
UNIT 4 MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION: SYSTEMIC LEVEL

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the three previous units, we have surveyed the growth and development of higher education across the world. We began with India, and moved on to the developed and developing countries in general, and then looked at the emerging scenario of higher education in a highly globalised world. We have mentioned that in our discussions, the focus will stay on India, even as we try to address the issues in a global context in general, and the developing countries, in particular. In the following presentation, therefore, there will be more about Indian higher education, the instrumentalities and mechanisms for its management at the system level, and the agencies and their functions in the Indian context. We realise that the Indian example is very complicated and complex; not just because of its size, but also because of the variety and diversity of the players involved in the management of the higher education system in India. A broad acquaintance with this complex structure, we hope, will provide you with an insight into the working of large higher education systems in many parts of the world.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- *identify* the roles played by governments at the central and state levels in the promotion and development of higher education;
- *analyse* the functions and responsibilities of different agencies at the national and state levels as well as their inter-relationships;

- *examine* the problems and conflicts that a multiplicity of agencies might cause in the functioning of the institutions of higher education; and
- *discuss* the nature and functions of funding mechanisms appropriate to different environments.

4.3 MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION: SYSTEM LEVEL

Education systems are very large and complex; often they comprise several sub-systems depending on their size and complexity. Structurally, three distinct levels are universal; primary education (also known as basic or elementary education), secondary education and tertiary education (higher education and all forms of further education beyond the secondary stage). Apart from these structural sub-systems, there could be other sub-systems within a specific sector; agricultural education, business studies, engineering education, legal studies, medical education, and so on. With over 430 universities and 20,000 colleges, and special agencies for each of its sub-systems, India presents a very complex picture for those concerned with the management of education. Since we are concerned with the management of higher education, we shall look at the system level management in the following sections.

4.3.1 Higher Education and the Government

In all the three previous units, we have had occasion to touch upon the role played by the governments in the management of higher education in different parts of the world. While the British pattern professes to buffer the universities from direct interventions of the government, the European model manifestly involves the governments in the management of universities. For instance, in France and Germany, universities are government institutions and their administration vests with the governments. The British model, on the other hand, insulates universities from direct interventions of the government. An agency like the University Grants Committee (which has had several incarnations during the last few decades and are presently known as the Higher Education Funding Council) buffers the universities from dealing directly with the British Government. Most of the Commonwealth countries follow the British pattern, and their models of management are shaped by the practices evolved by the British system. In what follows in this unit, we shall focus on the management of the Indian higher education system, and shall attempt to generalise this model in the developing country contexts.

We had mentioned earlier that the newly liberated countries had to face the challenges of building up their own independent education systems along with other economic, political and social systems. Interrelated though the developments in all these spheres were, all these countries realised that education was the key to the sustenance of their independence and sovereignty; they needed people who could guide their destinies, organise and manage their economic and political governance and structures, and engage in new ways of expanding and enlarging their economic and social infrastructure and processes.

As we noted earlier, India decided to be a sovereign Republic with a parliamentary form of democracy, governed by an elaborately laid down constitution that guaranteed freedom and equality for all its people. The country would be a union of states, federal in its character, with the states exercising legislative powers in a number of specified areas. Education was

basically a state responsibility though the union government had certain specified powers with respect to the coordination and maintenance of standards in university education, and in the administration of the universities and institutions established under the laws enacted by Parliament before independence. This dispensation changed some three decades later when education became a joint responsibility of the Centre and the States.

4.3.2 The Roles and Responsibilities of the Central Government

We discussed very briefly, in unit 1 of this Block, the role played by the Government of India in the growth and development of higher education in the country. Under the Indian constitution, the central government was mandated to perform the following functions:

- Coordination and determination of standards in institutions of higher education, research in scientific and technical education;
- Maintenance of institutions established by the central government (universities, libraries, museums and scientific and technical institutions, and
- Establishment and maintenance of institutions of national importance.

The performance of these functions involves the following:

- Policy formulation and implementation;
- Legislation; and
- Funding.

At the operational level, the performance of these roles requires that

- The centre sets the standards and ensures that they are maintained. Since standards of education are functions of several variables like physical infrastructure, content and structure of programmes of education, quality of teachers and teaching methods, criteria and standards of student assessment and so on, the central government has to regulate all these aspects in the field of higher education. And this regulatory role extends to all of the functions of all the universities and other higher education institutions.
- The core issue of coordination involves two major concerns; the first is that certain facilities have to be developed and maintained as national facilities available to all irrespective of the state in which they are located, and also irrespective of the states from which students come (post-graduate education and research in highly specialised fields that cannot be created in all universities, for example), and the second has to do with the content, structure and standards that have a broad measure of compatibility across all institutions so that questions of equivalence, etc. are settled with ease.
- Establishment of new institutions here local facilities are inadequate and the state governments do not have the resources to do so.
- The central government which is responsible for planned development, and therefore is the dispenser of resources, has to ensure adequate funds are allocated to the states for education.
- Finally, as the central government, it has to assume the responsibility for formulation of the national policy, priority for various sectors within education, and the blueprint for action in the future that will guide the states in their efforts in the field of education.

4.3.3 Policy Formulation and Implementation

As we mentioned earlier, education in India is the joint responsibility of the centre and the states. It is therefore essential that national policies in education are formulated with the full participation of all the states and reflect a broad measure of consensus on all issues of concern to all. The landmark of the Indian nation is its pluralism; it is a nation of many religions, languages and cultures. The Indian education system reflects all the diversities that India is home to, and therefore, the widest possible participation in the formulation of its education policies is a vital concern.

