excellence for the creation of new knowledge, set up with the vision to emerge as national and international leaders in research output and intellectual property. They enroll a select set of talented, research-oriented students to be taught by a stellar faculty. Faculty and students at the university attract handsome research grants and exhibit the greatest international diversity. Going beyond traditional scientific and applied research, these universities have phenomenally broadened the scope of India’s research capabilities to new inter-disciplinary areas of scholarship that present the greatest opportunity for the creation of new knowledge and have the highest relevance for India in the new world. While the first tier caters exclusively to furthering India’s intellectual capital, the other two focus on delivering economic and social value respectively (EY & FICCI, 2013, p.7-8).

The evolving perceptions about research in the discourses of Commissions/Committees on higher education reveal quite a few significant trends representing continuity and change. One was about striking a balance in priority and resource allocation between research in Science and Technology and Social Sciences and Humanities. Starting from the Education Commission, this emphasis was a persistent trend until the NKC (2006), the Yashpal Committee (2009) and the Narayana Murthy Committee (2012). There was never any compromise about research being for the best minds as a deliberate policy. Even those Commissions/Committees, which explicitly supported the entry and free run of the private agencies in universities and colleges, were in favour of going beyond the commercially viable subjects like engineering, medicine, management and covering the other not-so-profitable subjects like social sciences and humanities. However, they also maintained that ideally, research promotion in commercially non-viable subjects like social sciences should be the focus of government institutions.

Quality and Teaching

Content, Curriculum and Standards of Teaching

Even though the commissions and committees took a grim view of the quality and standards of higher education, they felt that periodic revision of content and curriculum, improvement in the teaching-learning approach and methodology, recruitment of talented faculty and their disciplined work ethic, and reforms in assessment and evaluation methods would be good enough for its improvement, i.e. to restore quality and standards in higher education. This was in sharp contrast with certain other aspects. For instance, in aspects like governance, as would be evident later, nothing short of an overhaul was seen as adequate. This section surveys the emerging perceptions on content and curriculum, teaching-learning approach and methodology, and reforms in assessment and evaluation.



On the issue of standards of teaching, the Radhakrishnan Commission was very concerned, when it found that “in the methods of instruction in the universities, mass lectures is the most common”, but, this was not supplemented by any regular work by students in the library after the lecture. Therefore, it suggested that lectures should be carefully planned and supplemented by tutorials, library work and written exercises (MOE 1962, p. 103-04).

The Commission found the overt dependence on textbooks as even more disturbing than the mass lecture system and lack of supplementary work by students. It observed: “One of the evils of the present method of instruction is that it is focused too much on the text books. The students are prevented from developing their powers of judgment, as they are taught to depend on text books”. Therefore, it suggested that “there be no prescribed textbooks for any courses of study” (MOE 1962, p.104-5). While advocating tutorials as “a kind of intellectual midwifery”, the Commission also cautioned that it should not become “coaching for exams”. Tutorial instruction should be developed in all institutions imparting university education, especially at undergraduate level and seminars at PG level (MOE 1962, p.107). Emphasizing the importance, Radhakrishnan Commission made known its conviction that “library is the heart of all university work and is second only to the instructional staff ...” and recommended that university libraries should be greatly improved. (MOE, 1962, p.111-12).

In respect of PG courses, the Commission was anxious that the “standards of our MA and MSc degrees should be raised”, and recommended a certain uniformity of duration of two years for MA and MSc in case of ordinary BA/BSc, and a duration of one year in case of BA/B Sc. Honours graduates. The teaching for these degrees should be properly organized through 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. There should be closest personal touch between the staff and students.

Fifteen years' experience showed certain other issues as becoming very urgent. One was the "undesirability" of specialization immediately after school and this led the Education Commission to recommend flexibility in the choice of courses at the undergraduate level, and not rigidly tie up the subjects at school-leaving stage, like a combination of maths, economics and philosophy or physics, chemistry with biology. This should be applicable in general, special and honours courses at the undergraduate level (NCERT, 1971, p. 578).

The Education Commission said that at the PG level also, there is an urgent need for flexibility, allowing for combination courses, consisting of one major subject with one or two subsidiary or ancillary subjects. The curriculum should be so framed as to provide general broad-based course or an intensive training in one or two subjects (NCERT, 1971, p. 579).

With regard to the broad areas of study, the Education Commission made very significant recommendations which also indicated newer directions. Social sciences, the Commission said, is one such area which "should be given a significant place in the subjects of study in Indian universities", as it can develop in students and teachers a spirit of accuracy, critical analysis and investigation which are imperative for any educational process to promote. It said that social sciences are essential tools for the study of the conditions and needs of modern society and its development. It provides educated and trained people in 'the third sector of the economy' – the service sector. There should be adequate provision of scholarships, flexibility in the choice of subjects in the first degree level, enabling students to combine study of social science subjects with choice with any other group of subjects. Hence, the Commission recommended for larger allocation of financial assistance to universities for the development of social science subjects.

The Education Commission also recommended that a significant and effective programme of area studies needs to be developed in universities relating to the study



of different regions like America, China, Asia – West, East, South, and South-East, Africa and Latin America, etc (NCERT, 1971, p. 582-84). It deprecated the neglect of study of humanities due to the current pre-occupation with science and technology and dependence on advanced countries for emulation. It said that this imbalance should be redressed by supporting the study of humanities (NCERT, 1971, p. 584-85). The Education Commission's emphasis on the study of social sciences, area studies and humanities as manifest in its view indicated its anxiety for restoring the balance between the study of sciences and social sciences in Indian universities. It is remarkable that more than 40 years later, the NKC and Yashpal Committee, in 2006 and 2009, underlined the judiciousness of exposure to various disciplines like humanities, social sciences, aesthetics, etc., in an integrated manner, as was reiterated by the Education Commission in 1964-66.

Nothing happened to these recommendations for 20 years and the *Challenge of Education – a policy perspective*, 1985 again underlined that undergraduate programmes should be re-organised in a modular pattern wherein a student should have the option of combining courses concerned with theoretical knowledge, languages, communication skills, culture, sports and programmes of a vocational character. The *Challenge* argued that there is no reason as to why a person should not be able to graduate with modules relating to political theory, public administration, mathematics and word processing. It held that there should be a moratorium on further expansion of the traditional pattern of colleges and universities, and new colleges and universities should offer only work-oriented or socially relevant courses, catering to carefully identified tasks, having usually a multi-disciplinary character. Thus, the *Challenge* emphasized that concerted action is needed to change the curricula in line with the expansion of knowledge (MOE, 1985, p. 49).

Till the 1980s, effecting uniformity in duration and ensuring flexibility in the combination of subjects at both UG and PG levels were viewed to be adequate in respect of reform and improvement in higher education. In the context of 1980s, as

indicated by *Challenge of Education*, reorganization of the courses became a major area of the reform agenda. The NPE, 1986 and its POA recognized that higher education programmes “have to be redesigned to meet the growing demands of specialisation, to provide flexibility in the combination of courses, to facilitate mobility among courses, programmes and institutions, to update and modernise curricula, to integrate work/practical experience and participation in creative activities with the learning processes, and to facilitate reforms in the evaluation procedure. The present rigid structures do not permit these reforms” (GOI, 1986, p. 40; GOI, 1996, p. 102).

In order to achieve these objectives, the POA 1986 proposed to re-organise the Boards of Studies in universities to facilitate course redesign and promote interdisciplinary programmes and interfaces with employment (GOI, 1986, p. 40). But, the situation in respect of restructuring of courses still remained without any significant progress in 1992 (GOI, 1996, p. 102).

Examining the scenario, the National Knowledge Commission said that the syllabi of courses in universities, which remained unchanged for decades, needed to be upgraded constantly and revised frequently. The process for such revisions should be streamlined and decentralized, with more autonomy for teachers, through a change in statutes, wherever necessary. There should be some mode of censure for departments or universities that do not upgrade their courses regularly. It needs to be recognised that it is very difficult to introduce new courses or innovative courses in universities due to departmental divides. Appropriate institutional mechanisms should be put in place to resolve this problem (MHRD, 2009, p. 17-19).

The Yashpal Committee felt that much of our higher education is uni-disciplinary and advocated curriculum to be focused on exposing the students to the world of work of different kinds so as to sensitize them to the conditions of the universe of persons outside of their own. It stated that “There is a need to ask as to what is the purpose of a university, especially at the undergraduate level, and then use the

answers to develop a curriculum”. It further added that “there is a need to expose students, especially at the undergraduate level, to various disciplines like humanities, social sciences, aesthetics, etc., in an integrated manner. This should be irrespective of the discipline they would like to specialize in subsequently” (MHRD, 2009, p.19-20).

In sum, one could notice that beginning from the Education Commission in mid-1960s, and across different commissions in later years, a great discomfort and concern about outdated content and curriculum was palpable, underlining the need for periodic revision and greater connection with the real world of life and work, especially at the under-graduate levels. The Education Commission saw flexibility in combination of courses at UG and PG levels as a more pressing need. It did not perceive any urgent need to call for revision of content and curriculum and syllabus. The 1980s was a different situation in respect of explosion of knowledge and expectation of exposure at the under-graduate level, with regard to content and curriculum. The connection with the growing demands of specialization and the world of work became an additional dimension besides the need for flexibility in combination of courses between and across Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities subjects at UG and PG levels. A more pointed directive was given to the UGC to undertake this task across UG and PG level with the involvement of universities and colleges, its teachers and students. The NKC had found not much headway made on this score and had become much more severe in its criticism and equally strident in its recommendations, including censure of universities and colleges found wanting in the matter of revision of content and curriculum. The Yashpal Committee was most forthright in calling for revision of content and curricula with a view to achieving a greater connect between the universities and the world of persons and world of work outside, an issue with which the Narayana Murthy Committee was in total agreement.

