

Perceptions of Stakeholders towards College Autonomy on Quality of Higher Education in Northern and Southern Odisha

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study was to investigate the perception of stakeholder towards college autonomy on quality in higher education. The present study has been conducted in two autonomous (VD College, Jeypore and MPC College, Baripada and two non-autonomous (DAV College, Koraput and Women's College, Baripada) government colleges in the southern and northern regions of Odisha, India. The perceptions of students, parents, and teachers of autonomous colleges relating to their satisfaction with different quality dimensions of higher education have been compared with the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers of non-autonomous colleges using 't' test to assess the impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education. The impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education was explored using the causal comparative method taking non-autonomous colleges as control group. The study found that; i) college autonomy impacts positively on quality of teacher, curriculum, co-curricular activities, method of teaching, library, infrastructural facilities and examination system; ii) college autonomy impacts positively on students' achievement; iii) college autonomy impacts positively on customer orientation, client education, quality in education, teachers' participation, innovation and linkages. The study recommended that autonomous colleges should be sufficiently funded by central government, UGC and state government or should be provided opportunity to generate their own financial resources to carry out developmental activities for achieving total quality in higher education. It is recommended that steps should be taken to institute appropriate mechanism in every autonomous college to look into teachers' recruitment and promotion policy; terms and conditions of services; and techniques of inspiration, motivation and involvement. Autonomous colleges should be given administrative freedom to recruit teachers and other members of non teaching staff in conformity with UGC guidelines. Autonomy, quality and accountability are interrelated. Autonomy without accountability cannot ensure quality in higher education. Proper guidelines and regulations need to be formulated to ensure both autonomy and accountability in higher education.

Keywords: Quality education, autonomy, accountability, perception, development

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Development of higher education has become the prime task of countries across the world. The role of higher education is vital in the development of a nation. It includes a wide variety of universities and colleges along with other formal, non-formal and informal institutions. Higher education plays a necessary and an increasingly important role in human, social and economic development. Through it is complex fluid and dynamic in nature, it promotes development both directly and indirectly

through teaching, research and extension service. Higher education operates within different contexts in which it plays numerous roles and faces various challenges. The improvements in higher education lead to social development and social change. Higher education empowers people by raising the quality of life. It is about learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together (Faure, 1972). Learning, research and extension service at higher education institutions are the forefronts of knowledge generation and dissemination, and are thus important contributors to forces of social change.

In most parts of the developing countries, education in general and higher education in particular is seen as playing an indispensable role in national economic development. It cultivates necessary civil values for societal and political participation. Development of a nation depends on how government utilizes the national higher education system to train people in skills necessary for economic growth. Higher education is also seen as cultivating and inculcating social and moral values in students and communities. It plays an integral role in social and cultural transformation or preservation. It plays important role in cultivating democratic values or global citizenship. Higher education creates socially responsible graduates capable of leading a country or community towards prosperity and success. Higher education is seen to contribute to human capital and capacity development. It provides the knowledge base skills and training to perform specific tasks and job. More recently, the social and economic role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in development has regained prominence in the development agenda of all countries over the global. The United Nations (UN) has viewed higher education as an integral part to all aspects of development such as environmental awareness and sustainability, post- conflict resolution, poverty alleviation, and cultivating values such as human rights, health care issues and cultural preservation or change. Society and HEIs are mutually constitutive as society and HEIs co-evolve. The HEIs in general and universities in particular are considered to be the progenitors of social change through the generation and dissemination of knowledge and new ideas especially in the context of globalization . This suggests for re-conceptualization of the importance of HEIs in society, culture and development. Thus, a major theme focused throughout the contemporary literature on higher education is the proactive role of HEIs in the development process. The higher education and its institutions should be aware of its role and base its operations around developmental objectives. Higher education is transformative education. This transformative education creates the potential for wider process of social and human development. O' Sullivan (1999) argues that education can be critical of transcend or improve discourses and concept of progress and development through shifts of consciousness in transformative learning.

