



ABSTRACT

Kerala has ushered a new paradigm in higher education sector by granting autonomy to a few colleges in the recent times. Though it has been in the practice only for the last two years, CPPR finds it is important to understand how the stakeholders and the beneficiaries approach the autonomy status given.

Autonomous Colleges in Kerala: An Evaluative Study

Working Paper No. 3

October 2016

**Nikhitha Mary Mathew
Dr Martin Patrick**

Education is universally recognised as an important investment in building human capital, which in turn affects economic growth. The need to analyse the education system and reform it periodically is widely accepted. The Indian higher education system has received much criticism for its inability to improve the quality over time and for failing to cater to the evolving needs of the students and society. Researchers put forward various reasons behind the decline in quality. However, a popular notion is that the increase in the number of colleges affiliated to a parent university has resulted in grave inefficiencies and a move away from the affiliation system has been on the cards since 1980s. Higher education in Kerala has also been critiqued for its poor quality and total lack of research culture among other issues.

The Government in its initial step towards reformation of the higher education system in Kerala granted the status of autonomy to colleges in Kerala in 2014. This study is an attempt to analyse the functioning of the autonomous colleges in Kerala to infer if the quality of education has seen an improvement in these colleges.

The paper is organised into five parts. The first session covers the background of the study, where as the second session touches upon research problem, objectives, methodology and so on. While the third session contains an overview of autonomous college, the fourth session concerns with the analysis of the study. The fifth and final session includes summary and recommendations.

1. Background of the Study

Starting with three Universities -Madras, Bombay and Calcutta -with colleges affiliated to them, India today has 575 autonomous colleges affiliated to 100 universities in 23 States as of August 1, 2016 (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2016). The move towards autonomy started in the early 1970s as suggestions of the Kothari Committee Report were taken into consideration. The Kothari Committee, 1966, identified that the affiliating system led to large inefficiencies and contributed substantially to the widening gap of India's quality of education with respect to global standards. The delay in decision making process by universities as they struggle to manage the numerous colleges affiliated to them, the rigid academic curricula which has not been revised as per changing trends, economic needs and tastes of students, the stagnant, low level of research carried out in

** This study was conducted by Nikhitha Mary Mathew, Research Intern under the guidance of Dr. Martin Patrick, Chief Economist of CPPR*

colleges and the lack of global competitiveness in the wake of increased number of foreign universities establishing their institutes in India are some of the problems identified by the committee in its report submitted to the Government of India in 1966.

One of the challenges of higher education is to make students 'work ready'. With the global scenario changing rapidly with sectorial growth varying from time to time, it is necessary for higher education institutes to revise their curricula to accommodate these changes and introduce new, high quality courses according to the need. With greater liberalisation of the society and change in the tastes and preferences of students, it is the duty of the institutes to ensure that these changing tastes are catered to by offering flexible curricula. It has been noted that, under the affiliating system, the revision of curricula is a long drawn process and hence is taken up occasionally.

Research at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels has always remained poor in India with very few research projects being undertaken and of those being undertaken, fewer add to the existing bank of knowledge(Deepa A., 2006).Some of the reasons identified for this include lack of funds allocated by parent universities to the colleges under the current system. In the wake of increased globalisation of higher education and with more foreign universities venturing into India, the deteriorating quality of education offered by Indian colleges poses a threat to the very survival of these colleges.

Kerala has been lauded on global platforms for its commendable achievements in the field of education and attaining near 100 per cent literacy. This feat overshadowed the problems Kerala faced and hence were left to deteriorate further. Kerala's educational achievements have been primarily in primary and secondary education but at the cost of neglecting higher education. The education system has remained delinked from the production forces. Courses and curricula were not revised to incorporate changes in the economy and the students saw their opportunities in the society fading away. These problems were identified and autonomy was prescribed to rectify them.

In Kerala, the move to grant autonomy to colleges commenced recently with seven colleges being granted autonomy in 2014 and 11 colleges being granted the status later in 2015 and 2016. As of April 15, 2016, Kerala has 18 autonomous colleges affiliated to three Universities- Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala University and Calicut University (Appendix1)

2. Research Problem

The study identifies the lack of quality in higher education as the biggest concern that calls for immediate action by all the stakeholders. Ajithkumar (1996) identifies various problems in Kerala's higher education system. The poor quality of education is the most pronounced. Unrevised curricula reflect the deteriorating quality of education in the state. The state has also completely neglected research in undergraduate and postgraduate levels and the work in this field is dismal. The few research works carried out in the colleges do not add to the existing knowledge and hence is seen as futile. Moving towards autonomy is perceived as one of the solutions and was first suggested by the Kothari Committee Report, 1966, which identified the shortcomings of the education system. The move towards autonomy has been noticeably gradual in India. The growth in the number of autonomous colleges has been slow in India. The number of autonomous colleges is concentrated in a few geographical locations like the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh (DeepaA., 2006). TamilNadu has the highest number of autonomous colleges with 172 such colleges. Other worrisome trends taken note of is the fact that more private colleges have opted for autonomy than government colleges and that more autonomous colleges are situated in urban areas than in rural areas. This apparent disparity in the number of autonomous colleges calls for in-depth analysis.

Another glaring problem is that of the unsatisfactory functioning of the autonomous colleges in India. Autonomous colleges in India are seen merely adding to the number of courses without much emphasis given to improvement in the quality of existing programmes. Colleges have not used autonomy to design interdisciplinary programmes or new systems like the choice-based credit system (Bhushan, 2008). The goal behind granting the status of autonomy fails to be achieved in this case. Research and development too, have not seen the expected improvement in quality. The number of international collaborations is dismal in Indian colleges. Colleges have not adopted better methods of teaching as teaching in Indian colleges continue to be teacher oriented rather than student oriented. This is further indicated by the higher number of lecture hours in India compared to that in the United States of America, where students are equipped to learn outside the classroom, utilising the abundant resources.

The welfare of the teachers in autonomous colleges continue to be worrisome as the number of temporary teachers is higher than that of permanent teachers and the number of the former is on the rise in autonomous colleges.

2.1. Objectives of the Study

The study is an attempt to identify if the autonomous colleges in Kerala are functioning according to the guidelines prescribed and if they have remained committed to improving the quality of education and contributing to the general betterment of the educational system at large. It also aims to analyse if the status granted in the State is adequate.

The study aims to identify the improvements brought about by granting the status to colleges as well as analyse the differences, if any, in the functioning of private autonomous colleges and Government autonomous colleges.

The study also aims to identify the disadvantages it could potentially have on the system. In cases, wherein the colleges have not functioned satisfactorily, the study aims to identify the reasons and put forward suggestions to overcome these constraints.

2.2. Methodology

This study is a qualitative research to analyse the functioning of the autonomous colleges in Kerala. The study aims to collect information from four colleges in Kochi, Kerala, which were granted autonomy in 2014. Three of these colleges are private autonomies and one is a Government autonomy. They are Rajagiri College, Sacred Heart College, St. Teresa's College, and Maharaja's College (government). Each of these colleges has been visited to collect necessary details regarding their functioning. As the study is primarily exploratory in nature, the stakeholders, including the principal, representatives of the management, teachers, students and other interest groups were requested to disclose their opinion on the introduction of autonomy.