Before independence, the British government had established a Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) that consisted of representatives of the British Government and the many princely states that had acceded to the Empire. After independence, this Board was reconstituted as a body chaired by the Union Minister in charge of education and all Education Ministers of all states. There are in addition several members who represent a broad spectrum of stakeholder interests like universities, professional bodies, chambers of commerce and industry, trade unions, research councils, educationists, and other eminent persons representing various interests. This body meets as often as necessary, and at least once a year. Its major responsibility is to review the developments in education, review progress, propose new reform measures and recommend such other policy initiatives as are necessary from time to time. The recommendations of this Board have a broad measure of acceptability across all interests and therefore policies evolved around those recommendations are generally binding on all sections and interests in the country.

We have discussed some of the major policies evolved since independence in Unit 1 of this Block. We do not wish to repeat them here. In what follows, we shall briefly deal with the implementation of some of the major policy initiatives in higher education.

One of the major initiatives taken soon after India became independent was the establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC). This body was set up on the model of the UGC in the UK; several other countries of the Commonwealth had set up such bodies as they became independent (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, for example). The primary purpose of this Commission is to coordinate the development of universities, set the standards of education, provide funding to the universities, etc. The UGC in India, since its establishment, has been instrumental in promoting university education, coordinating their development, supporting them in creating new facilities for research, introducing new programmes in emerging areas of studies and research, improving the quality of teaching and research as well as the service conditions of teachers and, not the least, improving the conditions of governance of universities in the country.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What are the main concerns to be kept in view while formulating education policies in India? (answer in about 40 words)

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4.3.4 Legislation by the Central Government

All legislative powers vest in the governments, and their law-making institutions. In most parliamentary democracies, law-making falls within the sphere of their parliaments. In India, the first major legislation in education was the establishment of the UGC under the UGC Act in 1956. The UGC Act requires that a university, or any other institution, that has the power to award degrees, should be created under an Act of the legislature, the parliament or any other legislative assembly of a state (the UGC Act has a provision to recognise certain institutions as degree-giving institutions even if they have no legislative sanction behind their establishment).

According to the Indian constitution, education was a state subject, and establishment of universities was reserved for the state governments. The central government had no power to set up universities except when legislative assemblies of two or more states asked the central government to do so through resolutions adopted in their legislatures. However, it was open to the central government to establish institutions of national importance through parliamentary enactments. The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and some highly specialised institutions in the fields of medicine were set up under this provision.

The amendment to the constitution in 1977 altered this situation. The union government could establish universities under parliamentary enactments. In the last two and half decades, parliament has adopted laws to establish several universities; beginning with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1985 to the most recent legislation to establish one central university in each state of the country.

There were other important legislative measures too; notable among them are:

- Establishment of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for the planned and coordinated development of technical and management education. The AICTE has been in existence before independence, but it functioned only in an advisory capacity. Converting it into a statutory body empowered the AICTE to perform its functions with legislative sanction, and also enabled it to assume many regulatory functions like ensuring quality and standards of education, improving the infrastructure, developing faculty, and, more importantly, checking the proliferation of ill-equipped technical education institutions that exploited the ever-increasing demand for professional education.
- Similarly, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) set up in 1993 under an Act of Parliament conferred statutory status to an advisory body with the same name that has been functioning since the early 1970s. As in the case of engineering and management, teacher education too demanded undivided attention with the phenomenal expansion of school education and the constantly rising demand for trained teachers. Mushrooming of sub-standard teacher training institutions needed to be checked; norms and standards for good quality teacher education had to be set; and systems and processes had to be put in place for setting up new institutions and monitoring the performance of the existing ones. The new legislation made it all possible.

- There are a number of statutory bodies in professional fields like law, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, etc. The functions of these bodies are primarily regulation of the concerned profession and prescribing the standards for entry in to those professions. For instance, those who wish to practise medicine need to register with the Medical Council of India, and those who want to enter the legal profession as a practising lawyer need to enrol as advocates with the Bar Council of India. Same is the case with other such professions. The requirement for registration, among others, includes completion of a prescribed professional education programme. This means that institutions that wish to offer medical, legal and such other education programmes need to obtain the approval of the concerned statutory body before they can enrol students. Without this approval, students who complete the programmes will not be eligible to become members of the concerned profession.

You will notice that there is a multiplicity of agencies involved in higher education. Any university that offers programmes in all major areas of studies will have to deal with a number of statutory bodies, and often need to spend considerable time and effort in satisfying them that they have the physical infrastructure, qualified and competent faculty and other resources including facilities for practice sessions. This can be quite a time consuming and frustrating experience for many institutions. The creation of a unified authority at the national level to perform all these functions has been under discussion for the last four decades. The 1986 National Policy on Education, in fact, made a call to establish a National Commission for Higher Education and Research as an umbrella body to deal with all higher education including general, technical, legal, medical and other professional areas. Twenty-five years after this policy was announced, some definite move was made recently to enact a law to create the proposed National Commission for Higher Education and Research. However, it has still to come before Parliament as there is no unanimity among all the central agencies dealing with these subjects on a unified authority. The Ministries of Education, Health and Law are still waging a determined battle to protect and preserve their territories; the primary reason why such legislation did not become a reality.

