

WEST BENGAL COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

(REGISTERED UNDER ACT XXI 1860)

89, MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD, KOLKATA-700 007

Telefax : 2241-2060/2219-8930, E-mail: wbcuta@yahoo.in

Website: <http://www.wbcuta.org>

Ref. No. 16/UGC/2017

Dated the 14-06-2017

To

Jaspal S. Sadhu,
Secretary,
University Grants Commission,
New Delhi.

Subject: Feedback on UGC 'Public Notice' no. F.1-112017 (Secy) dt. 2nd June, 2017.

Dear Sir,

I on behalf of West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association hereby submit our observation on UGC's 'Public Notice no.F.1-112017 (Secy) dt.2nd June, 2017. The recently published UGC regulations on Categorisation of universities for grant of graded autonomy, 2017 and other related regulations cast a shadow on the possibility of raising the quality of higher education and research in the country. The said regulations are divisive and against the spirit of citizens' right to pursue higher education freely without any kind of prejudices or hindrances arising out of socio-economic disparity. The idea of categorisation, with its repeated emphasis on self-finance, partnership with corporates to raise funding, creation of centres for skill generation, making NET/SET mandatory for pursuing PHD cannot be positive moves towards making higher education accessible to the very diverse and heterogeneous body of students of India. Such a move only creates division among the students, based not on merit or academic excellence but economic solvency and social position. Higher education in India already suffers from multiple complexities. And without infrastructural developments and pulling of funds many of the crises cannot be resolved as well.

WBCUTA OBSERVATION ON UGC REGULATION 2017

1. We encourage Quality improvement in Higher Education giving emphasis on Research and Development. At the same time we demand increase in public funding by way of enhancing budgetary allotment both at Center and State level to ensure inclusive growth in overall educational sector especially in higher education. Categorisation of Universities (both public funded and private using same parameter) without giving emphasis on academic freedom/autonomy may lead to mere administrative reforms of such institutions. This may also motivate private entrepreneurs at the cost of public funded education system. UGC must think twice before executing such Regulation.
2. We demand regular assessment and academic audit of educational institutions but our experience regarding procedural framework of NAAC for such purpose is not up to the level of satisfaction. In many cases basis of assessment of some age old institution or reputed university does not consider the burdens, limitations and access to resource mobilization with a positive approach. Newly built up Universities in the remote area cannot prepare for NAAC assessment from the very beginning. This Regulation allows no space for such institutions. On the other hand a shopping mall in the name of educational institution with sufficient infrastructural support and external beauty does not always care for its social obligation. But these institutions are getting higher grades by way of representing them according to the need of the market. **We therefore strongly oppose the proposal for categorization of universities on the basis of NAAC assessment. It will ultimately lead to commodification of Higher Education which is the alarming signal of neo-liberal regime.** We demand thorough review of existing assessment framework of NAAC before considering the system as one of the important parameters for Categorisation of institutions.

3. The second option for categorizing these universities on the basis of NIRF Ranking is more dangerous. We think it's a defective design and most unscientific method of ranking of higher educational institutions simply on the basis of certain Data-Input format and without considering the reality and experience of the stakeholders. In West Bengal, if we consider the overall performance of some State Universities like Calcutta, Jadavpur, Burdwan, Kalyani and North Bengal during last decades, it do no tally with the Ranking of Universities made by NIRF. There is no reflection of Research work and other prestigious project work supervised by the learned faculties of these universities in the NIRF Ranking profile. In our opinion NIRF Ranking of higher educational institutions should never be considered as an important parameter for policy framework.
4. In our opinion, procedure of Categorisation i.e., at least two times in a year (page-4, 6.1) is mechanical and unscientific. It will ultimately force the institutions to an unhealthy competition for filling of forms for higher grade. Transparency of academic institution will be at stake.
5. We think collaboration with Foreign Educational Institutions for the purpose of awarding Degrees (page-2, 2(e)) without having any greater academic interest, is an effort to make Degrees saleable in the competitive market. UGC should keep distance from such type of unethical and immoral activity.

6. Eligibility criteria for a Foreign Educational Institution mentioned in sec 3(1) is ambiguous as there is no such uniform assessment or accreditation procedure in the European or Asian countries. Experience shows, some of the US Academic Institutions holding vague ranking have been cheating Indian students year after year. We cannot give them red carpet reception under the leadership of UGC for making their Degrees saleable. Operative arrangements (sec 3(1) c) should not be a parameter for academic collaboration.
7. We strongly oppose the proposal for automatic granting of 12(B) Status (sec 2.3.01) to the institutions under first two categories.
8. This regulation proposes that category I institutions may start new courses, programmes, departments, schools, centres etc. without approval of the Commission [2.3.03]. In regulation it is further mentioned that all such courses, departments etc. are to be opened in self – financing mode. This is not acceptable because if self -financing courses are opened at random then students coming from financially weaker background will be deprived of admission in those courses. In general, parents will have to shoulder huge financial burden to pay the fees of these self - financing courses.
9. In the proposed regulation it has been mentioned that Category I institutions may open research parks, incubation centres etc. in either self – financing mode or with private partners [2.3.05]. This is a dangerous proposal and will compel the top ranking institutions in the country to go for privatization.

10. It is proposed that Category I institutions may build an incentive structure to attract talents – but the incentive has to be paid from the own resources of the institutions [2.3.08]. This again is not acceptable because most of the Universities in India have very little as own resource and the easiest way to compensate that will be increase in student fees. The end result will be higher education will become more expensive and out of reach of the common people.
11. Existing Ph d / M Phil Regulation is more than sufficient for the scholars of Indian Universities. There is no need of Categorisation of Ph D Regulation (sec 3) for different types of universities. We should give emphasis on extension of quality research work instead of restricting it by way of introducing mechanical entry bar like NET/SET.

We believe that the best minds, best facilities are not confined to categorised institutions unless there is a comprehensive and time tested method to guarantee the same. Universities are made up of teachers and students and guaranteeing free exchange of ideas, providing right environment and infrastructure conducive for healthy intellectual growth will automatically augment the quality of higher education and lead to creation of centres of excellence thereby nullifying any attempt towards categorisation. And education is pursued for various reasons, not just for employment. Many pursuing education just for the love of it, without aiming any material gain. NET/ Set are professional qualifying examinations but making them compulsory for pursuing PHD will prevent many eager students from acquiring knowledge. This will create a situation where knowledge is

only functional. At a time when the world is ridden with negative thoughts and terror, the nurturing of rational thinking, sensibilities, aesthetics and finer qualities should be prioritized.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Srutinath Praharaj', with a stylized, cursive script.

(Dr. Srutinath Praharaj)
General Secretary,
WBCUTA
Mobile No. 09433820610
E-mail – spraharaj1960@gmail.com