The questionnaire prepared for this primary survey exhausts all areas expected to have had an impact upon been granted the status of autonomy. The collected information has been extensively analysed to infer the opinions of the stakeholders on various fronts like quality of curricula development, quantity and number of new courses introduced, quality of infrastructure, quality of research, quality of student life, welfare of teachers, methods of evaluation etc.

The inferences are used to identify the scope for improvement in the functioning of autonomous colleges and further quantitative research can be taken up.

2.3. Significance

Given the challenges Indian higher education institutes face today in declining quality and the resultant preference for foreign education by Indian students, it is pertinent to reform the system such that it addresses these shortcomings and makes India a preferred destination for higher education. It is highly important to analyse if the prescribed solution of granting autonomy to more colleges is effective and to determine if the current system of autonomous colleges need to be revamped. Identifying the constraints to the smooth functioning of autonomous colleges will help us explore possible solutions and improve the functioning of the colleges.

The study will help us identify if the prescribed granting of autonomy status to more colleges will lead to the much required reformation of the education system of India, to ensure that Indian colleges offer quality education that equips the students to compete at the global level and will help to highlight provisions of autonomy granted today that needs immediate modification.

3. Overview of Autonomous Colleges

The affiliation system as introduced by the British in India in 1887 is currently in practice only in two other countries, Bangladesh and Pakistan (Singh, 2003). As under this system, the university is responsible for the functioning of all its affiliated colleges and as the quality of higher education in India remained stagnant while elsewhere the quality soared, there was a demand to revamp the Indian higher education system. There was an urgent need to revolutionise the system and the Kothari Committee on Higher Education, in its report submitted to the Government of India in 1966, recognised this need formally for the first time and suggested a gradual move away from the affiliation system to a system of autonomous institutes. The committee cited the increasing number of colleges affiliated to a university as being a burden to the latter and slowing down the decision making process as the biggest setback to improvement of the quality of higher education in India.

The UGC defines autonomy to be a functional status conferred upon colleges by it, granting them greater flexibility towards purely academic development for the upliftment of academic standards and excellence. The Government encouraged the granting of the status of autonomy to more colleges as suggested by the Kothari Committee Report. The Madras University was the first University to grant the status to colleges affiliated to it.

3.1. Functions of Autonomy

A college on being granted the status of autonomy is separated from its parent university, though not completely (Rao and Rao, 2012). The extent of autonomy depends on the kind of status granted to it. There are three broad classifications of autonomy:

Academic Autonomy: Academic autonomy helps the college achieve the primary goal of granting autonomy. It enables the college to design its own curricula and devise its own methods of teaching. It also enables the college to design its own method of evaluation. Academic autonomy confers upon the college granted this status the right to:

- 1) formulate its own curricula based on relevance
- 2) revise existing curricula based on relevance
- 3) introduce new courses based on relevance and demand
- 4) conduct examinations
- 5) publish results
- 6) introduce new systems like the choice-based credit system

Academic autonomy is considered to benefit higher education as it enables the college to keep up with its potential without being constrained by the common systems proposed by the university. Academic autonomy permits the college with greater potential to improve its quality of education as under the previous system, such colleges suffered, as the university made common systems that could be followed by all colleges, and the college with greater potential found it impossible to realise its capabilities.

Academic autonomy does not permit the college to grant degrees, which is continued to be granted by the parent university. The university also plays an important role in ensuring that the quality of existing as well as newly introduced courses is good. Academic autonomy enables colleges to revise and update curricula, something higher education institutes in India failed to do and is thus aimed to improve the quality of education by large measures.

Administrative Autonomy: Administrative autonomy enables the faculty to participate in the decision making process of the college. These decisions were earlier taken by the parent university and pertain to the general administrative functioning of the college, including working hours and infrastructure.

Financial Autonomy: Financial autonomy enables the college to allocate its funds, including the UGC grants. It enables the college to generate internal funds through the

introduction of self-financing courses and to allocate funds granted to it by the UGC and the State in ways it deems fit. The parent university closely watches the allocation and utilisation of grants received by the college. Financial autonomy permits the college to set the fees for its self-financing courses. The direct payment agreement between the Government and aided colleges is upheld even after conferring financial autonomy to a college to ensure that it does not remain sceptical of increasing financial burden upon being granted the status of autonomy.

3.2. Introduction of Autonomy in Colleges in India

The Government and UGC envisaged granting the status of autonomy to more colleges as a step towards the growth of higher education in India. A number of committees from the 1960s to the present day appointed for suggesting improvements in higher education recommended academic freedom to select colleges with the objective to encourage innovative changes so as to achieve academic improvement.

The first specific recommendation in this regard was made by the *Dr. K.S. Kothari Commission (1966)*. This was followed later by similar recommendations made by the *Gajendragadkar Committee (1971)* and the *National Education Policy (1986)*. These reports envisaged the establishment of autonomous colleges. The UGC meanwhile prepared concrete guidelines for setting up autonomous colleges in 1973, which was revised in 1998 and offered substantial financial assistance to newly formed autonomous colleges for activities related to improving the academic standards of the colleges. The UGC evolved in 2007 a set of guidelines for autonomous colleges (Appendix2) and encouraged States and Universities to give autonomy to at least 10 percent of their colleges during the 11th Plan itself. The UGC offered special grants to autonomous colleges to manage the transition to autonomy.

The extent of autonomy enjoyed by colleges differs in different states depending on the regulatory laws put in place by the State Governments. The number of autonomous colleges in different states indicates great disparities with some states like Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha being home to more autonomous colleges than other states.

3.3. Governance of Autonomous Colleges

The UGC prescribes, in its 12th Plan period, the setting up of the following statutory bodies for the management of autonomous colleges in India.

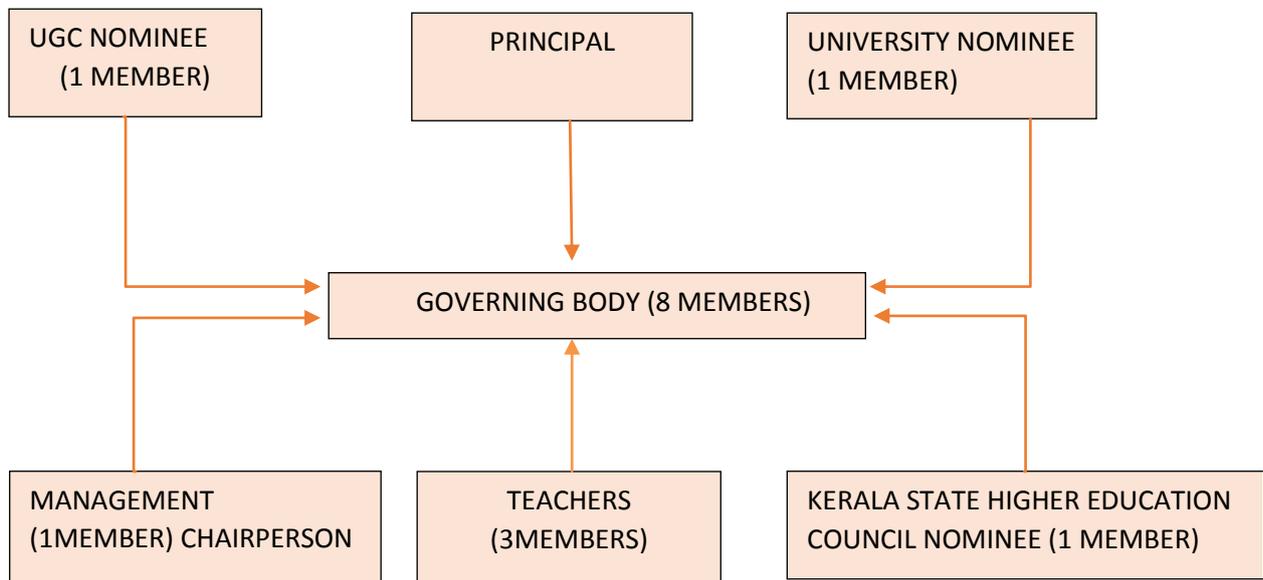
1. **Governing Body:** The Governing Body will comprise of members of the management trust/institute, representatives of the Government, UGC and the parent university, and the principal and members of the faculty in addition to academic experts. The Governing Body acts as the authority that sanctions and approves the decisions of the Academic Council and the Board of Studies. The University Laws Act prescribes the rules for the constitution of the Governing Councils of private management autonomous colleges and government autonomous colleges separately. Given below are the constitution guidelines:

