

7. TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

A. Kalanidhi*

Abstract

Corresponding to the population, India has matured enough to start more number of universities to govern professional institutions. Number of professional institutions started growing, and hence the Administrators and planners conceived the formation of Technical council to regulate the technical institutions in India. Where ever the government has entered to regulate, there one can visualize the corruption. It was during the British Rule that the universities started affiliating the colleges with the Universities. The affiliating character of a university continued even after the Britishers left India. When more number of institutions got affiliated to the University, the affairs become illogical in administration. This article deals with the state of affairs of technical education both at the University level and at the college level. On the one hand, there are positive points and on the other hand, there are many negative points leading to criminalization of professional education. India needs more professional institutions to offer technical education and hence supports the Technical Education council in giving approval for starting new institutions. The whole thing gets derailed when private partners get into the system. Though there are restrictions for starting the institution as a company, many private partners start the same by floating a Non-profitable Charitable trust. However, these trusts are sold and purchased thro ill-gotten wealth. It does not come under the eyes of the Tax authorities. Naturally these private partners play un-charitable role in promoting education. Quality suffers to a great extent. Hence we produce substandard engineers having no high Morales. This tendency is highly against the positive growth of the country. This article deals with the nuances of Technical Education and the status in comparison with international institutes/universities.

India has a population of 1120 Million. Corresponding to the population, number of technical institutions is far less compared to many developed country. Once upon a time, India thought that population is a menace. But now, they have realized that population is the price-less treasure for the country. The whole world has realized that India is the capital of Information Technology. Around ten years back, India was sending large number of technical graduates to

various countries to participate in their development activities. Every country has realized that their development pins around Information Technology and they have to depend on the Indian Human resource for the same. On the one hand, India increased the number of technical institution and on the other hand, created a body-viz. **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** to regulate these technical institutions.

*Vice-Chairman, Commonwealth and Science and Technology Academy for Research, India. & Former Vice-Chancellor, Anna University, Chennai;

In 1987, AICTE was formed and was not fully functional and hence, mediocre decisions and non-technical approach to the regulation of technical education took place. Few vested individuals participated in the whole process and hence, skewed development in technical education took place. Private individuals who have money started technical institutions and made fortune. AICTE started realizing that they are losing the grip over these institutions. AICTE started making sincere efforts in tightening the regulatory process. Private partners used the loopholes available in the laws and got out of the regulatory process, temporarily. In some cases, it continued for decades. Having realized that AICTE is getting tough, these private partners converted their institutions to **Deemed-to-be Universities**.

Many of them, even today, are not aware under what laws their institutions are running in India. AICTE is a body to regulate technical Institutions in India. Any Institution that is located within the territory of India will have to fall Under AICTE. Universities are expected to follow the norms and guidelines of AICTE. This is the gist of the AICTE Act. **Deemed-to-be-universities** are governed by the UGC Act. UGC Act does not have regulating teeth; however, AICTE Act provides the same. With respect to the Deemed-to-be universities, UGC has erred in monitoring the functioning resulting in unqualified people act as Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Chancellors and Chancellors. Adding fuel to the fire, UGC has issued orders, for those who approached, to rename the Deemed –to-be-Universities into regular universities under section 3g of the UGC Act. Common man has no idea how these institutions become universities. Even the professors in these Institutions thought that their institution got upgraded to a full university. So much people are ignorant. The so called **Deemed-to-be-universities** make huge money out of this name change. UGC is silent and keeping their face elsewhere. Ministry concerned with Higher Education is inactive.

These **Deemed-to-be-universities** started

offering distance education programmes. They even offer Ph.D programmes thro' distance education schemes. They start new campuses and off-campus even though they have no provisions to start under the **Deemed-to-be-universities** umbrella. In some cases, they have gone out of the country to offer programmes. When they offer programmes outside the country, how does our law apply? Whether it is off-campus, new campus or distance education, they make huge money. It is to be presumed that the regulating and governing organizations such as AICTE and UGC are not aware of what is happening in these institutions. In some cases when these organizations start acting, these institutions use the loop-holes in the law and block their actions because they are rich today.

Having realized that there are many impediments to get Deemed-to-be-Universities, the private investors have resorted to Private universities approved by state legislature. Once they get university status, they don't remain in the state. They go global. They start distance education, off-campus and new campus and mint money in the name of education. In one state, the authorities granted permission for more than hundred universities and made the education a mockery. Having realized that so much money is there in education, some political masters ventured to start state owned universities and minted money by appointing Vice-Chancellors and making further teaching appoints on cash basis. In these universities, the Vice-Chancellors started selling programmes and courses thro' regular and distance education mode. They started selling Ph.D for people.