Assessment and Evaluation

It sounds naïve that the higher education system, much like school education, is an engagement with what to teach and how to assess and evaluate what has been learnt by the students. It is surprising that the societies and countries were obdurately of the view that the engagement with one without the other is incomplete. Thus, much like the content and curriculum in different subject areas, assessment and evaluation remained as a constant sore, a troubling and disturbing aspect of the higher education system. That the system of assessment and evaluation should continue to defy efforts, at what and how to test what is learnt, has remained the heart and soul of the discourses in the commissions and committees on education and higher education.

The Radhakrishnan Commission noted that for nearly half a century, examinations, as they had been in operation, had been recognized as one of the “worst features” of Indian education. It said that “in our visits to the universities we heard, from teachers and students alike, the endless tale of how examinations have become the aim and end of education, how all instruction is subordinated to them, how they kill all initiative in the teacher and the student, how capricious, invalid, unreliable and inadequate they are, and how they tend to corrupt the moral standards of university life.” It went on to declare “We are convinced that if we are to suggest one single reform in university education, it should be that of the examinations”. It also suggested the line of reform, viz. the introduction of such valid, reliable, adequate objective examinations in the universities of India at the earliest possible time. It warned that without this reform, there is danger that Indian higher education will fall into chaos (MOE, 1962, p. 285-86).

The Education Commission did not find any change in the dominating role of examination in the higher education scene: “In the present system, when the future of the students is totally decided by one external examination at the end of the year, they pay minimum attention to the teachers, do little independent study throughout most

of the academic year and cram desperately for the final examination. The crippling effect of external examinations on the quality of work in higher education is so great that examination reform has become crucial to all progress and has to go hand in hand with improvements in teaching.” Simultaneously, it also recognized and rued the fact that “this is one of those areas in education about which one can say that the problem is known, its significance is realized, the broad lines of the solution - at least to begin with - are known; but for some reason or other, an effort to implement it on any worthwhile scale ... has not yet been made. What is needed is vigorous and sustained action” (NCERT, 1971, p.576).

One line of action, said the Commission, is to abolish set syllabuses and the external examinations and replace them with a system of internal and continuous evaluation by the teachers themselves, as was already being done in some institutions like the IITs. However, the Commission was pragmatic enough to recognize that “external examinations will remain with us for a long time, especially in universities which have large numbers of affiliated colleges of very unequal standards”. Under the circumstances, introduction of more frequent, periodical assessment could help reduce the undue emphasis on the final examination as the sole determinant of success. Therefore, the Commission recommended that “A system of internal assessment should be introduced as a supplement to the external examination”. It also recommended that like the Central Examination Reform Unit in NCERT, the UGC should immediately set up a similar examination reform unit for higher education to work in collaboration with the universities (NCERT, 1971, p. 576-77).

The *Challenge of Education* was totally in agreement with the Education Commission in recognizing that “as with secondary education, examination reforms are urgently needed in respect of Higher Education as well, since the present system has lost its credibility. A stage has been reached when one university does not automatically give credence to the grading of another university and all big employers in the public and private sectors give their own tests to judge the merit of their

candidates”. It observed that the efforts made in the past in examination reform did not succeed because periodic internal evaluation would require both teachers and students to work harder (MOE, 1985, p.48-49).

In view of the examination system dominating the education scene across the board, the NPE 1986 declared that “the objective will be to re-cast the examination system so as to ensure a method of assessment that is a valid and reliable measure of student development and a powerful instrument for improving teaching and learning.” This would mean, the NPE added, the elimination of excessive element of chance and subjectivity; de-emphasis of memorisation; continuous and comprehensive evaluation, spread over the total span of instructional time of the course; introduction of the semester system; the use of grades in place of marks; and reduction of the predominance of external examinations (GOI, 1986, p. 48-49). The NPE (Revised) POA, 1992 was in total agreement with the objective of examination as advocated by the NPE, (GOI, 1996, p.40).

While surveying the scene nearly a decade and a half later around 2006, the NKC observed that the nature of annual examinations at universities in India often stifles the teaching-learning process because they reward selective and uncritical learning. There is an acute need to reform this examination system so that it tests understanding rather than memory. But assessment cannot and should not be based on examinations alone. There is a clear need for continuous internal assessment which empowers teachers and students alike, just as it breathes life back into the teaching-learning process. Such internal assessment would also foster the students’ analytical and creative abilities, which are often a casualty in university-administered annual examinations. To begin with, internal assessment could have a weight of 25 percent in the total but this should be raised to 50 percent over time (NKC, 2006, p.3-4).

The Yashpal Committee did not see any difference in the role of examinations in the higher education system. It observed that the methods of teaching and evaluation



used were not conducive to improve students' ability for abstract thinking. The Yashpal Committee suggested a completely different design of assessment and evaluation, based on grades (MHRD, 2009, p. 17-18). The Narayana Murthy Committee and the FICCI Higher Education Summit 2013 neither dealt with this issue at any great length nor did they come up with any significant recommendations.

Making assessment and evaluation as a continuous process in the academic calendar of a university and as an integral part of the course transaction process was stressed way back in 1964-66. This has been repeated with greater stridency in every commission/committee till 2012. This has still been not fully implemented in all the universities and colleges of all States. Resistance, both on the part of students and faculty, for the extra work involved, explains the dreadfully slow pace of the reforms in assessment and evaluation. Not only is the adoption of the Semester system uneven, but the same is the case with adoption of continuous comprehensive evaluation.

Teachers – Recruitment, Working Conditions and Accountability

This section seeks to portray the perceptions of different commissions and committees on faculty, their recruitment and deployment, their role in improving the standards and quality of higher education, their discipline and improvement in their status and condition, etc., all in relation to bring about substantial improvement in the quality and standards of higher education.

The Radhakrishnan Commission took note of the critical role of teachers in transmission and extension of knowledge to the young and in the development of their personality. It recognized that to accomplish the task, competent and qualified teachers are necessary. The Commission viewed the current status and salary of teachers, and the deterioration in the standards of teaching and discipline. Higher salaries that industries and government jobs offered were “taking the cream away, leaving the staff poorer, envious and discontented”, with the attendant

demoralization. “All this must pass away if the university is to play its proper role in the life of the nation” (MOE, 1962, p. 70-71).

The Commission noticed that in India “there is a great variety of salary scales” that differed from government to government-aided and privately managed institutions, between institutions of professional and technical courses, between teachers of different subjects and departments, universities to colleges -- implying different scales of payments for the same type of work (MOE, 1962, p. 73). Examining the salary scales of Provincial Services, the Commission recommended scales of salary for different grades of university teachers such as Professors, Readers, and Lecturers with the starting salary of Rs.900, Rs.600 and Rs.300 respectively and Instructors and Research Fellows with Rs.250. It also recommended scales of pay of Lecturers, Senior Posts and Principals of affiliated colleges with no PG classes and those with PG classes with higher annual increments after certain number of years of experience. The age of retirement for teachers was to be 60 and professors could be given extension till 64 subject to them being in good health. The Commission also recommended PF and other benefits as part of service conditions for teachers (MOE, 1962, p. 78-81).

The Education Commission was convinced that in building up a major university, it would be necessary to conduct an energetic search throughout the country for outstanding and promising young persons for recruiting as its teaching and research staff. For that purpose, each department or faculty should have a specially appointed personnel advisory committee, which should actively identify such candidates for appointments and, wherever necessary, offer them advance increments. What is even more important, they should be assured of opportunities for research and for taking study leave. There should be room for flexibility in the appointments and promotions. The UGC should place at the disposal of each university a contingency fund which may be used to provide more attractive salaries to persons having exceptional promise and performance (NCERT, 1971, p. 566-67).



The Education Commission also suggested that one of the important contributions, which the major universities can make to the development of the other universities and affiliated colleges, is to provide them with teachers of quality. The steps needed for that purpose should include inducing talented students from the universities to join the teaching profession and place a majority of them in universities and colleges, other than their own, to enable them to help in raising standards. The UGC should also sponsor a scheme of fellowships at Lecturer, Reader and Professor level to attract outstanding persons to the teaching profession as a temporary arrangement prior to their being absorbed in regular teaching assignments in the universities and colleges. The Commission also recommended that invitations should be extended to promising scholars and scientists from other universities or affiliated colleges to undertake research and to conduct seminars (say for a term or a session) at one of the centres of advanced study (NCERT, 1971, p. 568-69).

On the issue of faculty selection, the National Commission on Teachers in Higher Education (NCT-HE) was “of the view that it is extremely important to make a rigorous merit-based selection at the entry level into the teaching profession”. The Commission also agreed with the view that the fragmentation of the educational system, on the basis of language, region, caste and religion, should be counter-balanced by some selections on the basis of a widely cast net. Hence, we have recommended an All India Test and only those who have obtained grade B+ in such a test on a seven- point scale, should be eligible for consideration (NCT-HE, 1985, p. 121).

Although said in the context of management efficiency of the institution, the NCT-HE’s view about faculty is equally relevant in the context of teachers’ accountability. It observed that “all the educational changes and reforms, with all the money at our disposal will prove ineffective, and may be counterproductive, if the system lacks coherence, is afflicted with lack of discipline and suffers from poor work ethics or plain unwillingness to work conscientiously... our concern with end results or performance of the system leads us to say that a two-fold policy must be pursued:

we must give the teacher a place of honour, good salary, prospects of a good career depending on performance, adequate personal and professional facilities, we must set up mechanisms to remove his specific grievances, but we must demand work and responsibility from him. The management has to be strengthened in order that the imbalance, which has crept in between democracy and accountability, is corrected. This requires modification in Acts and Statutes, and also administration without fear or favour, and accountability on the part of "managers" too" (NCT-HE, 1985, p. 118).