Governing Council

The Governing Council submits to the university the approved proposals for the institution of new courses submitted to it by the Academic Council.

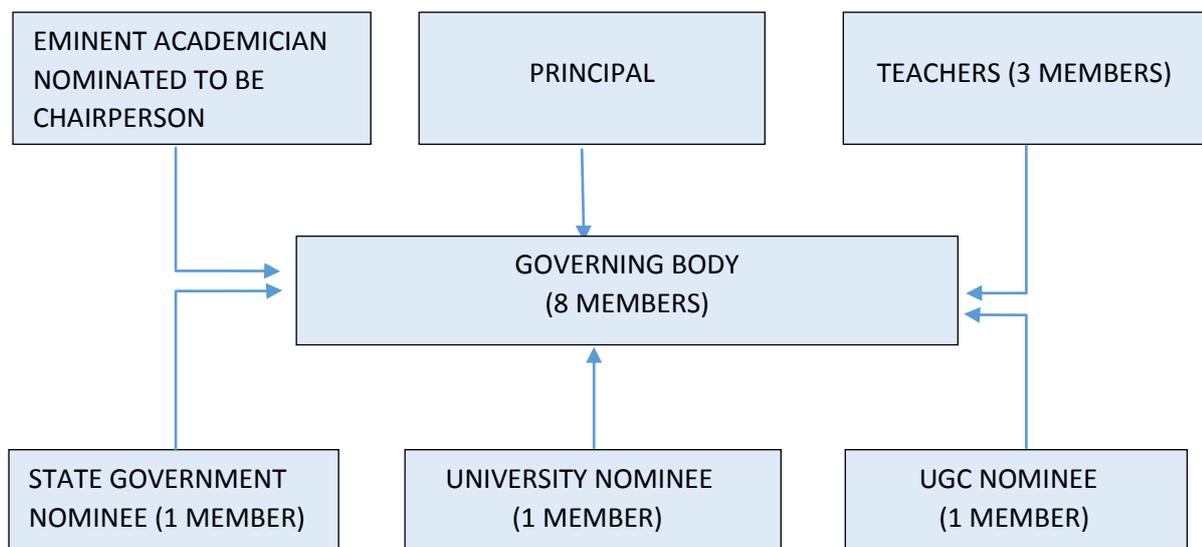
The council conducts examinations and publishes results. It forwards the results to the university and approves the issue of mark list to students.

Graph 1: Governing Body for Private Management Autonomous Colleges



Source: *Autonomy Rules*

Graph 2: Governing Body for Government Autonomous College



Source: *Autonomy Rules*

2. Academic Council: The Academic Council has as its members all the heads of departments and other faculty members. The major functions of the council as proposed by the UGC are as follows:

(a) Scrutiny and approval of the proposals with or without modification of the Board of Studies, with regard to courses of study, academic regulations, curricula, syllabi and modifications thereof, instructional and evaluation arrangements, methods, procedures relevant thereto etc.

(b) where the Academic Council differs on any proposal, it will have the right to return the matter for reconsideration to the Board of Studies concerned or reject it, after giving reasons to do so

(c) make regulations regarding the admission of students to different programmes of study in the college

(d) make regulations for sports, extra-curricular activities and proper maintenance and functioning of the playgrounds and hostels

Academic Council

The Academic Council scrutinises the proposals of the Board of Studies, with regard to the courses of study, academic regulations, curricula, syllabi and modifications thereof, instructional and evaluation arrangements, methods, procedures relevant thereto and to approve the same with or without modifications.

It proposes to the Governing Council recommendations for a new course. It is also responsible for regulating the conduct of exams and admission procedure/criteria.

- (e) recommend to the Governing Body proposals for the institution of new programmes of study
- (f) recommend to the Governing Body the institution of scholarships, studentships, fellowships, prizes and medals, and to frame regulations for the award of the same

The University Laws Act lays down the constitution of the Academic Council for autonomous colleges to consist of the following members:

Table 1: Academic Council for Autonomous Colleges

Member	Nominated by
Principal	Ex-officio
Heads of all Departments	
4 Teachers	Manager/Director
Atleast 4 Academic Experts (External)	Governing Council
3 Experts	University
1 Teacher	Principal

Source: *Autonomy Rules*

3. **Board of Studies:** The Board of Studies is constituted for each department of the college with all members of the faculty as its members along with nominated experts of the specialised field. These are functions of the board:

- (a) prepare syllabi for various courses, keeping in view the objectives of the college, interests of the stakeholders and national requirement, for consideration and approval of the Academic Council
- (b) suggest methodologies for innovative teaching and evaluation techniques

BOARD OF STUDIES

The Board of Studies is constituted for different subjects and is primarily responsible for preparing/revising curricula. It is also responsible for suggesting study materials/books, teaching methodologies and evaluation techniques as well as coordinating other academic activities, including research in the department.

The suggestions put forward by the Board of Studies are subject to approval of the Academic Council.

- (c) suggest the panel of names to the Academic Council for appointment of examiners
- (d) coordinate research, teaching, extension and other academic activities in the department or college

The constitution of the Board of Studies as prescribed by the Kerala State University Laws Act is as follows:

Table 2: Board of Studies for Autonomous Colleges

Member	Nominated by
Chairperson (Senior Most Head of Department)	
Less than 6 Teachers	Principal
2 Experts (External)	Academic Council
1 Expert	Vice Chancellor
Industry/Corporate Sector Representatives	
Meritorious Alumnus	

Source: *Autonomy Rules*

4. **Finance Committee:** The Finance Committee comprises of the principal as the chairperson and a nominee of the Governing Body, in addition to a senior member of the faculty. The committee looks into the estimate budgeting of grant received from the UGC and the income generated from fees and its utilisation to ensure autonomy.

3.4. Autonomous Colleges in Kerala

The need to reform higher education in Kerala was realised as early as the 1990s and many committees were set up by the Government in its quest to come up with possible alterations to the system without changing it radically. The latest committee with Madhava Menon (2013) as its chairperson submitted its report to the Government of Kerala, voicing its consonance with other earlier reports, supporting the granting of the status of autonomy to colleges with potential for academic excellence.

