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Sustenance of Autonomy in Higher Education Institutions

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

Background: The higher education institutions will achieve autonomy traversing the path of graded accreditation. The autonomy of higher education is linked with the quality of education and accreditation. Higher education institutions will not only achieve autonomy but will sustain it in ever-changing external and internal environments.

Purpose: The purpose is to design strategies for the sustenance of autonomy in higher education institutions.

Method: The paper is based on an exploratory qualitative study conducted during 2020. The research objectives emanate from the review of the literature and the experiences of the researcher. The research objective is further explored from the literature review to formulate the research questions. The population for the study constitutes the autonomous higher education institutions of the country including engineering, management, pharmacy, and polytechnic institutions. The researcher selected a purposive sample to gather the information and views of the respondents. Respondents were selected from all over India, all types of institutions, and all levels of the institute. The researcher designed a comprehensive, concise, precise, and accurate structured and semi-structured research instrument based on the literature, experiences, and focus group discussion. This research instrument was validated on content and construct in a group of six persons working in the area of autonomy. Then it was prepared in the Google form which was validated by forty respondents. The respondents are principals, heads of departments, senior faculty members working in national-level institutes, higher education institutes, and technical institutions. The instrument was mailed to more than 8000 respondents out of which 954 respondents provided information. The information is provided by principals, deans, heads of departments, and senior faculty members. Secondary information is also used to fill up the gap to achieve the research objective. The information received from structured instruments is compiled using Microsoft Excel Sheet to calculate the weighted mean and percentage.

Results: The strategies for sustaining autonomy at central government, state government, regulatory body, institute, teacher, and student levels are evolved.

Conclusion: To reap the full potential of autonomy and its sustenance strategies at different levels of hierarchy need to be effectively implemented on continuous basis.

1. Introduction

The government of India declared the national education policy (NEP) 2020 with a vision to achieve quality and excellence in higher education institutions (HEIs) (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). The HEIs are expected to achieve accreditation and autonomy of different degrees in the next 15 years. At present, there are institutions having accreditation from the national assessment and accreditation council (NAAC), accreditation of engineering programmes from the national board of accreditation (NBA) and some of these institutions are autonomous. The percentage of institutions having accreditation and autonomy is very few in the country. In NEP 2020 there is a provision for creating a national accreditation council (NAC) that will come out with improved guidelines processes, and criteria for granting accreditation to HEIs. The new system of accreditation and autonomy would be more quality focused for the HEIs to get accreditation and autonomy. It is said that achieving quality is the first stage milestone for HEIs. It is a big challenge for the HEIs to sustain the accreditation and autonomy, and continuously improve the quality in the context of NEP 2020.

2. Literature Review

The researcher started a literature review on the autonomy of educational institutions in the year 2018 and it took one and half years to approve the topic for the research by the national institute of technical teachers' training and research (NITTTR) Bhopal. A brief review of the literature is enumerated in Table 1.

Table 1: Literature Review

Reports		
Authors and Reference	**Focus**	**Main conclusions**
(Iwinska & Matei, 2019)	Autonomy	Institutional autonomy on various parameters to make decisions.
(University Grants Commission, 2018)	Guidelines for granting autonomy	Role of different agencies, criteria for granting autonomy, and procedure for granting autonomy and benefits of autonomy.
(Frankowski *et al.*,2018)	Distributed autonomy in education	Governance perspectives of bureaucratic, competitive, independence, and self-organization models are explained.
(Martin, 2013)	Nature of autonomy and its effects	Autonomy was considered as a means to the system's improvement within the context of broader reform agenda. It should be implemented in the policy context of the nation.
(Arcia, 2011)	Autonomy and accountability	Indicators of autonomy, assessment, and accountability.
(Estermann *et al.*, 2011)	Autonomy Scorecard 2010	A scientific scorecard for various dimensions of autonomy, perception, and challenges of reform implementation is described.
(Estermann *et al.*, 2009)	Exploring autonomy	Autonomy is key to enabling universities to respond to challenges. A comparison of different types of autonomy is made.
(Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2005)	Autonomy	Roles of various agencies and recommendations on various types of autonomy.