The *Challenge of Education*, which diagnosed the practice of selection and promotion from the time of Education Commission, found it in a state of serious credibility crisis. The Challenge steered clear of questioning the policy milieu for pursuing excellence in the field of university and college education, i.e. the practice of attracting and retaining talented young scholars by offering better emoluments – better than the average scales of pay of university and college teachers and other facilities like housing. Seeing the serious compromises in the current scene, the *Challenge* underlined the need for great care in laying down the norms and criteria for such practices (MOE, 1985, p. 55). This concern for not diluting excellence and merit was also evident in the promotion policy. The *Challenge* found the merit promotion policy had deteriorated to promotion by seniority. The *Challenge* called for a serious re-think and re-working of the norms in order to protect promotion by merit rather than promotion by age and years of service, as otherwise it would threaten to “turn away young people with talent and imagination from the teaching profession which does not distinguish between mediocrity and genius”. More importantly, and within the ranks of university and college teachers, if merit is not recognized for promotion, “there will be no way of creating the urge and compulsion for the pursuit of good teaching... and there will be no incentive left for self-study, experimentation and research and pursuit of excellence, which has been the concern of universities” (MOE, 1985, p. 55, 57).



The NPE's POA 1986 perceived that the "present system does not accord teachers a proper economic and social status, opportunities for professional and career development, proper orientation in concept, techniques and value system to fulfill their role and responsibilities." In order to achieve this, it proposed to organise specially designed orientation programmes in teaching methodologies, pedagogy, educational psychology, etc., for all new entrants at the level of lecturers, and refresher courses every five years.

Reviewing the progress, NPE's Revised POA (1992) observed that the 48 Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs) constituted a concrete progress for strengthening the academic and pedagogic capabilities of newly-appointed lecturers. The scheme of ASC was reviewed in 1991 by UGC and it endorsed the recommendations to further improve and strengthen the scheme, including its implementation by distance education mode by IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) (MHRD, 1996, p. 66).

The National Knowledge Commission stressed the need for a conscious effort to attract and retain talented faculty members, as otherwise we will lose talented students who are potential faculty members with choices that are far more attractive in other professions in India or in the academic profession outside India. It is necessary to provide working conditions in the form of office space and research support together with housing. This must be combined with some incentives and rewards for performance. The NKC found another hurdle to the talent hunt as "Universities do not always choose the best, in part because of native-son/daughter policies which leave them to select their own former students. This tends to lower quality and foster parochialisation in universities" (NKC, 2006, p. 4). Therefore, for the sake of cross-pollination between universities, the NKC suggested introduction of a ceiling of say one-half or even one-third of the proportion of faculty members for hiring from within the university. This would almost certainly engender greater competition and more transparency in faculty appointments (NKC, 2006).

For promoting quality and standards in higher education institutions, the NKC felt it necessary to introduce rewards for performance. Even conceding that universities are different from the hierarchical worlds in governments and corporate structures, NKC believed that “time has come to think of salary differentials within and between Universities as a means of attracting and retaining talented faculty members. The salary differentiation among teachers within the same university needs to reflect the opportunity costs for teachers in some departments. This will help retain talent in some disciplines wherein the remuneration in the market is much higher than in other subjects. Universities cannot compete with salaries elsewhere, but they should try to provide a comfortable minimum for all, with some premium for those who perform (NKC, 2006, p. 14).

The Yashpal Committee kept the socio-cultural aims enshrined in the Constitution as the guiding principles and role of education. Liberation from inequality and social injustices prevailing in Indian society are the aims of education. Gender and caste and economic class differences are pervasive markers of inequality in society as well as in education. The Yashpal Committee noted with concern these inequalities in the composition of the university and college faculty as well. It is worth recalling the NCT-HEs suggestion that the fragmentation of the education system in the selection of faculty, on the basis of language, region, caste and religion, should be counter-balanced by the selection process on the basis of a widely cast net – all India basis (NCT-HE, 1985). That this had not happened is evident when the Yashpal Committee said that in the composition of the faculty, the representation of regions other than the one in which a university is located can serve as a valuable means of assessing a university’s resolve to avoid parochial tendencies that are commonly noticed. By definition, a university is a place where India’s diversity must find adequate and visible expression (MHRD, 2009, p. 27).

In its presentation of the higher education scenario, the Vision 2030 document of the FICCI Summit was patently pro-industry in the matter of giving preference to

industry experience in faculty recruitment, paid fellowships for managerial personnel to take up teaching in colleges and universities for a fixed duration, easing of norms to recruit best talent from India and outside, and tenure- based faculty positions as in the private and corporate sectors (EY & FICCI, 2013, p. 36-37). Across all commissions and committees on higher education, the perspective guiding talent hunt, strong advocacy for providing all the conducive academic and professional working conditions and promotion policy, as the most critical factors in higher education, have been kept above any iota of doubt.

Governance and Reorganisation of Higher Education

In respect of what ails the higher education system, the various Commissions/Committees alluded to the deterioration in standards and quality as a major parameter. Content and curriculum, quality of teachers and the teaching methods, assessment and evaluation were seen as responsible for the deterioration. However, as seen in the previous section, in respect of these aspects, improvement and reform were viewed with optimism to restore quality and standards of higher education. But that was not the perception about governance and management of the universities and the higher education system. The governance of universities i.e., the different bodies/structures of university management is one domain in the higher education system which had come under maximum strain, pressure, interference and disrepute from the 1970s and '80s. This is significant given the tradition of autonomy that universities enjoyed for long in India. The solution envisaged in Commissions/Committees on education, in general, and higher education, in particular, is nothing short of a complete reorganization or overhaul of the management system, not only at the institutional level but also at the level of the higher education system as a whole.

Two developments combined to force national attention on reorganization of the regulatory system governing higher education and reorganization of the university governance and management at Institutional (university) levels. One was the

unplanned proliferation of the universities and colleges sponsored by the state governments without conforming to UGC norms of facilities. It seriously undermined the statutory role of UGC in coordinating the development and maintaining standards of higher education. The other was the prevailing socio-political pressures and interference in the autonomy of the universities and colleges, calling for radical changes in their governance, and management bodies and their roles and their functions. It was even worse with AICTE, with the proliferation of the capitation fee colleges in technical, management and professional education. In fact, the erosion of the university autonomy and infringement in the statutory authority of regulatory bodies like UGC and AICTE gave rise to the view of a national authority on higher education subsuming other regulatory authorities for different sectors like medicine, law, engineering and technical etc. The purpose was to create a single window clearing system and keep socio-political pressures and interferences at bay.

It would be well to remember the difference between the academic and the management factors that led to the decline in standards and quality of higher education. Unlike the decline in academic dimensions, the deterioration in the management of the university and governance of higher education system by external pressures was a phenomenon of the post-Education Commission era. The 1960s could be seen as the formative period in the evolution of higher education in Independent India, and the Education Commission's enumeration of the different bodies of university governance and their roles and functions as the benchmark to study the pressures and interferences experienced later responsible for the deterioration and degeneration of the higher education system.

Governance of Universities before NPE 1986

The Education Commission was of the view that the proper sphere of university autonomy lies in the selection of students, appointment and promotion of teachers and determination of courses of study, methods of teaching and selection of areas and



problems of research. The effective discharge of these core functions, viz. teaching, research and service to the community requires autonomy from regimentation of ideas or pressure from party and power politics (NCERT, 1971, p.596-97).

Autonomy within University: The Academic Council of the university should be the supreme body vested with final authority on all academic matters and the function of non-academic elements should be to represent, not impose, the wider interests of the society. Departments of universities are its main operational units on the academic side. Administrative and financial powers should be delegated to the Committee of Management under HODs to discuss academic programmes related facilities (NCERT, 1971, p.598).

Greater Freedom to Colleges: A joint committee of teachers and students should discuss common problems and difficulties. The head – the VC or Principal should be kept in touch. A central committee of institutional head, representatives of staff and students should sort out common problems rather than be allowed to accumulate bitterness (NCERT, 1971, p. 589-99).

Autonomy within the University System: A degree conferred by a university should be automatically recognized by other universities in the country. There should be consultative machinery between universities, the UGC, IUB (Inter-University Board) and the Government Departments at the Centre and the State to decide about manpower requirements in different courses of study and research. One of the most important functions of the UGC is to support and strengthen the autonomy of the universities (NCERT, 1971, p. 602).

University Finances: State universities obtain their development grants based on the reports of the UGC appointed Visiting Committees. The Education Commission was not inclined to the idea that the UGC should give 100% of the development grants without depending on the state government's matching grants because of the widespread delays in many cases (NCERT, 1971, p. 604-5).

Vice-Chancellor: Appointment and Role: Vice-Chancellor (VC) is one who is expected to embody the spirit of academic freedom and the principles of good management in a university. He should ensure that the executive wing of the university assists the academic community in all its activities (NCERT, 1971, p. 610-11). The VC's appointment should be left to the university. As suggested by the University Education Commission, the practice was that the Chancellor appointed the name finalized by the EC of the University. But, the Education Commission was inclined to follow the selection by the Visitor from a panel of three names, suggested by a Committee of three persons – a nominee of the university, a nominee of the Chancellor and a nominee of the UGC Chairman (NCERT, 1971, p. 611). The VC should be a distinguished educationist or eminent scholar of any discipline or profession. He should be appointed on a full-time basis with a salary and other perks for a term of five years, renewable for only one more term. As suggested by the Committee of Model Act for Universities, adequate powers should be vested with the VC for effective working of the university (NCERT, 1971, p. 612-13).

Legislation for Universities: The important authorities of the university include the Court, the Executive Council (EC) and the Academic Council (AC). The Court is the policy-making body of the university with about 100 members, with a lay element. It includes ex-officio members, alumni, representatives of learned professions and industry, and nominees of the EC, the Visitor and MPs (Members of Parliament) in case of Central Universities and MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly), in case of State universities. The Court is not concerned with the details of academic matters or day-to-day administration (NCERT, 1971, p. 614).

The Executive Council: It should be a small body of 15-20 members, half internal and half external, headed by the VC and PVC and Rector as ex-officio (NCERT, 1971, p.614).



Academic Council: The AC should be the sole authority to decide courses of study and standards. There should be a Standing Committee of the AC for more frequent meetings for academic matters.

Academic Planning Boards: There should be permanent planning and evaluation machinery dealing with long-term plans, new ideas and programmes and periodic evaluation of the university (NCERT, 1971, p.614-15).