The complexities do not end there. Under the Indian constitution, agriculture is a state subject. There are several agricultural universities in the country, all established by the concerned state governments. Many of them are doing excellent work. But, there is no central statutory agency to oversee their coordinated development. The central government cannot legislate in the field of agriculture. There is, however, an Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) that coordinates research in agriculture and supports agricultural universities in their research efforts. The agricultural universities, including those other institutions engaged in agricultural education and research, are in some ways functioning under the guidance and standard-setting norms of the ICAR.

It would be appropriate to mention a few other legislative proposals that are currently under serious consideration. We have made a brief mention of these proposals in unit 1 while discussing the problems and prospects in higher education in India. All these have their origin in the 1986 National Policy on Education. These are:

- The Education Tribunal Bill
- The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill

- The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill
- The Prevention of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational, Medical Educational and Universities Bill

We mentioned these legislative proposals in Unit 1 (see section 1.5.4).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Why central agencies don't accept on unified authority for higher education including – general, legal, technical, medical etc.? (answer in about 40 words)

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4.3.5 Legislation by the State Governments

Till 1977, all legislations in the field of education except those concerning university standards and coordination as well as those relating to central institutions was the exclusive responsibility of the state governments. The 1977 amendment did not materially alter the situation except that state laws could not be in contravention of any central legislation. In other words, the state governments continue to enact laws in education, and since all universities have to be established by law, university legislation continues to be the primary responsibility of the state governments.

Till about the 1970s, there was a separate Act that governed each university. As the number of universities increased, and the issues involved in university governance grew in complexity, several state governments enacted consolidated laws that governed a number of universities. This consolidation helped in ensuring uniformity in the more general aspects of university governance and administration; it also helped in easing the time-consuming processes associated with legislative processes involved in making even minor amendments to any existing legislation.

Apart from those relating to the establishment of universities, there are several enactments at the state level that are significant in the area of higher education. Briefly, these are:

- Regulation of Private Colleges. As we mentioned elsewhere, there are a very large number of private colleges in the country. Though they do not award degrees or prescribe courses, they are primarily the vehicles through which higher education programmes are delivered. The number of government colleges is very small, and they are all administered in the manner in which government business is transacted, private colleges enjoy a degree of freedom in such crucial areas as admission of students, charging of fees, appointment of teachers and other staff and payment of their salaries. A very large

number of the private colleges get state grants for their maintenance. The general pattern followed in providing government grants is “cover the deficit”. That is, the gap between the total expenditure and income is met by the government grants.

As these grants, in the aggregate, involved a huge outgo from the state exchequer, the governments had to ensure that they were utilised fairly and properly. The state governments had to ensure that teachers’ salaries were settled at a uniform rate and paid in full, qualifications for recruitment and other conditions were the same for all teachers and other staff, student admission practices were consistent with state policies, and fees levied were just and fair. In order to ensure that these concerns are adequately met, most states have enacted laws covering all these aspects through one or more legislations. It would be worth mentioning here that framing of these laws and their enforcements had often resulted in major tensions in the relationships between the governments and the managements of private colleges, and quite expectedly, in protracted litigations between managements of private institutions and governments.

- We mentioned earlier that, in the last two decades or so, a new pattern of private higher education provision has evolved in India. This pattern is reflected in the emergence of what is generally known as the system of “self-financing colleges”. In theory, it meant that these colleges did not depend on any financial support from governments. They functioned on the principle of full recovery of cost from the beneficiaries. The cost of higher education in India was very nominal for the students; the recovery of cost was never more than a single-digit percentage of the full cost. Suddenly, the self-financing colleges began to ask for 10-20 times more than the average fees that students were paying. But the demand for seats in professional education colleges (engineering, education, medicine) was rising so fast that students and parents were prepared to pay any fees if only they were assured of admission. It was not just those in India alone; there were many from other countries as well including the children of Indians settled abroad. The cost was not a big concern for them. Private investors found a new avenue for making profits; allegations of malpractices and charging of capitation fees followed. Governments had to step in and enforce a semblance of justice and fairness. New laws were legislated by several state governments for the prevention of what was called “unfair practices”. A new central law that is being considered by the central government will now deal with these issues.
- In more recent times, there has also been a trend in the creation of private universities. Since universities have to be created by law, there has to be legislative backing for every university. A private university therefore is strictly ‘oxymoron’. Nevertheless, corporate and individuals have come forward to establish universities and run them without state finances, if only they get the legal backing. Several state governments responded with the enactment of enabling laws under which two or more separate universities can be established by private agencies within their states without any financial support from the government (in most cases, they expect the governments to provide them the required land at no cost or at a nominal price). The umbrella legislation, of course, sets out the regulatory framework for their operations including governance, accountability and adherence to the statutory regulations on academic standards, quality of the education provision and academic audit of performance.

- Following the 1986 National Policy for Education that called for the establishment of a state level mechanism for the coordinated and planned development of higher education within each state, many state governments have set up State Councils of Higher Education. The primary responsibilities of these Councils include preparation of state level development plans for higher education, allocation of development outlays among all universities and colleges, determination of maintenance grants to all state universities and colleges within the state, coordination of development work with the central agencies like the UGC, AICTE, etc. and performing the general supervisory role of the state governments in higher education. All these Councils have been established as statutory bodies through state legislation.

4.3.6 Funding of Higher Education

The finances for higher education come from a number of sources. Government grants are the major sources of education finances in India. Let us take a look at some of the facts.

A Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) on Financing Higher and Technical Education, in a report submitted in June 2005 noted that there have been grave deficiencies in the investments in higher and technical education in India. According to the Committee, the overall expenditure on all education was just about 4% of the GDP; of which the share of higher education was just 0.5% (about Rs.12,500 crores). Since 1966, education policy makers have been demanding that the public expenditure on education should be at least 6% of the GDP. This demand was first made by the Education Commission (1966) and was reiterated in the National Policy on Education in 1986. But as the CABE Committee says this goal is still a distant dream.

What was the impact of this shrinking investment in education? According to the CABE Committee, the spending on higher education per student declined by about 30% between 1990-91 and 2002-03. The results were obvious: faculty deficiencies, infrastructure inadequacies, poor support for research and declining student support through scholarships. One must also remember that all this while enrolments were going up, new institutions were being established and new areas of studies were being added. The Committee's recommendation, predictably, was to step up public outlay on education to 6% of the GDP and to ensure that the allocation for higher education goes up to 1.5% of the GDP (about Rs.38,000 crores).

There are several major ideological and policy issues involved in addressing this concern. Obviously, the resources at the disposal of the government are not unlimited; there are limitations to raising revenue through increased taxation. The choice, therefore, is to look for alternate sources of funding; enhanced recovery of costs and more private funding. Both have ideological underpinnings. Can the government, committed as it is to equity and justice, afford to be guided entirely by market forces? Can it leave education entirely to the whims of the market? Let us look at some of the issues involved.

- The percentage of poor people in India is estimated variously between 30 and 40 per cent. These are the people below the poverty line, living on less than two dollars a day. An equal number of people, though they can manage their subsistence, have no means to send their children to universities and colleges without financial support. Therefore, increasing fees for higher education (reasonable recovery of cost) is not

an easy option. The argument that it is the responsibility of the government to provide for their education continues to prevail.

- Private participation is encouraged; but profit is not. There can be no private investments unless reasonable returns are available. The government, however, is strongly against commercialisation of education. It hopes that philanthropy should be the guiding factor behind private investments; a hope that is perhaps too unrealistic.
- It is not as though there are no private players in Indian higher education. They are prepared to make investments provided that they have some stake in those investments. Those areas of education that have significant demand from the public like engineering or medicine, for example, do attract private investors. The CABE Report (2005) mentions that currently about 85% of all engineering colleges in India are privately run self-financing institutions (functioning without state finances). Similarly, the proportion of medical colleges is also large though not as high as engineering colleges (medical colleges require hospitals for clinical practice for students). Though they are prohibited from making any profit, such professional education institutions continue to attract private investments; Business Studies is a new entrant to this category of private educational institutions. A recent Supreme Court judgement has explicitly banned profit; but has permitted generation of surplus provided it is ploughed back in to the institution for its development.
- There are the impacts of state policies as well. As a means to curb profiteering, several state governments have assumed, through legislation, to regulate the levels of fees charged by private institutions. The fees cannot go beyond the levels prescribed by the governments; there are different levels of fees for different categories of students. For instance, students from the state in which a private college is located pay the same fees that public-funded institutions in that state charge their students; students from outside the states pay a higher level of fees and students from outside the country pay a still higher level of fees. Beyond fees, there are other constraints as well; state governments require that the private colleges fall in line with state policies on quotas for admissions and appointments as well.
- In spite of this none-too-friendly environment for private investments, higher technical education is still a fertile market for private investors. They often resort to unfair practices like raising money by selling seats, collecting capitation fees in the garb of donations, and acquiring precious land that they use for non-educational purposes as well. The result is that the government is caught between the devil and the deep sea; it supports private investment, but cannot permit legitimate returns on those investments.

4.3.7 The Mechanism of Funding

Having looked at the larger issues of funding higher education, we shall now turn our attention to the ways in which the central and state governments fund the higher education institutions. As we noted earlier, all universities are government creations and therefore, they owe it to themselves to ensure that they perform their functions. The governments therefore make the funds available to them to meet their expenditure on an annual basis. Salaries are the largest single component of the annual expenditure of any educational institution; it goes as high as 95% of its total

revenue expenditure. Other teaching costs vary from institution to institution; the trend is to contain these costs to the extent possible to manage the annual budget. This effort often results in poor maintenance of the infrastructure, inadequate library and laboratory facilities, non-availability of student scholarships, and so on. The annual expenditure in any year is assessed in terms of the levels of expenditure reached in the previous year with an incremental cost (often very nominal) to set the budgetary ceiling for that year. The funds so settled for each institution are then released in appropriate instalments. This annual funding is known as the maintenance grants.

The central institutions established by the Government of India are all fully funded by the Government. The funding comprises both maintenance and development grants. Maintenance grants are the annual recurring grants from which expenditure on salaries and other revenue expenditure is met. The grants are determined generally on the basis of "cover-the-deficit" method, that is, by meeting the full expenditure after adjusting all income (fees and other miscellaneous receipts). Development grants, on the other hand, are those required by institutions to undertake new activities like launching of new courses and programmes, expansion of enrolments, creation of additional infrastructure (classrooms, libraries, laboratories, appointment of additional teachers and staff, etc.). The additional expenditure involved on these efforts are initially approved in advance and the expenditure provided separately in the budget and then made over to the institutions. After a period of five years (this period is reckoned on the basis of the termination of the relevant five-year development plan), this addition becomes part of the maintenance grant.

The Government of India does not directly disburse the grants to central universities. These grants are routed through the UGC. The UGC is represented on the Finance Committees of the central universities, and through this mechanism, it maintains a close watch on the financial state of the universities. In the case of certain institutions of national importance like the IITs, for example, the grants are directly disbursed by the central governments.