Researches		
Authors and Reference	**Focus**	**Main conclusions**
(Michavila & Martinez, 2018)	Excellence, autonomy, funding, and accountability	Autonomy, funding, and accountability. The relation between accountability and excellence, autonomy and excellence are established.
(Sharma *et al.*, 2017)	Autonomy and accountability	Aspects of autonomy and accountability, and challenges of implementing autonomy.
(Pondhe, 2016)	Quality improvement	Need for autonomy for quality education, types of autonomy, challenges of autonomy, conducive factors, problems of autonomous institutions. Granting autonomy is the right decision.
(Verdenhofa, 2016)	Autonomy	The degree of autonomy i.e. full, partial and minimal, and the state control.
(Mathew & Patrick 2016)	Evaluation of autonomy	The colleges are not enjoying autonomy as intended in the law. The performance should be evaluated in the sixth year, objective criteria should be set to approve the programmes, grading of the colleges should be done, cluster university should be formed, and voucher facility for economically underprivileged students.
(Sankaran & Joshi, 2016)	Autonomy for excellence	Structuring autonomy and providing the budget for excellence.
(Sandhu, 2015)	Autonomy and accountability	The importance of internal governance is emphasized in the context of autonomy and accountability. The need for market orientation and completeness is stressed.
(Deo & Kohli, 2014)	Students satisfaction	Students of autonomous institutions are more satisfied than students of non-autonomous institutions because of various reasons.

(Kai, 2013)	Academic freedom and autonomy	Dimensions of academic freedom are duty and right, academic ethics, trust by the general public and state, and impact of information communication technology. Dimensions of university autonomy are social responsibility and obligation, monitoring service, policy and law, globalization, and international code of practice.
(Gandhi, 2013)	Autonomy and accountability	The importance of enforcing accountability in autonomous institutions is stressed.
(Devade, 2013)	Structure of autonomy	Problems addressed by autonomy, ideal autonomy, and control structure.
(Velazquez *et al.*, 2005)	Sustainability in higher education	Factors affecting the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives in higher education institutions
(Huisman &Currie, 2004)	Accountability	Soft accountability measures are favoured over hard measures. Shift from professional to political accountability, accountability for outcomes and not for process.
(Brock, 2003)	Autonomy of individuals and organization	A typology of four combinations of autonomy and centralization, four matching strategic types, and several strategic contingency propositions are developed.

The research studies undertaken were on institutional autonomy, problems of autonomy, challenges of autonomy, accountability of autonomous institutions, quality improvement in autonomous institutions, need of autonomy, funding in autonomous institutions, and satisfaction level of students. No study was found on the sustenance of autonomy, it may be because higher education institutions have not reached up to sustenance level. A clear gap in the literature is found in the sustenance of autonomy.

3. Research Objective

To evolve strategies for long-term sustenance of autonomy in higher education institutions.

Research Questions

1. How does the central government sustain the autonomy of higher education institutions?
2. How does the state government sustain the autonomy of higher education institutions?
3. How do higher education institutions sustain autonomy at the institute level?
4. How do the faculty members sustain the autonomy of higher education institutions?
5. How do the students sustain the autonomy of higher education institutions?

4. Research Methodology

The study is an explorative quantitative research in the context of NEP 2020. Therefore the stages and characteristics of explorative study are followed for completing the study.

- Sample: The researcher selected a purposive sample to gather the information and views of the respondents. Respondents were selected from all over India, all types of institutions, and all levels of the institute. Three percent respondents are from the Indian Institute of Technology and National Institute of Technology, twenty percent respondents are from universities, twenty percent respondents are from engineering colleges, nineteen respondents are from polytechnics, one percent respondents are from national institute of technical teachers training and research and 18 percent respondents are from other institutes. Out of 752 respondents, 4% are Directors and Principal, 7% are Deans, 11% are head of departments, 25% are faculty members, 18% are students and 35% are other respondents.

- Research Instrument: As there is no standard research instrument available related to sustenance of autonomy of higher education institutions in Indian context. The researcher designed a comprehensive, concise, precise, and accurate structured and semi-structured research instrument based on the literature review, experiences, and focus group discussion. The instrument comprises structured questions, semi-structured questions and open-ended questions. This research instrument was validated on content and construct in a group of six persons working in the area of autonomy. Then it was prepared in the Google form which was validated by forty respondents.

- Respondents: The respondents are principals, heads of departments, senior faculty members working in national-level institutes, higher education institutes, and technical institutions.

- Data collection: The instrument was mailed to more than 8000 respondents out of which 954 respondents provided information. The information is provided by

principals, deans, heads of departments, and senior faculty members. Secondary information is also used to fill up the gap to achieve the research objective.