Kerala granted the status of autonomy to seven colleges in 2014 and more in 2015 and 2016. Today, Kerala has 18 autonomous colleges affiliated to three universities. The Kerala State Education Council's report on autonomous colleges in Kerala emphasises the importance of academic autonomy and quotes that autonomy essentially implies academic autonomy as that is where quality matters. The State followed the UGC guidelines for the selection of colleges that can be granted the status of autonomy but decided to refrain from granting status to many colleges, with the aim to analyse the functioning of some autonomous colleges before undertaking a large-scale reformation. The State has also refrained from granting financial autonomy to any college.

4. Analysis of the Study

This section deals with the analysis of data. To start with, the functioning of statutory bodies can be examined. The University Laws Act (Third Amendment), 2014, lays out in detail, the constitution, powers and functions of the statutory bodies of an autonomous college. The four colleges visited for the study are seen to be complying with the rules on statutory bodies laid down by the Act. The private management autonomous colleges visited for the study have followed the rules in constituting the statutory bodies that have met regularly. The Act provides the university to approve/recommend changes/comment on the proposal forwarded by the Governing Council within 30 working days. If the university does not comply with the above rule, the proposal is deemed approved.

It is seen that some privately managed autonomous colleges have as its management nominated member of the Governing Council, the director of the college, who thereby becomes the chairperson of the Governing Council. In colleges that do not have the post of a director, the management nominates one of its members, who is an expert in the academic field, as the chairperson of the Governing Council. In matters concerning the functioning of the Governing Council, discussed in the previous section, the posting of the director of the college as the chairperson does not have any visibly different effect. Teacher members of the Governing Council have expressed their satisfaction on having the director as the chairperson of the council, as they feel that a chairperson, who is greatly involved in the day-to-day functioning of the college, will understand the requirements of the college, teachers and students and push for greater academic excellence. The Governing Council of the government autonomous college has been appointed as per the rules prescribed by the Act. The council has met thrice last year, approving the revision of

courses suggested by the Academic Council and making decisions regarding the conduct of examinations and publishing of results. The council of the government college, however, has not yet proposed the introduction of a new course, owing to unsettled debates on autonomy.

The Academic Council in all colleges has been constituted as per the rules put forward by the Act. The constitution of the Academic Council varies widely from college to college, especially in the number of experts from various fields nominated by the Governing Council. It was observed that a private autonomous college has 43 members in its Academic Council with 14 experts of various fields, including commerce, industry and architecture, nominated by the Governing Council. The faculty of the college felt that the inclusion of experts in the council gave them an edge over other colleges with fewer numbers of such experts as their participation in revising courses and other academic matters contributed greatly to align them as per the current trends in various fields, thereby improving employability. In other private management autonomous colleges, the Academic Council has been functioning smoothly, with regular meetings and approval of revisions of courses.

All colleges covered by the study have in place a fully functioning Board of Studies for relevant departments. The boards meet regularly and submit suggestions to the Academic Council. The faculty of the colleges felt that the decentralised system of decision making in academic matters is the greatest advantage of Academic Autonomy and that the opportunity to participate in curricula revision at an individual level is an exciting challenge welcomed by all teachers.

To sum up, all colleges have taken efforts to comply with the rules regarding the constitution of all statutory bodies and have convened regular meetings. In the case of the private autonomous college, a slight difference is observed in the chair of the Governing Council, in that the director of the college holds the post as a nominee of the management. Nevertheless, a marked improvement in the performance of the college with respect to other private autonomous college was not observed. Hence, it can be concluded that this difference in the constitution of the Governing Council does not have a significant effect on its functioning.

4.1. Analysis of Performance of Autonomous Colleges

At the outset, it must be noted that colleges in Kerala have been granted academic autonomy only. The study received mixed responses from the stakeholders, some of whom

support the concept of autonomy but are unsatisfied with the implementation. Given below is a discussion, based on the responses of various stakeholders on different aspects.

4.2. Infrastructure

Teachers and students of all colleges expressed their satisfaction at the infrastructural developments in the colleges but yet again pointed out that it was not a significant achievement of autonomy. On the contrary, they felt that it was the availability of commendable infrastructure that enabled the college to achieve autonomy. The colleges have well-equipped libraries, laboratories and other facilities. As all autonomous colleges are subject to an evaluation once in every six years, failing in which could result in a revocation of the status, students felt that the management would continue its efforts to provide the best infrastructure possible. However, the maintenance of infrastructure was found to be a handicap in the government college. Though the library is rich with its huge collection of books here, its maintenance is doubted; same is the case with laboratories and buildings.

4.3. Admission Procedures and Reservation Policy

It was observed that the admission procedure to autonomous colleges continues to remain transparent and is based purely on merit for aided courses, particularly for general merit seats and reservation seats, while admissions to self-financed courses in private autonomous colleges take place largely through the discretion of management. It must be noted that there are seats as management quota in aided courses. The admissions to management seats in aided courses are not transparent as there are lot of complaints from different corners of the society. Teachers and management staff noted that the reservation policy followed in autonomous colleges is that prescribed by the Kerala State Government and that no attempt to amend the policy has been taken up by the colleges. Admitted students are satisfied with the transparency of admission procedures and the ease of procedures but student unions (in government college) do not fully agree with that.

4.4. College Fee, Scholarships and Financial Aid

The autonomous colleges under study have emphasised that they have successfully retained the fee structure followed under the affiliation system and cite the lack of financial autonomy as the reason why the fee will not be hiked in autonomous colleges as claimed by the critics. But it has been observed that there is an increase, though not

huge, in the fee collected for aided courses by the management of private colleges by way of caution deposits and Parent Teachers Association (PTA) collections etc. Table 3 that depicts the fee collected from students substantiates this.

Table 3: Fee Collected in Autonomous Colleges

Type of Course	Government College	Private College	
		1	2
Aided			
B.A.	2490	4840 9840 for B.A.(English)	8160
M.A.			9625
B.Sc. (Mathematics)	2640	4990	8710
B.Sc. (Physics and Chemistry)	2890	5640	8960 8810 for Physics
B.Sc. (Botany and Zoology)	3040	5590-5690	9110
Self-financing			
B.Sc. (Environmental Chemistry and Physics Instrumentation)	12890		
M.Sc.			11325
B.Com.		4840	40000
M.Com.			42500

Source: CPPR Study

The table shows that the total fee for aided courses in private colleges is higher than that in the government college, which is prescribed for aided courses in private colleges too. The increase in the fee collected by private colleges for aided courses comes to the extent

of 90-95 per cent. The fee structure for aided courses applicable to both private and government colleges is published in the websites of the university. The university will view any college that violates the rule for prescribed fee seriously. But it is unfortunate that students or parents concerned should make a complaint to the university for taking action against those who collect fee beyond the prescribed limit. For an unaided course, the fee is more than three times the fee prescribed in the government college. It can be justified on the grounds of autonomy, which may bring quality difference. In this background, one of the arguments put forward by the critics of autonomy need to be looked into. Most of the critics of autonomy, primarily in government autonomous college, cite a possible fee hike as their main reason for opposition. The advocates of autonomy, who argue that colleges will remain sensitive to the needs of students, have dismissed the claims of the critics of autonomy that it will result in discontinuation of available scholarships and financial aids under the affiliation system.

