



Greater Autonomy To Educational Institutions: Right Or Wrong

Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 2
- ✓ Autonomy to educational institutions, issues related to it
- ✓ Meaning of autonomy
- ✓ What should be the right step?

Recently:

- ❖ A new scheme of greater autonomy to educational institutions has been announced.

What will happen now?

- Depending on the NAAC scores the institutions will be slotted in category I, II and lower.
- There will be less autonomy as the rank declines.
- Those in the highest category will have the freedom to start new courses, hire foreign faculty and pay higher emoluments to faculty.
- So, some will have more freedom but others will have even less.
- Autonomy has been identified as the key to improving the quality of higher education in India.

What is the Issue?

- This has given birth to the question that will standards be achieved by standardisation?
- Would the current move lead to high quality higher education?
- UGC and its committees has become the arbiter of standards and all institutions are expected to fall in line.
- This includes the points an academic had to collect under the API system to get promoted, the degrees and tests needed to become a teacher and so on.
- Teachers had to be upgraded periodically through training institutions.
- The entire structure of teaching-learning was progressively determined by the UGC.
- With each pay commission, there were more and more regulations and diktats.
- The quality of education has not improved with all these standards.
- Institutions have deteriorated in quality.

So what makes an institution great?

- Great institutions of learning accept that knowledge is not ready made and has multiple sources.
- Different people have different ways of learning and producing knowledge.
- Someone may publish many papers each year while some may publish a seminal work in a decade.
- Nobel Prize winner Higgs (God particle fame) said for the first 15 years at Cambridge he did not publish anything.

So what is required?

- Multiplicities of approaches are needed for knowledge to advance.
- In higher education a great deal of freedom is required to generate ideas.

And what does autonomy mean in real terms?

- Autonomy implies the freedom to pursue one's own path of knowledge generation.
- Teachers in higher education institutions need to devise their own courses to teach the perspective they feel best reflects the subject — standardized courses, like in schools, are undesirable.
- Good teaching and research go hand in hand.
- This requires commitment which comes when academics have autonomy.
- Academic autonomy must filter down.
- The institution must have autonomy from external pressures; the department must have autonomy from the head of the institution and the teacher from the head of the department.

What makes the latest move not a right step made in the right direction?

- The latest move to provide graded autonomy to institutions will curtail the autonomy of academics in these institutions.
- The institutions will have to generate their own funds for many of the freedoms they are being granted. So, they would be subject to the dictates of the market.



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- Consequently, professional courses may get money but not the core social sciences or sciences. There would be pressure to move towards paying courses.
- Those not catering to the markets would be marginalised and the generation of the socially relevant knowledge would decline.

Conclusion:

- The idea of becoming world class implies that our institutions would have to create facilities that prevail in the advanced countries to attract faculty and students from there.
- In a poor country like India this would result into drain of resources from other institutions.
- The new policy confuses the autonomy for individual faculty members with that for the institution, that too truncated by the dictates of markets.



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RBI & Inflation

Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper2
- ✓ RBI and Inflation
- ✓ Reasons and worries

Recently:

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept the key policy rate, or the repo rate, unchanged in the first bimonthly policy review of 2017-18.
- ❖ However it narrowed the policy corridor by 25 bps by raising the reverse repo rate to 6%, from 5.75%.

What are the reasons?

- The central bank said the policy decision was consistent with the neutral policy stance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for retail inflation, which is 4%.
- The RBI governor said that the MPC saw the path of inflation in 2017-18 challenged by upside risks and unfavorable base effects towards the second half of the year.
- Accordingly, inflation developments have to be closely monitored with food price pressures can be checked so that inflation expectations can be anchored.
- The central bank said the future course of monetary policy would largely depend on incoming data on how macroeconomic conditions are evolving.

Inflation worries:-

- RBI said the path to achieving 4% inflation would be challenging.
- The central bank has set its inflation projection to an average of 4.5% in the first half of 2017-18 and 5% in the second half, while keeping its GVA growth projection unchanged at 7.4% for FY18 as compared with 6.7% in FY17.
- The central bank said while surplus liquidity in the banking system had fallen from close to Rs 8 lakh crore in January to Rs 4.8 lakh crore in March.
- The central bank said it had proposed a standing deposit facility to the government in November 2015, approval for which was still awaited.
- SDF is a mechanism to drain surplus cash at a rate lower than the repo rate without the need for any collateral.
- Analysts said there were upside risks to the 4% target and there was a possibility of an increase in the cash reserve ratio, going forward.



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Sharada Prasad Committee on Skill India

Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 2
- ✓ Goals of 'Skill India'
- ✓ Sharad Prasad Committee report

Recently:

- ❖ In 2016, the Government of India formed the Sharada Prasad Committee to rationalise the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and improve 'Skill India'.
- ❖ The committee submitted its report in 2016.
- ❖ Now over a year later, it may be prudent to look at the reforms it suggested and action taken in the vocational education/training (VET) system.

What are the goals of 'Skill India'?

- To meet employers' needs of skills.
- To prepare workers (young and old) for a decent livelihood.

What does the Sharada Prasad Committee's report say?