- Data analysis: The information of structured instrument is compiled using Microsoft Excel Sheet to calculate the weighted mean and percentage. In this instrument information strategies were identified and provided so the respondents had to put a tick mark against each strategy on three-point scale. The information received in response to the semi-structured instrument was immense, qualitative and innovative incorporating more than 5000 ideas. It appeared from the information that respondents are having hundreds of ideas but there is no one to share with. The research provided them a vent to share their feelings on autonomy, quality, accreditation, motivation and grievances.

The information is classified on a wide spectrum of parameters using 5 iterations to finalize the parameters and conclusions. The analysis of qualitative information was a challenge for the researcher to maintain the spirit of the information, avoid duplication, appropriately articulate the information on parameters and draw the conclusion.

5. Findings

5.1. Strategies for Long Term Sustenance of Autonomy at Central Government Level

The identified strategies contribute 67 to 69 percent (Table 2) for the sustenance of autonomy at the higher education institute level.

Table 2: Strategies for long term sustenance of autonomy at Central Government Level

Strategies	Mean	Percentage
Developing a national qualification framework to provide a base for establishing quality standards.	2.76	69
Establishing a structure by which autonomous universities will be free from the control of politics.	2.75	69
Providing inclusive quality education and learning opportunities for all at affordable cost at the national level.	2.74	68
Developing and implementing policies for autonomous institutions at the national level addressing global employment and economic requirements.	2.70	68
Encouraging autonomous institutions for international collaborative programmes to ensure the quality of education at par with global standards.	2.70	67
Standard Deviation	**0.03**	**Av= 68%**

5.1.1 Regulating Autonomous Institutions at the National and State Level

The central government should provide detailed policies on:

- Different aspects of governance and management of the institute
- Quality assurance of education
- Training and development of faculty and staff members
- Research and services offered by the institute to technical staff, ministerial staff, students, and other significant stakeholders.
- Mandatory and optional contribution of HEIs to broaden the scope (reach, access, equal opportunity, quality) of higher education in the country

- HEIs should be encouraged to function with a larger network of world of work and not in isolation.
- Granting autonomy in all the dimensions of autonomy i.e. academic, managerial, administerial, and financial in an integrated and balanced manner.

5.2. Strategies for Long Term Sustenance of Autonomy at the State Government Level

The identified strategies contribute 65 to 68 percent (Table 3) for the sustenance of autonomy at the higher education institute level.

Table 3: Strategies for long term sustenance of autonomy at the State Government level

Strategies	Mean	Percentage
Developing a state qualification framework to provide a base for establishing quality standards.	2.73	68
Developing and implementing policies for converting public universities into autonomous universities.	2.68	67
Developing policies for local and regional economic development from higher engineering institutions.	2.65	66
Regulating the autonomous institutes differently in accordance with education policy.	2.64	66

Developing a foreign exchange programme for faculty and students.	2.59	65
Standard Deviation	**0.05**	**Av= 66%**

5.2.1. Regulating autonomy at the regulatory level

- Strategic plan: The regulatory authority should come out with a clear strategic plan to achieve the vision of higher education in the country. The regulatory authority should consider the expectations of the world of work to prepare the strategic plan for the higher education system for the country. The policies and guidelines issued by the government should be detailed out in the action plan. The regulatory system of higher education should be transparent and available on the website of the authority. The regulatory system should take quick actions for non-adherence to rules and regulations. The regulatory system should use strong and direct criteria for monitoring and use of autonomy at the institute level. The institutions should be mentored for achieving quality education and excellence.

- Standards for governance and management: The regulatory authorities should develop minimum standards for governing and managing the institutions. These standards should be finalized in consensus with the HEIs and other significant stakeholders like industry, professional societies, and the public at large. They should make it mandatory for industry and institutions to work collaboratively to combine the strengths and cover up the weaknesses of both. They should grant all power to institutes to develop their scheme and curriculum as per industry-based considering the global and local requirements within the national framework. The authorities should encourage the institutes to enter into collaboration with industry, research, professional societies, and foreign universities.

- Regulatory mechanism: The regulatory authority should collect annual performance data and thoroughly analyze it for taking corrective and preventive actions. The regulation of higher education should be undertaken by one regulating body and not by many regulating bodies like University Grants Commission, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, All India Council for Technical Education, National Board of Accreditation, Department of Higher Education of the State Government, parent university and the like. The regulatory mechanism should be strong, direct, simple, and transparent.

