CHAPTER IV
ORIGIN AND ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has a direct and recognizable role in Centre State relations in the field of higher education. UGC is the single most important statutory, advisory and executive body created to enable the Centre to discharge its constitutional responsibility in higher education. Even the Kothari Commission (1964-66) which spoke of higher education as a Centre State partnership, took the view that since education must increasingly become a national concern, the Centre must provide the initiative, leadership and finances, it must give shape and direction to higher education by determining its policy framework and ensuring its implementation. The Centre discharges this responsibility, which is explicitly laid down in Entry 66 (List I), through the UGC.¹

Ever since the establishment of the first modern Universities in 1857, the Government of India and the Provincial Governments adopted the practice of giving grants - in - aid to institutions imparting higher education in the country.²

In the later part of the nineteenth century, it had been increasingly realised that there was need of an organisation or agency to disburse the Central Government grants for higher education. The
Calcutta University Commission (1917-1919) had suggested the creation of such a body which, in addition to disbursing funds would also operate as a clearing-house agency, collecting and disseminating information about universities and maintaining liaison with foreign universities. But the idea was shelved for a while, owing to the introduction of dyarchy by the Act of 1919 and the economic depression of the thirties. But the need for a University Grants body on the lines of the British University Grants Committee continued to be felt. The Sargent Report (1943) repeated the suggestions of the Calcutta University Commission. In view of the fact that the existing Inter-University Board was neither a co-ordinating nor a fund-distributing body, the Sargent Report recommended a setting up of a British type Universities Grants Committee.3

In 1945, a University Grants Committee was appointed. It had four members and was to deal only with the Central Universities of Aligarh, Delhi and Banaras. After 1947, its membership was increased and it was empowered to deal with all universities. Having no funds of its own, it had to make recommendations to the Education Ministry which submitted them to the Finance Ministry. However, the formation of this new University Grants Committee organisation was kept in abeyance, pending the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49). While India had yet to take on a federal complexion, the British-type University Grants Committee was ideally
instance, the Inter-University Board of India at its Sixth Quinquennial Conference held towards the close of 1948 stated, "This Conference is of the opinion that the University Grants Committee should be re-constituted on the general model of the University Grants Committee of the United Kingdom with a full-time Chairman. To carry out its duties successfully, the University Grants Committee should have an adequate Secretariat of its own, so that applications for grants from the universities may be expeditiously dealt with and that it should be empowered to disburse the grants to the universities without the need for further reference to any Department of Government". Finally, on 3rd November 1952, the Government of India resolved to create a University Grants Commission, with a full-time Chairman, three non-official members and two representatives of the Ministries of Education and Finance. Its functions were to advise the Government on allocation of grants-in-aid to central universities, other universities and institutions of higher education in general, and to be an advisory body to the government in matters of higher education.5

In April 1953, the Government of India held a Conference of the State Education Ministers and Vice-Chancellors in Delhi, to examine anew the issue related to the CCUE and the UGC. The Conference unanimously recommended that instead of having two separate bodies, it would be better to have the UGC alone and give it the powers and functions proposed to be allotted to both. By the
Resolution of 1953, the Government of India set up an interim UGC which started functioning on 28th December 1953, by Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, the Minister of Education and Natural Resource and Scientific Research. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister was also present and addressed the inaugural meeting. The UGC Act was passed in 1956.

The UGC was set up in 1956 under a Central Act with a comprehensive role "to take in consultation with the universities or other bodies concerned all such steps as it may think fit for the promotion and co-ordination of university education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities."

The UGC shall consist of:

1. a Chairman;
2. a Vice-Chairman; and
3. ten other members.

to be appointed by the Central Government. The Commission consists of 12 members. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are its full-time working members. The Secretariat of the Commission is headed by a Secretary. He is assisted by a Financial Adviser, a Director (Science) and two Additional Secretaries. The Secretariat of the Commission is
organised on the pattern of the Sections and Divisions. According to
Section 10 of the UGC Act, the Commission appoints a Secretary and
other employees as necessary for the efficient functioning of the
Commission. The manner of appointment includes direct recruitment,
promotion, deputation and contractual appointment.