- The recurring theme in the report is its focus on youth.
- Each recommendation underlines that-
 1. The VET is not just for underprivileged communities.
 2. It is not a stopgap arrangement for those who cannot make it through formal education.
 3. It is for all of us.

Streaming for students:

It suggests concrete steps to ensure a mindset change, such as-

- Having a separate stream for vocational education (in secondary education).
- Creating vocational schools and vocational colleges for upward mobility.
- Having a Central university to award degrees and diplomas.
- China, for instance, has such a separate stream after nine years of compulsory schooling, and half the students choose VET at the senior secondary level (after class nine).

A global alignment:

- Aligning the courses to international requirements, ensuring a basic foundation in the 3Rs, and life-long learning is required.
- National standards for an in-demand skill set with national/global mobility that translates into better jobs.
- Short duration courses (with no real skills) that provide low pay for suboptimal jobs cannot be called national standards. Hence the current national standards have to drastically improve.
- The focus should be in strengthening reading, writing and arithmetic skills.
- No skill development can succeed if most of the workforce lacks the foundation to pick up skills in a fast-changing world.

Strengthening regulation:

- As in other industries, the regulator has displayed a limited capacity to regulate.
- Cases of a conflict of interests, of rigged assessments and of training happening only on paper are not new.
- A recent parliamentary report on private ITIs reported that the number of private ITIs has grown from under 2,000 to over 11,000 in five years.
- It points to failure of regulation, accompanied by a lack of quality training on offer at such ITIs.
- There is a huge ethics and accountability issue if there is no credible assessment board and when there are too many sector skill councils, each trying to maximise their business.
- The Sharada Prasad Committee had recommended that the number of SSCs should correspond to the National Industrial (Activity) Classification (which has 21 economic activities across the entire economy).

Unification of the entire VET system:

This should be first policy step.



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- What we have today are fragmented pillars. An NSDC-centric focus has left the skill development efforts of 17 ministries out of the same scrutiny.
- 'Skill India' can have an impact only when all of them work together and learn from each other.

Enhancing employer ownership:

- The private sector places the onus of unemployment on the government, treating it as a welfare responsibility, while the government looks to the private sector since it is the end consumer of skills.
- The result is that only 36% of India's organised sector firms conduct in-firm training.
- In this regard the committee's recommendation of a reimbursable industry contribution model (applicable only to the organised sector) should solve the problem.
- It could ensure reimbursements for those companies undertaking training while rewarding industry for sharing and undertaking skilling until everyone in the company is skilled.

Conclusion:

- India can surely become the world's skill capital but not with what it is doing right now.
- The reforms suggested by the committee can be a good starting point.
- Taking advantage of the Indian demographic dividend must be a key part of India's growth story.



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STI Policy 2013 of India

Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper II and III
- ✓ Schemes and policies of government, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy of India, STI Policy

Introduction:

- Released in January 2013, the policy envisions placing India among the top five global scientific powers by 2020;
- It proposes to use STI for faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth with a focus both on STI for people and people for STI;
- The Policy notes that India's R&D investment is less than 2.5% of the global investments. It has been under 1% of the GDP;
- It observes that achieving the target of increasing Gross Expenditure in Research and Development (GERD) to 2% of the GDP in the next five years can be achieved if the expenditure of public sector to private sector ratio increases from current 3:1 to 1:1;
- It plans to boost innovation through research and development (R&D) driven by private sector participation, publishing more research papers, achieving gender parity in S&T and global cooperation;
- The Policy intends to position India among the top five global scientific powers by 2020, facilitate S&T-based high-risk innovations through new mechanisms;
- facilitate partnerships among stake holders for scaling successes of R&D; and
- trigger changes in the mindset and value systems to recognize, respect and reward performances which create wealth from S&T derived knowledge.
- It engrains the principle of social inclusion and private participation for achieving its objectives.
- In a nutshell, it intends to “accelerate the pace of discovery and delivery of science-led solutions for serving the aspirational goals of India for faster, sustainable and inclusive growth”– a strong and viable Science, Research and Innovation System for High Technology-led path for India (SRISHTI).

The key features of the STI Policy 2013 are:

- Budget:
 - Increasing the R&D spending to 2% in next five years' time through PPP;
 - creating conducive environment for encouraging private sector investment in R&D.
- Manpower:
 - Promotion of spread of scientific temper amongst all sections of society;
 - attracting talented and bright minds towards careers in science, research and innovation;
 - increasing the number of R&D personnel by 66% in next five years;
 - creating environment for women to enter in R&D field; and
 - setting up inter university centers, bringing together different disciplines of humanities and science together.
- Business:
 - Identifying 10 sectors of high potential and putting more resources into them for STI;
 - Increasing by two folds the global share of high tech products;
 - Increasing R&D intensity in service sector, small and medium scale enterprises;
 - Sharing the risk on R&D investments with private sector;
 - Providing new financing mechanisms for entrepreneurs;
 - Creating a public procurement policy that favors indigenous innovations;
 - Achieving synergy between R&D policy for agriculture vs. STI policy.
- Climate Change:
 - Active role in implementation of National Action plan for Climate Change (NAPCC); and
 - Providing incentives for green manufacturing.
- PPP:



