



## Autonomous Status to Higher Education Institutions in Kerala: Students and Teachers Perception

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### Abstract

*The present study tries to measure the perception of students and teachers towards autonomous policy at implementation level. The study was conducted within the autonomous institutions of Kerala. Among nineteen autonomous colleges three autonomous colleges were selected for the study. The investigator has chosen 50 teachers and 300 students for the study. The perception is measured by categorizing gender and type of management i.e. male or female and Government or Aided. The important factors like infrastructure, curricular activity, extracurricular activity, institution stakeholder relationship, administrative nature and organizational value are analyzed to understand the perception. Finally it concludes that the perceptions of the male and female students are same in nature. The aided students have higher perception to autonomous status compared to government students. Both male and female teachers have same opinion about Autonomous status. The Government teachers have higher perception to autonomous status compared to Aided teachers.*

**Keywords:** *Autonomy, Perception*

### Introduction

Autonomy is a term discussed and implemented in the Indian higher education since last thirty years. The philosophical understanding of autonomy is debited to different ideology in both Asian and western shelf of knowledge. In western shelf of knowledge autonomy was strictly bound to the church domain. Church has the power of autonomy to construct and practice knowledge. Bible is the scriptural authority regulating the autonomy. There the teacher doesn't have the autonomous power. Later in fifteenth and coming centuries renaissance created more centralized knowledge system.

While comes to Indian shelf of knowledge about autonomy it is deep-rooted in early ancient education structure and beyond. The ancient Gurukula education was purely autonomous in nature especially in the form of teacher autonomy.

The teacher himself decides the syllabus, readings and even the curricular experience of the students. The syllabus and readings of the students to gather knowledge is validated to the geographical territory. The modern idea of universal standardization also rejected. The scriptural authentication was more reliable and considered as the valid knowledge. Natural phenomena like extreme wind, flood has role in developing the knowledge. In a way the concept autonomy existed in the ancient education setup, which was confined to teacher.

When comes to modern concept of autonomy it is the solution suggested by the policy maker to the problems of university affiliation system. The problem includes the handling of academic and administrative matter. Policy makers opinioned that the institution autonomy can eradicate the issues like administrative delay and university academic secretive. In this context Indian higher education facilitated the institutional autonomy. Presently there are 621 autonomous colleges in India.

In Kerala, the government started to promote those Arts & Science and Engineering colleges which have achieved high standards in imparting education in the State to get autonomy from the UGC. Government has decided to constitute an expert committee by name "Autonomy Approval Committee" (AAC), after the approval of this AAC Government granted permission to the institutions to approach UGC for autonomous status. On the basis of the recommendations of the Committee, Government propose to facilitate granting of autonomy to deserving colleges in the State during the academic year 2013-14. Apart from the guidelines fixed by the UGC for granting autonomous status, the committee has suggested some recommendations with special reference to Kerala. It has decided that in the first phase government and aided colleges with long standing reputation only given autonomy. Among AAC



permitted list UGC had permitted eighteen governments aided college and one Government College for autonomous status till now.

The people of Kerala generally accepted this autonomous policy in a suspecting way. Traditionally Keralite are interested to bind with government machinery. People aspiration and mindset are more favor to the government bondage and strict monitor of the government. In this context an attempt to measure the perception of the students and teachers towards autonomy based on gender and type of management. In this context the study was conducted to know, how the real stakeholders of education i.e., teachers and students perceive this new concept in their institutions. Here the perception was measured by determining the satisfaction level of important factors like infrastructure, curricular activity, extracurricular activity, institution stakeholder relationship, administrative nature and organizational value.

#### NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE

In the higher education system in India, there are many nagging concerns about its role and performance. The complex array of associated issues deserves a total rethinking of our approach to higher education. Serious efforts are now underway to develop the policy perspectives in education involving deeper national introspection and fundamental changes in the structure, content and delivery mechanisms of our university system. In this context autonomous status process started. Francis Sundararaj said in his study "that autonomous colleges have not brought about the desired change during the past eighteen years, a period not too brief to expect results". (*College Autonomy in India: Success and Failure: in Reforms and Innovations in Higher Education: Association of Indian Universities: New Delhi: 2001*). There is no significant studies in Kerala.

In the system of higher education in Kerala, the provision of giving autonomous status has come only in 2013, studies attributing this concept is nil or meager. While referring to the national perspective, the studies conducted in the area of autonomy of higher education institution concludes that there are mixed results in terms of academic excellence in autonomous institutions as it was expected. In this context the focus of the study is to understand the perception of various stake holders towards the autonomy of higher education institution.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Autonomy has been a great term of hope and controversy in Kerala higher Education system

in the recent years; this has been debated over many days by academicians throughout the state. The academicians were divided over the institutionalization of Autonomy in the higher education institutions in Kerala. So the paradigm decision of giving autonomous status to higher education institutions is significant in the higher education system of the state. So the present study is entitled as "*Autonomous Status to Higher Education Institutions in Kerala: Student and Teacher Perception*".

#### DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

##### Autonomous Status:

Autonomy may be defined as a functional status given to the colleges, by the University Grants Commission, giving greater flexibility towards purely academic development for up-liftment of academic standards and excellence. (UGC XII Plan (2012-2017) Guidelines for Autonomous Colleges).

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the perception of various stakeholders towards the autonomous status to higher education institutions in Kerala namely
  - a) Students
  - b) Teachers

#### HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The Hypothesis of the present study is

1. There exist no significant difference in the perception of various stake holders towards the autonomous status to higher education institutions in Kerala namely
  - a) Students
  - b) Teachers

#### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

##### Method

The nature of the study is quantitative. Normative survey method is used for collecting data for the present study

##### Variable

Autonomy Status to Higher Education Institutions is taken as the independent variable for the study

##### Sample

The present study is having a sample of Students and Teachers



**Table 1.1**  
**Distribution of the final sample of Teachers given below**

Sl. No.	Category	variables	No: of teachers	Total
1	Gender	Female	33	50
		Male	17	
2	Management	Aided	26	50
		Government	24	

**Table 1.2**  
**Distribution of the final sample of Students given below**

Sl. No.	Category	variables	No: of Students	Total
1	Gender	Female	196	300
		Male	104	
2	Management	Aided	90	300
		Government	210	

#### Tool

Different questionnaires were used to assess the perceptions of various stakeholders like Students, Teachers towards the autonomous status to higher education institutions in Kerala

#### Statistical Techniques Used

- Descriptive statistics like mean, median, mode etc are used
- Independent sample 't' test is used to assess the significant difference between mean scores

#### HYPOTHESIS TESTING

#### MEAN DIFFERENCE ANALYSIS

#### STUDENTS PERCEPTION TO AUTONOMOUS STATUS

#### COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION TO AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF MALE & FEMALE STUDENTS

The objective was to compare the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous Status of male and female students. The data were analyzed with the help of independent sample t-test and results are given in table 1.3.

**Table: 1.3**  
**Mean, SD, 't' values of students perception to autonomous on the basis of Gender**

Sample	Mean	SD	N	Critical Ratio
Male	111.31	21.056	104	1.222@
Female	108.51	17.588	196	

#### Note: @ indicates not significant

From the table 1.3 it can be seen that the Critical Ratio is 1.222 (t-value) which is not significant even at 0.05 level of significance. It shows that mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status of male and female students do not differ significantly. The mean score of male students was 111.31 and the

mean score of female students was 108.51 but their difference was not significant. So the hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status between male and female students" is not rejected.

#### Discussion



The perception of the male and female are same in nature. The investigator feels that the male and female students experienced that evaluation system is corrupted through teacher. According to female students the teachers are more stereotyped. While male students opinioned that they are biased with some students' verbal expression. The students from science stream expressed that they do not have proper lab facility. Female students from government institution feel that some teachers are not much serious in terms of practical work. They also felt that the institution is not taking much involvement of parents to be major criteria to look

up and office staff is less interested in works related to students.

#### COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION TO AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF AIDED & GOVERNMENT STUDENTS

The objective was to compare the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous Status of aided and government students. The data were analyzed with the help of independent sample t-test and results are given in table 1.4.

**Table: 1.4**

**Mean, SD, 't' values of perception to autonomous status of aided & government students**

Sample	Mean	SD	N	Critical Ratio
Aided	121.26	17.798	90	7.078**
Government	105.66	17.361	210	

**Note: @ indicates not significant**

From the table 1.4, it can be seen that the Critical Ratio is 7.078 (t-value) which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. It shows that mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status of Aided and Government students differ significantly. The mean score of aided students was found to be 121.26 and the mean score of government students was found to be 105.66. This indicates that aided students have higher perception to autonomous status compared to government students. So the hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status between Aided and Government students" is rejected.

#### Discussion

From the above description of figures it can be said that aided students have higher perception to autonomous status compared to government students. The factors like academic freedom, Administrative nature seem to have significant effect on aided student's perception. Aided students are not satisfied with the academic freedom which they enjoyed. Administration showed big brother attitude to students in some occasion while Government students enjoy the academic freedom to a large extent.

