



**UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION
NEW DELHI**

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE UGC-AICTE
REVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH APRIL, 2008 AT 11.00 IN
THE UGC OFFICE, NEW DELHI**

The first meeting of the Committee was held on 30th April, 2008 at 11.00 a.m. in the UGC office. The list of participants is enclosed.

Prof. Yash Pal, Chairman of the Committee welcomed the members and expressed the hope that what this Committee might do would be significant. It might influence the future of this country. Some of our concerns arise from a universal malady that knowledge is being broken up into narrower and narrower cubicles making it difficult to understand the way to a wholesome future for the planet. If the universities of the world do not engage in this exercise then who would? Universities should realize that one of the important reasons for the world being in the present mess is the fact that they are not performing their function properly. This is the wider perspective in which we should examine our inadequacies and find corrective measures. In doing so we cannot just copy others. The initial conditions do matter. Excellence also has dimensions. Many of these dimensions are organic. We must recognize them for any sustained progress and uncommon excellence.

There are several examples to show that on occasions we have done things differently without respecting the boundaries of disciplines and achieved extraordinary success. He invited the participants to analyze the management, the learning curve, a shared passionate drive and contribution of various disciplines to

the achievement of ISRO just the day before (29.4.08). This involved the launch of 10 satellites in one go. Please do not dismiss it as only an engineering achievement of a technological company that has nothing to do with the problem we are discussing. The young scientists and engineers responsible for this accomplishment did not come fully trained from their college for the challenges they accomplished. Most of their learning came from standing up to do something that was beyond their grasp. Without this spirit they would not have got there even if they were all trained in IITs, or in universities abroad, which they were not.

He said ISRO, unlike NASA, started with social objectives. The satellite instructional television experiment was highly technological, but simultaneously it was also highly sociological. No space programme in the world had such deep ambitions. This required tremendous freedom to form alliances, to venture into areas in which there was no pre-existing certified competence, to demystify technology and invent appropriate management systems. There was sharing of dreams and the self-confidence that if something was doable then we could do it ourselves.

The ISRO centre in Ahmedabad was peopled by several hundred scientists and engineers but production of educational messages and evaluation of the experiment required social scientists. So we started hiring sociologists and anthropologists and sent a word around that we needed help in various ways. As a result we ended up with about 200 people of that category, some for a couple years, others more permanently. Studios were set up in the buildings of the education department of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. Help was sought from friends, and their friends, in theatre and films as also from the scientists of TIFR. Every one was learning and everyone felt privileged that his or her help was sought. Initial critics became collaborators.

Learning organizations need to be built on excellence and cooperation. True excellence cannot be imported through inorganic

components and artifacts, or through following the practices that have worked in other social and physical milieus.

Professor Yash Pal said that he had gone through this story to emphasize the need to allow the growth of an active culture within a College or University, with lot of autonomy even to make mistakes; this was essential for achieving excellence. In his view a Commission or Council that provides funds or some control has to play a catalytic role and never a line control that curbs autonomy. He was not in favour of a mere regulatory Authority. Authority smells control, and control, no matter of what kind leads to suffocation. Re-emphasizing the catalytic role of an overseeing organization, he reminded the members of the way the UGC had long back established a number of IUCs which are very fine examples of blending teaching and research and are all doing very well.

He expressed his concern about enormous amount of fragmentation that exists today, not only between Science & Technology but also between Science and Humanities or Technology and Humanities. He felt that a university symbolizes a universe of knowledge; this should be place where new knowledge keeps growing often crossing the boundaries of established diciplines. Membranes between various subjects should be porous to avoid imprisonment of subjects i.e. some degree of osmosis between the disciplines is essential. Technology should to be molded with a touch of social relevance and efforts should be made to grow from grassroots. He gave the example of opening of PCOs after the path breaking development of digital exchanges by C-Dot. This was a revolutionary concept that blended a new modern technology with social reality.

He appealed to the committee to help in creating a system that is less rigid with less Babudum, less bureaucracy, less control and less regulation and easy cross-disciplinary wandering. Such a system would help in growth of both - creativity and productivity.

Prof. Mushirul Hassan, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia expressed his concern about the status of state universities which are in terrible shape. He felt that UGC / AICTE can become effective only after we know about the shortcomings of the system which can only be known by meeting people, students, teachers, universities, colleges and even NGOs who are working on specific problems. The dialogue is required on various issues like curriculum, admission, fees, restructuring etc.

The Chairman, UGC mentioned that the terms of reference of the committee clearly indicate that the recent changes in higher education have necessitated the restructuring of UGC / AICTE to enable them to meet the global challenges. The inter-disciplinary approach which is being followed worldwide is missing in India. There are too many bodies (17 professional councils) to regulate higher education which at time leads to conflict of interest. He mentioned that the Kothari Commission (1960-66) in its Report had indicated as follows:

“...All higher education should be regarded as an integrated whole, that professional education cannot be completely divorced from general education, and that it is essential to bring all higher education, including agriculture, engineering and medicine, within the purview of UGC. This is the ultimate direction that we should move.”