The late 1960s was a period of student unrest in the institutions of higher education. The student unrest and violence at Banaras Hindu University during 1968-69, which led to a Commission of Inquiry under Gajendragadkar, was too recent to ignore. The Banaras Hindu University Inquiry Commission came out with far-reaching recommendations to stop recurrence of unrest in university and college campuses (MOE & YS, 1969). Almost simultaneously, the Conference of Vice-Chancellors in 1969 suggested to the UGC to appoint special committees to study the problems of governance of universities and the system of affiliation, especially in governance matters. UGC appointed two committees, one on governance of universities under P.B. Gajendragadkar, and another on colleges under Rev. P.T. Chandi which later got subsumed with the Gajendragadkar committee itself (UGC, 1971, p. 1-2).

The Gajendragadkar committee on governance of universities and colleges felt that university should keep lines of communication open between different constituents of the university and devise proper machinery for removal of grievances so that there was no reason for eruption of violence or adoption of pressure tactics and agitational methods. The university should not claim to be a state within a state and, hence, was subject to the jurisdiction of the courts established by law. But the universities and all its constituents should tell the state to be firm but humane while dealing with unrest within the university (UGC, 1971, p. 10).

The Gajendragadkar committee was of the firm conviction that UGC should be the custodian of university autonomy and the State governments should consult UGC

on all matters pertaining to universities in the State. It also said that the State governments should consult the UGC before introducing any law on universities or making any change in university governance. Different constituents of the university should work together in policy, planning and implementation of plans of development of the university as also in the case of different colleges in the affiliating university (UGC, 1971, p. 15-16). The system of election of teachers to the university and college statutory bodies, that was based on Radhakrishnan Commission Report in 1949, in keeping with the principles of democracy, was perceived to have brought in factionalism and other evils. Therefore, the Gajendragadkar Committee advocated the principle of rotation rather than election. In the case of affiliating universities, the affiliated colleges could elect two representatives – one senior and one junior teacher-who could constitute an “electoral college” from which the representatives to different statutory bodies of the university could be elected (UGC, 1971, p. 20-21).

The Gajendragadkar Committee underlined the supremacy of the Academic Council as the most important body of the universities and the Boards of Studies, separately for UG and PG, in respect of their respective disciplines. This system would be helpful to initiate academic restructuring and modernization of the curriculum and syllabus. The academic and administrative wings of the university need to work in a spirit of cooperation and understanding and the human touch was essential in their university campus and the classrooms and the university should enjoy an environment of autonomy that was critical to the pursuit of learning (UGC, 1971, p. 22-23).

Nothing very substantive seemed to have happened in streamlining the governance and management of institutions of higher education through the 1970s and the '80s. And, the tension over the disequilibrium between the roles and responsibilities of the Vice- Chancellors and other bodies and also over the lack of accountability of the various bodies concerned with academic and managerial functions was made public in a poignant fashion at the national level by the *Challenge of Education* document in 1985, some 20 years after the Education Commission. The

Challenge of Education was candid in pointing out: “There is a general feeling that radical changes are required in the present system of management” in the relationship between various faculties, decision-making bodies and the Vice-Chancellor.

Challenge of Education also pointed out that “there is considerable divergence of views” in the prevailing socio-political milieu about the relative autonomy or the accountability of colleges and universities. The *Challenge* hoped that perhaps it would be easier to strengthen the autonomy of the universities if a viable system of the accountability of a university as a whole and various faculties and bodies within the university could be established and a suitable system of incentives and disincentives could also be fashioned on this basis (MOE, 1985, p. 114). The NPE and its POA, 1986, as well as the Revised POA 1992 did not address the issue of lack of accountability of different university bodies or of the VC, etc. Instead the NPE and its POA, both in 1986 and 1992, dwelt on the mechanisms for the coordinated development of higher education at state and national levels that are capable of holding the socio-political and commercial pressures at bay. Among the “urgent steps” that the NPE, 1986 promised to take “to protect the system from degradation” [a euphemism for socio-political pressures and interferences], included “State- level planning and coordination of higher education ... done through Councils of Higher Education. The UGC and these Councils will develop coordinative methods to keep a watch on standards” (MHRD, 1986, p.13)

Perspective on Re-organisation of Higher Education System

Mechanism for Coordinated Development of Higher Education at State Level: NPE’s POA, 1986 recognized that there “is at present no effective machinery for planning and coordination of higher education at the State level and co-ordination of State level programmes with those of the UGC.” In order to fill this gap, the POA proposed to: (a) set up State Councils of Higher Education (SCHE) as Statutory Bodies, (b) have, for the guidance of State Governments, model provisions framed by the UGC, setting out the

composition and powers of the State Councils, and (c) prepare consolidated programmes of higher education in each State. Despite MHRD and UGC efforts, SCHE was established only in Andhra Pradesh and POA 1992 resolved to pursue the efforts to establish SCHE in all States in VIII Plan (GOI, 1996, p.132).

It is very sobering to see the NPE declare its determination: “In the interest of *greater coordination and consistency in policy*, sharing of facilities and developing inter-disciplinary research, a national body covering higher education in general, agricultural, medical, technical, legal and other professional fields will be set up” (MHRD 1986, p. 13). It is sobering to see the NPE view that the failure to safeguard against the inconsistency in policy could wreak havoc, as being reiterated by the NKC some 20 years later, when it observed that: “The other regulators, say in the sphere of professional education, are often inconsistent in their adherence to principles. There are several instances where an engineering college or a business school is approved, promptly, in a small house of a metropolitan suburb without the requisite teachers, infrastructure or facilities, but established universities experience difficulties in obtaining similar approvals. Such examples can be multiplied” (NKC, 2006, p. 9).

As a sequel to the NPE’s declaration, the NPE’s POA, 1986 also envisaged the establishment of a *national body covering higher education in general, agriculture, medical, technical, legal and other professional fields* for greater coordination and consistency of policy, sharing of facilities, and developing inter-disciplinary research. It recognized that “presently, this responsibility is shared by a number of agencies, like separate structures for higher education in agriculture, engineering and medicine, etc. This separation in the decision- making and funding mechanisms has become more of a problem for allowing various disciplines”. In order to remedy this problem, the NPE, 1986 and its POA proposed to “establish an *apex body at the national level for higher education* to deal with policy aspects and to undertake integrated planning in respect of post-graduate education and inter-disciplinary research.” But, in the meantime, the POA was prepared to go along with the current practice, viz. separate bodies would

be set up on the lines of University Grants Commission for areas such as agriculture, medicine, engineering, distance learning, etc (GOI, 1986, p. 45-46). The Revised POA admitted that consensus eluded on the national apex body, viz. National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), and the POA, 1992 could only hope to have such a body “as soon as possible” (MHRD, 1996, p. 132).

The NPE’s POA 1986 proposed to develop a *mechanism for accreditation and assessment* for maintaining and raising the quality of institutions of higher education. The POA declared that to that end, the UGC will take the initiative to establish Accreditation and Assessment Council as an autonomous body. Nothing much seems to have happened in the intervening 5-6 years and, it was only in 1992 that the UGC “resolved to set up a National Accreditation and Assessment Council” (NAAC) to which the Revised POA committed that the Government will accord its approval.

The Ambani Committee (2000) was more particular about creating substantial space for private enterprises for establishing “high quality secondary education in every taluka” and for government leaving the space predominantly to the private sector in the establishment of world-class higher education facilities at every district headquarters and state-of-the-art professional research- based institutions in all disciplines. It argued for insulating private enterprises in higher education from socio-political interference by government legislation in the name of autonomy. This was also its prescription to the higher education institutions and system at large even with respect to the state sector institutions (GOI, 2000, p. 14-15).

Thus, nothing happened to the NPE’s proposal in 1986 and 1992 on the establishment of a National Council for Higher Education and the different sectors of higher education continued to be governed by each sector’s regulatory body like UGC for general higher education, AICTE for technical and management education, MCI (Medical Council of India) for medicine, BCI (Bar Council of India) for law, etc. And this issue was visited only in 2006 by NKC, some 20 years after the NPE proposal for

establishment of an apex national body for the entire gamut of higher education, covering the various disciplines.

There was a forerunner to the NKC in respect of reform in the structures of governance of universities, and that was the CABE “Committee on Autonomy of Higher Education” under the Chairmanship of Shri Kanti Biswas, Hon’ble Minister for Education, Government of West Bengal, in 2005 to: (a) suggest measures for enhancing the autonomy of higher education institutions, especially those with potential for excellence; and (b) institutionalize regulatory provisions for promoting autonomy and accountability of higher education institutions [HEIs] (MHRD, 2005, p. xiv). Based on interaction with a large number and variety of stakeholders across the country through workshops and questionnaires, the perceptions were analysed and the emerging recommendations were grouped along academic, financial and administrative autonomy. Some of the salient ones included (MHRD, 2005).

Academic Matters: There is a need to grant autonomy to individual HEIs for designing curriculum, with the Universities providing broad framework and leaving adequate scope to teachers to try out pedagogical innovations. The curriculum should be revised with the guidance of apex bodies’ like UGC and AICTE. While ensuring that new frontier areas of knowledge are included in the curriculum, the HEIs should also ensure that certain other subjects of vital concern such as environmental education, consumer education, human rights education, education in human values, population education, gender equality, disaster management, etc., are also introduced as a part of undergraduate curriculum. All universities should quickly shift towards adoption of choice-based credit courses along with semester system to ensure flexibility in the academic structure and students’ mobility both within the country and abroad. All traditional universities should have, besides their conventional courses, linkages with open and distance education universities to enhance the enrolment in higher education system. Each HEI should set up an Internal Quality Assurance Cell to

continuously assess its performance on objective and pre-defined parameters (MHRD, 2005, p. xiv).

Appointment of teachers on contract basis with a paltry amount may be disbanded. Institutions should be allowed to fill up all posts expeditiously in a time-bound manner. All universities should adopt the practice of performance appraisal of teachers through self-appraisal, based on objective parameters. All HEIs need not focus on all areas of study, but must have flexibility to offer courses according to new and emerging realities of the region and the country. Universities should use the services of post-graduate and research students as research assistants and teaching assistants to provide them with practical hands-on-experience and also enable them to earn to meet their personal expenses (MHRD, 2005, p. xiv-xv).