It has been noticed that the management of private colleges collect huge donations from students, especially if the students are admitted under management seats. The donation ranges from ₹ 25000 to ₹ 11 lakh. It has been pointed out from certain corners that there is an annual hike in the amount collected as donation, as is evident from the fact that the maximum amount of donation was ₹ 2 lakh some two years ago, which has now increased to ₹ 11 lakh for a B.Com. seat in a private autonomous college. The huge increase in donation in the name of building fund or other cause is an impact of autonomy granted to private institutions.

4.5. Academic Quality: Revision of Curricula and Introduction of New Courses

Almost all management staff, teachers and students of the private management autonomous colleges readily agree that academic autonomy has improved the quality of education in these colleges. The management of all colleges stressed on the importance of revising curricula regularly and pointed out that under autonomy, this be done without restrictions from the university. The management of the private autonomous colleges pointed out that different colleges have different capabilities and that academic autonomy enables them to introduce/revise courses to match these capabilities, without being subject to the restrictions faced by other colleges affiliated to the parent university.

The UGC guidelines prescribed in the 12th Plan for autonomous colleges state that, “An autonomous college is free to start diploma (undergraduate and postgraduate) or certificate courses **without the prior approval of the university**. Diplomas and certificates shall be issued under the seal of the college. An autonomous college is free to start a **new degree or postgraduate course with the approval of the Academic Council of the college**. Such courses shall fulfil the minimum standards prescribed by the university/UGC in terms of number of hours, curricular content and standards, and the university shall be duly informed of such courses. An autonomous college may rename an existing course **after restructuring/redesigning it with the approval of the college Academic Council.**”

All private management autonomous colleges under study introduced revisions to existing courses as well as new self-financed courses. On an average, three new courses each in the period after being granted autonomy are introduced. The managements pointed to the high number of applications to these courses to indicate that the courses offered are resonant with the trends and preferences of students. The autonomous colleges have seen a spurt in admissions to newly introduced self-financed courses, after being granted autonomy. This, the managements believe, is a recognition of the quality of the courses.

Teachers of private management autonomous colleges expressed their satisfaction in being part of the revision of curricula. They felt that the revision of curricula was absolutely necessary. Teachers quoted many instances wherein the curricula taught in the college previously were completely outdated. A Professor of Economics pointed out that a paper titled ‘Modern Banking’ was taught in the college until 2013. This paper, according to him, was far from dealing with modern methods of banking. “Students would not know what an ATM is but know what Bills of Exchange are,” said the Professor. The social reachability aspect has also been taken care of. The Board of Studies and Academic Councils in these colleges meet regularly and have revised the curricula for all relevant courses. The Governing Council of some of these colleges has either restructured the existing courses or introduced new courses.

Interactions with the students showed that they are satisfied with the revised courses. They pointed out that they enjoy flexibility in contrast to what was available to the previous batches. The colleges provide students with a wide range of options to choose from within a course and students welcome the chance. The students also felt that the revised curricula taught in autonomous colleges are more structured and easier to

comprehend. They were of the opinion that decentralised efforts at curricula designing is helping as the curricula were well planned and suited the best interests of the students.

In the government autonomous college, the revision of courses took place for the first time in 2015-2016 and is awaiting approval of the University. The faculty believe that the changes made are in accordance with the rules and that the University will not reject the proposal. The college, facing opposition to autonomy on various fronts, has not made an effort to introduce a new course. Though most teachers of the government autonomous college support the concept of academic autonomy and believe that autonomy will help in improving the quality of academics in the college, a faction of the teachers is sceptical about the consequences of the same. These teachers feel that the revision of syllabus by individual colleges will in the long run result in a highly non-uniform system of education and that it will widen the gap between differently efficient colleges.

Other teachers, both in private and government colleges, though they support the concept of academic autonomy, believe that full academic autonomy is still a far-fetched dream for colleges in Kerala. However, they also agree that this is a small but positive step towards revolutionising higher education in Kerala and are hopeful that greater academic autonomy will be made available to colleges.

One problem associated with the revision of syllabus and introduction of new courses is getting the approval of the university within the stipulated time. This approval is necessary, as the course requires to be affiliated to the university. The University Laws Act prescribes that it is mandatory for the university to respond to the proposals forwarded by the college within 30 working days, failure of which deems the proposal approved. It is observed that there have been instances where the university rejected proposals after 30 days, leading to further legal complications for the colleges. The private management autonomous colleges reported that the university rejected their proposals for the introduction of new courses after 30 working days. In such cases, the courses were already taught in these colleges and the colleges were forced to go to court to be able to continue the programmes. This has resulted in discouraging even the most capable colleges to introduce new courses. As this is a major deterrent for autonomous colleges to introduce new courses, stricter laws must be laid down to prevent delayed responses by the universities, they argue. It is necessary to define the criteria for the approval of courses and the university must be required by law to provide valid reasons for the rejection of proposals for the introduction of new courses. This will ensure the quality

of courses and at the same time, ensure that the university rejects such proposals, only if it can be satisfactorily justified.

4.6. Academic Quality: Methods of Teaching

There have been contrasting opinions on the improvement of teaching methods in colleges. While some teachers believe that autonomy has improved their methods of teaching by enabling them to design courses in accordance with the teaching methods best suited for them, some others feel that an increase in burden on teachers has resulted in them not being able to spend as much time as possible on teaching methods. They feel that this has resulted in declining quality of teaching methods. While these contrasting opinions were received mostly from private autonomous colleges, the teachers of the government college were unable to comment on the progress of pedagogy. One major criticism in the government college is that there is a lack of experienced teachers in the curriculum restructures, which has not been properly addressed. However, it is observed that new and innovative methods of teaching are rarely practised; no doubt traditional teaching methods have been successfully practised.

Nevertheless, teachers of private and government autonomous colleges agree that autonomy can mean an increase in the burden on teachers. On being granted autonomy, few teachers feel that the burden on them has increased significantly due to expected participation in curricula designing, evolving new methods of teaching as well as carrying out some of the administrative work. However, some other teachers and heads of the colleges opined that this feeling among a faction of teachers was unnecessary. They argue that the additional responsibilities teachers are trusted with, on being granted autonomy, as that of designing curriculum and revising courses, involve teachers more closely in academia and is accepted by inspired, motivated teachers as an exciting challenge. To them, the additional responsibilities are not a burden but a welcome opportunity to engage with their subjects closely. These teachers do not feel that there has been a setback to evolution of innovative teaching methods. What is observed is that the burden of the teacher has gone up after granting autonomy and they are given large amount of clerical works that demand the recruitment of more clerks.

The students of private autonomous college are satisfied with the current methods of teaching offered in their colleges. However, they failed to observe any visible difference in the same, after the college was granted autonomy. Most of the classrooms in some of

these colleges are equipped with the latest technology smart class boards and projectors, which are fully utilised by the teachers and students. In the government college, teachers explained that the delay in implementation of autonomy in the college prevents them from commenting on the improvement in teaching methodologies and they feel that an evaluation of the same will be feasible only a couple of years later. The students, however, did not feel that they require more time to evaluate teaching methods offered in the college. They feel that more administrative responsibilities on teachers have deteriorated the quality of lectures and expressed their dissatisfaction in this regard. It is difficult to confirm these claims, given that the students have staged their opposition to autonomy rather aggressively in the college.

