

**Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the Committee at
Thiruananthapuram on 13th June, 2008**

The following Members were present :

Prof. Yash Pal, Chairperson

Prof. N.R. Madhava Menon

Prof. S.K. Thorat, Chairman, UGC

Prof. R.A. Yadav, Chairman, AICTE

**Prof. Lalit .M. Patnaik, VC, Defence Institute of Advanced
Technology, Pune**

Prof. Vijay Khole, VC, University of Mumbai

Sunil Kumar, Member Secretary

Opening remarks by Prof. Yash Pal

Terms of Reference were read out for the benefit of participants. Shri M.A. Baby, Hon'ble Minister of Education, Kerala in his opening remarks congratulated the Central Government for the initiative in setting up the Committee. He also congratulated the central government for enhancing the public outlays during the 11th Plan. He suggested that the limitations of subject matters under the purview of the MHRD need not come in the way of discussing the need for a similar review of the MCI and other bodies outside the ambit of the MHRD. [Prof. Yash Pal clarified that the broad terms of reference allude to the linkages between UGC and other statutory bodies.] He mentioned that formal comments of the state government would be sent across later. He emphasized the need for defining clearly the role of the States and recalled that education which used to be a state subject was moved to the concurrent list under particular circumstances. He said that the central government has to play a very important role, also for the reason that the tax collections go to the central government, yet the spirit of concurrency has to be respected. At the last meeting of education ministers transcending political affiliations every one felt that regulatory agencies tended to ignore the views of the state governments, and the Committee has to articulate this aspect in its report. Shri M.A. Baby welcomed the mention of issues of equity and quality in the terms of reference. He clarified that the state government was not against either private managements and appreciated the role played by the religious bodies in setting up institutions – but he said that even as unaided institutions are encouraged to be set up, society must insist that its fragmented nature and inequalities must be reflected in ensuring regulations that

help in overcoming these concerns. Similarly, quality should never be compromised with. Shri Baby cited the directions of the AICTE in diluting the quality by relaxing the minimum norms for admission in engineering colleges, he linked it to the pressure from unaided institutions which came up in large numbers and were not able to fill class-rooms. He lamented the fact that the relaxation in marks was not for those who were underprivileged and therefore could not have competed on merit with the more privileged sections, but were used on the contrary to fill up management quota against donations. Shri Baby wanted the distribution of the enhanced allocations during the 11th Plan to be more realistic and not act as a discouragement to states like Kerala [while appreciating the need for special allocation to laggard states, he said the state should not be punished only because it has achieved higher GER, eg. no IIT for Kerala].

Introductions of participants followed. [List annexed]

Prof. Yash Pal emphasized the need for converging ideas and concepts across disciplines to arrive at solutions to problems and contrasted it with the increasing fragmentation of higher education; and lamented the absence of interaction between academics and research in India. We should not merely tinker with the system, but do something which gives joy in creation.

Shri M.A. Baby intervened to say that there was no escape from moving towards inter-disciplinary research, and the system has to be designed to enable and encourage inter-disciplinary interaction in the academic and research world.

Prof. S.K. Thorat, Chairman, UGC drew attention to the increasing private participation, including private universities established by state legislature, deemed universities with private characteristics, and also foreign institution which are attempting to enter without any proper regulation. The multiplicity of regulatory bodies – as many as 17 of them – would also need to be recognized. He also drew attention to the single faculty universities as against the multi-faculty origins of the university system. He mentioned that most of the applications received by the UGC for the status of deemed universities were from single faculty institutions. He also pointed to the hierarchical bent of mind – there are good institutions and there are not so good institutions, which again seems to get accepted without any concern. Add to this the development of compartmentalization of regulation. He said the attempts of the MHRD to create a National Higher Education Commission, which unfortunately did not get support because of turf

reasons. He invited suggestions from the participants on identifying overlaps which could be avoided and divergences that have arisen over the years in higher education. Should powers of regulation be transferred to universities and if so would that necessitate any changes in the governance structure of universities.