It is largely accepted that autonomy and quality are related directly. Researchers have studied quality in higher education as a dependent variable which might be influenced by many factors. Reforms in structural and functional aspects of higher education might be necessary condition, but not sufficient condition in determining quality in education. Quality in education depends on the satisfaction of beneficiaries. There found a dearth of systematic research studies investigating the effect of college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of satisfaction of such beneficiaries as students, parents, teachers, principals and members of community, except a study conducted by Mohanty (2005). Mohanty's study compared the satisfaction of students and teachers with some structural and functional aspects of higher education. The findings of his study suffers from methodological shortcomings, and lack of ecological and population validity. The effects of college autonomy on quality in higher

education require to be examined empirically to resolve the discourse on dependence or independence of autonomy and quality in education.

Grant of autonomy to potential colleges by the universities concerned has been the new trend in Indian higher education since the implementation of the National Policy on Education (MHRD, 1986) to ensure quality and excellence. Autonomous colleges are empowered with academic freedom to frame their own curriculum and syllabi, admit students by conducting entrance examinations, innovate and experiment with new methods and strategies for transacting curriculum, conduct examination and publish results, and award degrees to the students. Provisions are being made in national budget every year to provide substantial grants to autonomous colleges through University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC has been providing assistance to autonomous colleges to incur expenditure for inviting guests faculties; orienting and retraining teachers; redesigning courses at par with international standard; developing teaching learning materials; procuring equipments, furniture, books and journals; reforming examination systems; extending and constructing buildings, organizing workshops and seminars; holding meeting of governing bodies; and providing fees for accreditation. Besides these, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) have been established at Bangalore to assess the quality of colleges. The role of NAAC in assessing the quality of autonomous colleges using pre-fixed criteria is no doubt desirable but not acceptable from research point of view. Use of pre-fixed criteria to judge the quality of goods and services has been denounced by the researchers. The trend, all over the globe, has to evaluate quality of goods and services in terms of how far the goods and services satisfy customers' or stakeholders' needs and expectations. Since higher education has come under the service sector, its customers or stakeholders are mainly students, parents, teachers and principals. Therefore, the quality of college autonomy needs to be studied in terms of how far the services provided by autonomous colleges focus on customers' needs, expectations and satisfaction. Review of literature reveals that no systematic and comprehensive study has been conducted so far either in India or at international level to assess the impact of college autonomy on quality (in terms of satisfaction of students, parents, teachers and principals) in higher education. That's why the quality of college autonomy needs to be studied in terms of how far the services provided by autonomous colleges focus on stakeholder's perception.

The present study seeks answers to such questions as (i) whether there exists any impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of students' perception relating to their satisfaction with quality of teachers, curriculum, co-curricular activities, methods of teaching, library, laboratory, infrastructural facilities and examination; (ii) whether there exists any impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of parents' perception relating to their satisfaction with students' achievement, curriculum, quality of teachers, physical facilities, examination system and co-curricular activities; (iii) whether there exists any impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of principals' perception relating to their satisfaction with customer's orientation, client education, quality education, participation, innovation, parent's involvement and linkage; and (iv) whether there exists any impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of teachers' perception relating to their satisfaction with principal as a leader, quality of teachers, linkages and interface, students, co-curricular activities, teaching, office management, relationships, material resources, examination and job satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To study the college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of students' perception relating to the quality of teachers, curriculum, co-curricular activities, methods of teaching, library, laboratory, infrastructural facilities and examination.
2. To study the college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of teachers' perception relating to the principal as a leader, quality of teachers, linkages and interface, students, co-curricular activities, teaching, office management, relationships, material resources, examinations and job satisfaction.
3. To study the college autonomy on quality in higher education in terms of parents' perception relating to the students' achievement, curriculum, quality of teachers, physical facilities, examination system and co-curricular activities.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The present study has been conducted in two autonomous (VD College, Jeypore and MPC College, Baripada) and two non-autonomous (DAV College, Koraput and Women's College, Baripada) government colleges in the southern and northern regions of Odisha, India. The study was conducted on students, parents and teachers of autonomous and non-autonomous colleges associated at least one year with various activities of those colleges. The concept of quality was connoted to the satisfaction of such customers of higher education as students, parents, and teachers with different dimensions of education. The population of the present study comprises all students, parents, and teachers of the selected autonomous and non-autonomous colleges. Since it is difficult to include all of them in the purview of this study, a sample of 80 students, 80 parents, and 80 teachers representing the population are selected randomly from the studied colleges.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders towards college autonomy on quality in higher education. Since college autonomy in India has been a planned program launched by the central government through University Grants Commission to achieve excellence in higher education, and quality in higher education was understood in the present study as satisfaction of students, parents, and teachers with different educational aspects of higher education; the perception of students, parents, and teachers of both autonomous college and non-autonomous college with regard to different dimensions of higher education have been compared using causal-comparative method and ex-post facto research. Firstly, the perceptions of students of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges relating to their satisfaction with quality of teachers, curriculum, co-curricular activities, methods of teaching, library, infrastructural facilities and examination have been compared; secondly, the perceptions of parents of students studying in autonomous and non-autonomous colleges relating to their satisfaction with students achievement curriculum, quality of teacher, physical facilities, examination system, co-curricular activities and parents meeting; thirdly, the perceptions of teachers of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges relating to their satisfaction with principal as leader, teacher quality, linkages and interface, students, co-curricular activities, teaching, office management,