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS
COMMISSION

It shall be the duty of the Commission to take, in consultation
with the Universities or other bodies concerned, all such steps as it may
think fit for the promotion and co-ordination of University Education;
and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching,
examination and research in Universities. In order to perform these
functions given under this Act, the Commission may:

(a) inquire into the financial needs of Universities;

(b) allocate and disburse, out of the Fund of the Commission,
grants to Universities established or incorporated by or under a
Central Act for the maintenance and development of such
Universities, or for any other general or specified purpose;

(c) allocate and disburse, out of the Fund of the Commission, such
grants to other Universities as it may deem necessary or
appropriate for the development of such Universities or for the maintenance, or development, or both, of any specified activities of such Universities or for any other general or specified purpose:

provided that in making any grant to any such University, the Commission shall give due consideration to the development of the University concerned, its financial needs, the standard attained by it and the national purposes which it may serve.

allocate and disburse out of the Fund of the Commission, such grants to institution deemed to be Universities in pursuance of a declaration made by the Central Government under Section 3. as it may deem necessary. for one or more of the following purposes. namely:--

(i) for maintenance in special cases,

(ii) for development.

(iii) for any other general or specified purpose;

establish, in accordance with the regulations made under this Act, institutions for providing common facilities, services and programmes for a group of universities or for the universities in general and maintain such institutions or provide for their maintenance by allocating and disbursing out of the Fund of the
Commission such grants as the Commission may deem necessary.

(d) recommends to any University the measures necessary for the improvement of University education and advise the University upon the action to be taken for the purpose of implementing such recommendation:

(e) advise the Central Government or any State Government on the allocation of any grants to Universities for any general or specified purpose out of the Consolidated Fund of India or the Consolidated Fund of the State, as the case may be;

(f) advise any authority, if such advice is asked for, on the establishment of a new University or on proposals connected with the expansion of the activities of any University;

(g) advise the Central Government or any State Government or University on any question which may be referred to the Commission by the Central Government or the State Government or the University, as the case may be;

(h) collect information on all such matters relating to University education in India and other countries as it thinks fit and make the same available to any University;
require a University to furnish it with such information as may be needed relating to the financial position of the University or the studies in the various branches of learning undertaken in that University, together with all the rules and regulations relating to standards of teaching and examination in that University respecting each of such branches of learning;

perform such other functions as may be prescribed or may be deemed necessary by the Commission for advancing the cause of higher education in India or as may be incidental or conducive to the discharge of the above functions⁹ (See Appendix II - Brief Overview of UGC Activities).

Section 26 of the UGC Act provides that the Commission can frame regulations, among others, on qualifications of teaching staff of universities, defining the minimum standards of instruction for the grant of any degree, maintenance of standards and coordination of work facilities in universities, etc.

The procedure of work of the Indian UGC is modelled closely on that of its British counterpart. Before the formulation of each Five Year Plan, the UGC sends out circulars to universities, requesting them to propose their schemes for development for the next plan. The UGC also indicates the different development programmes it intends to pursue in the plan period. Accordingly, the universities prepare the
plans, keeping in mind their own needs and UGC schemes and then submit these for UGC scrutiny and approval. The UGC examines these plans in relation to the likely funds which the Planning Commission will make available to it through the Ministry of Education. In view of the possible allocations, the universities are requested to revise their plans. Then, visiting teams go out to universities. Their final reports which include recommendations for development plans along with financial provisions, are examined by the UGC. These are then consolidated and total financial liabilities are worked out within the total grant.\textsuperscript{10}

The University Grants Committee of United Kingdom was established under the jurisdiction of the Treasury in 1919 after the universities had requested substantial public funding. The University Grants Committee was created in order to act as a buffer between the universities and the government, since the universities were determined to maintain their autonomy in spite of their increased dependence on public funding.\textsuperscript{11}

The functions of the University Grants Committee of United Kingdom are: \textsuperscript{12}

1. Advisory
2. Inspectorial
3. Distributional
As advisors the committee makes its estimates of what, on what it considers to be reasonable assumptions about student numbers and research activities, the universities will need during forthcoming periods and presents them to the Secretary of State concerned.

As inspectors, the committee receives accounts of how its grants have been spent and takes account of them retrospectively. It also causes appropriate groups of its members to visit the various universities and to listen to explanations of their problems and ambitions. Here clearly is a method of indirect control.

The distributional function is the distribution of revenue to the universities. The main principle inspiring of distribution of revenue is the principle of so called block grant. An aggregate sum is handed over without prescription as to how it is spent when allotting capital grants, the University Grants Committee must choose on a variety of criteria. There is no possibility of any automatic formula of entitlement which relieves it of very difficult decisions.

**WHITE PAPER ON HIGHER EDUCATION** was submitted to meet the challenge in United Kingdom ¹³ which provided a clear statement (in broad terms) of the government's main policies for higher education.
"Higher education has a crucial role in helping the nation meet the economic and social challenges of the final decade of this century and beyond."

According to the government, the higher education could improve its efficiency and effectiveness in several ways:

1. Higher education should be more responsive to the needs of the economy.
2. Higher education depends too heavily on public funds.
3. Greater selectivity is needed in the allocation of research funding.
4. Higher education sector needs to be more cost-conscious.