Prof. R.A. Yadav, Chairman, AICTE drew attention to the enormous challenge on addressing regional imbalances despite growth in the number of institutions in technical education over the years. The low access rate and social imbalances in participation in higher education can also not be ignored. Quality of institutions when their numbers are on an increase, is to be discussed. Whether the norms or standards are realistic or do they need any revision? There is a need for systemic reforms as well because of the lack of vertical or horizontal mobility or interaction. Some of the traditional thinking also has to be overcome, for example the denial of biotechnology streams for biology students has been revised. He clarified that the minimum eligibility conditions for admission to engineering and technical courses were now left to the university concerned. He said that the normative conditions for starting programmes have some relevance to maintain standards. He said the role of the AICTE as a regulator, facilitator or any other role needs to be put in perspective by the Committee for which suggestions from participants would be invaluable.

Participants were invited to offer suggestions, views, comments etc.

Prof. Yash Pal invited comments in particular on

Prof. Oommen, Deptt. Of Zoology, Kerala University: graduated from BHU, a central university and now working in a State University – over the years we have neglected state universities which has contributed to the declining of standards, state universities were discriminated vis a vis the IISc and other institutions even though the research community does not discriminate when it seeks research outputs; there is a need to strengthen the state universities in infrastructure – for eg. 235 faculty in KU when he joined but many posts remain vacant; fill vacancies, mushrooming of private universities a matter of concern, UGC and AICTE should while acting as regulatory bodies give fullest autonomy to universities.

Prof. Rajan, Member, Syndicate, Kerala University: endorsed the view that universities have to be the universe of knowledge, universities in

Kerala function in that manner both in the university teaching department as well as in affiliated colleges; universities which are single faculty are not good for higher education; there should be greater allocation for public institutions; the model of the state higher education council which is an advisory body may be set up centrally as well, however the NKC recommendation of a regulatory body is not acceptable nor useful; KU's experience vis a vis in AICTE etc. the university's norms are also there, even where the university finds that facilities of colleges are not acceptable the AICTE has recognized the institution, there are instances of the KU disaffiliating certain institutions even those recognized by the AICTE. University should monitor and control the quality, and it should not be hindered by the central bodies; the central regulatory bodies could be represented in a central advisory body; the real force of reforms would depend on the level of funding; private and public institutions can not be treated at par – in particular, the NKC recommendations tend to equate the two types of institutions in relation to funding. The problems of equity and access can only be addressed through social justice measures. The role of university has been curtailed many a time by the central agencies e.g. in starting a new institution. Appreciates, that teachers associations have been invited.

Principal, Medical College, Thiruananthapuram: stated that there should be some clarity on how medical education could be brought under the terms of reference.

PVC, CUSAT: Central agencies and state governments have neglected higher education in the state. Kerala is far ahead of others yet there is no IIT or IIT status institution in the State. Although selected to be an IIT level institution, CUSAT is only being made an ISET – which is quite inferior to what the university deserves. There are several engineering colleges in the state but there is no technical university in Kerala. In regard to the role of the UGC and the AICTE, the policies of AICTE need to be streamlined and certain changes are required. For example, there is a shortage of teachers, bright students are offered placement even in the 6th semester, MNCs pick them up and attracting good students to the teaching profession. But the AICTE should frame better policies. [it was pointed out that this shortage of teachers was now common to all disciplines]. Research programmes need to be encouraged in universities at par with the IITs. Regional Research Centres should be set up. AICTE does not recognize even state universities as QIP centres. N-3.