4.7. Academic Quality: Method of Evaluation and Publishing Results

Academic autonomy has enabled colleges to design their own methods of evaluation. Questions can now be set up by the colleges for the semester examinations and evaluated internally. Questions are set by teachers in consultation with external academicians. The results are forwarded to the Governing Council, which forwards them to the university. The Governing Council can approve the publishing of results and the university follows the suggestions by the council, in awarding degrees to the students. All colleges under study were seen to be able to ensure the credibility of examinations. Moreover, the students consider publishing results on time as the biggest advantage of autonomy. The students observed that under the affiliation system, the delay in publishing results (which takes more than a year) crippled them, as they were unable to obtain their degrees in the stipulated time and their future remained insecure. The colleges have done well in addressing the apprehensions on the credibility of examinations by ensuring a standard for the same. Most students feel that the level of difficulty in college-conducted examinations is higher than that of university examinations. While reasons for this are unknown, some teachers raised apprehensions regarding the consequences of such a feeling dominating the student community. They fear that students looking for better grades would move to other colleges. Nevertheless, teachers dismissed the fear of increasing non-uniformity, resulting from differences in examination patterns and methods of evaluation. They feel that the competition between colleges to excel will motivate them to evolve credible systems of evaluation and thus there will be no fear of declining standards. They also feel that standardising the methods of evaluation will restrict colleges to innovate better systems.

All autonomous colleges have adopted the method of ‘double evaluation’, wherein the evaluation is carried out at two levels, first internally and next by external examiners. This has ensured the credibility of evaluations and addressed the objections raised against internal evaluation by the opponents of autonomy. Most students in private management autonomous colleges are satisfied with the current system of evaluation and proposed no change to the same. Whereas, a majority of students in the government autonomous college expressed their desire to move back to the previous system because of the value they attach to university examinations. They feel that university examination results will be widely acknowledged.

The managements of autonomous colleges are satisfied with the current system but lamented lack of funds to carry out examinations. Private autonomous colleges face a dearth of financial resources to conduct examinations smoothly. Lack of financial autonomy has prevented them from increasing examination fee. Colleges require up to ₹ 8 lakh annually for the conduct of examinations. Autonomous colleges are granted a fund of ₹ 20 lakh to facilitate their transit from affiliation system to autonomy. Private managements were quick to point out that government autonomous colleges are allocated further funds under various schemes. They claim that more allocation of funds to private colleges will enable them to meet the financial requirements to conduct examinations smoothly.

4.8. Academic Quality: Research and Development

Autonomy has shown to have improved the quality of research works in colleges in other states, including Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. This is primarily attributed to increase in the number of international collaborations as well as collaborations with national research institutes.

In the colleges under study, research is an academic requirement but the culture of research and projects is not serious among students at the undergraduate level. These colleges encourage research among students by awarding credits for published works. Colleges have collaborations with research institutes across the country and they facilitate student researchers. Students and teachers, however, note that there has been no significant improvement in this regard and that most of the initiatives to encourage research work were in place even before being granted autonomy and hence cannot be attributed to the same.

As most of the posts open to teachers in the statutory bodies have qualification requirements, more teachers are incentivised to pursue further qualifications. In the government autonomous college, teachers with PhD are more in number but they are not properly tapped. Teachers feel that inculcating an interest for research will continue to be a task for the colleges.

4.9. Internships and Placements

The students of private management autonomous colleges are satisfied with the placement and internship opportunities available to them but at the same time, are hopeful that they will widen in the future. One particular initiative by a private autonomous college is worth mentioning here as students feel that this initiative can be replicated in other programmes. The college introduced internship projects in a department, wherein the department connects students to research institutes and ensures that all interested students enrol in such programmes over summer. The students feel that this is an extraordinary effort by the college and hope that this will be continued in other departments as well.

The managements of the colleges feel that autonomy will play an indirect role in ensuring better placements to students. They feel that the involvement of industrial experts as well as experts from other fields in the Academic Council is responsible for the improvement. Corporate companies now feel that the involvement of their representatives in designing curricula ensures that students are work ready and possess all skills required for the industries and this, according to them, will ensure a surge in placements in the batch graduating in 2017.

In the government autonomous college, the students feel that placements will actually take a hit this academic year. They feel that an autonomous college will not be recognised as much as a college affiliated to a reputed university. In this respect, an evaluation of the role of autonomy cannot be carried out efficiently. No doubt, considering the poor state of internships and placements, which are not up to the desired level, steps should be taken to promote them rigorously.

4.10. Financial Autonomy

Colleges in Kerala have not been granted financial autonomy. The opposition towards academic autonomy among a faction of teachers and students is cited as the main deterrent in granting financial autonomy. None of the stakeholders, both advocates and

opponents of academic autonomy, feels that financial autonomy needs to be granted to colleges in Kerala.

The echoing fear among opponents of autonomy is that on being granted financial autonomy, colleges will introduce more self-financed courses and the fee for these courses could be set high, excluding the economically weaker students from enrolling. The consequential social exclusion will turn India's clock of development a decade back.

The managements of private autonomous colleges are not seeking financial autonomy at present. They feel that financial autonomy will instil fear in teachers and students and will jeopardise the current trend of improving academic quality. Teachers in private colleges could become apprehensive about the discontinuation of direct payment of salaries by the State Government. This could in turn result in teachers leading insecure lives.

The managements, however, feel that there is an urgent requirement for allocation of more funds to autonomous colleges, citing lack of funds to conduct examinations and inability to allocate adequate funds to research and development. Some of them expressed their suspicion that granting academic autonomy is a method adopted by the university to transfer the financial and clerical burden of conducting examinations to the colleges.

To conclude, while the power to conduct their own examinations has been well utilised by autonomous colleges, the quality of education has not seen any significant improvement in terms of revision of curricula and introduction of new, innovative courses. However, it is important to note that the rather slim improvement in academic quality in these colleges can be attributed to the partial academic autonomy granted to colleges in Kerala. The constraints faced by the autonomous colleges are primarily attributed to the lacking enthusiasm of the university.

4.11. Autonomy Criticised: Reasons

The move towards autonomy has faced opposition from many fronts. Some of these concerns need to be addressed at the earliest. The main criticisms are the following:

- Steps need to be taken to ensure that the autonomous status will not affect the service rules currently in practice in Kerala. Aided colleges opposing autonomy are sceptical that the direct payment agreement between them and the government

will cease to exist and that they will be unable to bear the burden of payment of salaries. This is a cause of concern for teachers as well.