relationships, material resources, examination and job satisfaction have been compared to study the magnitude of impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main aim of the study was to investigate the perception of stakeholder towards college autonomy on quality in higher education. Since the concept of quality in the present study was defined as meeting, exceeding and delighting customers’ needs and expectations with the recognition that these needs and desires would change over time (Downey, 1992), the data collected from customers of higher education such as students, parents, and teachers on their perceptions relating to satisfaction with various quality dimensions of higher education by administering the Satisfaction Scale for Students, the Satisfaction Scale for Parents, and the Mukhopadhyay’s Institutional Profile Questionnaire (MIPQ) for teachers were presented, analysed and discussed in this section.

The perceptions of students, parents, and teachers of autonomous colleges relating to their satisfaction with different quality dimensions of higher education have been compared with the perceptions of students, parents, and teachers of non-autonomous colleges using ‘t’ test to assess the impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education.

Table 1: College Autonomy and Quality in Higher Education in terms of Students’ Satisfaction

Types of College	Autonomous College		Non-Autonomous College		‘t’ value	Level of significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Quality of Teachers	25.7000	1.94651	21.1000	2.64365	4.431	0.05
Curriculum	20.8000	0.91894	6.0000	1.49071	26.726	0.05
Co-curricular Activities	21.9000	1.59513	15.7000	1.82878	8.079	0.05
Methods of Teaching	24.7000	1.33749	16.8000	1.93218	10.631	0.05
Library	10.1000	1.59513	2.8000	0.78881	12.972	0.05
Infrastructural Facilities	26.9000	1.52388	13.9000	1.59513	18.635	0.05
Examination	28.1000	1.52388	17.3000	1.56702	15.625	0.05
Total	158.2000	10.44096	93.6000	11.84628	97.099	0.05

Teachers of autonomous colleges were highly competent, well, cooperative, helpful and in taking lots of care as compared to teachers of non-autonomous colleges as perceived by students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of students of autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with quality of teachers was rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis. Table 1 shows that there found significance of difference between the perception of students studying in autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges ($t = 26.726$; $df = 18$; $P < 0.05$) in favour of students studying in autonomous colleges ($M = 20.80000 > M = 6.00000$) relating to their satisfaction with curriculum. Further, the analysis shows that students of autonomous colleges were highly satisfied with curriculum as the average perception score of students was greater than the average scale value for the level of satisfaction ($M = 20.80000 > M = 20.0$), whereas, students of non-autonomous colleges were just satisfied with the curriculum as the average perception score of students was greater than the average scale value for neutral level of satisfaction ($M = 6.00000 > M = 10.0$). The curriculum of autonomous colleges was significantly better than the curriculum of non-autonomous colleges because it included new concepts, theories and principles, and was designed according to the present need of the society as perceived by students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of the students of autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with curricular was rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis.