White paper announced that University Grants Committee was to be replaced by the Universities Funding Council (UFC) and Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) in United Kingdom. These two bodies became operational in April 1989.

The UFC is responsible under the Education Reform Act 1988 for the distribution of funds made available by the Secretary of State (Education and Science) for the provision of education and the undertaking of research by universities in Great Britain. The Council
was established on 1 November 1988 and assumed its full responsibilities in succession to the University Grants Committee on 1 April 1989. The Council's general aim is the maintenance and development of universities as high quality and cost-effective institutions, providing for the advancement of knowledge, the pursuit of scholarship and the education of students, thereby playing their parts in meeting national needs.¹⁴

The general principles of the new funding are ¹⁵

1. Funding will be determined on a competitive basis.

2. Funding will be flexible in so far as it will be adjusted during the planning period (to take account of each institution's performance and its success in achieving its stated objectives).

3. The funding of teaching, research and continuing education will be determined and indicated separately for each university.

4. Universities will be expected to restructure and rationalise themselves within the basic funds made available by the UFC (i.e. no extra funding is available for restructuring).

The method of allocating funds to universities should be changed from the block grant system to one based upon contractual agreements, drawn up between each university and the UFC (and
similarly for the polytechnics and colleges sector. According to this consultative document, universities would be expected to offer and deliver a clearly specified range of educational services in return for the UFC funding. This new method of funding would give the UFC and the government much greater control over the range and type of courses offered by each institution. The UFC of United Kingdom is therefore reinforcing the government's policy of imposing the discipline of the market on universities by making them compete for public funds through the introduction of a system of tendering for funded students.\textsuperscript{16}

In India there are two types of universities in the country i.e. Central and State universities. Central universities are set up under an act of Parliament and State universities by State Legislatures. The rapid growth of universities without proper infrastructure in the States became a matter of concern for the UGC and, therefore, laid down guidelines for the establishment of new universities. which provided that before a State Government formulates a proposal for the establishment of a new university, it should\textsuperscript{17}

(i) undertake a survey of the existing facilities for higher education in the state;

(ii) associate UGC from the very beginning of the proposal; and
other than Central universities, for any specified activities of such universities, or for any other general and specified purpose. 18

The UGC Act was further amended in September, 1984. The

purposes for which the UGC is empowered to make grants as per

the regulations made by the UGC shall be specified in the regulations.

It is for the UGC to allocate the grants to various universities and

colleges based on the need and merit. The UGC may also withdraw

the grants if the institution fails to make proper use of the grants.

A particular emphasis is now being laid on the country's

universities, to 1000 affluence, and the majority of our

university level students should be trained for political
other than Central universities, for any specified activities of such universities, or for any other general and specified purpose.\footnote{18}

The UGC Act was further amended in September, 1984. The two main features of the amended Act which came into force with effect from 1.10.1984 are:\footnote{19}

1. To enlarge the functions of the Commission so as to enable it to establish, in accordance with the regulations made under the Act, institutions for providing common facilities, services and programmes for a group of universities or for the universities in general and maintain such institutions or provide for their maintenance by allocating and disbursing out of its funds such grants as it may deem necessary; and

2. provision has been made to empower the UGC to determine the scales of fees charged by the colleges and to deny grants to and de-recognise the college, which violates the provision so that it cannot send up any candidate for the examinations.

A particular mention should be made here of the country’s nearly 5,500 affiliated colleges, in which the vast majority of our university level students study, having been created more for political
and regional considerations rather than to meet genuine higher education needs of their respective communities. Many of these institutions are extremely small in size, lack the minimum facilities needed to develop viable instructional programmes, and pose a constant threat to the quality and standards of higher education. Unfortunately, the Commission has no say in the establishment of new colleges or in their affiliation to a university. Although a committee is currently preparing a model grant-in-aid code for colleges including the conditions of affiliation, much would depend on their acceptance by State governments and universities. It needs to be emphasised that unless the establishment of new colleges is properly regulated by the UGC, it will not be possible to consolidate facilities and strengthen standards in the existing colleges, nor will it be feasible to bring about a closer matching of higher education to the man-power needs of our economy.20

The UGC continued to give high priority to the implementation of the NPE - 1986 as elaborated in the Programme Of Action approved by the Parliament. Some of the major thrust areas of the NPE - 1986 which are pursued with vigour are:21

(a) Autonomous Colleges;
(b) Redesigning of Courses;
(c) State Councils of Higher Education;
(d) Accreditation and Assessment Councils:
(e) Alternative Models of Management in Universities:
(f) National Qualifying Test for recruitment of teachers:
(g) Making research and development broad based:
(h) Training/Orientation of teachers:
(i) Improvement of efficiency:
(j) Education for the Minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Handicapped and Women.