Administrative Matters: Acts, statutes and ordinances of universities should be reviewed for their better management as also for granting autonomous status to affiliating colleges. The present system of assigning fixed number of Professors, Readers and Lecturers to each department should be replaced by leaving it to institutional head with autonomy to determine both the rank and number of these positions as per the need and development plan of the institution. All bodies and authorities in the universities and colleges should have representatives from the stakeholders concerned with a mix of elected and nominated representatives. The selection of Vice-Chancellors should be done with utmost care through a search-cum-selection procedure. Each university may set up a grievance redressal mechanism to ensure that grievances of students, both academic and non-academic, are addressed in an expeditious manner. There is a need for training and development of academic administrators in HEIs to improve the quality of governance (MHRD, 2005, p. xv-xvi).

Financial Matters: One-third of entire investment in education sector should be made on higher education. All government and government-aided universities and colleges should be brought under the financial support of UGC by significantly

increasing its present level of allocation. Since full public financing of higher education is no longer possible, given the overall funds constraints, HEIs should search for alternate funding sources, and should be encouraged, facilitated and even incentivised to generate internal resources. The Central and State Governments should set ceilings on fee levels to ensure that HEIs do not indulge in malpractice in relation to fees. The practice of financial disclosure standards should be introduced in self-financing institutions to bring about a greater level of transparency in their financial management. HEIs should be given complete autonomy to undertake consultancy assignments and sponsored research projects (MHRD, 2005, p. xvi-xvii).

General: The functioning of the UGC needs to be reviewed as per changing realities to make it more effective for maintenance of standards. There is also a need to evolve a coordination mechanism between the UGC and the various professional Councils. All HEIs need to be given full autonomy to establish linkages for academic and research collaboration with their counterpart academic and research institutions, industry and professional organizations, both in India and abroad. There is a need to encourage private participation with adequate social control in higher education to enhance access and capacity, supplement government funding and bring higher education closer to the job market. A code of professional ethics should be developed by national level teachers' organizations, in consultation with HEIs, and its observance must be ensured. Norms of Accountability through open and participative means should be developed by HEIs in consultation with the faculty (MHRD, 2005, p. xviii-xix).

Examining the higher education scene, the NKC observed that there can be no doubt that higher education has made a significant contribution to the economic development, social progress and political democracy in Independent India. But it has weaknesses, in fact a quiet crisis that runs deep and it needs a systematic overhaul, notwithstanding a massive expansion – nothing short of 1500 universities. The NKC discussed the reforms at the level of university and also at the level of the higher education system.

University Governance: The NKC said that there is an acute “need for reform in the structures of governance of universities.” It held that “the present system is flawed; it neither preserves autonomy nor promotes accountability. The autonomy of universities is eroded by interventions from governments and intrusions from political processes. This must be stopped. At the same time, there is not enough transparency and accountability in universities. This must be fostered” (NKC, 2006, p. 5). In its view, some reforms in the beginning included: (i) the appointments of Vice-Chancellors should be based on search processes and peer judgment alone. These appointments must be freed from direct or indirect intervention on the part of governments, and once appointed, VCs should have tenure of six years; (ii) the size and composition of University Courts, Academic Councils, and Executive Councils slows down decision-making processes and, sometimes, constitutes an impediment to change. University Courts, with a size of 500 plus, which are more a ritual than substance, could be dispensed with. Large ACs does not meet often. Even when they meet, they are slow in decision-making. Therefore, Standing Committees of ACs, with subject representation, should be created for frequent meetings and expeditious decisions. The Vice-Chancellor should, then, function as a Chief Executive Officer with authority and flexibility to govern with the advice and consent of the EC. The NKC said “experience suggests that implicit politicisation has made governance of universities exceedingly difficult and much more susceptible to entirely non-academic interventions from outside. This problem needs to be recognised and addressed in a systematic manner not only within universities but also outside, particularly in governments, legislatures and political parties” (NKC, 2006, p. 5).

With regard to the reforms at higher education system level, the NKC said that there is a clear need to establish an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE). It is necessary, NKC said, for two reasons. First, in India, it requires an Act of Legislature or Parliament to set up a University, which, in itself, is a formidable barrier. The second, as we seek to expand the higher education system,

entry norms will be needed for private institutions and public-private partnerships. An institutional framework for this purpose must be put in place. That would minimize conflicts of interest by keeping stakeholders at an arm's-length distance. It would replace the present over-regulated but under-governed system, through more appropriate forms of intervention.

The NKC reinforced the need for reform by referring to the inconsistency of policy of the different regulatory bodies in higher and technical education. It said that at present getting UGC sanction for funds to a university or college is possible only if UGC is satisfied that the existing institutions in the state are not adequate to serve the needs of the state. An improbable proposition. The other regulators, say in the sphere of professional education [referring to AICTE], are often inconsistent in their adherence to principles. The challenge is, therefore, to design a regulatory system that increases the supply of good institutions and fosters accountability in those institutions. The NKC hoped that the proposed IRAHE will not only rationalize the principles on which entry is regulated but also streamline other functions of the regulator such as: (i) Accreditation: quality benchmarking. (ii) Disbursement of public funds. (iii) Access: fees or affirmative action. (iv) License: to practice profession (NKC, 2006).

The purpose of creating an IRAHE, the NKC added, is to separate these functions. The proposed IRAHE shall be responsible for setting the criteria and deciding on entry and license agencies to take care of accreditation. UGC will deal only with disbursing public funds. Access will be governed by state legislation on reservations and other forms of affirmative action. Professional associations may set eligibility for conducting a profession. All other regulatory agencies such as the AICTE will need to be abolished while the MCI and the BCI will be limited to their role as professional associations. It goes on to discuss the membership and composition and roles and functions of the IRAHE (NKC, 2006, p. 9-10).



Taking on from the NKC position of multiplicity of regulatory bodies over regulating and stifling innovation and creativity, the Yashpal Committee argued for creating a regular body to cover the various spheres of higher education, ensure accountability and also evoke confidence in the academic institutions and academic body at large. It pointed out that bodies like the AICTE, ICAR, MCI, etc., had helped in focusing attention on specialized areas. But, at the same time, it fragmented the higher educational sector in the country from a policy perspective, and led to undesirable cubicalization of knowledge, unwarranted fragmentation of disciplines and separation of knowledge from application and skills. There is a need to create an agency that could take over the regulatory functions of entry and content and curriculum in respect of all disciplines (MHRD, 2009, p. 50-51).

The Yashpal Committee recalled that the idea of a single regulatory body for higher education has been in discussion for more than two decades and, hence, it would be necessary to have a single apex body in the field of higher education that would treat all knowledge areas in an integrated manner and work towards convergences with overarching regulatory powers. It was, therefore, proposed that the academic functions of all these professional bodies be subsumed under an apex body for Higher Education, to be called the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER). It would take over the academic functions of the existing regulatory bodies and these could (i) conduct regular qualifying tests for professionals in their respective fields – a Bar Council exam for practicing advocates, for example; (ii) prescribe the syllabi for such exams and leave it to the universities to design their curriculum including such syllabi (MHRD, 2009, p. 53-54).

The Yashpal Committee made it clear that the NCHER was not just a change in the nomenclature of UGC or any other existing regulatory body. The structure and composition of the proposed NCHER was meant to insulate it from political and other external interferences from the government of the day. The Yashpal Committee also assured that the NCHER would perform its regulatory function without interfering

with academic freedom and institutional autonomy. From the current inspection-approval method, the NCHER would move to a verification and authentication system (MHRD, 2009, p. 55-56).

The Yashpal Committee also advised that keeping in mind the federal nature of our country and the role of the States in the field of higher education, it would be necessary to create Higher Education Councils in the states which would harmonize in creating a comparable national system of higher education that would also allow different kinds of institutions, created by the state or the centre, to grow on equal footing, as was the case with the SCHECs in some states (MHRD, 2009, p. 57).

In reference to *restructuring universities*, the Yashpal Committee said that complete autonomy of institutions of higher learning is essential for free pursuit of knowledge -- this foundational principle should guide and govern restructuring of universities. University autonomy is closely linked to sources of finance and the legal framework and rules and regulations governing its operations. Even in the light of these considerations, the Indian institutions of higher learning need to: (a) Be freed from control of both government and 'for-profit' private agencies in matters of not just academics but also finance and administration; (b) Collectively frame a transparent set of rules to guide their regular functioning and submit themselves to an internationally recognized process of evaluation; and (c) Foster a culture of independent assertion of ideas, guarding of institutional prerogatives from external interference, transparency and accountability for decisions taken (MHRD, 2009, p. 58-59). The Yashpal Committee identified the critical hurdles in the university autonomy, such as the strong centralization at all levels of the university, including the VC's and Registrars. This rigidity, it felt, was largely derived from the controls currently exercised by the governments, like in delays in appointment of VCs, faculty positions' approval, funds for new programmes, disbursement of funds, etc.



The Yashpal Committee also pointed out that the leadership of universities is often in the hands of government administrators as well as executive councils or similar agencies that are far removed from the institutions and do not have a good understanding of the issues of concern, needs of development and growth of institutions. In addition, these councils are too large in numbers to make nuanced decisions. The VCs, most often, have low degrees of freedom in terms of administrative stretch, and faculty often has even lower degrees of freedom vis-a-vis the university authorities.

The Yashpal Committee argued that universities need the autonomy to operate in a healthy competitive setting. The leadership of the university must be driven by the objectives of the institution and lean on government only for macro policies. The governance structure of a university should be revamped so as to make it more democratic and efficient in its functioning. The academic decisions need to be freed from excessive bureaucratic controls, both within as well as outside the university. The role of a VC is to provide academic leadership to the university, develop and execute the vision of the university, including its growth, and to ensure that university is academically and financially healthy, with the Yashpal Committee going on to elaborate the skills required for such leadership (MHRD, 2009, p. 61-62).