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- Setting up of National Science, Technology and Innovation foundation to facilitate investments in S&T projects under PPP mode and large scale R&D facilities under PPP mode;
- Establishing technology business incubators and science-led entrepreneurs; and
- Treating private sector R&D institutions at par with public sector institutions for giving public funds.
- IPR:
 - Modification of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for social goods and IPR generated under PPP;
 - setting up of a regulatory and legal framework for sharing IPRs between Investors and inventors.
 - Participation: Encouraging participation of all STI stakeholders including
 - women and differently-abled and disadvantaged sections of society;
 - NGOs who would play pivotal role for delivery science-tech-innovation outputs especially related with rural / grassroot level;
 - State Governments by setting up state specific plans and strengthening the State Sci-Tech Councils / Boards and fine-tuning five-year plan schemes in response to rapid changes in S&T;
 - International partners by forging strategic alliances both bilateral and multilateral.
- Public awareness:
 - Releasing white papers on new science projects to generate public awareness about the ethical / social / economic implications of science-tech-R&D initiatives.

Criticism:

- The policy ignores Traditional Knowledge (TK).
- It follows 'one size fits all' approach. This means that sector specific contours have not been defined in the policy. E.g. the approach applicable to software industry cannot be applied to pharmaceutical industry.
- The policy pays less focus on involvement of Universities with industry. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have to be encouraged.
- In India, most of the research papers are published for the sake of 'upgrading a scientist's biodata'. Research papers which can yield industrial innovation and output should be encouraged rather than 'bogus papers'. The policy needs to comment on this side of innovation too.

Q. Critically analyse the provisions of India's STI (Science, Technology and Innovation) Policy, 2013.



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Swadhar Greh Scheme

Relevancy:

- ✓ GS Prelims, GS Mains paper I, II, IV
- ✓ Schemes of government, women empowerment, women related schemes, Swadhar Greh Scheme

Introduction:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Swadhar Greh Scheme which targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.
- The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.
- Swadhar Greh will be set up in every district with capacity of 30 women
- For big cities and other districts having more than 40 lakh population or those districts where there is a need for additional support to the women, more than one Swadhar Greh could be established.

Objectives

- To cater to the primary need of shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and care of the women in distress and who are without any social and economic support.
- To enable them to regain their emotional strength that gets hampered due to their encounter with unfortunate circumstances.
- To provide them with legal aid and guidance to enable them to take steps for their readjustment in family/society.
- To enable them to start their life afresh with dignity and conviction.

Beneficiaries:

- Women who are deserted and are without any social and economic support;
- Women survivors of natural disasters who have been rendered homeless and are without any socio-economic support;
- Women prisoners released from jail and are without family, social and economic support;
- Women victims of domestic violence, family tension or discord, who are made to leave their homes without any means of subsistence and have no special protection from exploitation and/ or facing litigation on account of marital disputes; and
- Trafficked women/girls rescued or runaway from brothels or other places where they face exploitation and
- Women affected by HIV/AIDS who do not have any social or economic support. However such women/ girls should first seek assistance under UJJAWALA Scheme in areas where it is in operation



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World Health: Issues & Concerns

Relevancy

- ✓ G.S. Paper 2,3
- ✓ Issues and concerns related to world health
- ✓ What is desired?
- ✓ The policies must aim for?

Recently:

- ❖ The World Health Day was celebrated.
- ❖ It is celebrated every year on on April 7.
- ❖ This year's World Health Day happens to be the 70th anniversary of WHO.
- ❖ It happens to be the day (in 1948) when the constitution of World Health Organization (WHO) came into force under the flag of the United Nations.

What is the issue?

- WHO commemorates this year's World Health Day (April 7) with the theme “Universal Health Coverage: Everyone, Everywhere”.
- It is essential to understand at this point that healthcare policies incorporate the behavioural component in it.

What are the concerns?

- Health clinics that are accessible and affordable still go unutilised in rural and under-served people.
- Behavioural patterns, old traditions, conventional beliefs, and habits have a strong hold on people.
- There is a long entrenched practice of going to untrained and unqualified doctors.
- There is evidently a lack of trust on existing scientific healthcare models.
- All these in turn affect the success of healthcare efforts.

What is desired?

- The low turnout witnessed at health outlets call for a shift in the approach.
- It takes concerted efforts to address this which include:
 1. Breaking various myths
 2. Sharing continued education and awareness
 3. Rendering door-to-door services especially for women and child care
- Notably holding camps and reaching out to the villages proved to be more effective.
- It triggered a change in the behavioural patterns of the villagers who began trusting a scientifically sound model.
- They started moving away from the traditional practices.

The policies must aim for the following:-

- Modifying individual behaviour is essential for the success of any public policy promoting health awareness and healthcare delivery.
- Effective people participation and engagement is significant.
- More interactive health policies are likely of developing public understanding, appealing to a larger consciousness and modifying habits.
- The health models need to be thought-out and viewed from public behavioural psychology during inception and while being drafted.
- Social media, digitisation, tele-assisted medicine, video and audio campaigns can play a significant role in reaching out to people.



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