- Guideline document: The regulatory authorities should prepare guideline documents to assure a minimum level of quality, uniformity, accountability, and transparency at HEIs level. These documents may be prepared on different heads of the functioning of the institute such as managing educational programmes, curriculum design, implementation and evaluation, human resource management, mentoring of institutions, quality standards and benchmarks, regulation of autonomy, and managing research projects.

- Quality standards: At the national level minimum student-faculty ratio should be prescribed to ensure the quality of education. This ratio should be 1:20 and an additional student-faculty ratio of 1:5 may for visiting, adjunct, emeritus contract, guest faculty (equivalent to full-time faculty) be prescribed for all types of HEIs. This ratio should be maintained to assure the quality of education. At the national level quality standards should be decided and communicated to the institution. There should be an effective mechanism at the national level to mentor the institutes for achieving the quality of education.

5.2.2. Strategies to be used by the regulator to make the institute accountable on all dimensions of autonomy

- Appointing screening committee: At the regulator level screening committee should be appointed to ensure that the institutes are adhering to rules, norms, and guidelines of autonomy. This should be ensured through mandatory disclosure on a portal of the regulator and respective institute. The screening committee should verify the use of autonomy accordingly to the rules on a sample basis. The committee should investigate the complaints received about the misuse or wrong use of autonomy. The regulator should design a vigilance mechanism to monitor the use of autonomy. The committee should organize surprise visits and third-party visits of the institutes for onsite verification purposes. Regulators should update the rules, regulations, and guidelines considering the developments taking place in the use of autonomy.

- Create awareness: Regulators should conduct awareness programmes on various dimensions of autonomy and training programmes for educational leaders to use autonomy for sustaining and maintaining the quality of education.

- Performance report: The institute should be directed to submit the performance report (quantitative and qualitative) on well-defined criteria. The format of the performance report and process of submission may be decided by the regulator.

- Verifying the information: The regulator should appoint experts for onsite visits to verify the use of autonomy. The experts may receive 360-degree feedback from stakeholders on the use of autonomy.
- Institute development plan: The institute development plan comprising vision, mission, goals, strategies, values, strategies to sustain the quality of education, and research should be prepared and submitted to the regulator. A brief report on the use of autonomy should be submitted to the regulator.
- Create autonomy cell and quality assurance cell: Institutes should be asked to create autonomy and quality assurance cell to ensure effective, efficient, and constructive use of autonomy and assuring the quality of education.
- Publish achievements: Institutes should be asked to publish major achievements of the institute on the institute website. The institute should be asked to publish achievements on admission status every year, analysis of students result, job placement analysis, achievements of faculty members, revenue generated, organization of national and international events, satisfaction level of students after completing programme, researches conducted, patents received, innovations and incubations completed, the contribution of alumni, academic audit and self-appraisal report.
- Enforcing rules and regulations: The regulators should enforce rules and regulations strictly and making it mandatory to adhere to rules and regulations.
- Foster healthy competition: The regulator should promote healthy competition among institutions to use the full potential of autonomy for assuring and improving the quality of education and research.

- Encouraging participative methods: Institutions should be encouraged to create teams' structure and use participative methods of decision making in governance and management of the institute to ensure mutual accountability.
- Promote decentralization and delegation of power: Institutions should use methods of decentralized, delegation and empowerment to decentralize and distribute the decision-making power where the role is performed.
- Accountability: Autonomy and accountability should be made mutually complementary at the institute level. Institute should be encouraged to build a collaborative relationship with regulators and stakeholders. Institutes should develop a mechanism for receiving 360-degree feedback to improve performance. Institutes should ensure professional governance at the institute level. The institute should create a provision for external academic monitoring and academic audit every three years. The criteria, process, and formats for ensuring effective use of autonomy, and monitoring the use of autonomy should be declared by regulators for the institutions. The regulators should take strict action against the institute on misuse of autonomy.

5.3. Strategies for Long Term Sustenance of Autonomy at Institute Level

The identified strategies contribute 68 to 70 percent (Table 4) for the sustenance of autonomy at the higher education institute level.