True to its premise and *raison d'être*, the Committee on Corporate Participation argued for building a world-class higher education system wherein higher education institutions (HEIs) should enjoy complete autonomy – financial, academic and administrative- but should also have stringent accountability framework. The financial autonomy should include freedom to decide the amount of students' fees, to raise and manage funds, to spend funds on institution's needs without requiring government permission. The government support could be restricted to meet the fees of students of reservation quota. On matters of funds raising and spending, government should not interfere. The academic autonomy should include freedom to decide content and curriculum, syllabus and text books, student evaluation and granting of degrees and

diplomas, freedom to invite and sponsor national and international students and faculty on best suitable compensation without seeking government approval. The administrative autonomy would imply freedom on admissions, besides current reservations, starting of new courses and campuses, within and outside India, on its own or in collaboration with foreign institutions and decisions on inviting and sending students, faculty and staff. This freedom should be subject to the deliverables, reflected in an MOU, in the cases of HEIs being funded by the government, but not those not dependent on government funds (GOI, 2012, p. 4-5).

The Committee also observed that autonomy is directly linked to the aspect of governance. In other words, it implied that autonomy and freedom of the management bodies and governance functions, permitted to the institution, would have a direct relation with accountability and deliverables. Keeping this in mind, the constitution of the different governing bodies, with minimum representation from the government and maximum representation from industry and corporate-friendly elements from civil society was advocated (GOI, 2012, p. 5-6).

As a sum up of this section on governance, it can be seen that the three committees on HE viz., the Ambani Group (2000), Narayana Murthy Committee (2012) and FICCI Summit (2013) view higher education from the lens of participation of private sector, with the higher education system becoming conducive for this purpose i.e., leaving the dominant space and say for the corporate sectors in the governance and management of the sector of higher education. They look at, examine and make recommendations on all vital elements of higher education from that angle alone, such as the industry-orientation in vision of expansion, content and curriculum and the corporate sector culture in organization, governance and management of the system and personnel and in financing. It is important to grasp the essence of the difference. These dimensions distinguish these three reports from all other reports that were produced by those largely involved in the system of higher education from the academia and administration. The public and private interests are the pervasive focus

of the diagnosis and prognosis in terms of solutions and recommendations in respect of these two categories of commissions/committees on higher education.

Privatization and Private Higher Education

Privatisation of Higher Education

The pressure for expansion of the HE system by compromising the norms of standards as set by the UGC could be held at bay till the 1970s. However, from 1980s and '90s, in the face of declining government funding for HE, the universities and colleges found one via media to make up for resource gap to meet their maintenance cost and also satisfy the increased social demand for HE, without compromising UGC norms in respect of standards. That was by way of starting self-financing courses in public universities and colleges as well as self-financing colleges by the government by offering the same courses approved by the UGC. Very soon, the State governments also allowed private agencies – Charitable Trusts or Societies – to establish self-financing colleges and offer UGC- approved courses by charging high tuition fees as well as various kinds of fees and charges not only to recover the cost but also to make profit (Gnanam, 2008, p.105; Varghese, 2013).

The increasing privatization of HE through the self-financing institutions, that accompanied the economic reforms and liberalization from 1991, came with an argument for autonomy. In the wake of liberalization, HE was seen as commodity, a tangible benefit and service that needed to be purchased, offered by the private institutions of HE for a price. This was in sync with the decline in public funding for HE, and the emergence of private HE institutions (HEIs). In the changing scenario, the earlier notion of autonomy of universities, its teachers, students and administrators, seemed indefensible, as it was seen as lacking in accountability to the “stakeholders” – the students, parents and society which pays for tangible benefits it received. Therefore, to be able to deliver the services and benefits, the private institutions, offering HE, needed administrative, academic and financial autonomy and freedom

from the control of the UGC, AICTE and other such statutory bodies. It was no longer autonomy for pursuit of knowledge, study and critique of the system, protected by state support and funding. Now, the private institutions wanted autonomy and freedom from any control, and autonomy to regulate cost and services of HE, according to the market principles. It meant autonomy in a completely opposite direction. It was an expression of HE as well as the institutions dispensing this service – the universities and colleges, both public and private, taking on the characteristics of, and the operational norms associated with business enterprises (Prasad, 2006, p. 491).

Almost a decade before the NPE, 1986 and its POA were formulated and adopted by the Parliament, many states like Andhra Pradesh (AP) decided to raise the fees in aided and un-aided colleges for professional courses in engineering and medicine. Professional education in private sector was ardently promoted in AP from late 1970s (Shatrugna, 1993, 2057) and was soon emulated by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra (Varghese, 2013). Trends such as these forced the NPE, 1986 and its POA to declare that (i) States cannot legislate creation of colleges without UGC's consent and sanction; and (ii) statutory bodies like UGC would regulate admission on the basis of physical facilities, etc. It said that the State Councils of HE (SCHE) will prepare coordinated programmes of development of HE in each State, which would then be endorsed by UGC (GOI, 1986, p. 38).

The government was conscious of the declining trend in the state allocations to higher and technical education and the NPE, 1986 and Revised POA 1992 openly admitted the need for some alternative way out, like raising tuition fees and other charges, subject to an elaborate and effective system for providing freships, scholarships, and loans to students belonging to the weaker sections of society (GOI, 1996, p. 111). The POA declared that a High Powered Committee would be set up to consider steps for mobilisation of additional resources for HE, both general and technical, to bring about a better balance in the funding, and improve the cost-efficiency (GOI, 1996, p. 69-70, 81).

The Gnanam Committee was appointed in 1990 against the backdrop of State Governments bypassing the UGC and establishing self-financing public and unaided private colleges. In states like Andhra Pradesh, private professional colleges in engineering and medicine were charging between Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs. 8 lakhs fees per annum. The Gnanam Committee was requested to review the existing management system and structures in the HE system and suggest alternative models. It recommended that (i) the Central Government should make a legislation mandating its incorporation in the Acts of all Universities to follow and adhere to the regulations issued by UGC from time to time; (ii) No new university should be established without the prior concurrence of the UGC, and with reference to the special needs, size of population, size of an existing University etc; and (iii) New legislations (including amendments to existing ones) in respect of State Universities should be referred to UGC prior to their enactment (UGC, 1990, p. 39; Sharma, 2013).

In pursuance of the announcement made by the Revised POA, the UGC set up a High Powered Committee in 1992 under the Chairmanship of Justice Dr. K. Punnayya to consider steps for mobilization of additional resources for HE. It was meant to examine the present financial situation of central universities, deemed universities, and colleges affiliated to Delhi and Banaras Hindu University, to make necessary recommendations about their financial needs and to suggest changes which could be introduced in the system of grants to these institutions. The Punnayya Committee recommended that: any additional resources generated by universities/institutions should be kept in a separate fund and should be used to further its objectives; UGC may give a matching grant as incentive to universities generating additional resources; Cent per cent income tax concessions be given for all endowments and contributions made to universities/institutions; and additional concessions be provided to donors sponsoring research projects. While universities should be encouraged to augment their resources for covering larger proportion of costs of education than what prevails now, the increased burden must be borne only by those who can afford it. State or

government funding must continue to be an essential maintenance and developmental requirement of universities (UGC, 1993, p.107).

The High Powered Committee on Technical Education (1992), headed by Dr. D. Swaminathan, was to suggest ways for technical education institutions to become self-reliant in resources. Given the dwindling state of financial support, the Swaminathan Committee felt that the time was appropriate to take new initiatives, such as raising internal and external resources like contributions from industry, alumni, and charitable trusts etc., (AICTE, 1994, p. 2-3). It recommended, among others, raising internal resources, rationalization of fee structures, including fixing the fee at a fairly high level and revising it from time to time, as done by private unaided institutions, besides attracting foreign students, enhancing consultancy work and sponsored research and offering revenue-generating courses for the industry (AICTE, 1994, p. iv).

The NPE's POA took note of the fee raises in aided and unaided colleges and reiterated that statutory bodies' sanction is a must for their affiliation, which went unheeded. But it was also true that the policies formulated for different sectors of HE in different times caused considerable confusion and harassment to competent agencies and discouraged them while incompetent and unethical groups exploited HE. Perceptive observers cautioned that this anomaly needed correction (Ananadakrishan, 2014; Shatrugna, 1993; Tilak, 1991).

Towards Dominance of Private Participation in HE

The Ambani-Birla Report (2000) advocated (i) establishment of world-class HE facilities at every district headquarters; (ii) fostering a healthy mix of state-supported education with private initiatives, within affordable cost, and (iii) enforcing strictly the "user pays" principle for HE supported by loan schemes and financial grants for economically and socially backward sections of society (GOI, 2000). The Ambani-Birla Committee wanted a clear policy milieu with complete freedom to establish private universities and colleges and other HEIs, without any reference to the existing

statutory bodies like UGC, and price its programmes and courses as the private agencies/institutions deemed appropriate. It also wanted that all political parties should come to an understanding that they will keep away from universities and educational institutions, and ban any form of political activity on campuses of universities and educational institutions.

The National Knowledge Commission's take on the scope for private institutions in the provision of HE was one of implicit approval of their widespread presence and an explicit plea for their role – co-existence as a matter of policy. The NKC advocated private investment in education by offering land grants, and other facilities, if needed for, because “even with the best will in the world, government financing cannot be enough to support the massive expansion in opportunities for HE on a scale that is now essential” (NKC, 2006, p. 12).

The Review Committee on “Deemed to be Universities” (also known Tandon Committee), constituted by the Govt. of India (MHRD) in 2009, observed that “interacting with representatives of 126 deemed universities, we are struck by the aberrations and some unacceptable practices”. It said that the deemed universities fall into three categories: (i) those that justify their deemed university status eminently = 38; (ii) those deficient in some respects which need to be rectified in 3 years = 44; and (iii) those neither on past performance nor on future potential hold hopes and deserve their status = 44. Continuation of the third category by allowing them to grant degrees is injurious to the case of quality of higher education, and, without doubt, would imperil the future of millions of our youth and a committee at national level is needed to salvage the future of the affected students is necessary (Tandon Committee, 2009, p. 21-26).