As, it is evident from table 1, there found significance of difference between the perception of students studying in autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges ($t = 18.635$; $df = 18$; $P < 0.05$) in favour of students studying in autonomous ($M = 26.9000 > M = 13.9000$) relating to their satisfaction with quality of infrastructural facilities in their colleges. Further, it shows that students of autonomous colleges were highly satisfied with infrastructural facilities in their colleges as the average perception score of students was greater than the average scale value for the level of satisfaction ($M = 26.9000 > M = 25.0$), whereas, the students of non-autonomous colleges were just satisfied with infrastructural facilities in their colleges as the average perception score of students was greater than the average scale value for neutral level of satisfaction ($M = 13.9000 > M = 10.0$). The quality of infrastructural facilities in autonomous colleges was better than the non-autonomous colleges as the students in autonomous colleges used to sit comfortably in the classroom, and were satisfied with the urinal, lavatory and drinking water facilities provided in the college. In autonomous colleges, infrastructural facilities like classroom, library, laboratory, playground, garden etc. were available and were maintained properly as compared to non-autonomous college as perceived by students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of students of autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with infrastructural facilities was rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis. In sum, the quality of education as perceived by students studying in autonomous colleges differed significantly from the quality of education in non-autonomous colleges ($t = 97.099$; $df = 18$; $P < 0.05$). From the table 1, it is evident that quality of higher education in autonomous colleges was significantly better than the quality of education in non-autonomous colleges ($M = 158.2000 > M = 93.6000$).

Table 2: College Autonomy and Quality in Higher Education in terms of Parents’ Satisfaction

Type of College	Autonomous College		Non-Autonomous College		‘t’ value	Level of Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Student’s Achievement	12.9000	0.87560	6.1000	0.99443	16.229	0.05
Curriculum	5.3000	1.15950	2.5000	0.52705	6.952	0.05
Quality of Teacher	12.8000	0.91894	7.1000	1.37032	10.925	0.05
Physical Facilities	11.8000	1.39841	8.6000	1.71270	4.577	0.05
Examination System	11.5000	1.71594	6.0000	1.24722	8.199	0.05
Co-curricular Activities	14.6000	1.42984	10.8000	1.75119	5.315	0.05
Parents’ Meeting	8.7000	1.63639	6.1000	1.79196	3.388	0.05
Total	77.6000	9.13462	47.2000	9.39487	55.585	0.05

From the above analysis, the finding emerged that the parents of students studying in autonomous colleges were just satisfied with the achievement of their children; where as parents of students studying in non-autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with the achievement of their children. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of parents of students studying in autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with achievement of their children was rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis. Table 2 shows significance of difference between the perception of parents of students studying in autonomous colleges and parents of students studying in non-autonomous colleges ($t = 5.315$; $df = 18$; $P < 0.05$) in favour of parents of students studying in autonomous colleges ($M=14.6000 > M=10.8000$) relating to their satisfaction with co-curricular activities organised in colleges. The quality of co-curricular activities in autonomous colleges was better than the quality of co-curricular activities in non-autonomous colleges, because autonomous colleges treated co-curricular activities as an important activity in the college and students were motivated to participate in those activities as perceived by parents. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of parents of students studying in autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with co-curricular activities was rejected in favour of alternate hypothesis.

As it can be seen in table 2, there found significance of difference between the perception of parents of students studying in autonomous colleges and non-autonomous colleges ($t=3.388$; $df=18$, $P<0.05$) in favour of parents of the students studying in autonomous colleges ($M=8.7000 > M=6.1000$) relating to their satisfaction with parents’ meeting organized in colleges. From the above analysis, the finding emerged that organisation of parents’ meeting in autonomous colleges was significantly better than organisation of parents’ meeting in non-autonomous colleges, although parents of the students studying in autonomous colleges maintained neutrality in the level of satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between autonomous colleges and non-autonomous in organisation of parents’ meeting was rejected in favour of alternate hypothesis. Quality of higher education from the view of parents’ perception with regard to their satisfaction with autonomous colleges differed significantly from the quality of education in non-autonomous colleges ($t = 55.585$; $df = 18$; $P < 0.05$). From the table 2, it was made clear that the quality of higher education in autonomous colleges was significantly better than the quality of education in non-autonomous colleges ($M=77.6000 > M=47.2000$). It also reveals that autonomous colleges were having significant edges over non-autonomous colleges on student’s achievement, quality of teachers, physical facilities available, examination system, co-curricular activities and organisation of parents meeting, but had a slight edge over curriculum.