In order to enable universities to have meritorious research fellows, the UGC has since 1984 been holding an eligibility test for Junior Research Fellowships and since 1988, it has been collaborating with Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in respect of science subjects. To attract bright and talented persons to research, the commission has raised the value of fellowship. The commission formulated a scheme called Academic Staff Orientation Scheme for orientation of newly appointed lecturers in universities and colleges. To begin with 48 universities were identified by the UGC during 1987 - 88 for conducting phase - I Orientation Programme. In phase - II the Academic Staff College will act as nodal agencies for conducting subject oriented Refresher Courses for in-service teachers.22

The Commission made concerted efforts in promoting awareness and acceptance of the ideas of the NPE - 1986 through discussions at
appropriate levels with the State/Central governments, university authorities, teaching community etc., besides constituting expert groups to formulate action plans, guidelines, and financial patterns. Simultaneously, organization of seminars, workshops, meetings with academics and follow up action with universities are the strategies adopted by the Commission to accelerate the process of appreciation of the NPE 1986 - Programme of Action by the university community. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and the Association of Indian Universities organised workshops/seminars on behalf of the UGC for the academic community, state government representatives, etc. for better understanding and application of the NPE - 1986 with a view to expedite its implementation.\textsuperscript{23}

According to Mr. S.C. Dube, Chairman of Madhya Pradesh Uchcha Shiksha Anudan Ayog, Bhopal, the UGC has injected substantial funds and has kept a semblance of development going in many universities. It can be credited with several bold initiatives. It has also kept alive a dialogue on certain key issues concerning higher education in India. As such, the establishment of UGC was a good thing to have happened. But a feeling is growing that this organisation has lost much of its earlier momentum, that it is a prisoner of indecision, that many of its innovations have not taken off, and that by letting universities by pass its recommendations all too easily, it has not contributed as much as it could have towards maintenance of
standards. One trend of thought holds that the UGC has outlived its utility and that its functions should now be taken over by the government; on the contrary, others favour a stronger UGC - a body with larger and sturdier arms for purposive use. The blunt fact is that the autonomy of this organization has been eroded considerably. It can take policy decisions but can rarely get them implemented in their true spirit.24

The Commission over the years has not given evidence either of imagination or of boldness or of professionalism. According to Dr. Amrik Singh it is possibly only in India that the UGC has been vested with two powers simultaneously. One is the power to provide funds and the other is the power to determine and coordinate standards. In other countries, for instance, Cannada, Australia, USA, funds are provided by the Federal Government and there is a good deal of argument about the quantum of grant, the procedures of release and other related issues. In none of these countries however does the Federal Government have the same right in respect of the determination and co-ordination of standards as the Union Government in India has. The UGC functions as a handmaiden of the Department of Education. Nobody wants the UGC to defy its parent body but it is not incumbent upon it to view things exactly as the Department views them. But over the years, the Ministry has ensured that nobody with an independent cast of mind is nominated to this
body. No wonder hardly any official working in the UGC can venture to go against the wishes of the Department of Education. In brief, the UGC has been emasculated so completely over the years that the Department can get done whatever it wants to be done.25

Mr. S. Bhattacharya, Dean of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University is of the view that the UGC in theory is accountable to Parliament, but operationally this is meaningless. Parliament has not discussed the annual report of the UGC for the last eight years and even the reports of the Public Accounts Committee or Estimates Committee on the UGC receive scant attention there. Thus the UGC is in practice accountable to no one.26

The UGC is the apex body for higher education in India. In addition to the statutory powers and the funds at its disposal, it has come to be regarded as an integral part of the academic community and the university system in general. It draws up policies, plans, programmes, and regulations in the discharge of its duties.

It is the responsibility of the UGC to strive to provide leadership to the entire educational system and assist it to bring about the needed transformation. The UGC should strive to remove regional imbalances in the development of higher education in different parts of the country and to relate such development to the programmes of socio-economic advance and cultural growth of the people in various regions.
The University Grants Commission appointed Committee headed by Dr. P. B. Gajendragadkar on governance of universities and colleges in 1969, opined that UGC with its intimate connection with all universities in the country, should advise and assist the universities in upholding the dignity of the university system and safeguarding the autonomy of the universities in all its aspects. The Commission must act as a guide, philosopher and friend of the university system and as such it is the custodian of the university autonomy and is entrusted with the responsible task of guiding the universities to make sustained and dedicated efforts to meet the challenge facing university education today. The future of university education will depend largely on the dynamic role which the Commission will play in discharging its functions.
REFERENCES


4. Ibid. p.64.

5. Ibid. pp.64-65.


20. *Idem.*


