Autonomy and independence are very important for universities

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(IANS) Universities have been forums to create knowledge and exchange knowledge. They have been instrumental in transforming the nation into a knowledge society. Over time, universities' academic freedom has been curbed, and their importance as a medium of social change has diminished. The Academic Freedom Index released by the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) shows that academic freedom of universities has been challenging in many countries. A statement by Albert Einstein became quite famous, because of academic freedom, I understood the right to discover the truth and to publish the truth and to tell the truth. Duty is also enshrined in this right. No one should hide any part which is believed to be true.

Recent events at a prestigious Indian university are a matter of public concern worldwide and are also highly relevant and relate to academic freedom, institutional autonomy and regulatory

rigor. When many issues of academic freedom are being debated in the public sector, we should make a deeper and more granular analysis of these issues as this will shape the future of universities in India and around the world.

To begin with, it is necessary to mention that academic freedom is fundamental to any university in the world. It is a matter of pride for democracy that precious places in democratic societies are protected where freedom of speech is duly protected and promoted. In a democracy where there is freedom of expression of various ideas, any kind of ideological dogma whether it is leftist or right wing is not good for universities. At the heart of academic freedom has been the preservation of democratic standards, the promotion of pluralism and the nurturing of democratic institutions.

Our challenge as educators is to identify universities that play a complex role as social organizations. No unique circumstances favor a public or private university to promote academic freedom in its institutional context. However, undoubtedly historical, social, political and economic factors are contributing to institutionalizing educational freedom in some societies.

The basic objective of university administration is to promote academic freedom while ensuring institutional autonomy, for which the following three principles are important. First, all appointments, reviews and evaluations of teachers and staff should be done entirely within the university. They should be based on merit and function and should be based on university policies, rules and regulations. The decision-making powers to implement these procedures should be vested in the leadership of the university, which includes faculty and staff. All outsiders, including the donor, however important it may be, should be excluded from the process. In order to protect academic freedom, the internal administration of a university should be vested solely with faculty members and not outside the university.

Secondly, all decisions related to the program, curriculum, syllabus, teaching and establishment of schools / departments should be determined in accordance with the policies, rules and regulations of the University within the University and all the decision making powers rest with the faculty members and staff of the University. needed. When these decisions conform to the laws, rules, regulations and guidelines given by various governmental and regulatory bodies and are based on international best criteria, no person outside the university should control or influence these decisions.

And third, all decisions related to research conducted by faculty members, including their publication, should be based on the principles of academic freedom and intellectual autonomy. Faculty members who are involved in academic research should have full autonomy

to determine research projects, including research topics and research results. When faculty members are busy with such research and publications the truth will come out of power and it should be based on evidence, especially when the purpose of research is to inform policy-making.

We then need to recognize the importance of two central aspects of university governance to establish academic freedom meaningfully in Indian universities. One, regulatory independence. The National Policy on Education (NEP) 2020 envisages substantial regulatory reforms to empower Indian universities.

Public or private, universities in India depend on a number of stakeholders for effective internal administration. These stakeholders are inside and outside the institution. Without achieving sufficient regulatory independence, no university can act in a truly autonomous manner and protect the academic freedom of faculty members and students. I believe this is the goal of NEP 2020, which promotes a lightweight yet tight-lipped regulatory framework to ensure integrity, transparency and resource efficiency, and innovation and the most divergent ideas through autonomy, good governance and empowerment Encourages

Second, there is a need to develop a culture of transparency in universities in which important decisions are taken after proper consultation with all stakeholders. The need for consultation, communication and consensus building is mandatory. However, for the validity and acceptance of decisions, trust, respect and simultaneous governance among all stakeholders must be a fundamental and fundamental aspect of governance. Otherwise, disagreements can lead to interpersonal relationships that can damage the academic and intellectual ecosystem, and universities should guard against this.

If the vision and vision of NEP 2020 is implemented in the true sense and in the right way, it will promote the excellence of Indian universities and universities will be able to provide world-class education while contributing to nation-building. For the nation, institutions, especially universities, 'is associated with the core principles of self-reliance, independence, autonomy and governance.

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