Table 3: College Autonomy and Quality in Higher Education in terms of Teachers’ Satisfaction

Types of Colleges	Autonomous college		Non-autonomous college		‘t’ value	Level of significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Principal as leader	35.4000	1.95505	23.3000	3.91720	8.740	0.05
Teacher quality	49.7000	4.16467	40.2000	4.15799	5.105	0.05
Linkages and interface	22.4000	2.17051	8.5000	2.17307	14.311	0.05
Students	28.0000	3.29983	14.9000	2.46982	10.051	0.05
Co-curricular activities	26.8000	3.19026	15.5000	1.95789	9.546	0.05
Teaching	27.8000	2.57337	21.5000	3.13581	4.911	0.05
Office management	26.5000	3.47211	19.8000	3.01109	4.610	0.05
Relationships	21.4000	1.71270	19.9000	1.72884	1.949	0.05
Material resources	35.8000	2.20101	16.6000	3.86437	13.653	0.05

Examination	42.5000	1.71594	36.8000	4.41714	3.804	0.05
Job satisfaction	42.2000	1.81353	31.6000	3.30656	8.888	0.05
Total	358.5000	28.26898	248.6000	34.13978	85.568	0.05

The above table shows that the teachers of autonomous colleges and non autonomous colleges differed significantly on their perception relating to satisfaction with principal as a leader ($t=8.740$; $df=18$; $P<0.05$). The perception of teachers in non autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with principal as a leader was better than the teachers in autonomous colleges ($M=35.4000 < M= 23.3000$). From the above analysis, the finding emerged that the teachers of autonomous colleges were highly dissatisfied with the principal as a leader; whereas the teachers of non autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with principal as a leader. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of teachers of autonomous colleges and non autonomous relating to satisfaction with principal as a leader was rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis. Table 3 reveals that teachers of autonomous colleges and non autonomous colleges did not differ significantly on their perception relating to satisfaction with Co-Curricular activities organised in the colleges ($t=9.546$; $df=18$; $P> 0.05$). From the above analysis, the finding emerged that the teachers of autonomous colleges were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with co-curricular activities organized in the colleges, whereas the teachers of non autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with co-curricular activities organized in the colleges. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of teachers of autonomous colleges and non autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with co curricular activities was retained.

It is also seen that the teachers of autonomous colleges and non autonomous colleges differed significantly on their perception relating to satisfaction with teaching ($t=4.911$; $df =18$; $P<0.05$). The perception of teachers in autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with teaching was better than the perception of teachers in non autonomous colleges ($M=27.8000 > M=21.5000$). From the above analysis, the finding emerged that the quality of teaching in autonomous colleges was significantly better than the quality of teaching in non autonomous. Teachers’ of autonomous colleges developed teaching plans, took care for students’ understanding , completed curriculum in time and reviewed their teaching in better line as compared to their counterparts in non autonomous colleges. Therefore, the hull hypothesis stating that there exists no significance of difference between the perception of teachers of autonomous colleges and non autonomous colleges relating to satisfaction with the quality of teaching was rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis.

Findings Based on Students’ Perception

(i) The students studying in autonomous colleges were more satisfied with their teachers as compared to the students of non-autonomous colleges. Quality of teachers in autonomous colleges was better. They were competent, well, co-operative, and helpful and student concerned.

(ii) The curriculums of autonomous colleges were significantly better than the curriculum of non-autonomous colleges as perceived by students. The curriculum of autonomous colleges was designed with new concepts, theories and principles, and was according to the present need of the society.