Dr. N.O. Verghese, Principal, Dental Council, Thiruvananthapuram: wanted to understand the role for the dental and medical colleges in the work of the committee; there are no grants for medical and dental or nursing colleges from the UGC; these sectors of higher education are in a state of suspended animation;

Dr Thomas Joseph, Kerala unit of AIFUCTO: congratulates the MHRD for setting up a UGC-AICTE Review Committee and for wide ranging consultations, something which the NKC did not do; the NKC questioned the national consensus on higher education as it existed as per the Kothari Commission recommendations; instead of gives greater emphasis to expansion and excellence while ignoring equity and does not recognize that equity should a precondition to excellence; while the general agreement is that there should be a maximum cap on student fee as revenues of institutions the NKC gives a minimum norm of fee being levied opening up possibilities of commercialization; inclusiveness in terms of students, regions, teachers and disciplines are related issues and not to be dealt with exclusively and individually. So the NKC's approach is one of divisiveness and not inclusiveness.

Prof Muralidharan Nair, CUSAT: conditions stipulated for promotion and appointment of teachers under UGC and AICTE differ and in the former it is very difficult, this creates different treatment with in the same institution, there should be some way of common set of conditions and regulations.

Dr. Harikrishnan Nair, Dean, Agriculture College: whether ICAR could also be coopted so that agriculture education could also be brought in the fold of this committee? There has to be some uniformity in the terms of employment, service conditions, retirement age etc. of teachers all over India across disciplines, states and institutions. We should integrate teaching, research and technology transfer for social priorities. Adequate emphasis should be given for both basic research as well as applied research. The selection criteria for all faculties for teaching or research should be taken as academicians and treated at par.

Dr. Prasad, General Secretary, Kerala Government College Teachers Association: Only 6000 or so colleges are recognized by the UGC under section 2(f) and 12B of the UGC Act out of nearly 20000 colleges in India. Also, colleges of Delhi and the Central Universities corner bulk of the assistance. Government Colleges are poorly funded and therefore the UGC should be more generous in this respect. Similarly, the

requirement of matching grants puts government colleges in disadvantage. Service conditions of teachers in respect of retirement in colleges and universities differ; for colleges it is only 55 and in universities it is 60 in Kerala, perhaps it is the only state with such conditions.

Dr. Mujeeb, Reader, Engineering Faculty, CUSAT: At present there is no QIP centre for teachers in Kerala, other than NIT Calicut. AICTE is not giving enough funds to universities for teachers attending QIP, even though the Council gives assistance to teachers in colleges on the ground that universities get funded by governments. Time spent on research guidance needs to be given credit by the AICTE. eJournal facilities need to be supported by the AICTE. Even minor typographical errors of circulars of AICTE cause difficulties to teachers and institutions. E.g. advance increments for those with Ph.D.

Prof. David, CUSAT: The helplessness shown by the PVC shows the inability of the university to implement its own regulation therefore the rationale for the UGC and the AICTE to have central regulations.

Dr. Abdul Salam, Kerala Agriculture University: there is a need for an apex body to coordinate all educational activities across disciplines without affecting the autonomy of the other institutional agencies. Other than granting funds, UGC must take proactive steps to improve the quality of education – not merely by spelling out some qualifications or some hefty pay packets – but something more concrete.

Prof. Yash Pal: No great wisdom resides in the UGC in ensuring quality, it is for you to ensure and maintain quality, they can only let you do so.

Prof. Kelur, Faculty of Education, Calicut University: welcome inter-disciplinary approach; the child is a potential orchestra so developing all faculties is critical to realize the potential; there is no uniformity and wide disparity exists in assessments across universities even in the same state of Kerala thereby affecting student mobility; the NCTE is responsible for quality of teacher education but it has diluted its qualifications of eligibility and there is a confusion on whether to follow UGC conditions of eligibility or that of the NCTE; in regard to higher education curriculum there should be some emphasis on some constructive programmes in order to develop some work culture (community awareness programmes and constructive programmes

depending on community resources); all science students must be exposed to humanities;

Prof. of Political Science, Kerala University: This review committee initiative must be repeated and welcome central decision to consult states and universities at the margin and decision is not merely Delhi Centric which is usually the case. AICTE and UGC must involve academics from across the country – experts are not usually brought in from other places and not only the JNU or Delhi University; when faculty members go abroad Home Ministry clearances are required but while certain precautions are welcome, international exposure is highly desirable and academics should not be discouraged by bureaucratic interference.