Table 4: Strategies for long term sustenance of autonomy at institute level

Strategies	Mean	Percentage
Regulating institutes according to a common set of national norms.	2.79	70
Strengthening education system for stakeholders addressing their expectations.	2.76	69
Developing and implementing qualification framework, and quality assurance system.	2.75	69
Developing a documentation cell for preparing compliance report at the institute level.	2.75	69
Developing human resources autonomy at all levels of the institute.	2.75	69
Encouraging autonomous institutions for recognizing industrial experiences as a qualification to contribute to academic activities.	2.75	69
Developing intellectual progress demands addressing the growth of the education system.	2.75	69
Strengthening of vocational education and training at institute level addressing higher education.	2.74	69
Establishing a cell at the institute level to facilitate sustenance of autonomy.	2.72	68
Establishing a culture relating to freedom of financial management addressing economic requirements.	2.70	68
Standard Deviation	**0.02**	**Av= 69%**

5.3.1. Implementation of autonomy at institute level

Institutes should work in a transparent manner through their actions. Institutes should have well-designed management systems and processes. The faculty members should have the flexibility to do experimentation. The power to act without external control is essential. Internal decision-making with a high degree of transparency should be promoted. The institute should strive to improve in all areas of functioning. The institute should establish a self-monitoring mechanism to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of educational programmes, researches, and services. The institutions should prepare an institute development plan in the context of NEP 2020.

- Leadership: The institute heads must be visionary. They should not have any influence on politics or caste or religion. They should have the ability to work as a team leader. They must select the visionary leaders for the departments, portfolios, and cells. The head of the institute should truly lead the institute by demonstrating leadership skills. The institutional head should empower everyone in the institute to perform their role effectively and efficiently. The institute head should design the institutional structure to ensure the effective performance of the institute. The heads of various cells such as curriculum development cell (CDC), examination management cell, placement cell, staff development cell, student affairs management cell, mentoring cell, professional society chapters, learning utilization cell, consultancy cell should be appointed through a competitive process of selection. The institute should have a team structure for achieving the goals effectively and efficiently. The faculty members should be motivated to accept the challenges and produce better results. The faculty members should be provided with the infrastructure and resources to perform their roles and responsibilities.

- Autonomy cell: A cell to exploit the full potential of autonomy should be constituted at the institute level. This cell should provide guidance, support, and resources to implement the decisions. The autonomy cell should create awareness and educate educational leaders to use the autonomy to perform their roles and responsibilities. The faculty and staff members should be provided the freedom to express their views on institutional functioning to improve the performance of the institute. The head of the institute and faculty members should listen to the problems, views, and suggestions of the students. Absolute integrity with

a dedication to academic and research duties must be maintained. There should be a degree of self-governance necessary for effective decision-making by institutes of higher education regarding their academic work standards, management, and related activities. Institutions should prepare the policies on all significant areas of functioning and implement them in the true sense. The organizational structure of the institute should encourage responsiveness and enforce accountability.

- Mentoring of the institute: The institutions should come forward to learn from premier institutes of the county and world to quantitatively and qualitatively grow to maintain the quality of education, research, and services. The institute may have more than one mentoring institute with different purposes in different areas of functioning.

- Educational programmes: The HEIs should be permitted to offer need-based programmes within the national framework declared by regulatory authorities. These programmes should be well designed incorporating the provisions of the NEP 2020. The programmes should be offered on outcome-based education philosophy considering interdisciplinary requirements. The institutions should be permitted to start, modify, and close the educational programme considering various factors, like admission, employment, funding, and entrepreneurship.

- Quality education: The institute should establish systems and processes using scientific tools and techniques, software, and apps to assure the quality of education, research, and services. The educational leaders, faculty members, staff members, and students should be trained to assure the quality of learning and development at the institute level. The faculty members should be financially rewarded for achieving quality goals. The institute should follow national standards and guidelines for assuring the quality of education, research, and services. An academic audit and monitoring mechanism for ensuring the quality of education should be implemented at the institute level. A scientific academic audit system should be designed and implemented at the institute level to assure quality and improve the quality of education and research. The academic audit should be used as a strong tool and technique to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of education and research.

- Outcome-based curriculum: The institute should be permitted to design an outcome-based curriculum for all the programmes. The curriculum should be designed following national standards and guidelines issued by the regulatory bodies. The institute should revise

the curriculum as per the needs of the industry and developments taking place in the industry. Practical-based courses should have 80% practical and 20 % theory. The curriculum should incorporate collaborative aspects of the implementation of the curriculum, minimum resources required, and the training required in faculty members and technical staff. The curriculum should be designed involving representatives of all the stakeholders. The practical aspect of learning should be given more attention rather than theory.