By and large, this pattern is also followed by all state governments. However, since the institutions are much more in numbers, and include both universities and colleges, the administration of grants is very complex. Generally, each state has both Directorates of Higher Education and Technical Education/Medical Education. Some have Councils of Higher Education also. Councils of Higher Education generally deal with the universities while the Directorate of Higher Education concerns itself with colleges. Their representatives sit on the Finance Committees and monitor the expenditure. Once grants are determined, the disbursements are made by the Council or the Directorate concerned. Since the number of institutions is very large, the volume of grants disbursed by all the state governments together adds up to a much larger amount than those paid by the central government to its institutions.

State universities and colleges also get development grants from the UGC. These grants are determined during each plan period on the basis of the development proposals made by the state universities and colleges and approved by the UGC. The grants approved by the UGC for development are paid for a period of five years from the commencement of each project, and thereafter it is added to the maintenance expenditure met by the state government concerned. Before sanctioning any development grant, the UGC

requires each university/college to provide an undertaking from the concerned state government that the additional expenditure flowing from those projects would be assumed by them as part of the maintenance grant.

It would be useful to draw attention to an important aspect of funding research at this stage. Though universities are the principal agencies for teaching and research, funding of research in universities has never been adequate. The reasons are many; soon after independence, the Central Government decided to constitute a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in the country. The intention was to focus intensely on scientific research as the universities were too preoccupied with their teaching responsibilities. A chain of 45 of science and technology laboratories were set up across the country; they focused on areas that were relevant to the country's development. The emphasis was on applied research as against pure research that universities were generally engage with. As the objective of this initiative was very crucial to the development of the country, it also attracted liberal funding. These research centres grew up very fast and established high standards of research in applied areas. But they unwittingly drained the universities of their precious resource- competent research faculty. In some ways, the nation's gain was at the expense of the universities, at least in terms of research strength and output. It needs to be added here that these research establishments work in close cooperation with the universities and are training a large number of graduates for their Ph.D. programmes offered by the universities.

Similarly, in the area of social science research too, a chain of research centres emerged at the beginning of the 1970s when the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established as a funding mechanism to strengthen research in the humanities and social sciences. Some 30 Research Institutions emerged in different parts of the country, many with the researchers drawn from the university system. Research did get the expected boost, but not the universities.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Space is given below for your answers.
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

i) What is the main reason for poor maintenance of infrastructure and other support services to students? (answer in about 40 words)

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ii) What do you understand by development grants to universities? (answer in about 40 words)

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4.4 APEX BODIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While discussing the roles of the central and state governments in the previous section, we mentioned that they have set up several bodies for the performance of one or more functions that fall within the broad framework of the government's supervisory role in the area of higher education. In what follows, we shall make a brief overview of how they are constituted, what they do in higher education.

4.4.1 University Grants Commission (UGC)

The establishment of the University Grants Commission in India, on the pattern of the British UGC was recommended by the University Education Commission in 1949. The need for establishing the UGC was expressed by the Commission in the following terms:

- A commission for allocating grants to universities from the Central Government is fundamental to the improvement and development of universities in the country;
- Such a body should consist of experts and representatives of government. The political decision on policy and resource allocation require, for their execution, experts who have the knowledge and the experience;
- It should be the responsibility of such a body to create and develop facilities for advanced research in the universities;
- There is need for coordination of facilities, in special fields, since it may not be possible all facilities in all universities;
- There should be constant liaison between universities and national research laboratories;
- Such a body would be able to recommend policies to be adopted by the central government from time to time;
- It should be the responsibility of such a body to ensure the minimum standards of efficient administration in the universities.

These recommendations were accepted by the government and a University Grants Commission was established in 1956 under an Act of Parliament. The Commission consists of a full-time Chairman and a full-time Vice-Chairman, and ten other members. These ten members include two officers of the government, university teachers, members of the learned professions, and Vice-Chancellors, all appointed by the Central Government. The major functions of the Commission are:

- Promotion and coordination of university education;
- Determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research;
- Allocation and disbursement of grants to the universities from the funds given to it by the central government;
- Advising universities on measures for improving university education;
- Advising central and state governments on matters relating to university education.

During a period of more than half a century of its establishment, the university system in India expanded phenomenally. We gave you a broad overview of this expansion in unit 1. We also drew attention to the many problems and challenges arising from this growth and expansion. We shall now turn to the ways in which the higher education management system in India addressed these problems and met those challenges. This is not the place to go into an exhaustive survey of all the major developments across half a century; we shall confine ourselves to the major issues that could be identified with particular phases of development.

The most significant among these were the issues posed by expansion. In the first two decades after independence, there was a major expansion. But it became evident that the economy could not absorb all the manpower coming out from the universities; there were other national problems too – food shortages, problems of challenges to the country's security, and so on. There were not enough resources to meet all these challenges. The expansion of higher education had to be contained. The UGC, with the approval of the Central Government decided to regulate the establishment of more universities by insisting, through regulations that no central assistance would be available to universities that were set up with no previous sanction of the UGC. While this policy continued through the 1970s and 1980s, the UGC focused attention on improving the quality of education provided by universities and colleges by strengthening their infrastructure and supporting the growth of centres of excellence in education and research.