He also mentioned that after 1964 there has been no report on higher education. Moreover, the extent of problems relating to privatization, fees, admission policies, curriculum, examination reforms is not known due to poor data base. While giving in brief, the structure and nature of higher education which includes central universities, deemed universities, state universities, private universities and colleges, he mentioned that the UGC at present has divided responsibilities. The mandate of UGC covers all institutions of higher learning. However, its actual jurisdiction is confined to,

what is called "General Education Sector". It has much less control over various institutions dealing with subjects like medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, engineering, agriculture, management, teacher education, distance education and other subjects. The educational institutions dealing with these disciplines are controlled by Central/State Govts. or autonomous bodies established for specific purpose, such as Medical Council, pharmacy council, AICTE, NCTE, ICAR, CSIR and many others. He also mentioned about limited coverage of institutions under the purview of UGC wherein only about 6000 colleges are under the purview of UGC out of 18000 colleges, thus reducing the UGC's role of monitoring to only 1/3rd of the educational institutions. He also indicated that the power to set up central and state universities is with the Govt. Similarly, colleges can be established with the permission of the State Governments and concerned universities. The UGC has no role in prescribing the necessary conditions and guidelines for setting up of universities and colleges. He mentioned that the emerging issues which need consideration are the issue of coordination since the regulations and maintenance of standards is a divided responsibility. There is also need to increase the coverage of UGC's control and empowering the UGC further for regulation and maintenance of standards.

Prof. Krishan Kumar, Director, NCERT was of the view that if the quality of school education is to improve, universities have to take full responsibility. He mentioned as an example that the excellent scheme of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya under which poor and tribal girls are provided education till 8th class is totally disassociated from the higher education sector. He felt that the distance of Indian universities and misery of Indian poor is too big for any integrated educational programme to succeed. He raised the issue of pedagogical skills of university and college teachers and felt that the higher education system of the country shows no

concern for pedagogy. The universities and colleges are oblivious of required acumen of communicating with the students and the colleges to examine their knowledge. He emphasised the need for bringing out a national curriculum framework for higher education as done for school education by the NCERT.

Prof. R.A. Yadav, Chairman, AICTE raised the issue of quality assurance and formulating norms and standards. He mentioned that the technical education institutions have increased from about 96 in 1950 to 7000 institutions today with an annual intake of 13 lac students. He also mentioned that about variation in the fee structure of same type of institutions for same type of courses which is leading to commercialization of education. He also mentioned about institutions which are not approved by AICTE but are giving degree and diploma certificates. While mentioning about the regional imbalances, he indicated that four states in the country are catering to 70% of the institutions and intake in the field of technical education. He mentioned that expansion in the system has led to severe faculty shortage and in about 65% of the institutes, B. Tech. are teaching B.Tech (since M. Tech are not available).

Prof. Pankaj Chandra, Director, IIM, Bangalore was of the view that the fundamental issue was flight of academicians who do not want to opt for academics as a career for a variety of reasons like infrastructural facilities, compensation, facilities, tight control, etc. The atmosphere in universities is not conducive to enable them to retain good academicians.

Prof. (Ms.) Malini Bhattacharya mentioned that in the last 20 years there has been a change in the government Policy. The Government is presently emphasizing more on school education rather than higher education and investing much more on school education as compared to higher education. She raised a pertinent

question whether. the Government is contemplating a change of policy to give more importance to higher education, as compared to School education..

Dr. Subhash Pani, Secretary, Planning commission mentioned about ways in which the state resources can be used for higher education. He mentioned that teachers tend to have complacent attitude. He felt that procedures should be devised for managing the universities in a better manner. He felt that the private sector would definitely have a role in the field of higher education but both public as well private sector have to be harmonize to bring out the best for maintaining standards. He suggested that the comments of stake holders may be invited through website to enable the committee to take an informed decision.

Prof. Ganeshan, State Secretary, State Council of Higher Education, Tamil Nadu mentioned that the rights of the State Governments are being taken away by the National Regulatory Bodies, e.g. if NCTE and AICTE give approval for a particular course to a college, it becomes mandatory for the university to affiliate this college and the State Governments have no say in the matter.

Prof. Vijay Khole, Vice Chancellor, Mumbai University emphasized on the need for creating facilitative mechanism for universities to function. He felt that the state universities have to work under the strict control of UGC, State Governments, Professional Councils etc which hinders them from innovating and conducting new experiments. He felt that the constraints should be identified in the first instance and then the methodology be divided to get rid of them. He felt that we should not be critical about privatization, since the very foundation of higher education was laid down by private bodies as all the colleges were established initially through private initiative.

Shri R.P. Agarwal, Secretary (Higher Education), MHRD while talking about public and private participation in the higher education indicated that 80-85% of Engineering intake comes from private sector. He mentioned that while India spends 3% of its GDP on education, small county like Cuba is spending 10%, Denmark is spending 8% and Europe is spending 80%. He said that we cannot wish away private sector. At present, out of total spending on higher education 50% is public expenditure and 50% is private expenditure. Out of the public expenditure, 20% comes from Central Government and 80% from the State Govt. He felt that no organization can claim perfection. Therefore, the committee has to bring out the reforms in the higher education system by restructuring UGC and AICTE to improve the higher education system. He said that NASSCOM report mentions that only 30% of our graduates are employable. One has to address this issue both in long term (by changing curriculum) as well as in short-term (through finishing school). But an action has to be taken. He also said that the academic autonomy of the universities should not come in the way of implementing the reforms and good practices.

Prof. Yash Pal while concluding the discussion mentioned that real qualitative change is required in the system, which can only be achieved if we create holes in the walls between the disciplines and design an overall structure that deals with all disciplines. The present control structure is not supportive of cross-disciplinary activity. This must be changed.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the chair which was proposed by Shri Sunil Kumar, Member Secretary of the committee.