With respect to the future of deemed universities, the Committee said (i) The highest governing body of deemed university such as Board of Management, Executive Council or Governing Council, must always be headed by the Vice-Chancellor

as in all conventional universities. Its membership should invariably include at least 50% of distinguished academics and professionals, and with not more than one or two representatives of the "Trust, Society or President" in the case of private deemed universities, and government representatives, in the case of publicly sponsored deemed universities; (ii) The President of deemed university should not be automatically designated as the Chancellor. President's role should only be ceremonial; (iii) The President or the Chancellor nominating close relatives to the Board or as Vice-Chancellor/ Pro-Vice Chancellor is undesirable and against the UGC rules, and must be discontinued; (iv) Admissions to all institutions of higher education, public or private, should be based on centralised examination. This will obviate the scope of malpractices now widely prevalent; (v) The fees charged for courses offered in deemed universities should be reasonable in relation to the cost of running the course and comparable to the fee levels in other institution for a similar course. There should be a national Committee to bring about a rational fee structure for deemed universities which can be reviewed periodically; (vi) There should be a more intensive and exhaustive external review of every deemed university once in every five years; (vii) While private participation in higher education is probably needed, it must be ensured that it does not lead to crass commercialization of education at the cost of equity and access to all deserving students and to the sacrifice of merit (Tandon Committee, 2009, p. 29-31).

The Committee on Renovation and Rejuvenation of HE, headed by Prof. Yashpal, was convinced that in order to reach the goals of doubling the present HE capacity, private sector participation should be encouraged. At the same time, government cannot afford to abandon its role and leave that task entirely to the private sector. In fact, all the different models are needed viz., state run, private and PPPs with rational and consistent ground rules, overseen by a transparent regulatory mechanism (MHRD, 2009, p. 33-34). But, the purely private initiatives require a credible corrective

mechanism to do away with plenty of the ills associated with it currently (MHRD, 2009, p. 34).

The Yashpal Committee was firm that private initiatives in HE should be not driven by the sole motive of profit and confine themselves only to ‘commercially viable’ sectors of education, such as management, accountancy and medicine etc., but should also establish institutions that will offer social and natural sciences. Otherwise, such institutions should be allowed to confer only diplomas and certificates and not university degrees. (MHRD, 2009, p. 35).

The Yashpal Committee noted the sudden spurt in the mushrooming of deemed universities as “another area of concern”. It found that some of the private institutions took the deemed-to-be university route to get degree-granting powers. While the number of private-sponsored institutions that got the deemed university status was 26 during 2000-2005, it shot up to 108 by 2009. By a notification of the UGC, it was no longer necessary for them to use the adjective “deemed” and they all started calling themselves simply universities (MHRD, 2009, p. 35). It strongly recommended i.e. in view of considerable misuse of the provision for Deemed University status, the granting of such status should be put on hold till unambiguous and rational guidelines are evolved. Institutions wishing to get deemed university status should demonstrate special capabilities as was originally intended and should be rigorously evaluated to see if they fulfill the holistic and universal concept of university” (MHRD, 2009, p. 35).

The Committee on Corporate Participation in HE, headed by N.R. Narayana Murthy, referred to the Working Group on higher and technical education for the XII Plan that projected a resource requirement of Rs. 4,13,368 crores. It felt that this large amount is unlikely to be made available, and the government has to find innovative and newer avenues of funding. It suggested that the corporate sector, as a key stakeholder in HE, can collaborate with the academia in several ways, with varying funding commitment: (i) Creating enabling conditions to make the HE system robust

and useful to attract investments; (ii) Improving the quality of HE, ... with corporate sector participation; and (iii) Engaging the corporate sector to invest in existing institutions, set up new institutions, and develop new knowledge clusters (GOI, 2012, p.ii-iii).

It was the Planning Commission that appointed this Committee to suggest measures for Corporate Participation in HE. Having seen the Report and as a measure of government's intention to give effect to its recommendations, the XII Plan (2012-2017) said that "private HE now accounts for 58.5% of enrolments. Private sector will be encouraged in the establishment of larger [number] and better quality HEIs in 12th Plan." It said that the current no entry provision of for-profit private institutions needs a rethink to allow their entry in select areas where acute shortage persists. There should be "innovative ways to encourage private institutions in HE", like "legal status" for allowing all types of private institutions under Section 25 of Companies Act, including conversion of Trusts and Societies to do so, and giving priority recognition to it and providing infrastructure status with financial and tax benefits (Planning Commission, 2013, p. 100).

The FICCI Education Summit 2013 came in the immediate aftermath of the XII Five Year Plan, legitimizing and valuing private participation in HE. The FICCI Summit foresees the situation in 2030 and describes the progress as would have happened along the lines it recommended in 2013. It starts as: "2030. This year marks 80 years of constitutional democracy, 40 years of economic liberalisation, and 20 years of accelerated educational reform... The Indian HE system has undergone rapid expansion. In less than 20 years, the country has created additional capacity for a mammoth 40 million students... [and this as result of] aggressive expansion as a deliberate strategy and an organized design (EY & FICCI, 2013, p. 7-8).

FICCI *Vision 2030*, looking back, states that the keys to this "revolution" and "transformation" in HE leading to the "50% GER and 40 million enrolment" and

“massive online courses enrolling 60% of world’s entire student population” are: (i) “diminishing government in governance”, with government withdrawing from direct management through multiple regulators to a single independent regulatory body for entire gamut of HE; (ii) “enabling environment”, with “less barriers for private and foreign participation”; and (iii) a change from “Government as single provider of funds” to a position where institutions, and individuals – students, faculty and researchers, no longer have to rely on government, but could start sourcing funding, from other sources “to assure autonomy” [i.e., freedom from any control and accountability to any one] (EY & FICCI, 2013, p. 12).

In sum, the space for private involvement in HE in India not just in actual practice but, more importantly, at the policy level, as seen in policy discourses, moved from the margin to the centre and began to clamour for the HE system to be handed over to the private sector. This was a plea for the government to shift from the field of HE and confine its attention to primary education and literacy as its principal obligation. It was an expression of HE as not a public good but a private good whose returns go to individuals and their families and for which they have to pay to the provider, the private institutions. Private involvement in HE has to be legitimized and ensured by legislation both at the central and state level and such legislation should also stipulate their autonomy and freedom in administration, academic and governance matters, including the cost. This argument for a legally-ensured dominant space for private involvement in HE also marks a metamorphosis. It is not as if the public institutions and the role of government involvement in HE has disappeared. It still retains substantial number of HEIs – universities, colleges and diploma institutions. But, in the policy milieu as seen in the discourses of the commissions and committees, there is an increasing stridency in the argument for leaving the field, as well as policy justification, in favour of private involvement in HE.

Conclusion

In the perceptions of the commissions and committees on higher education, the system of governance, envisioned and designed for universities and the system of higher education inherited from the British and perfected through the 1950s and '60s, were seen to be an appropriate model. They were concerned more with the factors affecting the standard and quality of higher education — the academic factors, such as admissions beyond the capacity, the serious deficiencies in the teacher quality and ability in teaching methods and, more importantly, in respect of assessment and examinations. It was perceived that the issue of the content and curriculum lagged behind the emerging new fields and the need for their inclusion in the subjects of study at university and college levels, and there was also a lack of flexibility in the combination of subjects and choice of courses at the UG and PG levels. Although these issues also continued to engage the attention, the major concern of the commissions and committees on higher education since the 1980s was decisively influenced by the compromises in the governance and management of the institutions and the system of higher education, which aggravated the deterioration not only in its standard and quality but its very credibility and image. How much of the recommendations of different commissions and committees regarding autonomy and accountability were implemented is debatable. But, without doubt, it could be said that higher education system continues to engage on both fronts i.e., seeking to improve on the less contentious academic front like increasing the relevance of content and curriculum, improvement in the teaching methods, in the quality of teachers and their working environment and performance and in assessment and evaluation. The other front is the radical reform in the management of the institutions of higher education – universities and colleges as well as in the governance of the system of higher education.

There is also another strand in the policy discourses, especially during the post-Reform phase, i.e., that the engagement in HE was significant for the state's retreat in

policy priority and funding commitment and the state facilitating the private sector engagement in HE, albeit with some noise about putting a ceiling on fees and regulation on their management. But, as mentioned above, there is an increasing stridency in the argument for government leaving the field in favour of private engagement in HE. There has been a consistent argument for un-wavered priority and funding support for HE as a public enterprise with autonomy and accountability going together. But, of late, the trend towards policy legitimacy for private engagement in HE is gaining currency.