This pause in unplanned growth gave rise to a new phase of development in which attention focused on enduring measures for improving the quality of the higher education provision. Significant among them are:

- The UGC Act was amended in early 1980s to make a provision that empowered the Commission to create common facilities and services that universities across the country could draw from. These included a common facility for research in nuclear science, an Inter-university Centre for Advanced Studies and Research in Astronomy and Astrophysics, Inter-university Consortium of Atomic Energy facilities, a Consortium of Educational Communications providing electronic media support for higher education, and an Information and Library Network.
- Over 30 selected universities were designated as Curriculum Development Centres for continuous review and renewal of the content of academic programmes in most disciplines. Similarly, some 48 designated university departments were developed as Academic Staff Colleges for training university and college faculty on a continuing basis.
- The last three decades marked a revival of expansion. With the national economy registering high growth and the expansion of employment opportunities, the demand for higher education rose rapidly. The segment that witnessed the highest rate of expansion was professional and technical education in which universities played the major role (we have looked at this phase elsewhere in this unit). The establishment of a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) by the UGC to assess and accredit universities and colleges, though on a voluntary basis, was a major breakthrough during this phase.
- The UGC itself expanded considerably. It set up five Regional Offices to maintain close liaison with the growing number of universities and colleges in all the states. The Regional Offices became contact points for

collection, compilation and dissemination of information, monitoring the progress of projects funded by the UGC, and instruments for improving the efficiency in the functioning of the UGC.

4.4.2 All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

The All India Council for Technical Education was set up in the late 1940s as an advisory body for guiding the development of technical education facilities in India (these areas cover engineering, technology, management, architecture and other related fields). The AICTE is chaired by the Union Minister in charge of technical education, all state Ministers dealing with technical education, a number of educationists and experts in the relevant fields and representatives of business and industry are members.

The AICTE was instrumental in ensuring the planned development of technical education in India. The central government, on the recommendations of the AICTE, provided financial assistance to states for establishing new technical institutions, especially engineering colleges and polytechnics, and also to upgrade and modernise the physical infrastructure of many existing institutions.

During the 1970s, the Council took some major initiatives in launching Quality Improvement Programmes in technical education which included curriculum development and faculty improvement for both degree and diploma level programmes.

As we noted earlier, the 1980s saw a rapid rise in the demand for professional education programmes, especially at the degree level in engineering and technology as well as medicine (medical education was within the purview of the Ministry of Health, and we are not discussing it here). It was this rising demand that led to many private agencies venturing into the field of technical education with the establishment of what came to be known as the self-financing colleges (institutions that do not seek any support from public funds). Governments encouraged them because they invested very large resources that the states were not able to find. Though this private initiative was a welcome development, it had also consequences that were not entirely beneficial. This profit-driven initiative saw many ways in which the investors made profits; the state had to step in with several regulatory initiatives. Capitation fees were outlawed; donations were banned; limits for fees were prescribed; admission rigours were imposed; and certain degree of accountability was enforced. As all these responsibilities fell on the AICTE, it was converted into a statutory body in 1987 with adequate powers and authority to frame and enforce a regulatory regime.

The new AICTE established under an Act of Parliament had its composition, functions and powers similar to those of the UGC except that it had no jurisdiction over universities that were in the domain of the UGC. The AICTE concerned itself largely with engineering colleges, management institutes and polytechnics, and functioned in close cooperation with the UGC. The UGC would refer all technical education proposals received from universities to the AICTE for scrutiny and recommendations, and generally would accept and implement them. The AICTE functions through four Regional Committees which maintain close coordination with the state governments in their respective regions.

A significant development of the regulatory regime initiated by the AICTE was the establishment of a National Accreditation Board for technical

education institutions under its statutory powers. Though accreditation was voluntary, the process initiated by the AICTE became a significant landmark in the launching of quality assurance mechanisms in technical education. It established the detailed processes and procedures and made it possible to launch a mandatory accreditation mechanism years later.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What made the AICTE to be converted from advisory body into a statutory body? (answer in about 40 words)

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4.4.3 National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)

A much later entrant in to the system level management structures in Indian higher education, the NCTE has many things in common with the AICTE. It deals primarily with teacher education colleges in India. Though there were a number of teacher training colleges, there was no planned and coordinated development of teacher education, nor was there any major attempt at improving the quality of teacher training. As the demand for trained teachers continued to rise, several institutions mushroomed across the country, and many of them turned into purely commercial ventures. Though an advisory body was set up to advise the central and state governments on measures to be taken to ensure the growth and development of an acceptable quality of teacher education, this initiative did not prove effective. As in the case of AICTE, the Government of India had to go in for legislation to establish a National Council for Teacher Education vested with statutory powers for the inspection of teacher education colleges, ensure the quality of the training provision, and where necessary, to derecognise the institutions through a declaration that their output would not be eligible for recruitment as qualified teachers.

4.4.4 Other National Bodies in Higher Education

Throughout our discussion on Indian higher education, we have had occasions to mention the existence of multiple agencies that perform one or more functions in the growth and development of higher education in one field or another. We have mentioned in passing that many among them owe their existence to the need to perform a function arising from the special need that created that agency in the first place. Thus, the **Medical Council of India** was established as a statutory body to regulate the profession of medical practice by requiring the registration of those intending to practice the medical profession. It became necessary to prescribe the qualifications for such registration that included not just the educational requirement, but the details of the curricula, content, teaching and practical training, qualifications of teachers, physical infrastructure required for teaching and training (hospital facilities), etc. In other words, all these covered exactly the

full extent of educational standards and norms in medical education. It was only natural that the Medical Council soon turned out to be the regulator for medical education as well. Their recommendations became binding on the universities.