There is one category known as the affiliating institutions. These institutions get their approval from AICTE and get affiliated with universities and start offering programmes. Few decades earlier, these institutions started playing with AICTE. When they come for inspection, they show the set of equipments and the same equipments were transported to another institution and finally they get approval without any equipment. AICTE insists on Demand Draft

for huge sum of money jointly in the name of the institution and AICTE. I have worked in AICTE as Advisor. I could never understand the philosophy of demand draft under joint names. AICTE is expecting that in the event that the institution is closed, this money could be used partially to repatriate the students and partially to repatriate the teachers. Under the present laws, the FD under joint name, can never be cashed with the consent of AICTE alone. Such deposits are running to more than few hundred crores. AICTE can logically think of utilizing the interest for faculty up gradation which is a critical parameter in the quality of education. Under the present arrangement, they cannot do this. This exercise has become a futile one. Private investors who run these institutions aim to fulfill the conditions laid down by AICTE and Universities and in some cases the State Governments. By hook or crook, these conditions are fulfilled and they aim at making money. Since large number of institutions have come up, admission has become easier for students to choose. Admission of students has become tougher for institutions, since the prospective students look for the prospectus of these institutions. In order to build a good prospectus, some resort to good buildings. Students and parents get carried away by the buildings, lawns and cafeteria. In some cases, the institution allows free movement of boys and girls in the hostel. Many students look for this kind of freedom. We need to look at the qualified academics. Having realized this, some institutions retain qualified teachers even though they are retired. But for their teaching needs, they depend on the under-qualified teachers. In order to look for the placements, these institutions resort to unhealthy practice and give a wrong projection about the placements. They give undue publicity. They spend several crores for only advertisements. They could as well spend the same on quality parameters.

Affiliating institutions stand on a registered trust. This means the whole education is a non-profitable venture. In practice, the private participants take law into their hands and run

the institution for profit. Law makers close their eyes for one reason that these institutions are governed by political personalities. Their only aim is to run on bare facility and suck money from the institutions and float another institution and so on. Quality is scanty regarded in higher education.

Governance of State owned universities:

Since the name carries good impression, people with power misuse the same by improper and illegal admissions. Misuse of funds to a large extent took place in these universities. Political masters at the power misuse the universities for their own personal needs. The level of misuse goes to the extent of tampering with mark sheets and Degree certificates. These days, people at power do not bother about consequences and hence resort to all forms of money making businesses. Neither the academicians nor the political masters do have any concern about the degradation of quality in higher education.

In India, there are two accrediting agencies. One promoted by AICTE and the other promoted by UGC. Only in India the accrediting agencies are at the mercy of Government grants. Even the appointment to these agencies is done by Government. Accreditation is a process by which the agencies explicitly place information about the academic standing of these institutions. Here again, influence comes into picture and hence true picture about the institution is not shown to the stake holders. Around the world, accrediting agencies are held by independent professional societies. Quality of an institution depends on the level of research being carried on by these institutions. None of the two accrediting agencies have designed the process to evaluate the research programmes of an institution/university.

Technological universities have come into being due to sudden growth in number of technical institutions. Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra are the few states where the number of engineering institutions is quite large. Larger the number of institutions, larger is the problems in regulating

and monitoring. Hence, Tamil Nadu created six universities, but appointed six vice Chancellors on monetary basis. The Vice-Chancellors concentrated in making money rather looking into the academic matters. Faculty appointments were made on monetary basis. The vice-chancellors, once appointed, become heavy headed and have no time to visit and interact with other universities for uniformity in academic standards.

Many of these Vice-Chancellors have no idea about Washington Accord. When we compare with Asian Universities/western Universities, we have big difference. Cost of education is less in India. Number of students per university is large in Indian Universities. Quality is far away from imagination. Technology and internet based techniques are flooding in the academic arena. The Vice-Chancellors and managers of Technical Education are far away from real developments. The teachers and managers of technical education are outdated because of the obsolescence in Engineering Technology syllabus and curriculum drafted by the universities. The teachers cut sorry figure in the class-room due to ignorance.

There has been concern on the quality degradation in technical Universities. Instead of contemplating for improved quality in IITs, the Government has increased the number of IITs. The number of teachers available in this country is fixed. As new institutions are started, this faculty started jumping for elevation resulting in circulation of the same faculty group in the

country. AICTE has major responsibilities in creating avenues for young teachers to get qualified with Ph.D. Till date, no large scale measures have been taken to upgrade the qualification of teachers. It is sad on the part of Universities too. They have forgotten that Ph.D is their main motto. If one looks at the chronology of developments in technical education, one can realize that it is the joint effort of the Federal and state governments who have brought down the standard of technical education to such a low level. We need to give oxygen and revamp the Technical education.

References

1. Issues and Concern in Engineering Education, **4th North-East Asia International Conference on Engineering and Technology Education**, held at Hungkuang University from October 25th to 29th 2010 in Taichung, Taiwan.
2. Global Crisis in Engineering Education, 2nd WIETE Annual conference on Engineering and Technology Education, Pattaya, Thailand, 25-28th January 2011.
3. Evaluation of Research in Accreditation, Asia Pacific Quality Network conference 2011, Bangalore, 2-4th March 2011.
4. Enriching Research in Academic Institutions, pune paper.