Annexure

**Commissions and Committees on Education:
Summary of Recommendations on Some Critical Issues of Higher Education**

Expansion and Research; Reform and Improvement in Higher Education	
University Education Commission, 1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To avoid overcrowding, limit enrolment to 3000 in teaching universities and 1500 in affiliated colleges. - mass lecture most common form of instruction, and, therefore, should be not supplemented by library work, tutorials and written exercises, ensuring that tutorials does not become “coaching for exams”. - Standards of MA and MSc degrees should be raised by regulating admissions as per facilities and faculty. - Introduce, at the earliest, reliable, objective examinations in universities. - Given the critical role of teachers in transmission of knowledge, replace their differential scales of pay across different disciplines and institutions by uniform scales of pay, comparable to Provincial Services, to retain talent, extend PF benefits, retirement age should be 60, and extension till 64 years.
Education Commission, 1964-66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan HE expansion as per manpower needs of next 20 years and enrolment in UG level to double from 1.5 lakhs to 3.5 lakhs, and at PG and research level, from 45,000 to 7.5 lakhs. - Give up open- door policy and adopt selective approach in admissions in Arts and Science courses. - Second university in a State in case of university with unmanageable under-graduate population in affiliated colleges. - Specialization immediately after school at UG level is undesirable and allow flexibility in choice of courses, like combining physics, chemistry with biology.. - Same should be the approach at PG level. - Social sciences should be given a significant place in subjects of study in Indian universities, with adequate provision of scholarships, flexibility in choice of subjects and higher allocation of funds. - Develop and promote area studies of different regions like America, China, Asia – West, East, South and South-East, Latin America, etc. - External examinations will continue with us for a long time and introduce more frequent periodic assessment to reduce undue emphasis on external examinations. - Each Department should have a personnel advisory committee to search outstanding young persons across India for teaching and research and teachers must be provided with attractive salaries and research opportunities. - UGC should sponsor fellowships at Lecturer, Reader and Professor levels to attract outstanding persons to the teaching profession.
National Commission on Teachers – Higher Education, 1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rigorous merit-based selection crucial for teaching profession and education system should not be fragmented on basis of language, region, caste and religion. - Give teachers a place of honour, good salary, prospects of good career development, but we must demand work and accountability from teachers and HEI managements.
National Policy on Education, 1986 and POA, 1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HE expansion uneven, not conforming to UGC norms, with many universities and colleges without minimum infrastructure, and, hence, consolidation and improvement of facilities rather than quantitative expansion. - Re-organise UG programme on modular pattern with option to combine courses to meet growing demands of specialization, and facilitate mobility among courses. - Re-organise Boards of Studies in universities to facilitative course redesign and promote inter-disciplinary programmes. - Re-cast examination system with continuous comprehensive internal evaluation, with semester system and use of grades in place of marks.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specially designed orientation programmes will be organized for professional and career development of teachers.
National Knowledge Commission, 2006 (NKC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open 1,500 universities to boost GER to 15% by 2015. - Reform universities through: revision of curricula every three years, supplement annual examination with internal assessment, transit to a course credit system, attract talented faculty by improving working conditions and incentives. - Through Central legislation, form Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE), independent of all stakeholders, subsuming regulatory functions of UGC, AICTE, MCI, BCI, etc. such as entry, license, arbitration of disputes, etc., and avoid policy inconsistencies. - UGC and other regulatory bodies would disburse grants and maintain public HEIs. - Enhance quality of education by stringent information disclosure norms, evaluation of courses by teachers and students, retain talented faculty by differential salary packages across universities, formulate policies for entry of foreign institutions in India and promote Indian institutions abroad. - Syllabi of courses in universities remains unchanged for decades and needs to be upgraded constantly and revised frequently, with more autonomy for teachers, through decentralization to Departments. - Start internal assessment with at least 25% weightage and raise it to 50% over time. - Conscious effort should be made to attract and retain talented students – the potential faculty and provide with office and research opportunities along with rewards for performance for individuals and institutions.
Committee On Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education (Yashpal Committee), 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Form National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) to subsume academic functions of UGC, AICTE, MCI, BCI, etc. These bodies should conduct regular qualifying examinations. - Establish a National Education Tribunal to adjudicate on disputes within and between institutions, and reduce litigation in courts - NCHER's top priority should be curricular reform, with mobility within a full range of curricular areas. - Bring vocational education within universities' purview. - NCHER to create National Research Foundation to promote research in universities. - Pending NCHER's clear policy stand, stop allowing new deemed university. - NCHER to identify 1500 best colleges to upgrade as universities. - Set up a National Testing Scheme, open to all aspirants of university education, to be held more than once a year. - Enhance quantum of central financial support to state-funded universities.
Committee on Corporate participation in Higher Education (N.R. Narayana Murthy Committee), 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - India's GER in HE must increase 20% by next decade and HE needs additional capacity of 26 million seats. - For this, remove all barriers to corporate participation.
Governance and Re-organisation of Higher Education	
Education Commission (1964-66)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching, research and service to community, university's core functions, need autonomy from regimentation of ideas or pressure from party politics. - Vice-Chancellor, necessarily a distinguished educationist or eminent scholar of any discipline or profession, should embody the spirit of academic freedom and principles of good management in university. - His/her appointment should be left to the university, with Chancellor appointing from the panel of three persons. - Adequate powers should be vested with VC for effective working of the university. - Important authorities of university includes the Court- policy- making body; Executive Council – a small body of 10-15 members; and Academic Council – the sole authority to decide courses of study and standards.

Committee on Governance of Universities and Colleges, 1972 (also known as Gajendragadkar Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Universities and colleges should devise mechanism and machinery to redress grievances of its different constituents; adopt the principle of rotation rather than election to different management bodies. – UGC as custodian of university autonomy, should be consulted before States enact or amend any laws on universities. – Respect autonomy and supremacy of Academic Councils and Boards of Studies in academic matters.
NPE, 1986 and POA, 1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SCHE, a state level body for planning and coordination of HE, to protect it from degradation (a euphemism for socio-political pressures and interferences).
Gnanam Committee, 1990.	<p>Central Government legislate that UGC's regulations as binding on all universities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No new university by States without UGC's concurrence and without reference to special needs for new university.
CABE Committee on Autonomy, 2005	<p><i>Academic matters:</i> Universities provide broad framework and leave freedom to individual HEIs to design courses and teachers to try out pedagogical innovations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UGC and AICTE should guide curriculum revision ensuring frontier areas in curriculum. – All universities quickly shift towards adoption of choice- based credit courses and semester system. – All universities establish linkages with open and distance learning universities to enhance enrolment. – Disband teacher appointment on contract and allow institutions to fill up vacancies expeditiously. – Allow universities to offer courses as per emerging realities of the region. <p><i>Administration matters:</i> Review university acts, statutes periodically for better management and for granting autonomy to affiliated colleges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Let intuitional heads decide number and rank of faculty positions. – University and college authorities and bodies to have a mix of elected and nominated persons. – VC's selection only by search-cum-selection process. – Training and development of academic administrators of HEIs is needed to improve quality of governance. <p><i>Financial matters:</i> One third investment on education should be for HE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bring all government universities and government-aided colleges under UGC-funding pattern and increase allocations to UGC. – Full public funding of HEIs no longer possible and encourage and incentivise alternative fund generation. – Set a ceiling on fee levels and ensure HEIs do not indulge in malpractices in fees. – Give HEIs autonomy to take up consultancy and sponsored research projects. <p><i>General:</i> Make UGC more effective for maintenance of standards. HEIs need to be given full autonomy for academic and research collaborations with their counterparts, industry and professional organisations in India and abroad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Need to encourage private participation in HE with adequate social control. – Needed professional ethics and norms of accountability from teachers.
Privatisation and Private Higher Education	
NPE, 1986 and POA 1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – States cannot legislate creation of colleges without UGC's consent and sanction. – Statutory bodies like UGC would regulate admissions as per physical facilities and faculty strength. – SCHE would prepare coordinated plans of HE development in a State which would be endorsed by UGC.
NPE, 1986 Revised POA, 1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Government of India would set up a High Powered Committee for mobilization of resources for higher education; and also a High Powered Committee on Technical Education for the same purpose.
Punnaya Committee, 1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rather than penalize, UGC should incentivise by a matching grant, universities and colleges generating own funds for development purposes. – Cent per cent income tax exemptions to endowments and contributions to HEIs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-financing courses only for those who can afford to pay and adequate subsidy/loan provisions for economically weaker students unable to pay high fees. - Funding for HE is essentially the State responsibility.
Swaminathan Committee on Technical Education, 1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public technical education institutions should raise internal and external resources from industry, alumni, consultancy, sponsored research/projects, etc. - Fix fees at a higher level and revise it periodically.
Ambani-Birla Group, 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish world- class HE facility at each district HQ. - Foster a healthy mix of state and affordable private initiatives. - Enforce strictly “user pays” principle in HE, with state support to economically weaker sections. - Complete freedom to establish HEIs to private agency without reference to UGC, AICTE, etc. - HEIs to be out- of- bounds for politics and political parties.
NKC , 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private investment in HE is welcome and should be encouraged by offering land grants and other facilities.
Yashpal Committee, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To double the current capacity of HE, all three approaches are necessary, viz., public, private and PPP, but with consistent ground rules to do away with lot of ills associated with private initiatives. - Private initiatives should not be driven by profit motives and confine attention to ‘commercially viable’ sectors like professional courses, but should also offer social and natural science courses. - Given considerable misuse of provisions and pending decision of Tandon Committee on Deemed Universities, UGC should suspend sanction or recognition of new deemed universities.
Tandon Committee on Deemed Universities, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abolish the category of 44 out of 126 deemed universities, which neither on past performance nor on future potential holds hope and deserve their status, and a national committee to salvage future of affected students. - VCs, as in traditional universities, should head governing bodies of deemed universities like Board of Management, Executive Council and Governing Council, and its membership should include more than 50% of academicians and with not more than 1-2 of Trust/President’s representatives. - Trust/President can’t nominate VC, PVC, etc. - Centralized admissions test to govern admissions. - Fees should be reasonable to the cost of the course. - Ensure that private participation does not slip into crass commercialization.
Narayana Murthy Committee, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create enabling conditions to make HE system robust and useful to attract private investments; - Improve quality of HE with corporate participation; - Engage corporate sector to invest in existing institutions, set up new ones and develop new knowledge clusters.
FICCI Education Summit, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create enabling environment with less barriers for private and foreign participation. - Change from government as a single provider of funds to a situation where students, researchers and faculty can source funds from multiple sources to ensure autonomy and freedom from any control or accountability.

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➔ About the paper

The discourses and recommendations of commissions and committees relating to higher education since Independence reveal widely varying trends. As it was mainly in state sector, the main thrust of commission/committee discourses on higher education (HE) till the 1970s was against expansion and for regulation according to UGC norms to protect it from deterioration in quality and standards as prevalent earlier. With decline in government funding from 1980s and 1990s, privatization and private agencies' entry through self-financing courses and colleges became an option to meet rising social demand for HE. The commissions and committees endorsed this approach while stressing the need to control private HE institutions from charging exorbitant fees. Although a significant portion of HE still continues under the state sector, there is far greater aggressiveness in the private agency's arguments for their unmitigated freedom and autonomy in higher education away from government control.

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