Other such bodies include the **Dental Council, Nursing Council, Pharmacy Council, Council of Architects, the Bar Council**, etc. We have mentioned the existence of the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research** as a national level mechanism for the promotion of education and research in agriculture. The ICAR is not a statutory body, but it provides substantial support to state agricultural universities; it has also established a chain of research institutions across the country to strengthen the development of agriculture in India through research and training in such areas as Veterinary and Animal Science, Dairy Development, Fisheries and Marine Research as well as research in various crops including wheat, rice, and a variety of cash crops.

There are two other Research Councils; we have mentioned them in the previous section. They are the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR).

Another national level agency for promotion and coordination in higher education is the **Distance Education Council (DEC)**. We shall discuss the roles and functions of this body in great detail in the Block 4 of this course.

We have noticed in our discussions on the organisation of the higher education system at several places in this course that several professional bodies influence, and even regulate, programmes of higher education in one way or another even if all of them are not, in fact, components of the higher education system. The primary responsibility of these professional bodies is the growth and development of the concerned profession; some of them, as we noticed in the previous section, have statutory responsibilities as well. Besides these statutory bodies, there are professional associations in several fields like engineering, electronics and telecommunications, management, accountancy, and so on. Many of them have close association with universities and other institutions of higher education. Some of them, in fact, offer education and training programmes as well. For instance, the Institution of Engineers holds an examination for its membership (Associate Membership of the Institution of Engineers – AMIE, for short) that is accepted as equivalent to a Bachelor's degree in engineering, both for employment as well as for further education.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

List the bodies which are not statutory but contribute to the development of respective subject/professional area as through research, education and training? (answer in about 40 words)

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4.4.5 Association of Indian Universities (AIU)

During the British period, when there were only 15 universities in 1925 across the Indian sub-continent that then included India (Pakistan and Bangla Desh were then parts of India), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Burma (now Myanmar), a Conference of Vice-Chancellors expressed the need for an inter-university organisation to facilitate the coordination of university work and to act as a Bureau of Information covering the entire sub-continent. Accordingly, the Inter-University Board of India, Burma and Ceylon was set up in 1925. Universities in Burma and Ceylon continued to be members of this Board even after they became independent nations. They withdrew only in the early 1960s.

The main functions of the Board were:

- To act as an inter-university organisation and Bureau of Information;
- To serve as an authorised channel of communication and facilitate coordination among universities in matters of common interest;
- To assist Indian universities in obtaining recognition for their degrees, diplomas and examinations by other universities;
- To establish and maintain a sports organisation for promoting sports in Indian universities.

In 1973, the Board was renamed as Association of Indian Universities (AIU). It continues to perform all the functions listed above and has, in addition, taken up several new initiatives. The most important among them are:

- It functions as a link between the universities and the Government/UGC on matters affecting the functioning and governance of universities;
- It has taken up major research programmes in such areas as examination reforms, economics of education, quality of provision, accreditation, etc.
- It has a major publication programme consisting of a 'University News', besides several Handbooks and research publications;
- The membership of the AIU presently covers all statutory universities, institutions of national importance and institutions deemed to be universities;
- Under the aegis of the AIU, the Vice-Chancellors of the member institutions (there are over 430 in 2009) have been holding regular discussions on matters of common interest in various committees and conferences, particularly at the annual meetings of the Association.

Such associations of universities have made significant contributions, nationally and internationally, to the development of the university system in general. Prominent among such international associations are the Association of the Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Association of African Universities (AAU).

4.5 STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

So far, we have focused on the organisation of the higher education system in India. Before we close this discussion, it would be useful to take a look at the structure of the system as well. In India, higher education begins on completion of 12 years of schooling, (ten years of elementary and secondary

education followed by two years of higher secondary education). The first degree, the bachelor's degree, takes three years of study in arts, commerce and science, and four years in the case of most professional degree programmes (four and half years in the case of medicine and five/six in the case of law). The Master's degree programme is usually of two years and research degrees (M.Phil and Ph.D) take variable durations depending upon the field of investigation and the pace of the student (see Fig.1)