(iii) The students studying in autonomous colleges were satisfied with co-curricular activities organized in the colleges than their counterparts studying in non-autonomous colleges. The curricular activities in autonomous colleges were frequently and systematically organized.

(iv) The quality of teaching methods in autonomous colleges were better than non-autonomous colleges as teachers of autonomous colleges used to follow innovative methods in teaching, encourage students to participate in teaching learning process, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their doubts and explain difficult concept and principles clearly.

(v) The students of autonomous colleges were more satisfied with the quality of library facilities in autonomous colleges than the students of non-autonomous colleges. The library of autonomous colleges were having sufficient number of books, journals and magazine and reading room facilities.

(vi) The quality of infrastructural facilities in autonomous colleges was better than non-autonomous colleges as perceived by the students. In autonomous colleges students used to sit comfortably in the class room. The urinal, lavatory and drinking water facilities provided in autonomous colleges were better than non-autonomous colleges.

(vii) The students of autonomous colleges were satisfied with the examination system than the students of non-autonomous colleges. The examination systems in autonomous colleges were conducted smoothly, questions asked in the examinations were free from ambiguity, answer scripts of the students were evaluated properly and impartially, and results were published in time.

Findings Based on Parents' Perception

(i) The quality of autonomous college was better than the quality of non autonomous college as perceived by parents. The parents of students studying in autonomous colleges were satisfied with the achievement of their children than the parents of students studying in non-autonomous colleges.

(ii) The parents of students studying in both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges showed their satisfaction with the curriculum on similar line.

(iii) The teachers' quality in autonomous colleges was significantly better than the quality teacher in non-autonomous colleges as perceived by parents.

(iv) Physical facilities available in autonomous colleges were better than non-autonomous colleges as perceived by parents.

(v) The quality of examination system in autonomous colleges was significantly better than non-autonomous colleges as perceived by parents.

(vi) The parents of students studying in autonomous colleges were more satisfied with the quality of co-curricular activities organized in the colleges than the parents of the students studying in non-autonomous colleges.

(vii) Organization of parents' meeting in autonomous colleges was significantly better than parents' meeting organized in non-autonomous colleges.

Findings Based on Teachers' Perception

(i) Though, the teachers of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with principals, the teachers of autonomous colleges were more dissatisfied with principals.

- (ii) The qualities of teachers of autonomous colleges were significantly better than the quality of teachers in non-autonomous colleges as perceived by teachers.
- (iii) The teachers of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges showed their dissatisfaction with linkages and interface.
- (iv) The teachers of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with their students.
- (v) The teachers of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with co-curricular activities organized in colleges. The teachers of non-autonomous colleges showed more dissatisfaction with co-curricular activities organized in the college.
- (vi) The quality of teaching in autonomous colleges was significantly better than the quality of teaching in non-autonomous colleges as perceived by teachers.
- (vii) The teachers of both autonomous and non-autonomous colleges were equally dissatisfied with office management in their colleges.
- (viii) The teachers in autonomous colleges showed less satisfaction with relationship than the teachers in non-autonomous colleges.
- (ix) The teachers of autonomous colleges were satisfied with the material resources available in their colleges than the teachers of non-autonomous colleges.
- (x) The examination system in autonomous colleges was significantly better than the examination system in non-autonomous colleges as perceived by teachers.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The finding revealing superiority of college autonomy in influencing quality in higher education bears remarkable educational implications. It is recommended that the present scheme of college autonomy which is restricted to a limited number of colleges needs to be extended to a large number of colleges in the country. Both central government as well as state government require to take necessary steps in this regard. The present scheme of college autonomy in India has been restricted to academic autonomy only. Besides academic autonomy, the scheme of college autonomy should make provision for administrative autonomy as well as financial autonomy. College autonomy should be made fully functional in order to enhance quality in higher education. Autonomous colleges should be given freedom to formulate their own rules and regulations for college administration, supervision and accountability in order to ensure continuous improvement. The autonomous colleges should also be given freedom to recruit and promote their members of staff within national and constitutional framework. The finding revealing that principals of autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with the involvement of parents in educational activities of the colleges bears important educational implication. On the basis of this finding, it can be recommended that Parent Teacher Association should be formed in each autonomous colleges and necessary planning should be made for the involvement of parents in curricular, co-curricular and other developmental activities of the colleges. The UGC scheme of college autonomy should focus on involvement of parents and local community members in college activities and necessary guidelines should be prepared in this regard.