- It must be ensured that self-financing courses will not be allowed to crowd out aided courses.
- A well-managed regulatory system must be put in place to ensure that the autonomous colleges follow the guidelines put forward by the UGC, parent university and the State. Autonomous colleges in other states have shown us that an autonomous institute, with commitment towards strengthening the quality of education and with proper systems of checks and balances, can function well and achieve its goals.
- The government heavily funded higher education in India until the recent trend of gradual decline in government expenditure, making way for private expenditure. The critiques of autonomy view promotion of autonomous colleges as a step by the government to facilitate this trend and encourage privatisation of higher education in India.
- Another criticism of autonomy is that it enables the college to fix students' fee and that this could mean increasing fee, excluding economically weaker sections from enrolling for higher education. The possibility of increased fee is high for self-financing courses.
- Scepticism regarding greater financial autonomy that could allow colleges to exclude economically poor students by charging higher fee, evaluation methods losing their transparency and increased burden on teachers are some other reasons for opposition to granting autonomy to colleges.
- The burden of teachers is thought to increase as the designing of courses and regular revision of curricula becomes the responsibility of the Academic Council of the college, which consists of all members of faculty of the college.
- The very concept of autonomy is challenged by a section of academicians, who are sceptical that introduction of different courses in different colleges will result in systems that are not comparable and that this could result in an inefficient system. As a response to this argument, Ninan Abrahamin his article for the *Centre for Civil Society* points out that freedom brings responsibility and that the curricula designed by each college are bound to be similar with differences in emphasis much the same way as autonomy in designing computers by different companies gives us very similar products.
- Concerns have been raised about the credibility of evaluation methods devised by colleges, arguing that a system of evaluation that is not credible will lead to sub

standardising of colleges. In response to this argument, the *Centre for Civil Society* reports that easy grades cheapen reputation and so, in a competitive education market, no college will compromise on the credibility of evaluation methods.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The study pointed out that the colleges granted academic autonomy in 2014 have not been able to enjoy the powers promised by the status initially, owing to the lack of readiness of the university to transfer much of its powers to the colleges. First, the extent of academic autonomy granted to the colleges, as per the guidelines of the UGC and the University Laws Act (Third Amendment) of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, is highly limiting. The above guidelines paint a picture of granting complete academic autonomy to the college but the below guidelines restrict academic autonomy to a great extent. The UGC guidelines go on to say the following, **'The University should have the right to review all new courses of an autonomous college. Where there is evidence of decline in standards or quality, the university may, after careful scrutiny, and in consultation with the UGC, either help modify them, wherever possible, or cancel such courses.'** The university is given the above rights to ensure that the quality of education does not deteriorate in autonomous colleges but it should be recognised that these rights granted to the university could be highly restricting for colleges, if the former fails to fulfil its duties responsibly. This is evident in Kerala. The delay in approving courses and recommending changes to courses by the university has restricted the academic autonomy granted to colleges. As the university takes more than the prescribed 30 working days (University Laws Act, 2014) to respond to the proposals of the college, the college is discouraged to introduce new courses. The delayed response by the university burdens the college with avoidable legislative costs and is time consuming. This has resulted in colleges bringing about minimal, necessary redesigns of courses and discouraged them from introducing relevant and socially necessary courses.

It is seen that academic autonomy has been implemented well in colleges with respect to the conduct of examinations and evaluations. The autonomous colleges have successfully conducted credible examinations and published results on time, much to the satisfaction of the students. The state universities have not been able to publish results on time, resulting in delays up to an academic year or more, under the affiliation system. The autonomous colleges have been successful in ensuring their credibility through a process of double evaluation and have published results on time. However, it is important to

recognise that transferring the power of conducting examinations, though a significant aspect of academic autonomy is not the only aspect of it. Conducting examinations and publishing results has been a highly time consuming and financially draining responsibility for the university and academic autonomy has permitted the transfer of this responsibility to the autonomous colleges. It has been observed that autonomous colleges have been struggling to finance the same due to lack of funds. The teachers of autonomous colleges have been entrusted with additional 'clerical' responsibilities attached to conducting exams. This has reportedly taken a toll on the time they wish to spend in evolving new methods of teaching and involving in research work. However, hiring new administrative staff to help the teachers carry out these additional responsibilities, though desired by the college management, cannot be carried out, as colleges are not granted administrative and financial autonomy. Citing the burden of financial stress on autonomous colleges, the managements of these colleges have been hoping to receive more grants and funds from the State Government. Given the precarious financial situation of the State, allocation of additional funds to autonomous colleges could be a long drawn process. This dire situation puts the relevance and requirement of financial autonomy to the fore, yet again.

Another issue that needs to be analysed is the restriction imposed on the extent of revision of courses that can be carried out by autonomous colleges. Though there is no written rule, by restricting curricula revision to a particular limit, it is observed that not all autonomous colleges are enthusiastic in revamping courses. It has been suggested that 25 per cent change can be made in the syllabus or 75 per cent parity with university syllabus should be maintained. This is not to say that colleges have not revised courses after being granted autonomy but the revisions have been minimal, with colleges updating courses that have not been revised by the university in a long time and admitted to ensuring that the university curricula are not revised drastically. The colleges have done little to incorporate new elements in curricula to keep up with the evolving educational scenario in other states and nations. The teachers are reluctant to revise courses significantly, and most revisions included deletion of outdated materials and tweaking the curricula slightly. It is important to note that the University Laws Act gives the Academic Council the right to revise courses but the colleges in Kerala continue to wait for approval by the university before introducing a revised course. This is in contrast to the practice in autonomous colleges in other states, where the Academic Council of the college has the complete right to revise courses, without approval of the university.

The reluctance of colleges to bring about more far-reaching changes to existing curricula is alarming. Various reasons have been cited for the same. Some teachers argue that a

good curriculum set by the university makes no significant revisions necessary. However, most teachers argue that the requirement of university approval of revisions deters colleges from deviating from the framework as much as possible. Though the Academic Councils of autonomous colleges in Kerala have the legal right to revise curricula, it is not being utilised by colleges as in other states like Tamil Nadu. Colleges with the potential to improve existing courses can make full use of academic autonomy, when and only when the decisions of the Academic Council are final regarding course revision. It must be recognised that no college will revise curricula to result in a lower standard of academics, as that will result in the college losing its reputation and hence the need for quality control by the university is misplaced.

Though it is necessary to ensure the quality of academics in autonomous colleges, making university approval mandatory defeats the very purpose of academic autonomy. Colleges must survive or perish by their reputation. While most teachers and students feel that granting academic autonomy is a much-needed change to the affiliation system, under which performance of colleges deteriorated year after year, it did not stop them from pointing out that the autonomy enjoyed by colleges in Kerala is glaringly inadequate. They cited the interference of the university in introducing and restructuring courses to point out that academic autonomy as implemented in Kerala ensure limited freedom even in terms of academic matters.

Financial autonomy grants a college the right to fix the fee and other charges payable by the students. This, undoubtedly, enables the colleges to mobilise funds as well as recruit staff (power of which lies with the Governing Council of the financially autonomous college). The college is also free to explore other means of attracting funds from government or private entities through research or consultancy projects. Many fear that financial autonomy will cause colleges charging exorbitant amounts as fee, resulting in the exclusion of students from economically weaker backgrounds. Introducing financial autonomy amidst these apprehensions could prove fatal for colleges in Kerala. The solution is that the Government must initiate steps to ensure that the colleges do not exploit the greater freedom assured by financial autonomy. A financially autonomous college is required to charge the fee prescribed by the university for aided courses, while for unaided courses, it can fix a separate fee. To ensure that the fee fixed by the colleges is not exorbitant, it is recommended that the Government carefully prescribe a ceiling to student fee chargeable by colleges.