- Curriculum implementation: The institutes should develop systems and processes for the effective implementation of the outcome-based curriculum. The focus of curriculum implementation should be students centric teaching-learning, use of technology and information technology, encouraging higher-order thinking, fostering creativity, reflection, peer learning, self-learning, practical approaches, problem-based and project-based learning. The curriculum implementation processes should be reviewed frequently based on the academic audit report, feedback of the students, and co-faculty members. The students' major projects should be selected from the world of work situations which are related to complex problem solving, innovation, latest technology, and application-oriented. The industrial visit and internship should be an integral event of curriculum implementation.

- Academic culture: At the institute level conducive, flexible, innovative, learning, development, quality, ethical environment should be created. The educational leaders, faculty members, staff members, and students should be encouraged to offer constructive feedback for improvement. A culture of openness, positivity, wellness, constructive criticism, respecting diversity should be created.

- Resources: At the institute level resources should be increased to achieve the goals of the institute. The resources should be timely available to perform the activities effectively, efficiently, and timely. The culture of sharing the resources within the institute should be promoted. The institutes should be encouraged to mobilize the resources of stakeholders such as alumni, industry, professional bodies, and funding agencies.

- Faculty: All regular faculty members should be placed as per the selection process decided at the national level and trained in professional competencies. Similarly, competent technical staff and ministerial staff should be made available. Faculty members perform at a cutting-edge level, so they should be empowered to have high morale and demonstrate high performance.

- Branding: The institute should develop its core competence and an adaptable brand strategy should be implemented for branding its academic programmes, researches, and services. The institute development plan should incorporate a branding strategy.

- Accreditation: The institute should continuously improve the quality of performance to satisfy the criteria and sub-criteria set by the accreditation agency for obtaining accreditation from national and international agencies. The institute should strive for getting a higher level of accreditation and a greater degree of autonomy.

- Financial: The institute should decentralize financial and other powers at the lowest level. Financial support from the government may be increased for various innovative, research, and student development-oriented activities. Full Financial support from the government should be provided with full financial autonomy. The institute should be compelled to provide salary as per norms set at the national or state level.

- Administration: The academic discipline should be ensured in the institute using well-designed administrative processes that are transparent. The administrative processes should be encouraging and motivating and should not create frustration and demotivation, tension and stress in the employees. The transfers in government institutes should be minimum.

- Assessment of students learning: The assessment scheme, tools, techniques, and mode should be part of the curriculum design and implementation. The assessment should be used as a learning motivation, learning problem diagnosis, and grading tool. The teaching-learning process should be followed to develop the learning outcomes and the assessment process should be integrated with it.

- Fee structure: There should be guidelines for the regulation of fee structure from the government of India which should be followed by all institutions. The students should be financially supported for different innovative activities. There should be a balance between the fee and the facilities in the institute.

- Innovations and change management: The institute should design and implement innovations to bring systemic improvement. A sudden change cannot be accepted by implementers and beneficiaries of the education system so step-by-step implementation of change may be promoted.

- Training and development: At the institute level, encourage self-learning as an important aspect of learning and development. Educational leaders should be trained in management development, organization development, and quality assurance.

- Placement: The industry and other major stakeholders should be involved right from the policymaking to the placement of students for the job. So that student

development will be focused on learning, skills, and innovation.

- Strengthening research work: Institutes should conduct domain-specific research studies on real-life problems. They should also undertake research studies on improving the quality of education. Research is a crucial element of quality education. Therefore, planned efforts should be made to increase the number of researches and their quality. Provide adequate research facilities to the institute where the faculty members have integrity, honesty, and competency to undertake research studies. Treat all institutes in a similar manner.

- Faculty training and development: The faculty members should be trained in domain-specific areas, pedagogy, research, and managing various portfolios in the institute. They should be mentored as envisaged in the national mentoring mission. Interaction among faculty members should be increased on issues and challenges the institute is facing.

- Recruitment and placement: Competent people should be selected and posted on all positions. The existing people should be appropriately deployed for the right role to ensure effective performance and achieve outcomes.

- Motivation to the students: The students should be encouraged to participate in innovation, experimentations, national and international events for their development. The institute and faculty members should encourage the students to harness their full potential for learning and development. Students' performance will speak about the quality of the programmes.

- Criteria for granting autonomy to institutions: The institutes should earn autonomy instead of expecting autonomy. Autonomy should be granted based on the quality of education and performance of the institute on criteria and process prevailing at the institute level. The performance of the institute for the last 10 to 15 years should be considered for granting autonomy. Autonomy should be granted to those institutes that can self-sustain. The precondition for granting autonomy should be the satisfaction of norms and standards issued by regulatory bodies. The institute should be capable of using autonomy in the right way for achieving academic excellence. The governance and management of the institution should be able to assure the quality of education, transparent in administration, cope up with the changes taking place in the external environment, and implement sustainable development strategies. The integrity, transparency, and professional governance of the institute play a significant role in getting autonomy.

- Criteria for granting autonomy: The criteria for granting autonomy should be decided at the national level with flexibility within criteria. The criteria should cover performance in academic and research areas, professional leadership, academic and research facilities, industrial collaboration, the rank of the institute in the national ranking framework, academic environment in the institute, quality of human resources, institute governance and management, the satisfaction of employees, admissions, benefits to students, financial soundness, contribution to social development, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, research work, innovation, incubation, feedback of stakeholders, international events, strict action on fake data, grievance management.

- Governance and management: The head of the institute should work and develop the institute without any pressure. But at the same time, he/she must be assessed using significant performance indicators. Control and regulation of full freedom is needed. The government should put forward a check and balance system to regulate autonomy, but prime superior governance should be under parent organization. The government should control the financial activity and the rest of the power should be with the institute. The government should encourage experimentation of full autonomy for a few selected institutions having excellent academic records, integrity, honesty, competency at all levels, caliber of the institute management, and time tested. The audit process may be inbuilt in the experimentation to use the full autonomy for a greater cause. The procedure adopted by the institute should be monitored periodically and must be verified. It should be in stages and based on compliance. Policy for staff-related payment, their service condition should be as per the condition mentioned by a regulatory authority. Faculty performance will increase if they are treated properly in fully autonomous institutions. Staff and students are the important pillars for a successful institute hence a progressive approach is essential but initially, there must be some hand-holding by an institute of national importance. Create teams to work with greater efficiency and productivity. The institutes should be granted full autonomy with very high-level academic performance indicators (National & International). It should be strictly based on the feedback of all the stakeholders including students, parents, industry experts, and academicians.

5.3.2. Strategies to sustain the impact of the autonomy at the institute level

Institutes should conduct six yearly comprehensive in-depth audit on all areas of functioning of the institute,

improve overall governance and management, ensure and maintain job placement and entrepreneurship, sustain and improve research studies quantitatively and qualitatively, undertake educational research studies to improve the relevance, quality and acceptability of education, ensure selection of right person for right job, select the person who can maintain the legacy of autonomy and comfortable in decision making, conduct academic audit and monitoring and take corrective and preventive actions, ensure consistency in implementation of systems and processes through guideline documents, awareness and training, use direct and strong 360-degree feedback for identifying the deficiencies and knowing the suggestions, foster use of technology and information technology in all aspects of functioning of the institute, inculcate adaptive culture for change at all levels of the institute from director to students, create system for timely designing, reviewing and revising curriculum, foster academic and research culture to achieve the goals, grab opportunities aligned to vision of the institute and beneficial to the institute, use sustainable planning models for educational institutions, foster team work and participative management practices, strengthen collaboration and networking with industry, sister institutions, alumni, professional bodies and research organizations, encourage start-ups, set higher goals to achieve year after year, aspire for higher level of accreditation and international level accreditation, take advantage of mentoring of institute and faculty members from premier institutes and renowned experts, encourage use of autonomous learning among students and teachers, retain professional and committed faculty members, ensure satisfaction of faculty members, staff members and students, enforce accountability for decision making and performance, reduce student teacher ratio, continuously update the infrastructure as per need of the educational programmes and research studies, ask the alumni and students to become brand ambassador for the institute, encourage everyone to adhere to and promote professional ethics, and tolerate unintentional mistakes.

5.3.3. Methods to promote autonomy at different levels of the institute to provide quick services to students and stakeholders

- Team structure: Institute should create teams' structure at the institute level. In this regard, a separate cell should be opened in the institute to provide better and timely services to students and all stakeholders. Institute should form teams and clubs of students for achieving various purposes at the institute and department level. These teams may be empowered to take decisions.
- Social platform: Institute should use social platforms and print media for spreading information related to the functioning of the institute and the person authorized for the same.
- Roles: Institute should clearly define and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the teams and individual positions. Institute should give authority to take the decision and make available all necessary resources. Institute should decentralize powers at various levels in the institute to perform the roles of the teams, sections, and cells.
- Feedback: Institute should create an opportunity to provide feedback on regular basis on all aspects of institute functioning and analyzing the feedback for improving the quality of the education.
- Image building: Institute should undertake image-building exercises using marketing, advertising, and word-of-mouth publicity.
- Decision making: Institute should be granted freedom to decide on its own about its academic and research programmes. The forming administrative hierarchy consists of faculty members. The administrative responsibility should be given on two years rotation basis.
- Curriculum: Institute should revise the curriculum in consultation with industry and alumni.
- Autonomous learning: Institute should encourage autonomous learning to develop desirable skills. Provide autonomy to students also with procedural autonomy for the development of their skills at all levels
- Guidelines: Institute should declare uniform guidelines for using the autonomy and delegated powers.
- Selection: Institute should select faculty members with a passion for providing services to students. While administrative and support staff should be given a clear understanding of the importance of quick services to students and stakeholders.
- Training: Institute should provide adequate training not only to use the autonomy but also to inculcate the responsibilities associated with it.
- Change management: Institute should use a pull system instead of a push system for designing and implementing innovations and reforms.

- Implementation: Institute should promote autonomy in a slow and selected way, as initially, it looks slow, but it brings long-lasting effect.
- Politics: Institute should be free from internal and external politics and free from the influence of the government and government policies not related to academic activities.

5.4. Strategies for Long Term Sustenance of Autonomy at the Teacher Level

The identified strategies contribute 69 to 72 percent (Table 5) for the sustenance of autonomy at the higher education institute level.

Table 5: Strategies for long term sustenance of autonomy at the teacher level

Strategies	Mean	Percentage
Professionally guiding, coaching, mentoring, and counseling students for the career	2.87	72
Promoting self-learning, collaborative and cooperative learning among students	2.87	72
Encouraging Google Suite Applications (Google Classrooms) or similar to Improve Teaching-Learning Process	2.84	71
Developing lifelong learning abilities in students	2.84	71
Creating an encouraging, developing oriented and positive environment for academic activities for students	2.83	71
Encouraging and developing a culture for learner-centric approaches	2.82	70
Encouraging professional, fair, transparent, and ethical practices in the institute	2.81	70
Developing the habit of enhancing, renewing, and adapting the quality of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular practices	2.81	70
Using information, communication technology, and learning management systems to improve the curriculum implementation and assessment of learning	2.77	69
Encouraging students to develop abilities in vogue in the world of work situation	2.76	69
Standard Deviation	**0.04**	**Av= 71%**

5.5. Strategies for Long Term Sustenance of Autonomy at the Student Level

The identified strategies contribute 69 to 72 percent (Table 6) for the sustenance of autonomy at the higher education institute level.

Table 6: Strategies for long term sustenance of autonomy at the student level

Strategies	Mean	Percentage
Developing abilities such as self-learning, peer learning, collaborative and cooperative learning among students	2.88	72
Developing life skills (communication skills, professional skills, leadership and management skills, and universal human values) and learning to learn attitude	2.85	71
Harnessing the full potential of students through guidance, counselling, coaching, and mentoring	2.83	71
Creating opportunities for earning during the study through apprenticeship and working on live projects	2.81	70
Creating simulated situations of interview, teaching, real-life examples, emotions, and work pressure	2.81	70
Developing students to go for exploiting self-employment opportunities	2.76	69
Standard Deviation	**0.04**	**Av. = 71%**

6. Suggestions

In the context of NEP 2020, the government of India should constitute the regulatory mechanism as envisaged in the NEP 2020. This regulatory system should come out with detailed policies, systems, quality standards, guidelines for obtaining autonomy and sustaining autonomy at the institute level. The strategies identified in this study at central government, state government, regulatory organization, institute, teacher, and student levels may be incorporated appropriately in the guideline document for tapping the potential of autonomy and sustaining autonomy for continuous improvement and innovations in academics, research, and services.

7. Conclusion

The autonomy is contemplated in the National Education Policy 2020 for higher education institutions. It may be easier to get the autonomy for the institutions but it is difficult to sustain the autonomy for a longer duration. In this study numbers of strategies for sustaining the autonomy of institutions are evolved that may be implemented through appropriate institutional framework at different levels of hierarchy.

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