The finding revealing that teachers of autonomous colleges were dissatisfied with library facilities, principals, linkages and interface, students, co-curricular activities, office managements,

relationships, examination system and job bear significant educational implications. It is recommended that Teachers' Council should be formulated in every autonomous college and teachers' council meeting should be held frequently. The needs and expectations of teachers are required to be discussed thoroughly and resolved amicably in the meeting. Constructive suggestion of teachers should be acknowledged while planning for developmental activities in the college. There should be teachers' representative in various committees which look into continuous improvement of the quality in higher education. Further, it is recommended that teachers' needs and expectations should be given priority for the procurement of books and journals to the college library. They should be involved in developmental activities of the college library. On the basis of the finding of teachers' dissatisfaction with office management, it is recommended that teachers' problems relating to service matters need to be resolved immediately and every autonomous college should have a grievance re-addressable cell. On the basis of the finding that the teachers were dissatisfied with relations, it can be recommended that there should be common room facilities available in every autonomous college and opportunities should be created for continuous interaction, relation and communication among teachers.

Further, it is recommended that every autonomous college should form Q+ team consisting of teachers, parents, administrators, students and classified personnel. The team should strive to foster opportunities which will create commitment to continual improvement in the college by encouraging open communication, shared participation, and an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. The Q+ team should be responsible for planning, implementation and management of the quality process. Besides Q+ team, subcommittees like search for opportunity, education, examination, process improvement corrective action, internal audit and evaluation, research and innovations should be formulated. Further, it is recommended that autonomous colleges should be sufficiently funded by Central Government, UGC and State Government or should be provided opportunity to generate their own financial resources to carry out developmental activities for achieving total quality in higher education. The finding revealing that teachers are not satisfied with their jobs has its educational implication. It is recommended that steps should be taken to institute appropriate mechanism in every autonomous college to look into teachers' recruitment and promotion policy; terms and conditions of services; and techniques of inspiration, motivation and involvement. Autonomous colleges should be given administrative freedom to recruit teachers and other members of non teaching staff in conformity with UGC guidelines. Autonomy, quality and accountability are interrelated. Autonomy without accountability cannot ensure quality in higher education. Proper guidelines and regulations need to be formulated to ensure both autonomy and accountability in higher education. The personnel involved in higher education should be made aware of their roles, duties and functions. On the basis of the finding of the present study, it is recommended that defined criteria used by the NAAC for assessing and accrediting the quality of higher education in the country should be supplemented with the assessment of customers' satisfaction. The UGC should allocate and release funds on priority basis to carry out major and minor research projects on different aspects of college autonomy. Research and development should go in a linear direction. Research findings should be utilized for continuous improvement of quality in higher education. Therefore, it is recommended that the UGC should establish appropriate mechanism to collect and utilize research findings for improvement of college autonomy.

CONCLUSION

The present study is very much useful in the field of higher education in India and abroad. It is unique of its kind on two grounds. The study ventured to investigate for the first time the quality in higher education empirically in terms of customers' satisfaction. The impact of college autonomy on quality in higher education was also explored for the first time using the causal comparative method taking non autonomous colleges as control group. The study concludes with the establishment of an empirically verified proposition i.e. college autonomy has positive impact on quality in higher education. The study comes to a close with following generalizations: i) college autonomy impacts positively on quality of teacher, curriculum, co-curricular activities, method of teaching, library, infrastructural facilities and examination system; ii) college autonomy impacts positively on students' achievement; iii) college autonomy impacts positively on customer orientation, client education, quality in education, teachers' participation, innovation and linkages.

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