Prof. N.R. Madhava Menon, Member of the Review Committee: Two issues basic to our future would be quality and access; quality aspect can be further broken down to teachers, students, infrastructure, curriculum, and so on and the basic responsibility should be on teachers; my efforts in the NLSU was the result of the experimentation that I was allowed through complete autonomy – for e.g. the academic council was the entire faculty which had complete command, interdisciplinary courses and innovation with hardly any interference from the UGC or the BCI; e.g. while the Bar Council of India's regulation was for 28 courses the NLSU started 59 courses, many of which were inter-disciplinary such as in medicine and law. Our responsibility is not merely disseminating knowledge but also creating new areas of knowledge; do not leave quality to the UGC or AICTE – for example, why should the issue of N-3 raised earlier in the discussion be laid at the doors of regulatory bodies, it should be sorted out by the university itself. For quality to be improved teachers would have to be improved. Access is important, where there should be regulation which should include equity also, but on quality there should not be any interference, every teacher must have the freedom to set higher and higher goals.

Dr. Lazar, Calicut University, Zoology Department, representing the Teachers' Association of the University highlighted the bureaucratic interference and delays caused in sanctioning travel grants and research grants. The delay is owing to very little time available for going through the processes laid down by the universities for utilizing funds. Delays in submitting utilization certificates are owing to the internal bureaucratic delays in processing at the university level. Research funding is allotted to the university and perhaps it would be helpful if UCs are based on chartered accountants' audit report; or, the

money could be transferred to the principal investigators with service charges being paid to the university. It is very frustrating for the researchers.

Prof. Khan, Advisor, UGC, New Delhi: University administration should be pressurized to expedite processing of such cases.

Prof. Rajan: In Kerala University, many of these problems have been sorted out, for example earlier teachers invited by the UGC to make presentations under SAP had to bear their own travel costs etc. now the university meets the expenditure, in KU Chartered Accountant's certification is considered adequate.

[systemic solutions should be worked out by the UGC to encourage research in universities, otherwise enhanced allocations by themselves would not help strengthen research in universities, perhaps Prof. M.M.Sharma Committee could look into this – s.k.]

Dr. Lazar: UGC may also clarify that for CAS purposes post doctoral research in foreign universities would also be considered.

Dr. Cyril Johnson, Member, Syndicate, University of Kerala: As a member of the Syndicate I have visited a number of colleges of engineering, medicine and have found that the institutions which are in a pitiable condition do not bother about the standards laid down by the university on the ground that the responsibility of maintaining standards is that of the central agencies and should the university interfere the institution would seek the intervention of courts. The Central agencies overlook, it is not physically possible for central agencies to monitor each and every institution, why can't this be left to the universities to monitor.

Prof. R.A. Yadav, Chairman, AICTE: the problem is that of multiplicity of inspection teams, although there is a provision of joint inspection teams, no state university agrees and each university insists on its separate team; no nominations for representatives have been received from any state government or state universities.

Dr. Stephen Mathews, St. Berchmann's College, Changanacherry: there is a need for the UGC to grow out of its image of a mere funding agency, its nomenclature ought to be changed to reflect the responsibility to oversee quality. The question to be looked into is whether funds alone will improve quality – whether by way of

increased salaries, or higher grants to university. There is a need for control on online courses and programmes, and foreign institutions.

Prof. Thorat, Chairman, UGC: the intended legislation on foreign universities requires political consensus.

Prof. Rajan, University of Kerala: Why are unaided institutions being encouraged to become deemed university?

AIFUCTO: Why so many de novo deemed universities.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks.