CHAPTER VIII

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The Academic Council is one of the university authorities established for the promotion of academic pursuits. It is the adviser, friend, philosopher and guide of all the other university authorities and university officers so far as academic matters are concerned. It is not a body subordinate to any one. The Act endowed it with coordinate authority and independent powers and functions.

Composition:

We shall now consider the composition of the Academic Council. The Statutes of the Gauhati University Act, 1947 require that the Vice-Chancellor shall be an ex-officio member and Chairman of the Academic Council. Besides the Vice-Chancellor, the Deans of the Faculties are ex-officio members of the Council. As regards others, the composition changed from time to time. In 1947, the Principals of all colleges were ex-officio members of the Council. But in course of time the number of colleges went on increasing and consequently the strength of the Principals in the Council also increased. In 1950, of the 34 members that were present at its annual
meeting, as many as 24 were principals. Even in 1950, the attendance of Principals at the meetings of the council was not less than fifty percent of the total strength of the Council. It was realised that all the Principals constituted themselves into a solid block and dominated the proceedings of the Council. The other members were heterogeneous in character. In order to maintain a balance of different interests in the Council, the Act was amended in 1960. The amended Act laid down that only five Principals shall be members of the Council. In other words, all the Principals constituted themselves into an electoral college and elected five from amongst themselves. The amended Act placed another limitation, namely, that of the five Principals elected at least one should be a Principal of a professional college. But we think that the representation of the Principals in the Academic Council is not adequate. It is, therefore, suggested that their representation may be increased.

In 1947, all the Professors and Readers of the University were members of the Academic Council. With the increase in the number of Departments, there was increase in the number of Professors and Readers in the Council out of all proportion. Therefore in 1960 the Act was amended and only Readers who were Heads of the Departments were made ex-officio
members of the Council. There was no reduction in the representation of Professors. Thus, while all professors were members of the Council not all Readers were members.

The Librarian was always a member of the Council. Since Library is the heart of the University, it is necessary that its administrator should be a member of the Council so that he may participate in the deliberations in regard to the library administration.

The next class of persons who were members of the Council were the Directors of the State Government. In 1947, there were no Directors in the Council; but in 1960, the Director of Public Instruction and the Director of Technical Education were made ex-officio members. In 1975, the Director of Health Services was also made an ex-officio member. Thus, all the Directors who were concerned with Higher education in the State were made members of the Council.

Another class of persons who were members of the Council were those nominated by the Chancellor. Under the Act of 1947, the Chancellor could nominate three experts who were not teachers of the university, on the recommendation of the ex-officio members of the Council. We think that
there is no need for this provision. The ex-officio members always recommended the retired Principals or retired engineers. The Principals are already represented and there is no need for further representation of the Principals in the Council.

Again, under the Act of 1947, the Chancellor could nominate one person who was capable of advising the Academic Council on subjects connected with Islamic learning. But in 1960, this provision was omitted.

The next class of members of the Council were those who were elected by the Court. The 1947 Act authorised the Court to elect two members to the Academic Council. In 1975 the Court was authorised to elect to members who were not employees or students of the University or of the affiliated colleges.

Another class of persons who were members of the Council were those nominated by the Vice-Chancellor. In 1947, the Vice-Chancellor had no power to nominate any one to the Council. In 1960, the amended Act authorised him to nominate as many as ten teachers of the university and the affiliated colleges. Of the ten at least seven shall be from the affi-
Hated colleges. In 1975, this provision was amended and the member of teachers of the affiliated colleges and of the university was raised to fifteen of whom at least twelve shall be from the affiliated colleges. They should be elected by from amongst themselves. That is, all the college teachers and the university teachers shall constitute an electoral college and elect fifteen from amongst themselves subject to the limitation that at least twelve of them shall be college teachers.

The provision of election has been a subject of criticism. The Chancellor once remarked that democracy did not mean that every one should be elected. That may result in chaos. It may bring into existence factions and induce the teachers to indulge in unacademic activities. But the opponents of nomination by the Vice-Chancellor argue that the Vice-Chancellor guided by his own prejudices and predilections, may nominate his yesmen. The principle of nomination, it is argued, is ridiculed everywhere. Thus there are arguments and counter arguments against the principle of nomination. But we consider that nomination by the Vice-Chancellor is preferable to election especially in academic councils.

The final class of member is the representative of
the Board of Secondary Education. At first, the Board nominated one of its members to be a member of the Academic Council. Later on the Chairman of the Board was authorised to nominate one of the educational officers of the Board. Thus, the total strength of the Council may be about 60. But it is not fixed because the total strength may go on increasing with increase in the number of Professors.

We have so far considered the composition of the Academic Council. What ought to be the composition? We shall consider this question after considering the composition of the Academic Council of Dibrugarh, Agricultural and Hill Universities. There is a slight difference between the Dibrugarh University and the Gauhati University in regard to composition of the Academic Council. The Academic Council of Dibrugarh consists of the Vice-Chancellor, the Rector, all Professors and Heads of the University departments and Principals of the Constituent Colleges, ten teachers of the affiliated degree colleges representing different subjects to be elected from amongst themselves, Principals of the Engineering and Medical colleges lying within the jurisdiction of the University, six Professors nominated by the Vice-Chancellor from the professional colleges to be specified by the Statutes, six persons who may or may not be teachers nominated
by the Vice-Chancellor, the four Directors, namely, Director of Public Instruction, the Additional Director of Public Instruction, the Director of Technical Education and the Director of Health Services and one educational Officer of the Assam Board of Secondary Education to be nominated by the Chairman. Thus in Guwahati all the Deans are ex-officio members of the Council but not in Dibrugarh. In Guwahati the Additional Director of Public Instruction is not a member of the Council but in Dibrugarh he is. In Guwahati the Librarian is a member of the Council but not in Dibrugarh. In Dibrugarh the Principals of all the Medical and Engineering colleges lying within its jurisdiction are members of the Council but not in Guwahati. The Court is not represented in the Council in Dibrugarh but in Guwahati it is. Finally, in Dibrugarh there are Chancellor's nominees.

As regards the composition of the Academic Council of the Hill University, it consists of 19 members. It consists of the Vice-Chancellor who is the Chairman, three Professors of the University, five Principals, two from Khasi Hills, one from Mizoram, one from Nagaland and another from Garo Hills, two teachers one from Mizoram and another from Nagaland, the Director General of the ICAR, the Director of Central Fuel Research Institute, the Director of the Central Institute of
English, the Director of Forest Research Institute, the Director of Regional Research Laboratory, the Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, the Principal of the Kohima Science College and the Speaker of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

The Academic Council of the Agricultural University differs from all other universities in the region so far as its composition is concerned. The total strength is 29. The fourteen ex-officio members are, the Vice-Chancellor, the Deans of the various Faculties, the Directors of Research, Extension, Students' Affair of the Colleges of Basic Sciences and Humanities, the Chief Librarian, the Registrar, the Head of one department from each college, the Dean of the Postgraduate studies and such other members as may be prescribed. The Council may co-opt two others to secure representation for different fields of agriculture.

We have so far considered the composition of the Academic Council of the different universities in the region. What ought to be the composition of the Council? There can be no uniformity in their composition. The Academic Council of the Hill University consists of eminent men, rather top men in the country. It may not be possible to secure the services
of such men for all other universities. We therefore suggest
that we must anchor our boat near the shore lines of reality.
The Gajendra Gadkar Committee in its report on Governance of
Universities and Colleges has suggested a composition which
we consider to be not workable. Above all it is unwieldy.
The composition of the Council may not be the same for all
universities. It depends on the size of the University, its
aims and objects. We suggest slight changes in the composi­
tion of the Academic Councils. But we consider that on the
whole the composition of the various Academic Councils in
the region is rational. We suggest that all Professors in
distinct areas of academic programmes of the University
should be members of the Council. The adhoc Professors should
have no place in it. Second, there is no need for the three
persons nominated by the Chancellor on the recommendation
of the ex-officio members of the Council. There is no need
for the nomination of any one by the Chancellor.

Chairmanship of the Council:

The Vice-Chancellor is the Chairman of the Academic
Councils of all the Universities and we agree that this
should be so.
Term of Offices

The elected and nominated members hold office for a term of three years from the date of their election or nomination. But in Dibrugarh the teachers elected from the affiliated colleges hold office for a period of two years. All others hold office for three years except the ex-officio members. We are unable to understand this invidious distinction between the teachers elected by the teachers of the affiliated colleges and others so far as the term is concerned. All those elected or nominated should hold office for a common term of three years.

Meetings

During the period 1948 to 1960, the Academic Council met only once a year. Later on it met twice a year. In times of crisis it met very frequently.

As regards attendance at the meetings of the Academic Councils, it was always good. Principals of the affiliated colleges were very regular in attending the meetings for obvious reasons. First, the Academic Council deals with academic matters with which they are intensely concerned.
For instance, framing of the syllabi, the appointment of examiners, the determination of the qualifications of teachers of the affiliated colleges, medium of instruction, and recognition of the courses of studies attracted the principals to the meetings. There is a second reason why they are anxious to attend the meetings of the Academic Council. It provides an opportunity to them to come in personal contact with the Vice-Chancellor and other officers of the university and settle some of the outstanding issues which could not be settled by correspondence.

Not only the Principals of the colleges but also university teachers who were members of the Academic Council attended the meetings regularly. There was no need for them to travel long distances like the principals to attend the meetings. It also provided them an opportunity to meet the Vice-Chancellor. But the representatives of the State Government were not regular in attending meetings of the Council.

The average attendance was 55. That is, more than 70 percent of the members attended the meetings in all places.

The quorum of the meeting was one fourth of the total
strength of the Council. We consider that this is too small. It should not be less than one third.

Powers and functions:

The Academic Council under the Act of 1947 was authorised to control, regulate and be responsible for the maintenance of standards of instruction, education and examination. It is the adviser of the Executive Council on all academic matters. In 1960, the jurisdiction of the Academic Council was widened. It was authorised to make proposals to the Executive Council for the institution of professorships, readerships, lecturerships or other teaching posts and determine the duties and emoluments thereof.

Again, the Academic Council might submit to the Executive Council regulations regarding the method and manner of conducting examinations including the establishment of moderation boards.

The Academic Council is authorised to recommend award of fellowships, scholarships, medals and other rewards. It was also authorised to recommend examiners for appointment to be made by the Vice-Chancellor. It controls the university
library and for this purpose it appoints a library committee and frames regulations for the efficient management of the library. It assigns subjects and teachers to the faculties. It is responsible for the promotion of research. For this purpose it has established a research council. It may call for reports from the research workers and if they are satisfactory it may terminate the scholarships. It is responsible for the inspection of the colleges and hostels and submit reports thereon to the Executive Council. It is responsible for the organization of teaching work in the University.

We have so far enumerated the powers and functions of the Academic Council. We shall now consider how these powers and functions were exercised. The Academic Council fixed the qualifications, emoluments and conditions of service of the teachers. It constituted the faculties of law, commerce, arts science, engineering, medical and agriculture and veterinary. It framed the regulations for the conduct of the meetings of these faculties. It constituted a library committee of five members for the management of the affairs of the library. It constituted Departmental Advisory Committees and determined its composition, its powers and functions. It elected members to the Executive Council and recommended panels of experts to the Selection Committee. It recommended the award of
scholarships by the Executive Council. It notified the colleges to be inspected. It constituted admission committees for the admission of students, an examination committee for the moderation of results, Standing Committee for publication of results of examinations. It considered and approved the reports of the different faculties recommending examiners. It recognised the degrees of other universities. It made recommendations to the Executive Council for establishment of teaching and research departments. It framed regulations for various examinations. It instituted Visiting Professorships. It fixed the number of working days both in the university and the affiliated colleges.

In the earlier years, the Executive Council exercised certain powers which it was not competent to do. For instance, the proper authority for the institution of professorships, readerships and lecturerships is the Academic Council. The proper authority for the determination of the emoluments and conditions of service of teachers is the Academic Council. From 1948 to 1956, the Executive Council not only created the teaching posts but also determined their emoluments and conditions of service. The Academic Council did not protest because the leading members of the Executive Council were also members of the Academic Council. Further the personality
of the Vice-Chancellor was decisive factor. Above all the scales of pay adopted were the standard scales of pay.

The Academic Council fixed the qualifications of the teachers in the affiliated colleges to be at least a second class Master's degree with at least 45 percent marks in the aggregate. The percentage of marks was fixed because in the Calcutta University the minimum for a second class was 40 percent whereas in the Gauhati University it was 45 percent. Later on it was felt that the percentage of marks fixed was very low. Therefore, the Academic Council laid down that the candidates for appointment as Lecturers must have secured not less than 50 percent. The percentage was raised because the U.G.C. prescribed a high second class Master's degree for appointment of college lecturers. The Academic Council modified its decision in 1977 and the minimum of fifty percent was relaxed to forty five percent in the case of lecturers in the pre-university and pre-degree courses in colleges.

On 26 August, the Academic Council of Gauhati University laid down the guide lines for the creation of adhoc posts for the promotion of lecturers as Readers and Readers as Professors for teachers who had done outstanding work but could
not be promoted for want of posts. It was argued that there should be no stagnation of teachers because it affects the efficiency of their work. A person who finds himself in the same position for decades even though he had done outstanding work naturally becomes dissatisfied. Dynamic personalities wish to move about both vertically and horizontally. The Academic Council should have bestowed thought on this question earlier. The result was that several good teachers left the university and their experience and knowledge were lost to it. The Academic Council considered this question and laid down the conditions under which a person would be promoted from a lower to a higher post. The result was that as many as 27 persons were promoted as adhoc Readers and Professors.

The Academic Council Gauhati created certain departments although there was no student in such departments, but were good enough for promoting research. The department of Folklore was established for research in Folklore of North East India and the department of Modern Indian Languages has in it the certificate courses in Assamese and Tamil Languages for non Assamese and non Tamil speaking people.

The Academic Council discussed the abolition of
compulsory attendance on two occasions. On the first occasion none but one member supported the proposal. The proposal fell through. Again on 21 January 1971, it was discussed. One of the members who opposed the motion on the first occasion, said that the proposal was academically sound. All the members knew that the abolition of compulsory attendance is academically unsound. Yet they did not speak out their mind. In 1975, the same Academic Council and restored compulsory attendance.

Again the university introduced certain examination reforms, internal assessment, tutorial system and seminars. The Academic Council never bothered whether the scheme it prepared was practicable. The students protested against internal assessment. The Vice-Chancellor with the consent of the Academic Council abolished internal assessment.

The Academic Councils of the other universities in North East India have also done commendable work. By and large these Councils functioned effectively.