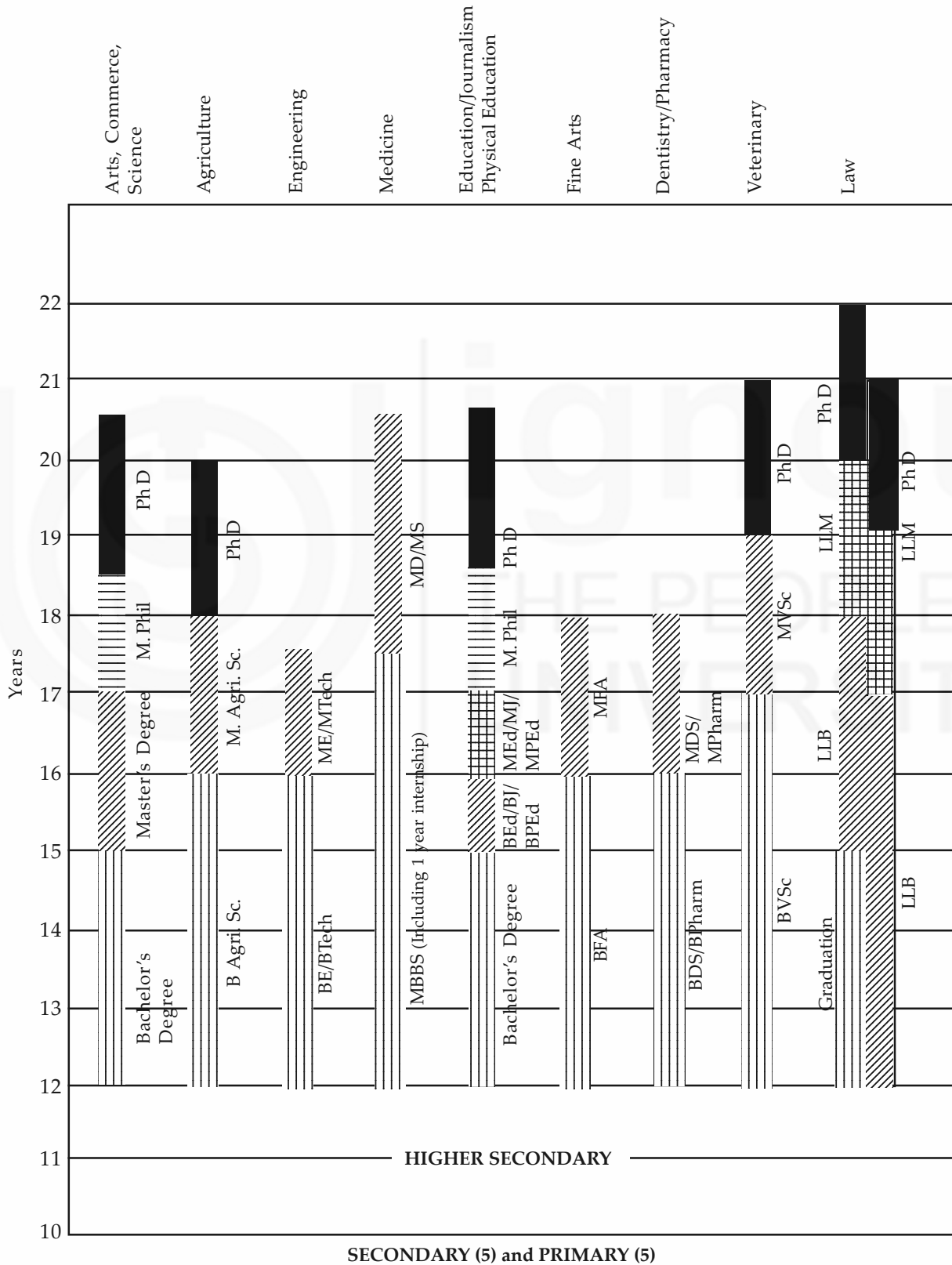


Fig. 1: Duration required for various programmes at Higher Education Level (Source: Powar, K.B. 1997)

The post-graduate degree programmes (except in engineering) take two years of study after the first degree. The M.Tech. programme can be completed in three semesters while MD, MS and MDS (medical education programmes) take two years after MBBS/BDS.

The M.Phil programme is of one and half years; it is a preparatory programme for doctoral level work and consists of course work in subject areas as well as research methodologies. The Ph.D programme is research study that could take two or more years after M. Phil (direct registration for Ph.D. is also possible, in which case, it takes three years or more), while D.Sc. and D.Litt. are awarded by some universities after Ph.D. for original contributions.

Besides the degree courses, a number of diploma and certificate courses are also available in universities. The range is wide and they cover everything from poetry to pottery and from communication to computing. Some of them are undergraduate diploma courses while some are post-graduate programmes. The duration varies from programme to programme.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Which body led to the formation of AIU? (answer in about 30 words)

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

We have presented in this unit an overview of the structures and processes involved in the management of higher education in India at the top of the system. We thought a better understanding of these structures and their roles and responsibilities will help you appreciate the problems and prospects as well as the issues and challenges that a large system of higher education can face in the process of its growth and development. These issues of macro-management will provide you with some insights into the issues of micro-management of higher education at the institutional level. We understand that this unit will probably leave you with a feeling, and very rightly too, that Indian universities are 'managed' too much from the outside with a multiplicity of agencies and their regulatory interventions. A serious concern that is often expressed by universities in India is that there is very little coordination among these agencies, and that they are pulling the universities in different directions.

4.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Considering the pluralistic nature of the country and education being the joint responsibility of the states and the centre – all major policies have to be formulated with full participation of all groups/committees/states to reflect a broad measure of concerns thus binding on all sections to accept and implement those policies.

Check Your Progress 2

Recently a definite move was made to create NCHER bringing all professional bodies under one roof is resisted by respective ministries because to protect and preserve their territories and powers.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Maintenance grants are the annual recurring grants from which expenditure on salaries and other reserve expenditure is met. Out of the maintenance grants 95% goes to salaries alone and remaining 5% is used in maintenance of infrastructure, library and laboratory facilities, student scholarships etc; this leads to poor and inadequate maintenance.
- ii) Development grants are those required by institutions to undertake new activities like launching of new courses and programmes, expansion of enrolment, creation of additional infrastructure etc. State universities and colleges also get development grants from UGC.

Check Your Progress 4

The AICTE was established as an advisory body in late 1940s, since then huge expansion in technical education had taken place including the entry of private initiatives in the form of self-financing colleges. To regulate these private initiatives and maintain the quality in technical education, the body was converted into a statutory body in 1987 with adequate powers and authority to frame and enforce a regulatory regime.

Check Your Progress 5

The bodies which are not statutory but work in respective subject areas such as ICAR, CSIR, ICSSR, Institution of Engineers through their contribution in research education and training.

Check Your Progress 6

The Inter University Board of India, Burma and Ceylon setup in 1925 was renamed as Association of Indian Universities (AIU) in 1973 to perform all those functions the Board used to do.