The teacher student relation in aided autonomous colleges is not friendly while comparing to Government autonomous institution. The administrative student relation in government and both aided institute is not healthy in nature. The student extracurricular activity in the aided institution is confined in the annual program me. In government institution extracurricular activity is not confined to the annual programme. The activity is designing at students' level. In evaluation government institute running with all confidentiality and keeping university standards. From the opinion of students from aided institution it feels that confidentiality of the examination losing in some occasion with the vested interest of management.

#### TEACHERS PERCEPTION TO AUTONOMOUS STATUS

#### COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION TO AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF MALE & FEMALE TEACHERS

The objective was to compare the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous Status of male and female teachers. The data were analyzed with the help of independent sample t-test and results are given in table 1.5

**Table: 1.5**

**Mean, SD, 't' values of perception to autonomous status of male & female teachers**

Sample	Mean	SD	N	Critical Ratio
Male	132.88	15.362	17	0.265@
Female	131.39	20.287	33	

**Note: @ indicates not significant**



From the table 1.5 it can be seen that the Critical Ratio is 0.265 (t-value) which is not significant even at 0.05 level of significance. It shows that mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status of male and female teachers do not differ significantly. The mean score of male teachers was found to be 132.88 and the mean score of female teachers was 131.39, but their difference was not significant. So the hypothesis that “there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status between male and female teachers” is not rejected.

#### Discussion

From the above description it is clear that Autonomous status of male and female teachers are not different in nature. Both genders have same opinion about the academic freedom, Personal freedom and preservation of constitutional values. In the case of syllabus and curriculum, male teachers expressed more anxious than female teachers. Most

of the teachers have the opinion that autonomous policy is not curtaining the academic freedom. Teachers expressed anxiety on constitutional values. Teachers feel that student extracurricular activity is confined to campus preplanned programme. Teachers saying institution parent relation is strong in nature. Teachers expressed that innovative teaching strategy using technologically innovative dimensions before autonomous status being granted to them.

#### COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION TO AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF AIDED & GOVERNMENT TEACHERS

The objective was to compare the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous Status of aided and government teachers. The data were analyzed with the help of independent sample t-test and results are given in table 1.6.

**Table: 1.6**

**Mean, SD, ‘t’ values of perception to autonomous status of aided & government teachers**

Sample	Mean	SD	N	Critical Ratio
Aided	124.04	16.825	26	3.434**
Government	140.42	16.870	24	

**Note: indicates not significant**

From the table 1.6 it can be seen that the Critical Ratio is 3.434 (t-value) which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. It shows that mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status of Aided and Government teachers differ significantly. The mean score of aided teachers was found to be 124.04 and the mean score of government teachers was found to be 140.42. This indicates that Government teachers have higher perception to autonomous status compared to Aided teachers. So the hypothesis that “there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Perception to Autonomous status between Aided and Government teachers” is rejected.

#### Discussion

From the above description of figures it can be say that Government teachers have higher perception to autonomous status compared to Aided teachers. They are very much conscious about the academic freedom, curriculum, Institution parent relation, administrative nature, evaluation and constitutional values. The government teachers feel that autonomy not giving time to engage teachers in academic matter beyond the classroom. While aided teachers agree with the academic freedom of autonomy at implementation level. Regarding

curriculum government teachers feels that present autonomy giving only 25 % to update. This is not sufficient to reconstruct the syllabus or curriculum in connection with local needs. The aided teachers are not much conscious about the syllabus updating until or unless management initiative not done.

In government autonomous institution initiative from the side of administration to make parent involvement in administration is there. But participation in number and quality interfere is less. While at aided autonomous institution the initiative take not to involve parents in administration instead to convey the progress and degrees of the students only. In visible, parent institution relationship is there. Administrative nature of the government institution is not biased with individual thought or power. But there is a change in the discipline of teachers before and after autonomy. While at Aided autonomous institution administrative nature is purely in accordance with the management. Even teachers are forced to do clerical work.

#### CONCLUSION

The government of Kerala has institutionalized the concept of autonomy in the year 2012 and as per records there were 19 institutions





which have been granted with autonomous status so far. The real concept of academic autonomy entrust the teacher to design the course content and students are provided with the facility to choose their own courses as per their preferences, but the autonomous colleges in Kerala are modified version of previous affiliated colleges where the concept of autonomy has been displayed in the boards and holdings seen elsewhere in the campus. The syllabus and model of evaluation followed does not reflect the concept of autonomy anywhere. But there is a positive hope in this aspect that is the administration has become

proper and declaration of results is also up to date compared to the previous university affiliating system. When the administration and policy makers feel the essence of the concept of autonomy and they just permit the colleges to act according to the concept of autonomy the change can be visible in the near future in the higher education domain of Kerala. The perception of various stakeholders on this concept are wide and ambiguous because the stakeholders does not feel much difference in the practice but this also will be changed once the system work progressively.

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