It is important to identify plausible methods to prevent the much feared exclusivity that could accompany financial autonomy. The introduction of financial autonomy should be implemented carefully and necessary steps must be taken to assure students and teachers that the colleges will not be allowed to charge exorbitant fee. Convincing students and teachers of the same will be a difficult task but adequate steps by the Government will safeguard the interests of students and teachers.

5.1. Suggestions

The suggestions that have been gathered from the study are the following:

1) Evaluation

The broad suggestion is that autonomy could be continued at least for six years. In the sixth year, an evaluation has to be done and suitable reforms have to be initiated for the improvement of autonomy. More academic autonomy and limited financial autonomy can be considered as measures for the betterment of autonomous colleges.

2) Setting Objective Criteria for the Approval of Courses

It is necessary to define the criteria for the approval of courses and the university must be required by law to provide valid reasons for the rejection of proposals for the introduction of new courses. Stricter laws must be laid down to prevent delayed responses by the universities. This will ensure the quality of courses and at the same time, ensure that the university rejects a proposal only if it can be satisfactorily justified.

3) Grading of Colleges

Colleges can be graded based on the academic and infrastructural facilities as well as their social commitment. It means that quality should be given the utmost importance, while grading the colleges. Objective criteria have to be developed for grading. The fee ceiling should be prescribed separately for various grades of colleges. This will motivate the colleges to excel in these criteria and ensure that no fee is charged without any external control.

4) Cluster University

It is proposed that an evaluation has to be done after five years, based on which, steps can be taken for the improvement of autonomous colleges or alternative methods devised with proper homework. An alternative could be the introduction of cluster universities as proposed by the UGC in the 12th five-year plan. A college cluster university is a scheme where 10 to 20 colleges in a region form a cluster, which is granted autonomy to share

infrastructure and teaching faculty and function like a university. This is a proposal welcomed by academic experts, who recognise that the scheme will successfully address the issue of the parent university being unable to manage hundreds of colleges affiliated to it. This can be considered for government colleges in the initial phase.

This scheme could be introduced in Kerala, especially for government colleges and colleges apprehensive of their ability to function as an independent, autonomous college and seek support from other institutions. In the case of government colleges, there is a common notion that autonomy can bring about little change to the pattern of functioning under the affiliation system. The reverberating opinion of academicians is that as the final decision making power ultimately rests with the State Government, autonomy does little to revolutionise education in government colleges. Matters like the location of the college, fee structure for courses, introduction of new/socially relevant academic programmes, filling up of vacancies (teaching and non-teaching) and creation of basic infrastructure in respect of government colleges (autonomous or otherwise) are decided by the State Government or the State Collegiate of Education. In such colleges, the veil of autonomy will not bring about expected changes. This brings us to come up with an innovative and effective alternative system for government colleges.

Like autonomy, the concept of cluster universities is sure to attract a lot of criticisms and opposition in the initial stages. The advantages of this proposal must be conveyed with utmost clarity to the stakeholders and the Government must ensure that all apprehensions must be addressed before introducing this system.

5) Voucher Facility

An alternative to ensure inclusivity in financially autonomous colleges is to introduce the voucher facility for economically underprivileged students, while allowing colleges to fix the student fee without any interference from the State Government. The 'voucher system' refers to a type of system the government may employ to channel tax funds into public services. Its distinguishing feature is that it distributes funds directly to individual citizens instead of public institutions, i.e., the individual is given a voucher to purchase the services he chooses.

To conclude, granting of AUTONOMY is not a solution in itself. The need to improve the quality of academics in our colleges can be met only through the commitment of all the stakeholders -the management, the parent university, the State, the teachers and the students. Granting of autonomy to colleges in Kerala can be seen as recognition by the State of the dire need to reform the higher education system. No doubt, the higher

education system in Kerala demands qualitative improvement, which can be realised through thoughtful reforms in the sector. Granting autonomy is the first step, which should be accompanied by a host of other reforms. Along with that, there should be attempts to rectify the pitfalls that autonomy currently faces.

References

Abraham, N.(Unknown): n.d. *College Autonomy: Policy, Practice and Prospects*, s.l.: Centre for Civil Society.

Ajithkumar.1999.*What is Wrong with Kerala's Education System?*,s.l.:Working Paper, Centre for Socio-Economic and Environment Studies.

Assembly, K.L.2014. niyamasabha.kerala.com Accessed in June 2016at: <http://niyamasabha.org/bills/13kla/published/292-pub-eng.pdf>.

Deepa, A. 2006.*Autonomy Comes Closer but Debates Persists*. India Together.

Menon, M. 2013.*Kerala State Higher Education Council*.Accessed in June 2016 at: http://www.kshec.kerala.gov.in/images/documents/report_autonomy_kshec.pdf.

Singh, A. 2003.*Academic Standards in Indian Unversities: The Ravages of Affiliation*. Economic and Political Weekly,Volume 38.

UGC. 2016. *List of Autonomonous Colleges*. Available at: www.ugc.ac.in.

Wikipedia, n.d. *Higher Education in India*, s.l.: s.n.

Appendix 1

Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam		
Name of college	Autonomy Granted w.e.f.	Autonomy Valid up to
Assumption College, Changanassery	2016-2017	2021-2022
CMS College, Kottayam	2016-2017	2021-2022
Mar Athanasious College, Kothamangalam	2016-2017	2021-2022
St. Albert's College, Ernalulam	2016-2017	2021-2022
Maharaja's College, Ernakulam	2014-2015	2019-2020
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Ernakulam	2014-2015	2019-2020
Sacred Heart College, Ernakulam	2014-2015	2019-2020
St. Berchmans College, Changanassery	2014-2015	2019-2020
St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam	2014-2015	2019-2020
Affiliated to Calicut University, Thenhipalam		
St. Joseph's College, Irinjalakuda	2014-2015	2019-2020
St. Thomas College, Thrissur	2014-2015	2019-2020

Vimala College, Thrissur	2016-2017	2021-2022
M.E.S. Mampad College	2015-2016	2020-2021
Farook College, Calicut	2015-2016	2020-2021
St Joseph's, Thrissur	2015-2016	2020-2021
Affiliated to University of Kerala		
Fatima Mata National College, Kollam	2014-2015	2019-2020
Mar Ivanios College, Thiruvananthapuram	2014-2015	2019-2020

Source: UGC website

Appendix 2

UGC Guidelines to Select Colleges to Grant Autonomy

Given below are the guidelines prescribed by the UGC for the selection of colleges to be granted autonomy:

- Academic reputation and previous performances in university examinations and academic/co-curricular/extension activities in the past
- Academic/extension achievements of the faculty
- Quality and merit in the selection of students and teachers, subject to statutory requirements in this regard
- Adequacy of infrastructure, for example, library, equipment, accommodation for academic activities etc.
- Quality of institutional management
- Financial resources provided by the management/State Government for the development of the institution
- Responsiveness of administrative structure
- Motivation and involvement of faculty in the promotion of innovative reforms
- **Self-financing colleges:** Self-financing colleges can also apply for autonomy after they have completed minimum 10 years of existence. However, conferment of

autonomy will not entitle them to receive autonomy grant. They will have to follow the same procedure as applicable to other colleges

- **Unaided/aided colleges:** Minimum 10 years of existence and accreditation by NAAC/NBA; Henceforth, non-accredited colleges would not be eligible for autonomy and the existing colleges would be asked to undertake accreditation within one year